



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 152 No. 081
Friday, February 6, 2026

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 6, 2026

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1000)

[*English*]

STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 51(1), the following motion is now deemed to have been proposed:

That this House take note of the Standing Orders and procedure of the House and its committees.

[*Translation*]

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to speak to the Standing Orders.

I have not been a member of Parliament for very long, but this is a venerable institution. Our regulations, procedures and practices are part of a parliamentary tradition dating back to the Magna Carta. They were adopted by thoughtful parliamentarians who came before us to respond to Canada's unique reality, and they have evolved over time. I am not exaggerating when I say that they represent centuries of work.

[*English*]

I am very mindful that to immediately have opinions on how to better operate could be taken poorly or viewed as presumptive, even arrogant. However, I also know that, like frogs in hot water, we can all become used to the intolerable when given the benefit of time. In those times, it is on those of us who are new and experiencing the shock to our system to speak up, to present the view of the people who have fresh eyes. After talking with colleagues on both sides of the House, I also do not believe that what I am going to say is remotely controversial, though we may disagree on how best to resolve it.

Question period is broken. Canada's system is built on the idea that government must answer to Parliament routinely and in public, and I believe this to be a very good thing. A deteriorating executive cannot hide here, as it can in the United States, but beyond serving

as a daily wellness check, the current format of question period falls short of its goal of providing true accountability.

There are shallow questions, shallow answers, a degree of repetition that would make an advertiser blush, and mad applause on both sides as though we were hitting oratory high scores in 35-second exchanges about procurement. If I can relay one thing today, it is that it does not need to be this way.

[*Translation*]

Question period does not need to be this way.

There are many things that we can try to do to improve question period. There are also many lessons we can learn from our own history and from the experiences of other countries.

The Standing Orders do not actually say much about question period, other than to indicate that it happens.

Procedures and practices are established under the authority of the Speaker, often following consultation with the House leaders. Often, the goal is to ensure that changes have unanimous or almost unanimous support. That is fitting, and I am not suggesting that a mere majority should be able to make changes, but change is possible.

[*English*]

We can as a body be more prescriptive through the Standing Orders, or we can encourage the Speaker through our leaders to consider modification to improve accountability and to improve the value of question period to Canadians. We can experiment: We can agree to try different formats on different days; we can agree to try different formats for one session, having QP revert after that; or we can do both. Then we can see if our experiments have the intended effect or if they create new problems, and we can make changes more permanent or adjust accordingly. We can improve.

[*Translation*]

Once we embrace that, a world of possibilities opens up to us. For example, we could have different ministers answer questions on specific days. This would provide an opportunity for more targeted questioning and ensure that government weaknesses do not go unnoticed just because they involve topics that do not get much media attention.

Standing Orders and Procedure

We could limit the repetition of substantially similar exchanges. If the goal is to ensure accountability, not to get sound bites, we do not need eight versions of the same back-and-forth. We could do this or any number of other things as an experiment. This leads me to the most obvious way to improve question period.

• (1005)

[English]

In Canada, and uniquely in Canada, questions and answers are capped at 35 seconds each. In 35 seconds, anyone can hide. Members do not need to listen to the question to give the answer, and they do not need to engage with the premise. They do not need to back up their attack. Weak performances on either side of the House go undetected indefinitely in the shallow end.

Other countries with parliamentary systems do not do it the way we do it. We have not even always done it this way. The U.K., Australia and Ireland all measure answers in minutes, not seconds; this was also the system here in Canada until the 1990s. The tight clock was introduced to allow more participants. This is well-intentioned, but let us look at the current situation.

Before I was elected, I was a public engagement practitioner, and I would often talk about the conflict between an audience's stated and revealed preferences. Stated preference is what we say we will do; revealed preference is what we actually do. We say we want many questions, but our revealed preference is for longer exchanges. There are not 40 members asking 40 questions; members stay on one topic, one question, with a great deal of repetition for many rounds.

Here is my modest proposal. For one session, for two days a week let us do the following: lengthen the allowable time for both the question and the answer to two minutes apiece.

As questioners, in two minutes, members can lay out their values and the facts they rely on, and they can prosecute their case. They can demand information. They can show their deep understanding of the issue and where they believe our understanding may be deficient.

As answerers, in two minutes, we can lay out our values and the facts we rely on, and we can explain our decision-making and, if necessary, give our statement of defence. We can provide requested information. We can show our deep understanding of the issue and where we believe questioners' understanding may be deficient.

[Translation]

We can raise the level of debate and provide Canadians with thoughtful exchanges, at least from time to time, during these complex times. The purpose of question period is to provide accountability, and accountability is a very good thing. However, true accountability requires substance. Longer questions and answers do not guarantee substance, but they do increase the cost of dodging the question. They force consistency. They expose ignorance. They reward members who have a firm grasp on their files and penalize those who do not. More in-depth discourse is the most important change we can consider.

[English]

We shape our systems, and then our systems shape us. If we allow question period to be shallow, we will become shallow. If we allow question period to be thoughtful, we will be thoughtful.

I want to end with a conversation I had with a teacher a couple of days ago. He told me that when he brought a class to question period many years ago, he was embarrassed because a lesson in democracy became a lesson in how sometimes adults act like children. We have all winced on occasion when we have looked up and have seen a class in the gallery. We see there the leaders of tomorrow watching us, the leaders of today.

I am new to the House, but what I have learned is that while we disagree often and vigorously, we have a chamber full of dedicated, kind and brilliant people from all walks of life; we just do not act accordingly in the chamber. Question period as currently constructed shows us at our worst, not our best, so let us improve, or at least try to improve. I believe that Canadians deserve better, and I believe we can do better. I hope to work with all members in providing them with better.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague, the member for Calgary Confederation, with a great deal of interest. I would encourage him to look at Motion No. 517, which was introduced in the 40th Parliament and which echoes many of the issues he has raised. I note that in that motion, which the Liberal Party later adopted in the 42nd Parliament, the 43rd Parliament and the 44th Parliament, one of the five proposals was for the prime minister to answer questions on Wednesdays.

There being roughly 36 to 40 questions on Wednesdays, Prime Minister Trudeau answered roughly 36 to 40 questions every week in the House. I do not believe that the current Prime Minister answers as many questions each week in the House. I am wondering if the member would like to see the restoration of Wednesday PMQs.

• (1010)

Corey Hogan: Madam Speaker, I do believe that one of the things we should explore is mixing up who is up and for what duration on each day, and I think that having Wednesday PMQs is a good idea. One of the challenges we saw in practice was that it then became a question of, "Why is the Prime Minister working only one day a week?"

The challenge with implementing anything like that is that we are going to need to work across both sides of the House to say that this is a standard that increases accountability, and to not suggest otherwise. We do know that the current limits of question period are that the 35-second exchanges also do not necessarily feel like we are getting a lot of meat.

Standing Orders and Procedure

[Translation]

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech, in which he raised some good points. For one, he said that if our interventions are shallow, we risk becoming shallow. At times, I fear it is too little, too late for that. I also liked the point raised by my Conservative colleague about the Prime Minister being in the House. It is not a matter of saying he works only one day a week. Everyone knows full well that he does other things the rest of the week, but it is obviously important.

I, personally, would also focus on the content of the answer. Recently, in fact, we had a debate on this, and the Chair decided to cut off certain questions related to something that was happening in Quebec City. When we asked the Chair to cut off answers if they were not relevant to the questions that had been asked, we were told that that was not possible.

Does my colleague think that the Standing Orders should include a provision allowing us to point out when a response is irrelevant to the question or does not answer it? I think that could be very useful for democracy.

[English]

Corey Hogan: Madam Speaker, I think that would be very challenging to do without getting into matters of debate on a regular basis. I do want to note though that it would also be nearly impossible to answer some of the questions. Here are some samples from QP just yesterday. There were multiple questions about whether we would please adopt Conservative policies. That is very difficult and broad. There was also one question I want to draw attention to: “Is the member...aware of his lack of empathy and moral compass?” I do not know how one holds a government to account with a question like that.

That is the simple reality. These questions are just from yesterday. There is always going to be a certain element of that in question period; I appreciate that, but it makes it difficult to imagine that we could create a rule that says that someone must answer a question. I do not know how we could ask a member to answer a question like that.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity, for over 20 years, of being in opposition, and I have been on the government benches. I understand and appreciate what the member is suggesting. The only way I could see something of this nature working is if we had written questions. Some parliaments have done that. We would have to provide the written questions in advance. The government would then respond to them in a question period. Apart from that, maybe we could take away the television cameras during question period.

I would be interested in the member's thoughts on both.

Corey Hogan: Madam Speaker, the United Kingdom, I understand, does a version that is somewhere between written and oral, in which a question has to be put on the Order Paper. The Order Paper gets very long; there might be 300 questions on it at some point, but a minister knows the questions. This allows the minister to prepare and to get the answers ready. I think something like that could be explored.

I do appreciate there is a spontaneity to question period; it allows us to address issues of the day. Maybe we could do a hybrid, where a leaders' round could be about anything, but if we go on to those next rounds, then it has to be about something that is on the Order Paper. I think we should explore something like that.

With respect to cameras in QP, I think we have to realize that most of the country sees us through the video clips. That is a reality. I may not love it, but I think it is one of the accountability mechanisms, personally. However, it is certainly worth exploring what other parliaments do.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills North, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to rise to participate in this very important debate, because I think checks and balances on power and how power is distributed in Parliament are an extremely important topic of debate.

We have all seen what has happened in other democracies over the last number of years, the weakening of guardrails and the importance of guardrails in restraining executive power. Particularly in a Westminster parliamentary democracy, where the executive is not elected but appointed, and not only appointed but appointed out of this place, it is really important to have the rules and procedures in place to ensure that the legislature can hold the executive branch of government accountable.

I believe there are three areas of reform that the House should consider.

First, I believe that the Speaker's right of recognition should be restored. We are, to my knowledge, the only Westminster parliamentary democracy where the Speaker has effectively lost the right of recognition. In many proceedings of the House, during debate, during Oral Questions and during other proceedings, that right of recognition has been replaced by the list system, managed by the whips and House leaders, which has effectively displaced the Speaker's authority. During most of the proceedings of the House, in order for a member to speak, the member's name has to be put on a speaking list by either the House leader or the whip's office, and too often members do not have a voice in the House because they do not get on the list.

The Speaker should determine who gets to speak in the House. The House should do away with the list system and replace it with a system established and controlled by the Speaker. That system should have two broad principles. First, all members who wish to speak to a matter should get to speak. Second, time allocated to individual members who wish to speak should be distributed as equitably as possible to those members who wish to speak.

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As I understand it, in the United Kingdom Parliament, members who wish to speak, whether to a bill or during Oral Questions, go through a system established and controlled by the Speaker. For example, all members who wish to speak to a bill get to speak, because the time allotted for debate is divided by the number of members who have indicated to the Speaker that they want to speak, and the Speaker allocates time accordingly. For example, if four hours of debate are scheduled for a bill at second reading, and there are 40 members who wish to speak to the bill, the 240 minutes allotted are divided by the 40 members, thus each member would get six minutes to speak. In that system, every single member who wishes to speak to a matter in the House will have their voice heard, down to a minimum of three minutes, ensuring that their position on a particular matter is on the record.

I hope all members in the House give serious consideration to this. I would note, in particular, that former Speaker Milliken advocated for this change to the rules of the House and advocated for it strongly. I believe he advocates for it to this day.

The second area of reform the House should consider is its standing committees. In 2002, the Standing Orders were changed, a move supported by then finance minister Paul Martin to address the democratic deficit, by replacing the appointment of committee chairs with their election. Unfortunately, the Standing Order was crafted in a way that did not anticipate it being used in the way it has been. That well-intentioned change has not worked out in practice.

While, technically, committee members can elect committee chairs, about 21 or 22 of them are effectively appointed by the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's designate, and I think four by the Leader of the Opposition. That is because the moving of a nomination of a member for the chair position is done in public, and the whips use that fact to ensure that only a member that the ministry has decided should be the chair is moved and no one else is moved for nomination. The result, in almost all cases, is that members are acclaimed.

● (1015)

One way to fix this is to require a secret preferential ballot listing all the names of committee members of the recognized party from which the chair is to be selected. That way, no nominations for chair can take place, and the 12 members of the committee, or 10 members, or however many members are allocated per standing committee in that particular Parliament, decide who will be the chair based on a single secret preferential ballot.

To make committees even more effective, I think a second reform should be considered. The House should consider distributing the 25 chairs of the standing committees in a way that is proportional to the recognized parties' standing in the House. That is done in other Westminster parliaments, and I think it reflects the distribution of other aspects of the House when a Parliament is first constituted.

The House should also consider a third change to the way committees are constituted. Members on committees should be elected by their peers in caucus. The election on a secret preferential ballot vote could take place at the same time as the election for Speaker. Other Westminster parliaments do the same thing. In totality, the

secret preferential ballot election of committee chairs and the secret preferential ballot election of committee members would strengthen the role of committees in this place and ensure that there is more accountability of the executive branch of government to the House and its committees.

I would add something on this point of committee reform. The United Kingdom had a similar system for its select committees, equivalent to our standing committees, to the one we have here today. About a decade and a half ago, they implemented these kinds of reforms to their committees. After being in place for their select committee system for roughly a decade and a half, these reforms have, by universal acclaim, been seen to be effective reforms that have strengthened the U.K. Parliament.

The third area of reform I think the House should consider is to take away the Prime Minister's power to make key appointments in this place. I do not believe that the Prime Minister should be able to appoint the Clerk of the House, nor do I believe that the Prime Minister should be able to appoint the head of our parliamentary security, the Sergeant-at-Arms. I believe both of these positions should be appointed by the Speaker on the recommendation of a committee of MPs that has vetted various candidates. In fact, at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that is exactly the process that is in place, and it is that process that is also in place in the U.K. Parliament and the Australian parliament.

Most importantly, I think the majority of members of the powerful board that administers this place should be no longer appointed by the Prime Minister, either directly or indirectly, but rather elected by members of this House on a secret ballot vote. Members of the ministry, as well as officers of the House on both sides of the aisle, should not be eligible for the majority of positions on the Board of Internal Economy. In other words, the majority of the members on the Board of Internal Economy should be backbench members of this House, elected on a secret ballot vote by their peers in this place.

Those are the three areas of reform that I believe the House should consider.

As a final note, I would add this: I believe we should end hybrid Parliament. We are the only national legislature amongst western Liberal democracies to remain in hybrid mode. The U.K. House of Commons ended hybrid sittings on July 22, 2021, five years ago. The U.S. House of Representatives ended hybrid sittings on January 9, 2023, and the Australian parliament ended hybrid sittings on July 25, 2022. I would note that the French National Assembly never actually had hybrid mode, because, if I recall correctly, the court declared it unconstitutional, mandating that members of the legislature appear in person throughout the pandemic time.

Those are the three or four reforms I recommend to this place, and I look forward to the debate on this. I hope a committee of the House or a member of the House will take up these reforms and propose them to the House, and that some of them may be adopted.

Standing Orders and Procedure

• (1020)

Corey Hogan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with all of my colleague's first three reforms. I think they are all worthy of exploration.

I will say, as a father of three young children, an 11-year-old, a nine-year-old and a seven-year-old, and also as the son of aging parents, that I have really appreciated the flexibility that hybrid sittings have allowed on those unique occasions when it was necessary. My father was in the hospital recently, in the ICU for 11 days, and being able to be there at his bedside and do my work for Parliament from the hospital was really important to me. However, I think I understand my colleague's overall thrust and appreciation for this House and how important it is. I think that was the thrust of his speech.

I wonder if he would be willing, in his proposal, to look at a modified hybrid Parliament that would allow, in certain exigent circumstances, the use of hybrid sittings.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I am open to all potential options for the way this place sits, but I would note that we already sit the least of any major national legislature in the west. The U.S. House of Representatives typically sits between 165 and 190 days a year, and the U.K. House of Commons typically sits between 146 and 162 days a year. We sit only 129 days a year, and provincial legislatures sit even less. We sit far less than we used to, and I believe that we should consider sitting through much of July and early August and then adjourn for the rest of the summer. I believe we should start earlier in January.

Again, accountability of the executive to this place can take place only when the House is sitting. I would note that in the 1960s and—

• (1025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but I have to leave time for questions from other members.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech. I strongly disagree with him on one point, however. My colleague said that all members should be able to speak on every issue.

We will soon be presenting a proposal on the circumstances in which a response from the House to the Senate is necessary. No doubt everyone remembers the infamous Bill C-234 from the last Parliament, which never made it back to the Senate because the Conservatives decided they did not want to return it to the Senate, so they had their speakers give endless speeches. This shut down debate in a way that I consider improper.

What solution is my colleague proposing? The Bloc Québécois proposes that speaking times be limited in those specific circumstances, when the House of Commons has to send a response to the Senate.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I think that any ideas that concern democratic reform here in the House should be considered by members of the House and by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

As I mentioned before, I believe that the three reforms I presented are the easiest and most significant ways to improve the situation. That said, I thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for his comments.

[*English*]

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is my third Parliament. I know the member for Wellington—Halton Hills North has been here for many more and has spoken to many of these reforms countless times, but there has been no action taken by Parliament.

Does he think we should put something into the Standing Orders beyond just debating this at the start of each Parliament within a certain number of days? Should we create a method whereby it has to come to a vote or there has to be a way to implement these changes that are being recommended during the debates?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I think the way in which many of these reforms can be implemented is quite simple. Most of these reforms would require the procedure and House affairs committee to table a report in this House recommending these reforms, and that the report be concurred in. That would be one way to adopt these reforms.

The other is for any member of the House, through a private member's motion, or for a member of the ministry, through a ministerial motion, to propose these reforms and for the motion to be adopted. Those are two methods through which we could implement the reforms that are being debated here today.

[*Translation*]

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will try to talk fast, because I have a lot to say this morning.

No one will be surprised to hear that the first measure we are proposing is to abolish the morning prayer and replace it with a moment of reflection. Parliament must serve all its citizens, and not all of them share the same religion. Many have no religion at all. This is a matter of showing respect for each individual, so that everyone who wishes to pray alone can do so, privately, or take a moment to reflect. Others can do whatever they want with this time. I think this is fundamental.

The other point has to do with Fridays. Members will notice that fewer people attend on Fridays, a day that draws less attention. We have thought of a way to reform that. We would like to set aside some time on Fridays for a ministerial question period, similar to what happens in Quebec City.

Standing Orders and Procedure

As members will recall, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a special committee was created that allowed members to question ministers, and ministers had the same amount of time to respond as it took to ask the question. This created some very interesting exchanges. Unlike in question period, we could ask the ministers follow-up questions if their answers were off topic or not entirely accurate. I think that would go a long way toward improving democratic life and providing information to the public. Those sessions could take place in the morning and afternoon, right before Private Members' Business. We would obviously still have oral question period, because it is important to the opposition parties, as it is their opportunity to question the government. If we ever need to add time for government orders, we could adjust the schedule, either on Fridays or other days of the week.

The same formula could also be applied to adjournment proceedings. Rather than having four minutes to ask the question and four minutes to respond followed by one minute to reply and one minute to respond to the reply, which is not very much time, we could have a period of 10 minutes total, where the same formula would apply. The member would ask a question. If their question is 30 seconds long, then the minister would have 30 seconds to respond, and they would go back and forth like that for 10 minutes. That would allow for much more constructive discussions. I would invite members to watch video clips of the time when we were using that formula. It was really interesting.

The other standing order that we would like to change has to do with Private Members' Business. That is what we will be discussing in the last hour today. What most members find really boring and what really hinders the debate is the lack of back-and-forth discussion. We think there should be time for questions and comments in those debates too. A private member's bill is no less important than a government bill. The House of Commons is the seat of our democracy, and we should ensure that every bill is properly debated. One big advantage of this approach would be that perhaps more members would be present in the House to listen to the speeches. That is something that we have observed during these debates.

Earlier, my colleagues had a fascinating exchange about hybrid Parliament. My proposal may align somewhat with the questions and the answers that were given. We agree that remote interventions should be a little more of an exception than they are right now. They should be allowed for family reasons, as my Liberal colleague pointed out, and that is very valid, or for health reasons, but with approval from the whip in order to limit their use. Hybrid Parliament does create some challenges, particularly in terms of interpretation resources. Not everyone is aware of that. Members would have to sit on the Board of Internal Economy to be more aware of it. It does indeed create significant challenges.

Now, confidence votes can be difficult to manage. We believe that confidence votes should happen in person in the House of Commons when they have to do with supply.

With respect to a minister tabling a motion that requires five, 10, 15, 20 or 25 members to oppose it in person, the Standing Orders currently allow that minister to make the request online. That makes no sense. This unfairness is utterly ridiculous. The minister should be here in person to do it.

If a motion to censure the Speaker of the House were ever to be tabled, it should be voted on by secret ballot, the same way the Speaker is elected, so that each member can vote according to their conscience.

We should also return to "yeas or nays," based on the old way of doing things orally, in person, so that motions or bills can be carried or lost on division. That could be very interesting.

That brings me to committees. We francophones struggle to have our interpretation needs met in this Parliament, and we want to ensure fairness among all elected members.

• (1030)

We are asking that the Standing Orders require an interpreter to be present when a committee's work is suspended for informal discussions. Francophone members have to listen to very long discussions in English where people are talking fast. They miss parts here and there, and then they are asked for their opinion. The sharpest ones will say that they cannot answer because they did not understand anything, because that forces people to translate the message. However, this should be something that is implicitly set out in the rules.

Still on the subject of the Standing Orders, when we get to clause-by-clause consideration of a bill, the deadline for submitting proposed amendments should be at least one day after the last witnesses have appeared. Under the current system, amendments are often requested when there is still one meeting with witnesses left, but members cannot take their testimony into account because they have already submitted their amendments. That is totally illogical. It seems to me that this is something that we should be able to agree upon fairly quickly.

Here is another point concerning clause-by-clause consideration in committee. There is a new trend of having the interpreters work remotely, and we do not like it at all. It is very important that there be no delays during these meetings so that we do not miss anything that is said. During committee meetings spent on clause-by-clause consideration, we would like to make sure that the interpreters are on site, in person, in the same committee room as the members.

As for panels of witnesses at committee meetings, we also suggest that there be a minimum of two witnesses per panel. Occasionally, a panel appearing for one hour has only one witness, whereas the next panel may have two, three or four witnesses. Sometimes, three of the witnesses were invited by our political party, leaving us with less time to put questions to the people we had invited.

Madam Speaker, I would appreciate a little order in the House.

That is a major inconvenience, and I think that every political party has the right to do its work—

Standing Orders and Procedure

• (1035)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the hon. members here on this side to lower their tones.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[Translation]

Yves Perron: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I was saying that it is important to schedule witnesses at different times for each political party so that we can ask them questions properly. These are people we invite to appear, and we prepare our questions accordingly. We often do not have enough time to ask them questions properly. This is also a very important point.

There is also the issue of members attending committee meetings remotely. Again, this should be allowed for health reasons or family reasons, but if a member is participating remotely, they should not be in a public place or in a car. We have seen all kinds of foolish and ridiculous situations. Yes, the hybrid Parliament absolutely needs to be tweaked.

We also suggest creating a Wednesday motion that would be voted on but not debated. The problem is that we often try to achieve unanimous consent or bring forward a motion that we want the House to vote on, but we get a “no”. That means the government cannot take a position on the issue. We are suggesting that a motion could be moved in advance. Each party would get a turn. Then the motion would be voted on, without debate, in the House either that day or the following week. This would force each political party to take a position. I think that would greatly improve our democracy.

Also, as I mentioned earlier, sometimes a bill comes back from the Senate and the House has to respond. We already went through a period where one political party decided to hold up a bill for over a year. That is unacceptable in a democracy. Debate should be limited so that we can respond to the Senate and move bills forward. We are here to legislate, to act on behalf of the people, not to obstruct things for partisan reasons, which is nonsense.

My last point will be a nice one. During oral question period, the speaking time is already very limited. It is 35 seconds, as someone said earlier. That is tight, and we do not have much time to make our argument. Furthermore, some of the questions from the government side are what I will politely refer to as softball questions. Those are planted questions where government members ask a minister to spend 30 seconds talking about how wonderful and clever the government is and how great it is doing in a specific area.

To me, that does not serve democracy. I think that the government has other opportunities to do that and that question period slots should be reserved for the opposition members, because our job is to ask the government questions about its work and then pass on that information to the public.

That covers all of my proposals. I look forward to my colleagues' questions.

[English]

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

Madam Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's thoughts on question period, 35 seconds versus a longer period of time. In the Manitoba legislature, we adopted what Ottawa had here, the 35 seconds. It enabled more participation and, at the same time, the questions. One just needs to look at the Manitoba record to see that people would litter a premier or a leader of the official opposition. People would go for four minutes with a question or give a four-minute answer. It really made a huge difference in the Manitoba legislature, where there was more accountability, or at least more participants.

Looking at the size of the House of Commons, I think the same principles would apply.

[Translation]

Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I am glad for the parliamentary secretary's open-mindedness, and I thank him for it.

That is kind of what we are proposing in terms of a question and answer formula on Fridays or weekday evenings. We would like to have 10-minute question and answer periods where the member would have time to ask their question and the minister would have the same time to respond. That would make for a constructive discussion where we could expand on our question and request an answer on a particular subject. This would allow for a more in-depth discussion of the issues, and I think that would be really good for democracy.

[English]

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his thoughtful comments. In his first comments, he proposed removing the prayer from our opening ceremonies of Parliament. I wanted to get more information or his thoughts on why he wanted to do that. Obviously, the founding peoples of this country, including the French, held a deep faith when they came to New France and to the beginnings of Canada. In fact, Centre Block is adorned with dozens of scriptures, for example, “Where there is no vision, the people perish”. I think that is a fair reflection of the responsibility of this place and the wisdom that is inspired from our traditions in scripture.

I would like to understand why he thinks it would be a good idea to abandon that heritage that we have in this country.

• (1040)

[Translation]

Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question. I agree I might be worthwhile to expand on that.

Standing Orders and Procedure

The intention is not to prevent anyone from praying. Some members are religious, and that is an individual matter. That is precisely the point. Faith is a personal matter. This Parliament serves all citizens of Canada, the provinces and Quebec. These people have different religions.

I am wondering how my colleague would feel if he entered a parliament where a prayer from a religion other than his own was said at the beginning of the day. That becomes rather counterproductive, but if we have a moment of personal reflection, then each person can use that time as they see fit. That will enable Parliament to respect religious pluralism as well as the principle of state secularism, which we support.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Madam Speaker, some of my colleague's suggestions make a lot of sense, including the one to reinstate standing orders that were amended on an exceptional basis during the last Parliament by a majority of members. A tradition once existed here in Parliament whereby changes to key standing orders were to be made by consensus. That consensus ended when the New Democrats and the Liberals agreed to amend standing orders that benefited the government party and disadvantaged the opposition parties. That must never happen again. I never understood the NDP's position on this. My colleague is suggesting that we revert to the former standing orders that put the party in power and the opposition parties on an equal footing.

Can my colleague tell me what he would really like to see happen on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs? What often happens is that we debate a motion here and then after it is referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, there is no follow-up. I think the time has come to change some of the standing orders.

Could my colleague share his wishes concerning the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs?

Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, the fact is, I want to ensure that nothing structural, no organization, no political group is able to block a debate. It is very unfortunate when that happens. If a matter goes before PROC and nothing comes of it, it is because the government does not want to change anything.

We are sending this message to the members of PROC. We have made proposals. These proposals are supposed to be studied by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I expect them to be debated. I expect new rules to be adopted, including one that restores the need for consensus when making fundamental changes to the Standing Orders.

[*English*]

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the need for the reform of the Standing Orders governing the House. What I want to raise today are not partisan concerns but rather structural ones, issues that go directly to fairness, accountability and the equal standing of members in the House.

At a time when we see democratic backsliding around the world, Canadians are rightly asking that we demonstrate responsive parliamentary procedures that keep up with the times and stay abreast of

the democratic innovations and best practices happening elsewhere. I will briefly touch on several Standing Orders that merit review, but I want to be clear at the outset that the most serious issue before us is the current restriction on who may trigger a recorded vote.

First, on private members' bills more broadly, I believe that PROC should examine whether the balance between the House and the Senate remains appropriate. We have seen cases where the Senate's ability to delay or block private members' bills has effectively nullified decisions taken by elected members of Parliament. Romeo Saganash's Bill C-262, an act respecting the UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is an example. Despite all odds, Romeo got it through the House of Commons, only to have it stalled by the Senate and to see it die on the Order Paper.

Jack Layton's climate change accountability act met the same fate. Rona Ambrose's bill requiring federally appointed judges to receive mandatory training in sexual assault law was stalled for two years. We have also seen extended debate on Senate amendments to private members' bills, which occurred with the Bloc Québécois's supply management bill.

Some of these issues, essentially and eventually, were resolved because they were brought back to the House, and some of them were adopted as government bills, but the Senate should never be allowed to stall a private member's bill in such a way that it dies on the Order Paper. That has happened to all parties. PROC should consider whether reasonable limits are required, both on the Senate's capacity to obstruct Private Members' Business and on how long the House debates Senate amendments to those bills. Private members' bills already operate under constrained time and opportunity. They should not face unlimited procedural delay in the red chamber.

Second, PROC should revisit the rules governing dissenting reports. At present, only the official opposition may table and present dissenting reports during Routine Proceedings. That limitation no longer reflects the composition of the House or the reality of the committee's work. All parties should have the ability to formally express dissent and table their dissenting report.

Standing Orders and Procedure

Relatedly, committees should be empowered to table bills following the completion of substantive studies. Committees frequently identify clear legislative gaps or solutions. Allowing committees to initiate legislation in these circumstances would strengthen Parliament's policy capacity and better connect study to action. Too often, committees do a study and come forward with recommendations that, frankly, just sit on a shelf without much action. We should actually empower the House of Commons and members of the committee to be able to move legislation forward.

Third, opposition days should not be scheduled on Wednesdays or Fridays. These are already shortened sitting days. Scheduling opposition business on those days diminishes its effectiveness as an accountability mechanism. PROC should examine whether this practice aligns with the original intent of supply days. I note that the NDP, given where we are, does not actually have opposition motion days, but I raise this because it is important for democracy.

Fourth, we should consider increasing the number of late shows or at least extending the period during which they can be scheduled. Late shows are one of the few procedural tools available to members to pursue answers when initial responses are inadequate. In an era of increasingly centralized messaging, this mechanism deserves strengthening, not contraction. This would allow us to probe questions more thoroughly and more deeply, heightening democratic accountability.

• (1045)

Fifth, the rules governing committee of the whole require updating. Committee of the whole should always last four hours, and participation should rotate in a manner similar to question period. Too often, these proceedings are dominated by government members, despite the fact that committee of the whole is fundamentally an accountability mechanism. PROC should restore balance to this forum.

I want to turn to the most pressing issue, which is the right of members to trigger a recorded vote. Under the current standing order, specifically Standing Order 45(1), only members of recognized parties may request that the yeas and nays be entered into the record. Members without a recognized party status may ask that a motion be carried on division, but they cannot insist on a recorded vote. This is not a long-standing parliamentary practice. It is actually a relatively recent change.

The restriction emerged during the House's transition to hybrid sittings in response to COVID-19. Similar language was adopted in 2021, extended in 2022, and made permanent in 2023, following PROC's recommendation that hybrid-related changes be entrenched. However, what is striking and concerning is that this restriction does not appear to have been fully examined as a stand-alone question to members' rights. It was bundled into a broader package of hybrid reforms, many of which were necessary, but their long-term implications deserve more granular scrutiny.

The practical effect of the current rule is stark. For example, an MP without recognized party status can introduce a private member's bill. They can win a spot in the Private Members' Business lottery, a process that is already governed by chance and scarcity, but when the House reaches the moment of decision, an MP without

recognized party status cannot compel a recorded vote on their own bill. From a procedural perspective, this is indefensible.

Private Members' Business is already one of the most constrained elements of House business. The lottery system means that members may wait years for an opportunity to have a bill debated. To deny a member the ability to trigger a vote after clearing all of those hurdles is not merely inefficient; it is inequitable. It creates a hierarchy among members that is not grounded in parliamentary principle. PROC should be particularly concerned about this because the ability to trigger a recorded vote is not a courtesy. It is a core accountability mechanism.

Recorded votes are how members place themselves on the record. They are how constituents assess their representation. They are how Parliament signals collective decisions. There is no democratic rationale for restricting that right to members of recognized parties only, nor is there compelling operational justification.

The House has now demonstrated over several years that recorded votes can be conducted efficiently in a hybrid environment. Whatever concerns may have existed during the early stages of the pandemic no longer apply. What remains is a rule that centralizes power in party structures and diminishes the voice and role of individual members. That should be a concern for all members of Parliament, particularly at a time when democracy is being undermined in so many places around the world.

PROC has a responsibility to ensure that standing orders do not erode the equality of members over time, particularly through incremental or convenience-based changes. In this case, the effect is clear: Some members are being denied the ability to force a vote and force the House to decide. If PROC is serious about protecting Private Members' Business, about fairness and procedure, and about the equal standing of all elected members, then this standing order must be revisited.

At a minimum, every member of Parliament should have the right to trigger a recorded vote on their own private member's bill. Anything less undermines the credibility of our procedures and the legitimacy of members to participate in a fair, democratic and transparent manner, no matter what political party they belong to.

• (1050)

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree completely with the member about it being important to return to voice voting. The system that was adopted disenfranchises members of Parliament and prevents them from participating in the vote determination process, where they would have their voice heard in a voice vote.

Standing Orders and Procedure

However, it was her House leader at the time, Peter Julian, who was instrumental in giving us what we have today. I do want to give the member some time to further make that point that the absence of voice voting, and having the Speaker simply look at the government whip for direction on how a vote will unfold, is unfair to members of Parliament.

Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear. What I am raising is the issue of a member of Parliament being able to trigger a recorded vote. That should be afforded to every single member here irrespective of their party standing or what party they belong to. It is our fundamental right to be treated equally, to have that right and to have our voice be counted and recorded.

I am not sure how this was advanced, as I did not sit at that table, but I do not think it is right. We have an opportunity to revisit it right now to correct that wrong.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on concurrence reports.

When we have an emergency debate, when the Speaker approves it, it comes after Government Orders, which has proven to be fairly successful. The member made reference to opposition days not falling on shorter sitting days but on longer sitting days, and we always have concurrence reports on those days, which limits the participation of members on government legislation. Would she support the idea of having debates on concurrence reports occur after Government Orders, in a similar fashion to emergency debates?

• (1055)

Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, those are valid questions to be considered, as are all the issues the members of the different parties have brought up. The purpose of this debate is to raise these issues and to have them examined thoroughly by PROC, so it can come back with a system that is fair and just. I urge the government members to consider the points I have raised, particularly around triggering a vote, but all the other points as well.

The way that the Senate is filibustering or stalling on private members' bills is just wrong. It has happened to the Conservatives, the NDP and the Bloc. It is supposed to provide a sober second thought, but deliberately stalling to obstruct is not sober second thought.

[*Translation*]

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I believe the subject of my question was addressed in previous questions.

Currently, under the Standing Orders, a minister who is online can make a proposal, but it takes 5, 10, 15, 20 or 25 members to block it. These opposition members must be in the chamber, and that change was approved by the majority. This is a first in history and it clearly puts the opposition at a disadvantage. I believe I heard my colleague mention that she was not sure how it came about at the time.

Is this change not a glaring example that any significant change should always be made by consensus and that that should be included in the Standing Orders?

[*English*]

Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I raised the issue of the points the different parties have raised, which are valid points for consideration. I think they should be given the time to be thoughtfully considered at PROC. It should invite the members of Parliament with different points of view to come forward so they can advance those perspectives and we can come back with standing orders that are effective, fair, just and equitable.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a serious problem for our democracy when private members' bills that are sometimes passed unanimously by this House have been held up indefinitely in the Senate. The Senate is supposed to provide that sober second thought, not sit on bills without providing any thought to them just to prevent them from passing.

In the last Parliament, we had the international human rights act, Bill C-281, brought forward by my colleague from what was then Northumberland—Peterborough South. That bill was indefinitely delayed, probably because the government did not want it to pass, even though its members were afraid to vote against it. It was passed unanimously in the House and blocked in the Senate. These were important human rights measures that many people were behind. Changes need to be made so that this does not happen again.

Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I agree. I think there needs to be restrictions put in place on the Senate. I cited some examples and there are many more. Randall Garrison's bill on transgender rights was another one that was stalled in the Senate. That should not be allowed.

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join this debate. I am passionate about the Standing Orders.

Before I get too deep into it, I am going to say that in Parliament, the Standing Orders are only as good as the chair occupants who preside over them and make rulings on them.

Madam Speaker, you were the best of the four occupants in the previous Parliament, so I am glad to have you back in the chair. I am very glad we have three new occupants who are doing a much better job than the previous ones. It is important, because the rulings of the Speaker under the Standing Orders are important. That is the good news: that we have become better in this chamber in terms of how it functions.

I am going to propose three changes to the Standing Orders. I will not get to all of them before QP, but I want to talk about voice voting and the standing order change that was made that eliminated voice votes. This came up with the previous speaker. I would like to reverse, permanently, the change that was made wherein now, at the conclusion of debate, the Speaker says, "If any member of a recognized political party would like the motion to carry, carry on division, or request a recorded division, will they stand?" Then the Speaker immediately looks for the government whip, and the government whip then declares how the vote will unfold.

When we return after QP, I will get into how it worked before and what we should return to.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

SURREY & WHITE ROCK BOARD OF TRADE

Ernie Klassen (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the newly formed Surrey & White Rock Board of Trade, created through the merger of the Surrey Board of Trade and the South Surrey & White Rock Chamber of Commerce. It is now one of the largest and most influential business organizations in Canada.

I also want to congratulate Joslyn Young, the CEO. Her leadership comes at a pivotal moment as this rapidly growing region continues to play a major role in B.C.'s economic future.

They are a vital advocate for small businesses and the tourism sector, industries that create jobs, support families and showcase our communities to the world. By working collaboratively with the government, these organizations help ensure local entrepreneurs have the certainty, support and opportunities they need to grow and succeed. Today, I encourage all members to stay closely connected with their local chambers and boards of trade.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada has shaped the world far and beyond our borders. One such contribution lives on in a phrase we still use every day: "the real McCoy".

As we mark Black History Month in Canada, we recognize the achievements of Elijah McCoy. Born in Canada to formerly enslaved parents, he achieved greatness while facing barriers and discrimination. Elijah McCoy transformed modern engineering by inventing automatic lubrication systems that revolutionized railways, ships, factories and industrial machinery.

Black History Month matters because it tells a full story of Canada, honouring excellence and acknowledging struggle and our shared Canadian history. As we reflect on this legacy today, let us strive for excellence by always asking for and being the real McCoy.

Happy Black History Month.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

DAIRY FARMERS OF CANADA

Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to recognize the hard work and dedication of Canada's outstanding dairy farmers.

Dairy farmers from across the country are in Ottawa this week for their annual dairy policy conference.

Every day, on thousands of farms across Canada, including many in my riding of Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, farmers work tirelessly to provide Canadians with safe, nutritious and high-quality milk. This work is about a lot more than just feeding our families. Canada's dairy sector strengthens Canada, our economy, the vitality of our rural regions and our food sovereignty.

Today, I want to sincerely thank Canada's dairy farmers for their commitment to their farms, their communities and our wonderful country.

* * *

[English]

COST OF FOOD

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week the Prime Minister visited a grocery store to announce his Canada groceries and essentials benefit. While this program would do absolutely nothing for the vast majority of Canadians, it is even receiving lukewarm reviews from Regina's anti-poverty advocates.

John Bailey, CEO of the Regina Food Bank, said that this rebate is not a magic bullet and that "it's not the only step that we're going to need to make sure we're really combating food insecurity." Denis Simard, executive director of Regina's Al Ritchie Community Association, said that he expects food insecurity to increase despite the rebate because of rising food inflation. Peter Gilmer of the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry said, "It's certainly not enough."

Those Canadians struggling to make ends meet should know this: Conservatives see them. Conservatives will fight for them. Together we can build a better Canada for all Canadians.

*Statements by Members***AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR**

Pauline Rochefort (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the vital role Canada's independent automotive repair sector plays in my riding of Nipissing—Timiskaming.

Independent service technicians and repair shops help keep vehicles safe, reliable and on the road. For households already working hard to make ends meet, a vehicle out of service for days can mean missed shifts and lost income. Local, highly skilled repair businesses, including those serving rural and northern communities like Nipissing—Timiskaming, help Canadians get back behind the wheel quickly and affordably.

I had the opportunity to meet with members of the Automotive Industries Association of Canada, who spoke about the importance of fair access to vehicle repair information and tools. Strong progress on the right to repair helps ensure consumers continue to have choice, affordability and timely repairs, especially as vehicles become more complex. We welcome them to Ottawa.

* * *

● (1105)

GLENN HALL

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, earlier this year, one of hockey's most legendary goaltenders passed away. Glenn Hall was a true prairie boy, and throughout his life abided by the values of hard work, humility and determination. He is survived by his children, grandchildren and many friends.

In the 1955 season, Glenn made his NHL debut, earning the title "Rookie of the Year". In 1961, he won the Stanley Cup, earning the nickname "Mr. Goalie". In 1967, he earned the Conn Smythe Trophy, a rare feat for a player whose team did not win the Stanley Cup. A three-time Vezina Trophy winner, Glenn changed the game of hockey forever through his butterfly style of goaltending. In 2017, he was honoured as one of the 100 greatest NHL players of all time.

A farmer, avid hunter and sport shooter, Glenn was a pillar of the Stony Plain and area community. Our local arena is even named in his honour. He will be sorely missed, and his impact on the sport of hockey and the community of Stony Plain will not be forgotten.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today, we celebrate an interpreter whose voice will be instantly recognizable to members of the House. Over his 30-year career, Peter Douglas has also been the voice of francophone leaders for 10 different leaders' debates and interpreted numerous budgets and Speeches from the Throne.

As a professor of conference interpreting at the University of Ottawa since 2007, he has transmitted his vast expertise to numerous cohorts of young interpreters who themselves now work on the Hill. A lawyer by training, Peter also interprets at the Supreme Court of Canada.

Peter will be greatly missed, but we know he is eager to spend more time with his beloved dog Piper and at the curling rink. I wish him a happy retirement.

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[Translation]

SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, in this Suicide Prevention Week, I would be remiss if I did not mention my son David, who left us on February 10, 2025. He was 28 years old.

His case is not unique. Every year in Quebec, more than 1,000 people choose to take their lives. There are nearly 4,000 hospitalizations for attempted suicide. I would like to say to all their loved ones that my family and I share their grief, their distress, their anger, and above all, the great void left by the suicide of a loved one.

Today, I want to send a message to the health care system that mental health issues—those that do not bleed, those that eat away at you from the inside—should be recognized in the same way as a broken leg or cancer. The resources and energy we devote to treating the body should also be used to help people who are suffering inside, before their pain reaches a terminal stage. In an emergency, we would not let a person bleed to death by putting them on a six-month waiting list for a transfusion, so why do we let patients with injuries that can be as fatal as cancer suffer in silence?

This is for my son David, for our family, for all his friends, for those who suffer and their loved ones.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, February is Black History Month, and this year marks the 35th annual edition in Quebec. This year's theme, "Together, Let's Raise Our Voices", gives us the perfect opportunity to reflect on Quebec's openness and ability to live together in communal harmony, as well as the contributions made by Quebecers from Black communities.

As in past years, everyone is invited to attend a series of events showcasing the history, culture, talent and pride of Black people in Quebec. While the month is primarily dedicated to commemoration, it is also an opportunity to imagine our shared future together in a welcoming and diverse Quebec.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I invite everyone to join the activities, from Montreal to Mauricie to the north shore. I wish everyone a happy Black History Month.

• (1110)

[English]

PREVENTATIVE HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Kanata, Lib.): Madam Speaker, February is Preventative Health Awareness Month, a reminder that the best health care often starts long before someone visits the hospital. Preventative care saves lives. Whether it is routine screenings, mental health supports, physical activity or eating well, early action helps us stay healthier longer.

This week, I attended an event in Kanata to help kick off Preventative Health Awareness Month. Originally started by Margaret Wallis-Duffy, this initiative has grown into a national movement. In my community, I see first-hand how preventative health initiatives, from seniors fitness classes like those led by Susan Kunststadt to community resource centres, help people remain active and connected.

This month, I encourage Canadians to take one small step: book that appointment, choose one healthy habit to start, and make prevention part of their plan.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Clifford Small (Central Newfoundland, CPC): Madam Speaker, on January 23, 22-year-old Jamal Adem Omer assaulted a Royal Newfoundland Constabulary officer and a civilian employee outside police headquarters in St. John's. He faces charges of aggravated assault, assaulting a police officer, uttering threats, resisting arrest and attempting to disarm an officer.

Both victims were injured and required medical attention. The civilian who was injured was a very good friend of mine. Members would be devastated if they saw the pictures.

Officers and staff at RNC headquarters are devastated that this happened on their own property. They want a safe and secure workplace where police and civilian staff can perform their duties without fear and where they can drop off and pick up their kids at the on-site day care knowing they are safe.

Criminals know the law is on their side. The assault is the result of 10 years of the government's mismanagement of the judicial system. The government must listen to those on the front lines and support our police officers, strengthen protections—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

* * *

FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Aslam Rana (Hamilton Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to highlight how much federal funding has been coming to my riding of Hamilton Centre since we were elected.

We delivered \$12.2 million to Sacajawea Non-Profit Housing to support indigenous people facing homelessness. We invested roughly \$13 million to build 82 affordable units to tackle the homelessness crisis head-on.

Statements by Members

In budget 2025, we committed \$25 million to the downtown Hamilton YMCA to expand mental health and housing supports for our most vulnerable. We also announced \$950,000 to help expand the Art Gallery of Hamilton.

That is not all. We provided \$100,000 in funding for the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, \$15,000 for the Boys and Girls Club and \$288,000 for the Hamilton Conservation Authority.

While the opposition talks, delays and divides, the government delivers.

* * *

JUSTICE

Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, in 2018, Saskatchewan was rocked by the news of 16 tragic deaths in the Humboldt Broncos bus tragedy. Today we learned that the deportation process for the truck driver responsible may finally be ending, as his last bid to stay in Canada has been rejected, and the wheels of deportation are now in motion.

Our hearts remain with the families and loved ones of the 16 victims who lost their lives and the many more who were injured in this horrific accident. This is exactly why Conservatives tabled amendments to Bill C-12 last fall: to bar individuals convicted of serious crimes from exploiting asylum pathways and avoiding deportations.

It is outrageous that a non-citizen charged with or convicted of a serious crime could even attempt to avoid removal using the many delay tactics provided by the Liberal government. Falsely claiming refugee status or using other procedural tricks is an insult to the victims of these crimes.

Sadly, our reforms were rejected by the Liberals. It is just another slap in the face of everyday Canadians by the Prime Minister.

Conservatives stand ready to work with the government to close these loopholes and bring true justice to the victims of crime in Canada.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

WOMEN'S SPORTS

Marie-Gabrielle Ménard (Hochelaga—Rosemont-Est, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in less than three hours, the opening ceremonies of the Milano Cortina Olympic Games may steal the show. We know how talented the Italians are at putting on a show. I want to congratulate the athletes of the Canadian delegation, who will soon be bringing us many emotional moments.

Do my colleagues know that, since December, people have been able to watch women's sports in Hochelaga? In recognition of that, I am awarding a double gold medal to two female entrepreneurs, Catherine D. Lapointe and Caroline Côté. Together, they created a unique place, Le Nadia, in honour of Olympic champion Nadia Comaneci. Le Nadia is a space dedicated to broadcasting and celebrating women's sports. I am delighted to hear people call out the names Ann-Renée Desbiens, Marie-Philip Poulin, Valérie Maltais and Laurie Blouin.

There is nothing quite like sports to stoke the flames of our Canadian pride, particularly in a match against the United States. Go, Team Canada, go!

* * *

• (1115)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Billy Morin (Edmonton Northwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Edmonton Northwest, too many warehouses, retail spaces and industrial yards sit empty as Canadians wait for the economy to get better.

Stats Canada confirmed that Canada lost 25,000 jobs last month. However, one great organization in my riding is a champion for change. Tribal Chiefs Employment and Training Services, led by executive director Eva John-Gladue, has been a great example of how Albertans in public and private sectors work together to create pathways of prosperity in oil, gas, trades and beyond.

Eva has worked for over 25 years with industry to build healthy families by creating innovative partnerships in culture, housing, sports and more. She and her industry partners have connected thousands of indigenous workers with the training and work placements they need to be self-sufficient.

Recently, 52,000 private sector jobs have been lost across Canada. The government needs to listen to more leaders like Eva, to transform the way it thinks so as to help our economy reach its full potential.

* * *

DEREK RUTTAN

Peter Fragiskatos (London Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for generations, the people of London, Ontario, have counted on The London Free Press, our daily paper, to capture their hopes, their aspirations, their cares, their concerns and their worries for the future.

This is true of its journalists, and it is true of its photographers. Derek Ruttan was an extraordinary talent. He passed away at the

age of 60 in late January. He will be remembered as a family man. He will be remembered as someone who constantly gave back to the community, especially through his work. He was recognized nationally through awards. He will be, of course, missed by his colleagues, by his community and especially by his adoring wife, Sarah, and his sons Darcy and Shayne.

On a personal note, I knew Derek. He was a truly valued member of London whose talent came through in every photograph he took. So often his photos were on the front page of our paper. He will be deeply missed by all Londoners.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7. He promised to build this country, but today we are seeing that those policies are just not working. January saw a major drop in private sector employment of over 50,000 workers, a drop of 28,000 in the manufacturing sector alone. The government is presiding over a deepening employment crisis as more people are dropping out of the workforce.

When will Liberals listen to the constructive solutions we have put forward and recognize that what they are doing is not working?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, total employment is up, in fact, by 134,000 jobs over the past year. Most of those jobs are in the private sector. We see a rate of inflation of 2.4%, which is well within the Bank of Canada's guideline, and also an unemployment rate that is now down to 6.5%, but we do not rest on that.

There is anxiety in Canada, but there is also resilience that defines this country and defines its people. What that resilience means is that there is an expectation that we work together.

Will the Conservatives work with us to pass budget 2025, measures that include benefits for the member's community and mine?

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we will work to advance solutions that work, and we will oppose what is not working.

I am looking at the employment numbers. Private sector employment fell by over 50,000 in the last month. Young people overwhelmingly report that they are worse off than their parents' generation because they cannot find jobs and they cannot afford homes.

Canadians are looking for hope. They are looking for real solutions. That starts with the government recognizing that what it is doing is not working.

When will the government come to that recognition?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians are looking for hope, but they are also looking for people to work together in the House of Commons to support them at this time, in the short term and in the long term.

In the short term, what this means is, and we saw it, in fact, the spirit of collaboration that helped to bring about Bill C-19. Bill C-19, of course, is the Canada groceries and essentials benefit that will provide up to \$1,900 for a family of four. For the long term, we can work together to ensure the budget passes. Spending is there for defence, which will create tens of thousands of jobs, and for infrastructure, to build this country up, among other things.

Will the Conservatives help us?

• (1120)

[Translation]

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, young people from Quebec and Canada are not asking for much right now. What they want is a real job so that they can get a start in life, but what are they seeing?

In January, Canada lost 28,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector. Investments are leaving the country. Meanwhile, the only job growth is coming from more bureaucracy, not from real jobs in the real economy. Young people are stuck with precarious jobs, or no job at all, while plants are closing in Baie-Comeau and across Canada.

Does the Prime Minister realize that the current economy is not creating the jobs that young people need to get a start in life?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since our colleague from Quebec is talking about employment statistics, I am sure he must have noticed that we have created a large number of jobs in Quebec and that Quebec now has the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

However, we also recognize that the industrial sectors that are directly threatened by the U.S. tariffs are being hit hard. That is why, yesterday, we announced a new strategy for the auto industry, so that we can increase our auto production capacity in Canada.

Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals are pretty proud of the work they have done, but 52,000 private sector jobs have been lost in the past year. After years of anti-development legislation, closed markets and investment bolting to the United States, Canada is not in a good position. Every week, real workers are losing their jobs, and it is mainly our young people who are being told to wait and make sacrifices, yet again.

The Conservatives have proposed a clear path forward: Build here, protect our jobs and free up our resources.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister work with the Conservatives to create real jobs here for our young people and defend Canada's economic sovereignty?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the strategy for addressing these issues is set out in Bill C-15. It is set out in the budget. That is our plan. It is a very broad and comprehensive plan, with many measures.

Will our Conservative colleagues do what needs to be done and support us so that we can pass the budget as quickly as possible?

* * *

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, last night the industry minister said the quiet thing out loud. When pressed on how many Canadian vehicles the Liberals' EV rebate will apply to, she admitted it is only one. The vast majority of these EV rebates will go to foreign car manufacturers, including in Donald Trump's America. He is the guy who is tariffing our autos, put 5,000 auto workers out of work and closed two plants.

Rather than rewarding Donald Trump's America, why not take the tax off all Canadian-manufactured vehicles to preserve Canadian jobs and benefit all Canadian auto workers?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday was a great day as we stood on the shop floor of an auto manufacturer and talked about how we are not only going to keep working to support building vehicles here in Canada but also are going to make EVs more affordable and more available for Canadians. We are doing the hard work.

We are standing to support auto workers in our country because we know that we have the best industry in the world. Why will the member not stand and cheer along with them?

Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the last time the Liberals ran EV rebates, between 2019 and 2025, 99% of the rebates went to foreign-made vehicles, including in Donald Trump's United States. While we are in the middle of a trade war and Donald Trump is tariffing our vehicles at 10%, leading to the closure of two manufacturing plants and the layoff of thousands of workers, Donald Trump's buy American program is going to benefit from Canadians' buying American EVs, subsidized by Canadian taxpayers. This is outrageous.

Oral Questions

It is not a good day for Canadian auto workers. A good day would be if the Liberals were to adopt our plan to take the taxes off autos.

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, this is another example of how Conservatives stand in the land of “no” and of holding us back from the economy of the future.

When we are talking about the rebates, let us be clear: The rebates are actually designed in such a way as to favour made in Canada. We are going to invest in the companies that invest in us.

Not only is there a specific part of the policy where, like I said, the rebates support made in Canada but, beyond that, we are also incentivizing investments in building more of those vehicles right here at home, because that is the future of the auto industry and we have the best auto workers.

* * *

[Translation]

PENSIONERS

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, there are pensioners who have not been receiving their OAS for nine months or have been receiving the incorrect amount because of the Cúram software in Ottawa.

Ten days ago, when we asked the government about it, we were told that we were fearmongering. The next day, the problem persisted, but just for 30 or so cases. In a dramatic turn of events, yesterday, in committee, the minister revealed that 85,000 people were affected.

We are talking about 85,000 people. How many more will it take before the Liberals stop sweeping the problem under the rug?

• (1125)

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the minister said, the department is working as quickly as possible to resolve these problems and to ensure that the staff has the tools required to deliver benefits effectively.

More than seven million seniors are now promptly and accurately receiving their benefits. We are modernizing this decades-old system to improve benefits payment for all seniors in the years to come.

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, there are pensioners who are having problems with their OAS benefits and these are the answers they are getting.

The Liberals went from 30 cases at one point about 10 days ago to 85,000 cases yesterday. The worst cost overrun of the Cúram software is the human cost. Even worse than that is the fact that just yesterday, when 85,000 people were affected by the software, the Liberals were still treating the matter as if it were a trivial, exceptional case. When 85,000 people fall through the cracks of the system, that is a serious problem.

When will the Liberals fix this?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Madam Speaker, this involves a major update to a system that is more than 60 years old.

The minister's office has contacted the Bloc Québécois member to get the names of the constituents who urgently need help so we can resolve this issue. We have yet to hear back from the member regarding the names of those constituents.

The department will continue to work to deal with these cases while continuing to modernize the system to ensure that seniors receive the benefits they need—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon.

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Madam Speaker, public servants have been telling the government since June that the Cúram software is causing problems with people's OAS benefits. Obviously, no one on the Liberal side did anything about it because, just 10 days ago, they were saying that there was no problem and that this was just fearmongering.

Suddenly, yesterday, they realized that 85,000 pensioners were affected by the malfunction. The Liberals have just clued in, eight months after they were told there was a problem.

Why can this government never take responsibility before it is too late?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is not true.

There is an adjustment period when implementing a new benefit delivery platform. The department is working hard to ensure that employees have the tools they need to become acquainted with the new system and deliver benefits effectively. The speed of service is already improving as employees become more familiar with the system.

If anyone is having problems with their benefits, I would urge them to contact Service Canada.

* * *

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Lianne Rood (Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, auto workers in Ontario are getting pink slips; thousands of jobs are gone at CAMI, Stellantis, GM Oshawa and others. Now the Prime Minister is forcing taxpayers to subsidize over two billion dollars' worth of foreign EVs. Canadians deserve better than to be sold out to the Americans.

Instead of handing billions of dollars in subsidies to American-made EVs and killing Canadian jobs, will the Liberals co-operate with Conservatives and adopt our plan to remove the tax from Canadian-made cars?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday the government announced its new auto industry strategy. It is a comprehensive strategy that will invest in companies that invest in Canada. We will continue to protect Canadian production of automobiles, and we firmly believe that the future of the industry is in electrical vehicles. There will be the assembly of electrical vehicles in Canada.

Lianne Rood (Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me clarify this and put it clearly for Canadians: Canadian auto workers are losing thousands of jobs, and our domestic production is collapsing, while the Liberals are forcing Canadian taxpayers to subsidize foreign-made electric vehicles. This includes the Jeep Compass EV, which should have brought jobs right here to Ontario.

When will the Liberals stop their betrayal and adopt our plan to remove the tax on Canadian-made cars to save jobs here at home?

• (1130)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, we have the best auto workers in the world right here in Canada. We are there to support them, and we are facing unjustified tariffs from the United States. The Conservatives do not seem to ever like to talk about that, but that is actually what our auto industry is facing, and that is why we have specific programs we are putting in place to support our workers in difficult times.

Beyond that, we are building for the future, and that is what the Conservatives never do. We are supporting our auto workers. We were there side by side with auto workers when we made this announcement, and we are going to be with them.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, President Trump slapped unjustified tariffs on Canadian autos, and thousands of Ontarians were put out of work as a result. Canadians need a plan that supports Canadian manufacturing and Canadian jobs. Only one Canadian vehicle qualifies for the Liberal EV subsidy, and that does not meet the moment.

Will the government work with Conservatives, adopt our plan and take the tax off Canadian-made autos to support Canadian auto manufacturing?

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians understand that we are facing an unprecedented time. It is a rupture. We are facing unjustified tariffs from the United States, which the Conservatives never talk about. However, we understand the impact on our workers. In fact, the auto strategy announced yesterday included supports for our auto workers, including things like work-sharing, because we understand their needs and are there by their side.

We are there not only for this tough time; we are also there to build for the future, to make sure workers have the jobs of the future. We are going to keep working for a strong auto industry. Why will the Conservatives not?

Oral Questions

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me say it a little louder for the minister: We are talking about it, about unjustified tariffs coming from the Trump administration. What we want from the minister and from the government is a plan that actually supports Canadian auto manufacturing. The Liberals' plan is going to help with only one Canadian production line. We want to take the tax off all Canadian-made autos.

Why do the Liberals want to subsidize President Trump's manufacturing strategy instead of supporting the hard-working men and women in Ontario's manufacturing?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, finally our friends from the other side acknowledge and recognize that the issues with the auto industry come from the U.S. tariffs. It is the first time I hear this from their side. It is about time.

Besides that, as I said, we are going to invest in companies that invest in Canada, in those that commit to Canada. By the way, currently, the two largest auto manufacturers in Canada are Toyota and Honda, and they remain fully committed to operating here.

Kathy Borrelli (Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday's announcement of a new national automotive strategy was nothing more than a slap in the face to Windsor's auto workers. The Prime Minister proudly announced that Canadians will now be subsidizing American-made vehicles.

Why do the Liberals think that it is better to subsidize foreign-made vehicles rather than to adopt the Conservative plan to cut the tax on cars made in Windsor, in Canada?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not know how to say this with parliamentary decorum, but that is just not true.

Yesterday's announcement confirms our commitment to our industry, and it confirms our assistance to companies that invest in Canada. There are very large companies that have currently committed to investing in Canada and will continue to do so. In order to promote that investment, that is what we announced yesterday, and it will work very well if—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore has the floor.

Oral Questions

Kathy Borrelli (Windsor—Tecumseh—Lakeshore, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am not sure if the member across the aisle understands my question. Five thousand Canadian auto workers lost their job. The government's response is to hand out subsidies for American-built electric vehicles.

I am imploring the member across the aisle to answer the question: Instead of subsidizing foreign-made cars and killing Canadian auto jobs, will the Liberals adopt our Conservative plan to take the tax off cars made in Canada?

• (1135)

Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Lib.): Madam Speaker, time and time again what we hear from the other side is that they actually have no plan.

Yesterday we presented a comprehensive auto strategy. It will help to reduce our emissions. It will help to support Canadians who want to buy EVs. The rebates specifically take into account a made-in-Canada component. There is also a component to support our auto workers in this time when they are facing the brunt of the unjustified tariffs from the United States.

More than that, we are standing side by side with the workers in our auto industry to build the industry for the future. Why will the Conservatives not?

Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, since 2016, auto production in Canada has collapsed from 2.3 million vehicles to just 1.2 million vehicles. We have lost over 5,000 auto jobs, including thousands in Oshawa and Brampton. Now the Liberals want to spend up to \$2.3 billion in taxpayer money subsidizing foreign-made electric vehicles, many built in the United States, while Canadian plants sit idle.

Instead of supporting manufacturing elsewhere, will the Liberals adopt our Conservative plan to take the tax off Canadian-made vehicles?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives just do not get it. We are positioning Canada to be a global leader. It is important that the Conservative Party members recognize the need for Canada to act. One of the ways they can do that is to stop the filibustering on our budget implementation bill. If they want to deliver something for Canadians today, the best thing they can do is stand in their place—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Order, please, so the hon. member can answer and we can go through question period.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let me give a clear message: If Conservatives want to help Canadians, it is time to stop filibustering and to allow the budget—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Rimouski—La Matapédia.

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, the scientific community is concerned. The Liberals are cutting 20 jobs in my riding at the Maurice Lamontagne Institute in Mont-Joli, a major regional hub for science and a jewel of oceanography research.

This alarming loss of expertise is jeopardizing the scientific and economic development of our regions. It is also reducing Fisheries and Oceans Canada's research capacity and ability to act on evidence-based data, which is already a serious problem at the department.

Can we really afford to pinch a few pennies by cutting back on science?

[*English*]

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an important issue. Science has played an integral role in the building up of agriculture and agri-food in this country, and it is going to continue.

I had the opportunity to meet with the president of the University of Saskatchewan, just this week. I was in Laval, at the university there, as well. We had good discussions. It is important that we move forward with a revised science program, and we will continue to do that.

[*Translation*]

Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski—La Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, the cuts to science keep mounting. On top of the 20 positions that were cut at the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, more than 1,000 employees across Canada are being affected by other cuts to agricultural research. The agricultural research centre in Quebec City is being shut down after nearly 60 years of operation. The unions are calling out this major loss of expertise. Honestly, the situation reminds us of the how the Harper government once muzzled science.

In economic times that demand reinvention and economic stimulation, how can the Liberals possibly make cuts to science?

[*English*]

Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are spending less to invest more in science in this country. Science is extremely important. It is extremely important for trade. We are maintaining our presence in every single province, and we remain the largest agriculture institution in this country. By streamlining research and development, we can build a strong, resilient future for science.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, this Prime Minister wanted to dazzle Canadians with his grand promises to build on a scale never before seen in Canada, but it was all just an illusion. What has he really accomplished?

He promised an agreement with President Trump, but tariffs have increased. He promised homes, but he created offices for civil servants. He promised to accelerate major projects, but there is not a single shovel in the ground. The results are disappointing. Canada lost 28,000 manufacturing jobs in January. Workers in small and medium-sized businesses in the regions are the ones paying the price.

Instead of giving up, will this Prime Minister work with the Conservatives to restore Canadian sovereignty?

• (1140)

[English]

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Madam Speaker, as my colleague noted earlier, overall employment has been up over the past 12 months and wages continue to rise. These are proof points of an economic plan that is in action, but this is not over.

The government brought forward this fall our economic plan in our budget, Bill C-15, which is before the House. It would create tens of thousands of jobs, jobs in the skilled trades. It would bring forward tax cuts that would grow our economy and increase investment. It would create major new investments in housing, in infrastructure, and in some of the largest projects this country has seen.

When will the Conservatives put those small differences aside, start cheering for Canada—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière.

Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, we see their plan. We know how they plan to get Bill C-15 adopted. They are the ones who proposed the deadline. They are the ones who proposed the schedule and they are accusing us of obstruction. That is ridiculous.

What has really happened since they got here? Some \$58 billion in investments have left Canada for the United States, including the Brookfield headquarters. What a coincidence. Some 51,000 manufacturing jobs were lost last year.

Will the Prime Minister support our bill on Canadian sovereignty to reward those who build our economy, instead of remaining passive and making things up while our jobs are moving to the United States?

Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the short answer is no. We will not support our colleagues' motion. At least that is clear.

The Canadian economy is going through an extremely complex period triggered by the U.S. tariffs and trade war.

The Canadian economy is showing incredible resilience. The same problems exist around the world and the Canadian economy has shown that it has the capacity to adapt to these major geopolitical changes. That is what we are doing. To reach our goal more effectively, we need the budget, so let us work together—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata.

Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud—Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomiq—Témiscouata, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister promised to fix all our issues, but thousands of Canadians are still struggling to make ends meet. In January, Canada lost 25,000 jobs. In addition, since the start of his mandate, \$58 billion has fled to the United States. That is unacceptable.

The Prime Minister is in luck. We, the Conservatives, have proposed a Canadian sovereignty act to protect our industries and reduce our dependence on the United States. Will the Prime Minister finally work with us to protect our Canadian sovereignty in the face of American threats?

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for a party that does not believe in climate change, it does a lot of recycling. We hear it every day here in the House.

Our plan to build is working. Yesterday, we introduced a bill to strengthen Build Canada Homes, which will fast-track the construction of housing across Canada. We will do that by stimulating the steel, aluminum and lumber sectors, which are seeing tough times right now, by protecting jobs, and by providing Canadians with housing that meets their needs and budgets.

Our plan is supported by municipalities, developers and grassroots organizations. We hope the Conservatives will support it.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, the forestry sector has been under attack by unjustified U.S. tariffs since October. In January, the manufacturing sector was hit hard by the loss of 28,000 jobs.

Instead of working to resolve U.S. tariffs and support Canadian businesses, the Prime Minister prefers to buy Chinese cars.

Can the Prime Minister work with the Conservatives, address the real issues and stand up for forestry workers?

Oral Questions

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there now seems to be a consensus in the House that we are in the middle of a trade war and that the tariffs imposed by the United States on our softwood lumber are completely unjustified.

We announced \$2.5 billion in support for forestry companies and workers, delivered through a single window. This includes funds for diversification and innovation, while implementing the buy Canadian policy to increase domestic demand in Canada and thereby strengthen the forestry sector. We also have a task force developing recommendations.

• (1145)

Jason Groleau (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, if that is the number one issue, why is he not dealing with it?

The United States is, and always will be, our largest trading partner. Everyone knows that. On January 13, 346 forestry workers at the Domtar plant in Baie-Comeau lost their jobs.

When will the Prime Minister start working with the Conservatives and stand up for workers in regions like Beauce?

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a little surprised by my colleague's comments, because it is the Conservatives who are blocking the \$2.5 billion in support that our government has budgeted for the forestry sector.

Will the Conservatives help us pass the budget to support our forestry workers?

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when he addressed the world at Davos last month, the Prime Minister talked about the gap between rhetoric and reality. That gap is alive and well on the Conservative side of the aisle. The rhetoric is encouraging, with lots of talk of collaboration and working together, but the reality does not always match Conservative words. Canadians want to know if the Conservatives will put country above party, or if they will block important legislation, including the budget implementation act.

Can the parliamentary secretary let Canadians know what important measures would be blocked by the Conservative Party?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our colleague served his community as mayor. He is now fighting for his constituents in the House of Commons. We have an opportunity to come together and do the very same for all our constituents.

What will the Conservatives do? Will they get behind budget 2025? It is a landmark budget that invests in housing, in defence, and in infrastructure to build this country up and put in place the foundation for diversifying our trade strategy so we can ensure prosperity for current and future generations.

Will the Conservatives obstruct and play political games, or will they work with us on behalf of Canadians? It is their choice.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadian workers are being pumelled. There were 25,000 net jobs lost in January, including 52,000 in the private sector. These numbers are not outliers. After 10 years of the Liberals, Canada has seen the slowest GDP growth in the G7, a meagre 0.5% compared to more than 20% growth in the United States.

In the face of these numbers, will the Liberals finally accept responsibility for a decade of economic failure?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives need a reality check. We have had over 100,000 new jobs since the new Prime Minister was elected last year. We are focused on building Canada strong with an economy that will improve the conditions in all regions of the country. That means looking at major projects and looking at investments.

We have a Prime Minister who is aggressively looking at exploring additional opportunities for exports. We have a Prime Minister who is literally bringing in billions of dollars in foreign investment. It is time that the Conservative Party—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for St. Albert—Sturgeon River.

Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Sturgeon River, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister promised a strong economy. He delivered stagnant growth, including negative growth in the first two quarters of 2025. The Prime Minister promised to build big, build bold and build now, but not a single project has been approved. Meanwhile, 25,000 Canadians are out of work in January alone. We have had enough of the rhetoric and enough of the empty promises.

When will the Liberals come up with a real plan to get Canadians back to work?

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member opposite. We have had enough of the rhetoric. The Conservative Party's interest, generally, is in the Conservative Party. It is time that it starts thinking about Canadians.

When we talk about investments, members can think about the first five major projects, which is over \$60 billion of investment. Every region of the nation is going to benefit because we have a Prime Minister and a government that works for Canadians day in and day out. I urge the Conservative Party of Canada to get outside.

Oral Questions

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, in January the Canadian economy lost 25,000 jobs, while even more unemployed Canadians have given up looking for one. Job loss at a time of food and housing unaffordability is catastrophic. The Prime Minister promised the best economy in the G7, but under his watch, Canadians have the highest food inflation, the most expensive housing, the lowest per-capita GDP growth and \$58 billion in capital flight to the United States.

When will the government repeal the taxes and regulations that kill jobs and make life more expensive?

• (1150)

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the member's own home province of Alberta, unemployment has decreased this past month and the participation rate has actually climbed. That is part of the proof of the hard work that the government is doing with its solid and strategic economic plan for the country.

We cannot move forward as a country unless we have the opposition's support to pass that economic plan, to invest in the jobs that we need, to build the projects that are going to bring our nation together and to fight off the unjust tariffs and the trade war that we are in. The opposition needs to join team Canada, get on board and pass our budget.

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday I talked to a mortgage broker in Calgary who said her clients are increasingly worried about their jobs and that layoffs are killing home deals. She said that construction and energy workers are among the most affected.

The Prime Minister said that we are going to be an energy superpower and claimed that the Liberals are going to build over half a million homes per year. If that is so, why are energy and construction workers the ones losing their jobs?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.): Madam Speaker, in stark contrast with the Leader of the Opposition, our Prime Minister is doing what he did in Davos, showing what real leadership looks like. In Davos, the Prime Minister said, "Middle powers must act together because if we're not at the table, we're on the menu."

Thanks to our Prime Minister, Canada is at the table. We are securing multi-billion dollar deals with many different countries, including Indonesia and China.

Do members know what this is going to do for Canada? This is going to double exports. It is going to create more jobs. It is going to make life more affordable and support our local businesses right here in our country. That is real leadership.

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada has lost over 5,000 automotive jobs and 32 paper mills have shut down. In my riding, three facilities are shutting down. As well, 51,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in the year since the Prime Minister took charge.

He said he was going to "build, baby, build" but the only thing he has built is the highest unemployment rate for youth we have seen in a generation.

Will the Prime Minister do what he promised, build at a scale we have not seen in generations and work with Conservatives to restore Canada's sovereignty in the face of American threats?

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have a plan to build strong across the country, including in the forestry sector. We are going to use our wood for things like Maisons Canada and the buy Canadian policy. For that, we need to be able to implement the budget we presented. We need co-operation.

When are the Conservatives going to get on board to implement the build Canada strong program?

Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC): Madam Speaker, where is the urgency? There were 67,000 jobs lost in Ontario last month. Young people cannot find work. Canadians are worried about paying their mortgage and affording groceries.

Will the Prime Minister do what he promised, which is to build at scales we have not seen in generations and work with Conservatives to restore our sovereignty in the face of these American threats?

Caroline Desrochers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is exactly what we are doing. We are building Canada strong. We are building more and more housing. We are building at a speed never seen before. Yesterday, we introduced in the House the bill to enact the build Canada homes act.

Day after day, the Conservatives are in the House talking about affordability, yet they are blocking everything. I am sure Canadians and Conservative ridings would like to see, going forward, the proper measures we are putting in place to put more food on the table.

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians are being crushed by the Prime Minister's failure to get the economy moving again.

StatsCan confirmed that Canada lost 52,000 private sector jobs last month, including 28,000 manufacturing jobs, a sector Manitoba families rely on, from aerospace in Winnipeg to value-added ag and resource processing across our province. Since the Prime Minister took office, \$58 billion in investment has fled to the U.S., while the only job growth here has come from hiring more bureaucrats.

Will the Prime Minister explain why his rhetoric about building and growing the economy means lost jobs for Manitoba families?

Oral Questions

● (1155)

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unemployment is down to 6.5%. Inflation is within the Bank of Canada guidelines. We have a AAA credit rating and record foreign direct investment. In fact, we are building up the country for the success of current and future generations.

I am going to go off the script for a moment. He is on it, and the previous member was on it. They both care about defence. I know that about these members. Southwestern Ontario, my region, is an anchor of the defence sector in Canada. We can all bring jobs to our communities and sustain them by supporting this budget, because it is a landmark budget for defence.

What will the member do, and what does he have to say to that?

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, these members want to talk about defending our veterans. They have just closed the veterans affairs office in Brandon and moved it out to CFB Shilo, so I think that is a bit rich coming from the member.

Manitoba workers want to build. That is what the question was about. Whether it is critical minerals, forestry or manufacturing, uncompetitive Liberal laws have killed the jobs market. While plants are cutting shifts and communities worry about their future, the Prime Minister promised to build at speeds never seen. When is he going to get started?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have gone back to the script.

We have an opportunity. If Conservative members do not want to listen to Liberals, as I advised just a few days ago in question period, they can listen to their former leader. Former prime minister Harper made it clear that we have an opportunity to rise above partisanship now. At a moment of crisis and at a moment of rupture, to use that appropriate term, nostalgia is not a strategy. We cannot look to the past.

We have to build for the future. We have to diversify our economy and our trade relationships. We have to focus on defence like never before. We have to focus on housing like never before. What will we do?

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, CPC): Madam Speaker, this week, the Crofton mill on Vancouver Island shut down.

Growing tariffs and lack of access to local raw logs have forced over 30 mills in B.C. to close. The unemployment rate in forestry doubled in the last month. On south Vancouver Island alone, hundreds of trucks are arriving weekly to export raw logs to foreign countries, as approved by this government.

Our proposed Canadian sovereignty act would legalize rapid resource development in Canada, giving mills across B.C. a chance to survive. Will the Prime Minister protect our industries from rising

tariffs, reduce raw log exports and work with Conservatives in the face of American threats?

Claude Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the closure of a mill is difficult news for workers, their families and their communities. The federal government has come forward with supports for the sector, and we urge the provincial government to work with us, as partners, to protect these jobs. The forest sector transformation task force is right now hard at work to formulate recommendations to grow and build a new future for the sector.

While the opposition casts blame and rages, we will continue to examine every option available, because workers across Canada—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Terrebonne.

* * *

[Translation]

SPORT

Tatiana Auguste (Terrebonne, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in a few hours, 20 Canadian athletes will walk into the San Siro Olympic stadium, proudly waving the maple leaf as they represent Canada at the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics.

Could the parliamentary secretary for sport tell us what our government is doing to support our athletes and how Canadians from coast to coast to coast can support team Canada?

Madeleine Chenette (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and to the Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to sincerely thank my colleague from Terrebonne for her question and her leadership within our government.

Our athletes are true ambassadors, and as the single largest investor in Canada's amateur sport system, our government is proud to support the Canadian athletes now leading 41 million Canadians in a celebration of unity and pride.

That was the reason we increased our athletes' monthly allowance by about 23%. Since then, our athletes have been under a lot of pressure, which is why we invested an additional \$3.11 million in health services. Let us all join together in supporting our athletes.

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday Health Canada officials revealed at committee that there are no age requirements at federally approved drug injection sites. In fact, Health Canada revealed that there is not even a requirement for ID. That means minors can legally use drugs in these consumption sites under Liberal law. The health minister approves supervised drug injection sites through the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Why are the Liberals allowing minors to inject hard drugs under their watch?

• (1200)

Wade Grant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a father of two young children, aged 15 and 17, I know how important it is to ensure that we think about the health and safety of our children and youth. We will work hard in ensuring that they are not in any danger moving forward.

That is what we will continue to do on this side of the House, and I really look forward to working with both sides of the House to ensure the safety of our young children moving forward.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, the health minister approves these drug injection sites, and her own officials confirm that there is no age limit to use them. That means a minor from a nearby school could walk in and legally inject fentanyl under this Liberal policy.

If the health minister does not think minors should be injecting drugs at these sites that she approved, why does the minister not stop them today?

Wade Grant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the member's question. I will work with him after question period to find a solution with the member.

* * *

TAXATION

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal finance minister failed to stabilize grocery prices as he promised to do three years ago. His new one-off rebate will not reduce the cost of a single item on the shelf, and food bank lines in my region will not shrink, yet the Liberals voted against our motion to reduce transport and packaging costs for farmers.

Food inflation must come down. When will the Liberals work with us to cut taxes to bring down the cost of food?

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservative call for focusing on taxes in this particular instance is out of place. No serious analysis has given any credibility to what the Conservatives have put forward on the issue of food inflation. I shared earlier this week, as we all know and the Bank of Canada recently affirmed, that climate change is a key factor, and the key factor when it comes to the increase in prices at the grocery

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store. How could it not be? An increase in severe weather events, droughts and floods obviously limits supply, and that has an effect.

Ultimately, the member and all members across the way, all of us in the House of Commons, can get behind budget 2025, because it focuses on Canadians.

* * *

JUSTICE

Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.): Madam Speaker, after months of obstruction, the justice committee finally completed its study on the bail and sentencing reform act. Premiers, mayors and law enforcement from across the country are asking for it to pass swiftly.

Can the parliamentary secretary explain the important measures of the bail and sentencing reform act for us, please?

Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Secretary of State (International Development), Lib.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-14 is about keeping Canadians safe, and this government is leading. We listened to police officers on the front lines, to mayors, to premiers and to victims' advocates, who have been crystal clear that the status quo is not acceptable. That is why we brought forward a strong, targeted bail reform bill and why we are pushing to get it passed without delay.

We expect the opposition, especially the Conservatives, to support this important bill, because Canadians expect action, not obstruction, and this government is leading.

* * *

TAXATION

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, the finance minister promised three years ago to stabilize food prices, but today Canada has the highest food inflation rate in the G7, and more and more Canadians are struggling to afford groceries.

Clearly, this problem requires a team Canada approach. Will the Liberals work with Conservatives to cancel the industrial carbon tax, the fuel standard tax and the plastic packaging tax, and to fast-track results for Canadians?

Tributes

Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was intrigued when I heard “team Canada approach”. I agree that we need a team Canada approach. I think we should focus on serious solutions, and there are solutions for the short term and the long term. The groceries and essentials benefit that they collaborated on, thankfully, is just one short-term measure.

I agree that it is not a magic bullet. It is certainly not that. What do we have to do to ensure the future sustainability of this country? Budget 2025 provides an answer. For the generations that are looking at us, what will we do? Will we rise above partisanship and pass that important budget? We—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Vancouver East.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister says he wants to build Canada up, yet he is slashing over 30,000 PSAC workers who deliver core public services like EI, tax credits, food inspection and more. Admin funding for friendship centres across the country will come to an end this fiscal year. The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society is also being forced to fight for the survival of its gender-based violence prevention programs and its urban programming for indigenous people.

Will the Prime Minister stop the cuts and protect the well-being of our communities with ongoing, stable, permanent funding for friendship centres and their programs, yes or no?

• (1205)

Tom Osborne (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the public servants across Canada for helping us deal with the issues that Canadians and our country are dealing with in these uncertain times. I will say that the public service has grown by over 40% over the past decade. We are focused on delivering better, faster services for Canadians. Part of that is ensuring that we also bring our public service to a sustainable level so that the taxpayers across Canada get the services they require but at the price they are looking for.

* * *

SENIORS

Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, this week the NDP government in Manitoba took over a failing for-profit care home to protect seniors. Meanwhile, the federal government owns Revera, Canada's second-largest for-profit long-term care chain. In Edmonton Strathcona, 10 seniors died and 84% of the residents tested positive during COVID-19. Despite the efforts of hard-working staff, corners are cut and tragedies like this occur every day at for-profit facilities across the country.

When will the government prioritize the health and safety of seniors and nationalize long-term care?

Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and

to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are a government that stands squarely with our seniors. We have a long track record of defending them, of investing in long-term care and of protecting seniors through the difficult years of the pandemic. In particular, we have increased GIS, benefiting over a million seniors across Canada. We have increased our OAS payments to seniors over 75 when they face higher costs, expanded our earnings exemption and enhanced CPP, and we are delivering dental care for over six million Canadians. Many seniors in my riding call this a lifeline to oral health that they have not received before.

I look forward to working with the member opposite in continuing to provide—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): That is all the time for Oral Questions.

The hon. member for Calgary Crowfoot is rising on a point of order.

Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Standing Orders and the practices of the House demand that when members have said something that is false or untrue, they be given the opportunity to correct the record.

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader accused the Conservatives of filibustering the BIA. This is patently false. All parties agreed to a work plan, including the Liberals—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): That is a matter for debate.

* * *

HON. KIRSTY DUNCAN

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, February 5, I invite all hon. members to stand to observe a moment of silence in honour of our former colleague, the Hon. Kirsty Duncan.

[A moment of silence observed]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today with deep honour and profound sadness to pay tribute to the life of our former colleague, Dr. Kirsty Duncan.

Tributes

Kirsty should be remembered as a true polymath, a remarkable Canadian scientist, advocate and dedicated public servant whose career blended groundbreaking research, passionate advocacy and impactful political leadership. She was also an accomplished athlete, dancer and writer. Therefore, in remembering Kirsty, we must begin by paying tribute to her many personal and career accomplishments.

After she earned her Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh, Kirsty built an international reputation for academic excellence through her pioneering work on environmental health and pandemics. In 1998, she famously led an expedition to Norway to investigate the 1918 Spanish flu virus, earning international acclaim as an expert in pandemic influenza and the effects of climate change on human health. Her book, “Hunting the 1918 Flu: One Scientist's Search for a Killer Virus”, chronicled this journey, while her earlier contributions to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, which shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, underscored her commitment to global environmental stewardship.

She authored many additional works, including “Environment and Health: Protecting our Common Future”, and later “The Exclusion Effect”, which addressed the barriers facing women and girls in STEM.

Kirsty entered politics in 2008 and was elected as the Liberal member for Etobicoke North, a riding she proudly represented through five consecutive terms until retiring in 2025.

She first served as the vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. After 2015, Kirsty went on to become Canada's first minister of science, where she championed the integration of scientific evidence into decision-making. She later held the portfolio of minister of sport and persons with disabilities, where she advocated fiercely for safe sport, accessibility and inclusion. She then served as deputy leader of the government in the House of Commons.

Beyond cabinet roles, Kirsty was known for her consistent political advocacy for public health initiatives, cancer prevention, Alzheimer's strategies, sickle cell disease and expanding school food programs to support young people. She also worked tirelessly to advance women in STEM, drawing from her own experiences as a scientist turned politician. She championed a motion that resulted in the Standing Committee on Science and Technology, something that I know the member for Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, a fellow woman in STEM who went on to serve in politics, is also deeply grateful for.

Most importantly, throughout, Kirsty remained deeply connected to her constituents in Etobicoke North.

Kirsty Duncan's career legacy is one of intellectual courage, compassionate leadership and dedication to using knowledge for the public good. I have no doubt that her contributions will continue to inspire future generations of researchers, advocates and leaders. However, I also believe Kirsty's true legacy lies in how she lived her life, becoming known for so much more than her very impressive résumé.

I first met Kirsty shortly after my election in 2011. As a freshly minted MP and parliamentary secretary, I walked into my first

meeting of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development only to face two of the most formidable women in Parliament at the time: Megan Leslie and, of course, Kirsty Duncan.

To this day, I remember Kirsty effortlessly gliding into that room, tall, proud and carrying every ounce of the grace and purpose that belied her skill and lifelong passion for Scottish Highland dance. At that moment, I knew I was in trouble. Kirsty always meant business, and the fact that I was a political neophyte at the time did not change that fact one bit.

Back then, Kirsty was the only Liberal on the committee, but her personal tenaciousness made up for any diminishment in numbers that might have affected the advancement of her positions. I quickly learned that Kirsty's relentlessness was not a symptom of partisanship, but rather a pursuit of what she personally viewed to be justice and action for her community. For me, this meant Kirsty would aggressively oppose government positions when she felt it necessary, but she would remain open to or even propose policies that Megan and I put forward or could agree upon.

● (1210)

Wherever possible, Kirsty sought to build consensus without sacrificing her principles. Our working relationship was such that, even in a majority Parliament, we managed to produce a committee report that miraculously had no dissenting reports attached to it.

In other words, while I never saw Kirsty back down on tough issues, quite the opposite in fact, trust me, her overriding commitment was always to achieving results, and she would work collaboratively with anyone to make that happen. This included doing one of the hardest things any of us can do in this place, offering principled, public, constructive advice to our own team when it is needed. For example, in the wake of the Hockey Canada sexual assault scandal, I believe it was Kirsty's principled and public call to action, urging her own government to move faster in preventing harassment, abuse and discrimination against women in sport, that helped break the logjam that existed and began to drive meaningful change.

Kirsty really was a true champion for women. It has only been in recent years that I realized how fortunate I was during my early years in Parliament to serve on the environment committee alongside Kirsty. As a relatively young woman in politics at the time, I had the rare and invaluable experience of working respectfully across the aisle from two extraordinarily talented female lawmakers from different political parties. Kirsty did not merely advocate for greater equality of opportunity for women; she lived it by example every day.

Tributes

After my party lost government in 2015, Kirsty never once lorded her new-found status over me. Instead, she reached out with her characteristic quiet kindness through texts, emails or simply stopping by to say hello. She was always checking in to ensure I was coping with the loss and transition to opposition in a healthy way. She even went as far as to share meaningful tips with me on how to be a more effective opposition member. When I asked why she was investing time in helping me learn the ropes of opposition, she answered without hesitation that our country is stronger when more women understand how to both govern and hold the government to account. In turn, she always paid heed whenever I felt the need to give her similar reflections from my time in cabinet. I have no doubt that she would rejoice in other women in this place sharing that type of experience.

These are but a few stories that illustrate some of the best parts of Kirsty's legacy, her profound courage, resolute determination and remarkable grace. There are literally thousands of similar stories that have poured out across the country that provide testimony to the same.

Perhaps the greatest testament to these qualities in Kirsty's legacy came in the final years of her life. Kirsty faced her profound medical challenges with the same unyielding determination that always defined her. She chose to live life fully, to keep driving change, to cherish her friends and family, and to embrace moments with the boundless joy and compassion that always were her hallmarks.

When Kirsty reached out to tell me that she had been diagnosed with cancer, she also made a point of saying that she would continue serving as a member of Parliament. I remember being quietly taken aback that she felt the need to emphasize that part to me. Of course she would stay on and finish her work; Kirsty was never one for quitting.

Kirsty also chose to share her cancer journey publicly, which was a gift to us. If one looks through her posts about it, one theme shines through consistently: Kirsty beaming with joy and gratitude for another day granted, another small victory won or another moment of love she shared with another person. For me, what is most difficult in grappling with the loss of Kirsty is that someone with her capacity for abundant love, gratitude and kindness has been taken from us far too soon.

Throughout my time in office, in spite being from a different political party, Kirsty was always among the first to reach out with genuine congratulations on my successes and quiet comfort during the difficult, lonely moments of personal political loss. She intimately understood that politics, as it is with life, comes with both highs and lows, and through her example, she helped me understand something profound: No matter which seat we hold in this place, our power comes not from the centre of our parties, but rather from our constituents, and it is up to each of us to wield it to its fullest on their behalf. Kirsty lived this principle with absolute abundance. All of us who serve in this place would be well served to honour her legacy by striving to do the same.

Kirsty loved so many people so fiercely, but her love for her husband Sven shone so brightly that it was the loudest type of quiet love I have ever seen. Looking back through the messages, the

many messages she sent me over the years, I always found her sly, joyful references to him were the things that brought me the most delight.

● (1215)

Kirsty poured out love so generously to her family, her friends, her work and to her country. To see that love returned so steadfastly by Sven, through the isolation of political life and the trials of illness, stands as a profound example to us all. What truly matters is the love we give and receive: for one another, for our families and for the nation we serve. We are so grateful to Sven for loving Kirsty. He should know that we are here for him, both in his grief and in the remembrance of his beautiful, remarkable wife.

When I learned of Kirsty's passing, it hit me that amidst the rush of year-end business, I had let one of her last messages to me go unanswered: a beautiful, so characteristic of Kirsty, thoughtful holiday greeting. What I would not give to press "send" one more time to tell her how much her friendship meant to me.

This will have to do instead: "Kirsty, thank you for being our friend. Thank you for so passionately loving our country. Thank you for showing all of us that there is value, hope and dignity in the act of living, no matter the circumstance.

"May our conduct in this place honour you, and may the years that cancer robbed from you serve to remind us of the fact that while the days in this place are long, the years are very short.

"Kirsty, we are so grateful to you. Your country is so grateful to you. May your memory continue to be a blessing."

● (1220)

Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of the Hon. Kirsty Duncan, a former colleague, a dear friend and one of the most genuinely inspirational people I have had the privilege to know.

Kirsty was, first and foremost, a scientist. A medical geographer of international renown, she devoted her intellect and her energy to understanding how environment, health and human lives are inseparably linked. She believed deeply that evidence matters, that truth matters and that public policy should be grounded in knowledge rather than convenience. Her environmentalism flowed naturally from that scientific mind: Once we truly understand the consequences of our actions on human health, indifference becomes impossible.

However, titles and achievements, impressive though they were, only tell part of the story. For those of us who worked alongside her, Kirsty was something rarer in public life. She was profoundly empathetic. She listened carefully. She spoke thoughtfully. She carried herself with kindness even in the parliamentary hurly-burly that so often rewards the opposite.

Tributes

We were first elected together in 2008, with the hon. member for Don Valley West; we are the last of the class of 2008. From those early days onward, I saw her navigate the chaos of Parliament with quiet resolve. Kirsty never confused passion with aggression or conviction with cruelty. She showed us that one could be principled without being strident, determined without being dismissive and ambitious without losing one's humanity.

On a more personal note, Kirsty was also a woman of remarkable discipline and vitality, a devoted Highland dancer, a runner, a careful eater and a self-acknowledged health fanatic; attributes, I must confess, I do not share. There is a cruel irony in the fact that Kirsty, who treated her body with such care and respect, was taken by cancer, while I, having faced the same disease, remain here. Life, it seems, can be profoundly unfair, and no amount of reason or science can fully explain the injustice of it all.

What I do know is that Kirsty lived fully, purposefully and generously. She gave her talents to her country, her compassion to her colleagues and her love to her family and friends. Her legacy is not just in the legislation she shaped or the causes she championed, but in the examples she set of decency, integrity and quiet courage.

To her husband, Sven, himself a former colleague, I offer my heartfelt condolences. I can only imagine the depth of his loss and the magnitude of his grief. Please know that Kirsty's impact reached far beyond these walls and that she is remembered with respect, admiration and affection by so many.

Kirsty Duncan made Parliament better simply by being in it. She made our lives richer by her presence, and though she is no longer with us, the values she embodied through compassion and service remain a light worth following. May we honour her best by carrying those values forward.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to pay tribute to Kirsty Duncan. I am also rising on behalf of two colleagues who also knew her, the member for Rimouski—La Matapédia and the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, and who both wanted to say a few words.

Today, I pay tribute to an exceptional woman, a woman whose career, commitment and humanity left a lasting mark on the House and on thousands of lives. I am talking about Kirsty Duncan.

Kirsty was not just a fellow parliamentarian or a minister. She was also a scientist, an educator, a deeply committed woman who believed that politics should always serve the people. Before she even became a member of the House of Commons, she was a renowned academic and an expert in public health and pandemics.

Her many years of research and teaching gave her a quality that is sadly rare in politics: the ability to bring science and intellectual rigour to bear on the most concrete human realities. She believed that government decisions should be informed by knowledge and guided by compassion.

She was first elected in 2008 as the member for Etobicoke North and served her community steadfastly for over 15 years. She was

re-elected five times and held important cabinet positions, including minister of science and minister of sport and persons with disabilities. She also served as the deputy House leader of the government. In each of these roles, she was driven by the same belief, that science, inclusion and empathy must guide public action.

As minister of science, she helped restore scientific research to its rightful place in government by defending academic freedom and data transparency and consistently reminding people that one must govern based on facts, not impressions.

Kirsty also took on the sport portfolio with the same diligence and sense of duty. She strongly believed that public policy should always seek to protect people, particularly the most vulnerable. I also want to acknowledge her ongoing commitment to safe sport, a battle she cared a lot about.

As the editorial team at The Hill Times suggested, if the government really wants to honour Kirsty's memory and political legacy, it should live up to its commitment and call a independent public inquiry on safe sport in her honour, because that is something that she cared deeply about and that she would have wanted to see through.

Even when illness struck, Kirsty remained standing. Physically weakened but undiminished in her determination, she continued to speak with a strength and clarity that left its mark on the House.

Kirsty passed away on January 26, 2026, at the age of 59, after a long battle with cancer. Her passing sparked a wave of tributes from across Canada. However, her legacy cannot be summed up in titles or dates. It lives on in the policies she shaped, in the institutions she helped strengthen, and in the belief she fully embodied, that politics can still be a tool for progress.

Today, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to thank her. I thank her for her courage, her integrity and her humanity. Her example will continue to remind us that when politics is guided by knowledge and empathy, it can truly change lives.

Tributes

[English]

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the NDP, I rise to pay tribute to the late Hon. Kirsty Duncan, whose life was defined by an extraordinary commitment to science, justice and public service. Regardless of the partisan antics that happen in the House, we all collectively know, admire and are touched by the incredible strength of Kirsty Duncan. Today, I want to recognize a great Canadian who gave so much to public life in this country no matter what sphere she was working in, from sport to science to community to academic research to a life in politics. Kirsty Duncan was exemplary in all these areas. She has been taken from us far too young. Our thoughts and condolences go to her family, her husband, her friends and colleagues.

Before entering public life, Kirsty was already a distinguished scholar. As a medical geographer with a deep sense of moral responsibility, she devoted her academic career to understanding the links between environment, health and human well-being. Her pioneering work on trying to understand the origins of the 1918 Spanish flu, culminating in an ambitious and ethically grounded expedition internationally, reflected both intellectual courage and an unwavering belief that science exists to serve humanity. Even when the expedition did not yield the outcomes she had hoped for, she was transparent about the process and generous in sharing its lessons, exemplifying scientific integrity at its best.

Kirsty also spoke with rare honesty about the abuse she endured as a young athlete and the lifelong consequences it had on her health. That lived experience profoundly shaped her later work and gave her advocacy a depth that was impossible to ignore. As minister of sport, she brought a depth and embodied understanding to the work that supports Canadian athletes. As a parliamentarian representing Etobicoke North for 17 years, Kirsty brought her scholarly rigour into the House of Commons.

As the minister of science, she played a central role in restoring respect for evidence-based decision-making in federal policy and re-establishing the position of chief science officer. She understood that democracy is weakened when science is sidelined, and she worked deliberately to rebuild trust between researchers, government and the public.

Her tenure as minister of sport and persons with disabilities was marked by courage and compassion. She made ending abuse and harassment in sport a national priority, convening governments across jurisdictions and pressing institutions to confront systemic misconduct. This was not abstract policy work; it was deeply personal, and it mattered. Her insistence on accountability, safe reporting mechanisms and enforceable standards changed the national conversation on sport safety.

● (1230)

Kirsty was also a champion for women and girls in science. Her later work, including *The Exclusion Effect*, challenged institutions to confront how systemic barriers continue to push women out of scientific fields. She was unafraid to name uncomfortable truths, and she always paired critique with practical solutions. Across party lines, Kirsty was known for her seriousness of purpose, her respect for colleagues and her belief that public office carries an obligation to do better for those who have been excluded, harmed or ig-

nored. Even when we disagreed, she engaged with integrity and care.

Kirsty Duncan leaves behind a legacy that spans academia, public policy and advocacy, a legacy rooted in evidence, empathy and courage. Canada is better because of her work. She will be remembered not only for the offices she held but for the principles she lived by. Kirsty truly was one of the good ones, and we, all of us in the House, mourn her loss. I know my colleague Richard Cannings particularly mourns her loss and will send his love to her family and friends, for they were both scientists at heart, and that bonded them in an unbelievable way.

Rest in peace.

● (1235)

[Translation]

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise today. It is a very difficult moment for me, but I want to pay tribute to my dear friend, Kirsty Duncan.

[English]

I do not think I have ever been in the House when we have had a round of speeches for a former colleague when the flag over the Peace Tower is at half-mast. Maybe we have, but it is an unusual moment. Today is the day that Kirsty's family is having a small ceremony. Her funeral is today, and as she would want, because she was so modest about all her accomplishments, it is a small, family event. However, the flag on the Peace Tower is at half-mast, as it should be. As so many of her friends and family who have posted notices have said, we are shattered, and our hearts are broken, as I think her husband Sven said, "into a million pieces."

We think about politics and MPs who have served together, and it happened that Kirsty was elected in 2008, and I was elected in 2011. Through the grace of whatever House of Commons angels there are, I was seated right next to her. I was one seat behind her, and she was on the banquette. We were in the far corner next to the translators' booth in Centre Block; over in that corner now, here in West Block, it was me in the back row, Kirsty right in front of me and Justin Trudeau there. We would have lots of conversations.

The thing that is even more remarkable is that Kirsty and I had been friends for 15 years before either of us entered politics. I knew Kirsty initially through her work at Environment Canada. An odd coincidence was that for a brief period of time, my daughter was in child care in the same building where Kirsty worked. I was inspired by the member for Calgary Nose Hill and went back through some old text messages from Kirsty. I should not have done that before trying to talk. Kirsty always referred to my daughter, Cate, as “your wee bairn.” She would always say to me, through our lives, “How is your wee bairn?” I just looked back through some text messages where I had sent her pictures of my wee bairn with her wee bairn, of my daughter and granddaughter, and Kirsty had responded as one would expect: “Oh, your beautiful wee bairn.”

I want to reflect, as many members have. I want to give thanks for the heartfelt speech by the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, who already touched on some of the things I was going to say about Kirsty's work and her authorship of the book about the hunt for the 1918 flu virus. An extraordinary degree of intellectual curiosity led Kirsty, alone or almost alone among scientists, to wonder, now that we are experiencing climate change and some corpses in various places are thawing, if we could find a victim of the Spanish flu who had been completely frozen but from whom now, because of global warming, we could perhaps access tissue. We could perhaps find out more about the origins of the Spanish flu. It has been referenced, but it was an extraordinary effort of will to launch a global expedition to Spitsbergen, Norway, to get the help of the Norwegian government, to engage other scientists and to say this could matter. It was really a medical detective story that she led.

She accomplished so very much. I want to canvass what her family put in the obituary, the number of things they felt she would want to be remembered for and that she was passionate about: dance, music, art, sport, science and research and, of course, politics, as well as humanitarian causes that were also courageously championed by her husband, Sven.

Again, thanks to the member for Calgary Nose Hill for paying tribute to the extent that Kirsty's work on young women in sport who were victimized and sexually harassed was not swept under the carpet.

All of that makes for a person about whom someone could not say, even in summary fashion, what they gave the world.

• (1240)

Of course, she had an enormous joy for life, an exuberant embracing of life, and even with health challenges, she never felt sorry for herself. My God, what a hero she was. For the spirit of life, if there was ever someone for whom we could sing this at their funeral, and in my heart I am thinking of this, it would be her: “I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.” She had that spirit of dance, and Kirsty had pride, joy and love for her little students. Even as an MP, she kept teaching students in Highland dance, and it meant the world to her.

I am quite incoherent and overwhelmed, but I wrote to a few of her scientist colleagues because I thought it would be good in this place to have the words of scientists who worked with her.

Routine Proceedings

I am first going to share what was said by one of Canada's leading scientists, Dr. Gordon McBean. He wrote:

Kirsty Duncan was an outstanding scientist who dealt with health and environmental issues including climate change. I first met Dr. Duncan in the 1990s when she was teaching climate change at University of Windsor and I was the Assistant Deputy Minister of the atmosphere-climate part of Environment Canada. I was very impressed by her scientific knowledge and leadership....

I was so pleased when she was elected in 2008 as she provided—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I apologize for having to interrupt the hon. member, but we are well beyond the five minutes that had been allocated. I have been signalling.

Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to finish up my speech as quickly as I can. I am very sorry.

Alexandra Mendès (The Assistant Deputy Speaker, Lib.): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to conclude her remarks?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues.

I am going to close with words from another one of Kirsty's scientist colleagues, Dr. Ian Burton, who said:

It has been an honour to work in association with Kirsty Duncan through the University of Toronto and IPCC.... With her work and training in Medical Geography she made outstanding contributions to the award of the Nobel Prize to the IPCC.

Her premature demise is an irreplaceable loss to the ongoing struggle against...ignorance.

I will close with these words in Gaelic. I do not know how to speak Gaelic in the past tense, so I can say it only in the present tense: Kirsty, *tha gaol agam ort*. I love you.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Jacob Mantle (York—Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting a petition today on behalf of residents in the York—Durham and Simcoe areas with respect to the Northlander rail line.

Residents in my riding are encouraging the federal government to prioritize funding for a station stop somewhere in northern Durham or in northern York region. They are encouraging the federal government to collaborate with Ontario Northland, indigenous partners and others in the community for a new station stop.

• (1245)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to present a petition today in the House of Commons on behalf of concerned residents of Regina and southern Saskatchewan.

Routine Proceedings

Signers of the petition are concerned about recent Liberal-Bloc amendments to Bill C-9 that could be used to criminalize passages from the Bible, the Quran, the Torah and other religious texts. They feel that government censorship of these religious texts, especially in churches, temples and other places of worship, represents an unreasonable infringement of the charter rights to freedom of religion and freedom of expression, and that the bill in its current form should never become law in this country.

FALUN GONG

Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting a petition today on behalf of Canadians who are calling on the Government of Canada to, first, publicly call on the Chinese regime to end its persecution of the Falun Gong in China and transnational repression abroad; second, continue to impose sanctions on and pursue accountability for the Communist officials and proxies responsible for these human rights violations; and, finally, take stronger measures to protect the Falun Gong community targeted by foreign repression.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of petitioners, who requested that it be presented today, February 6, in honour of the life and work of Ghaffar Khan, who is a close friend of Mahatma Gandhi and a champion political and spiritual leader known for his non-violent opposition and lifelong pacifism in the search to end colonial rule in India.

The petitioners summarize by saying that the husband of a Canadian citizen was deported, and they plead with Parliament to ask the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to reunite Canadian citizen Sophia Papp with her husband, Zain Haq, who was deported for non-violent protest and civil disobedience for defending old-growth forests and for climate activism.

I should mention that this was an e-petition signed by more than 4,000 people who have come to know and love this brilliant young man from Pakistan, who is a Canadian in all but citizenship. He is married to Vancouver resident Sophia Papp, who at this moment, with her entire family, is in Pakistan with her husband.

The petitioners plead for Parliament and for the minister to take immediate action to reunite Sophia Papp with her husband, Zain Haq, through his admission to Canada.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to present a petition on behalf of constituents.

I rise for the fifth time on behalf of the people of Dauphin, Manitoba to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. Since 2015, there has been a 54% increase in violent crime and a 75% increase in sexual assaults across Canada. Petitioners are deeply concerned by what they read in the local papers, including a report from last week that the Dauphin RCMP arrested three men in connection to a crime spree of multiple incidents, including theft and armed robbery, all in a single day.

Our once-safe communities have now turned into places where people fear for their life because the government's catch-and-re-

lease policies have allowed repeat violent offenders to be out on bail instead of in jail.

The people of Dauphin and the Parkland region demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on crime policies that directly threaten their livelihood and their community. I fully support the good people of Dauphin.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise to table a petition signed by over 4,600 Canadians who are deeply concerned that Bill C-2, the strong borders act, contains provisions that would threaten fundamental rights and freedoms protected under Canadian and international law; that the bill would grant law enforcement and national security agencies warrantless access to Canadians' historical associations with organizations and businesses; that it would allow authorities to compel the disclosure of sensitive personal information, including geolocation data and contact details, based merely on suspicion of relevance to the investigation of offences under acts of Parliament, regardless of individual involvement; and that the bill is designed to facilitate Canada's alignment with the United States CLOUD Act and the United Nations cybercrime convention, raising serious concerns about foreign access to Canadians' private data, including by regimes with poor human rights records.

Petitioners also note that Bill C-2 would undermine Canada's obligations under international human rights instruments, particularly in relation to privacy rights and the fair treatment of migrants and refugees.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House to immediately withdraw Bill C-2 in its entirety; reaffirm Canada's commitment to privacy, civil liberties and international human rights standards; reject any legislative or policy initiatives that would enable foreign states, including the United States, to gain undue access to Canadians' personal information; and, finally, ensure that legislation related to national security and the border upholds the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and is subject to meaningful judicial oversight.

* * *

• (1250)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[For text of questions and responses, see *Written Questions website*]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[English]

STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, before question period, I was talking about reverting to the practice of voice votes. Right now, the Chair simply asks whether a member of a recognized party wishes for a motion to carry or carry on division, or wishes to request a recorded vote. Then, the Chair looks to the officers of the governing party, the whip, or if the whip is not there, perhaps the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. This is rather than members expressing through a voice vote, yea or nay, on the motion, which allows the Speaker to then make a call based on the voices. It further allows, if five members stand, to proceed to a recorded vote.

That system of voice voting and standing five enabled all members to have equal weight in the process, so a member who is independent, or a member of a party without twelve members, could say yea or nay. They could choose to rise or not rise. Under the rules now, which the Liberals changed, they once again give more focus and weight to party leadership than to members. This is disenfranchising unaffiliated members of the House.

We all represent our constituents equally, so the process of determining how a vote should go should be done with every member having an equal opportunity. It is less confusing. It is quite a bit less confusing than the current system when the person who catches the eye of the Speaker, who is always going to be the House leadership of the governing side, wants something to carry on division, but somebody else wants a recorded vote. I understand the standing order permits that, but it is awkward and confusing. We want a simple yea or nay, stand five or not stand five, to deal with whether something is going to pass unanimously, pass on division or be put to a recorded vote. I strongly think that this is an important and subtle change that we should revert to.

The change was made while dealing with virtual Parliament, which went along with the voting application. I do not care for the voting app. I do not care for votes in the House of Commons being reduced to participation in the world's least fun video game, but we will set that aside and assume that the voting app shall remain. The argument has been made that we must have a virtual system, if we have the voting app, to deal with technical problems, and I do not connect those two.

If a member has a technical problem with the application, and if the application is a convenience to members so they can not be in the House of Commons, which is the primary place where members face each other in debate and for votes, it should be used at the members' risk. If we are in a vote that is so important that it cannot be left to risking a technical problem, then the members should be in the House. We have seen, when a person has a technical problem

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with the app, they usually also have a technical problem with virtual participation.

Controversies arise when the chair occupant has to make a call on somebody's voting intention while they are struggling with internet connectivity. The answer to that is that the voting app could be used, but if it fails, it fails, such that if there were a confidence vote, a vote that is particularly important to the member, then they ought to be in the chamber.

Where else should a member be when there is a vote? That is the primary obligation of a member of Parliament. It is the purpose of this place. They should not be out meeting with lobbyists in the lobby, going out for dinner, being at a reception or anything like that and just voting. They ought to be in the chamber.

I can hear the howls of protest from those who will say, "What if an MP is sick? What if an MP is attending to a family emergency?"

If a member is unwell or in medical treatment, the last thing they should be worrying about is fumbling around trying to vote electronically from their sickbed. They should be paired. There are always ill members and members struggling with a family emergency in all caucuses. They could be paired so that, when people are attending to their health or attending to an emergency in their family, such as the death of a parent or the birth of a child, they do not feel obligated to be on top of their phone during these times.

• (1255)

It could be done with a signed pair book on the table, signed by whips or by members, that cannot be broken. These are ways we can deal with the what-ifs when a member cannot be present in the chamber.

I do not see any need to still have virtual participation. Members rarely try to participate virtually, other than to clarify a vote when they are sitting on an airplane and cannot get a strong enough Internet connection to upload a picture. I strongly think that, if this is going to be our place, MPs should attend in person, speak to each other and have to see each other across the hall. The public asks why MPs cannot work more productively together. I ask how siloed we want to make things with our rules, to enable people to silo themselves off even from their own colleagues by non-attendance to debate in the House.

The third point I want to make is about debate. In the House, we have debates where we spend twice as much time on the speech as we do on the questions and comments. I would suggest that we invert that. When debate is 20 minutes of speech plus 10 minutes of questions and comments, or 10 minutes and five minutes, the order should be reversed. A member should speak for five minutes and then entertain 10 minutes of questions and comments. It would be a move toward the Westminster parliamentary system. When a member engages back and forth in debate there and yields the floor to their opponents or their own colleagues, their time is added to the other member's time. The system encourages debate by giving a member more time.

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The easy way to do that would be to expand greatly the time spent on questions and comments, so that we would have real debates in this place, not reading a 10-minute canned speech and then hearing one question from each of the three parties. We could really have much more engagement on legislation. We could have much better debates in the House.

I strongly recommend these three changes: we revert to voice voting to give more and equal power to members of Parliament; we dispense with virtual participation in Parliament; and we improve our debate by actually having more debate.

This debate is interesting to members who are interested in parliamentary procedure, but only when the committee on parliamentary affairs, PROC, reviews these suggestions carefully and reports back to the House with recommendations that MPs can support can we change the Standing Orders instead of just talking about changing the Standing Orders.

• (1300)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's recommendation to reverse the time for speech versus the question. I do think that would promote and encourage more cross debate, which would be a healthy thing. I hope that PROC, when it does its review, gives it serious consideration.

Where I disagree with the member is on the voting app. As the member knows, some are around the chamber a lot. I see the voting app as, actually, one of the greatest reforms we have seen in Parliament in the last 50 or 60 years. I think it is important to enable members of Parliament and ministers to be able to be out and about in the country and not necessarily have to be tied down here because we are having a vote on an adjournment motion or something of that nature. Not all votes are on the budget or the throne speech.

I am wondering if he could provide his thoughts and if there is a way we could limit it by saying that some votes—

The Acting Speaker (Michael Cooper): The hon. member for Calgary Crowfoot.

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, honestly, he perhaps misunderstood what I had said. I do not care for the voting app, so we do disagree, perhaps, on that, but I was not proposing its abolition. What I was proposing is the abolition of virtual participation.

Arguments on the maintenance of virtual participation are often tied to the voting app, such as asking what happens if the voting app fails and someone needs to be able to log in virtually. I do not agree with that. I think the voting app is a tool for the convenience of the member, to be used at their own risk.

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am torn between my sympathy for the idea of shorter speeches with longer questions following them and the fact that I have a 10-minute set-piece speech that I am going to be delivering later on this afternoon.

I do think there is a model for this, and I wanted to ask my colleague about it. Adjournment Proceedings questions, or late show questions, are four minutes of question and four minutes of answer.

They are equal length and both of them are longer. It does give time to allow people to put a substantive, as opposed to purely rhetorical question, into what they ask.

I am wondering whether that serves as a model or potentially, as it is not a perfect system, a warning about things we should think about as we look at this question.

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I had not considered that model, but that would accomplish roughly the same objective. I think the late show proceedings are a much better forum for debate than speeches because we get more back and forth and a response from the other side. I think the member raises an excellent point.

Maybe another change, concurrent with what I recommended, is an expansion to an hour of Adjournment Proceedings rather than just 30 minutes, and maybe that it not be held at the end of the day, but at the beginning.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments with respect to virtual participation in the chamber. I just cannot reconcile why this continues to this day. I wonder if the member could share with us if he knows if this continues in any other Parliament similar to ours. My understanding is that it does not.

I fully agree that the tradition of pairing in the House should be fully used. Certainly, there is no reason for members to join in debate from their car in a gas station parking lot or from the bedroom in their hotel. It does not raise decorum in here, and neither do the heckles of the members opposite who would rather work from home.

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the comments and the direction of that question.

To answer the specific one, I am not aware of any other legislature that has maintained this type of system. Debates are for the chamber. Work that members of Parliament do in their constituencies and across Canada is for those areas. Combining the two is doing neither effectively.

As far as convenience goes, the primary responsibility of members of Parliament is to represent their constituents in this chamber and participate in debate, not to talk into a camera from a hotel room somewhere or try to take a selfie for a vote. Members can do that if they want to, but they do it at their own risk. In fact, the controversies that arise in votes are usually around trying to log into the virtual system when the app has failed.

• (1305)

John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to start my remarks, I want to thank my family: my wife Dawn, daughter Sadie and son Isaac; our three cats, Tinkerbell, Luna and Max; and our dog Duke.

One of the interesting parliamentary rules of order is that if my daughter Sadie happened to be in the gallery today, I would not be able to acknowledge her and say, “Hi, sweetie. Thanks for coming and seeing Dad at work.”

I am just going to quickly pose for the camera here. I am on that camera, but I am wondering if we could switch to this one, because I have a way better background. There we go.

That brings me to my first point, which is that this entire room here is a television studio, which in many ways encourages performance. My understanding of the Standing Orders is that there is no actual prohibition of using a cellphone to record ourselves to take photos and videos. Maybe that is something that we should consider adding to the Standing Orders, to make a formal restriction, because the last thing that we want is a continuation of “like and subscribe for more great content” and actually bringing that into the House of Commons.

I am going to take a moment to reflect on the current Liberal caucus. The Prime Minister is a world-renowned economist with a lifetime of leadership on the global stage, and we have a really extraordinary set of ministers with decades of experience. In our caucus, we have former provincial legislators and council leaders. We have over 30 former municipal councillors and former provincial elected officials in our caucus, which is amazing, along with a number of doctors, lawyers, always tons of lawyers, engineers, farmers, business executives, labour and social justice advocates, indigenous leaders, women and diversity. We have people who reflect the entire spectrum of the Canadian population, which is amazing. It is an absolutely amazing group of people to work with each and every day, and I am so grateful that the residents of Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas have given me that opportunity.

That reflects the outcomes of the last election, in which Canadians clearly wanted to elect a government with serious representatives and competent representation. There are very serious issues facing Canada at the moment, which have intensified since the last election. There is the U.S.'s hostile government and the deliberate destruction of the global allegiances and stability that our country has relied on. We have the Conservative Party of Canada's own Unity Mitford, who is attempting to freelance negotiations with the American President right now. There are separatist movements—

Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Standing Orders require the member to address the business at hand, which is the Standing Orders. This is a once-in-a-Parliament opportunity for parliamentarians to weigh in on how we govern ourselves, and I have not heard any recommendations about the Standing Orders, so I would ask you, Speaker, to direct him to—

The Acting Speaker (Michael Cooper): I thank the member. I would also say that there is quite a bit of latitude, but I would encourage the member to get to the Standing Orders.

The hon member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

John-Paul Danko: I appreciate the reminder, Mr. Speaker. That is actually an important point among the points that I am making this afternoon.

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As I was saying, some of the biggest risks that we are facing as a country are extremist movements, extremist ideologies and the politics of division, anger, resentment and hatred being directly imported from the United States. That is not on one side of the spectrum; that is on the extremes of both sides. It is damaging to our democracy and it is undermining the public's confidence in our democratic institutions, which brings me to the issue of parliamentary privilege.

In the House, MPs cannot be sued or prosecuted for things that they say in the chamber, in committee or in official parliamentary proceedings. In itself, this is not a standing order. This is an inherent feature of the Westminster system of government, but, interestingly, it does not exist at the municipal level. I am obviously rather new to this role, but I did spend seven years as a municipal councillor in Hamilton, Canada's 10th-largest city, with 650,000 people and a \$2-billion annual budget. I was the chair of the planning committee, the budget and the public works. I served as deputy mayor. In that span, I probably chaired hundreds, if not thousands, of meetings. Local politics in Hamilton are fairly ruthless, cutthroat—

• (1310)

The Acting Speaker (Michael Cooper): The member for Mégantic—L'Érable—Lotbinière is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I think our colleague is well aware that we are debating House rules and procedures today, and he received a warning a few moments ago that he should address the subject being discussed today. I think it would be appropriate to call him to order.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Michael Cooper): The member has wide latitude, but I look forward to his submissions with respect to the Standing Orders.

The hon. member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

John-Paul Danko: Mr. Speaker, the debate is on the Standing Orders, but we are also discussing parliamentary procedure in general, which I am doing.

As I was saying, Hamilton is a rough place to be an elected representative, and I am rather used to some rough treatment. I am very proud to say I have served two terms. Before that, I worked for 20 years in heavy civil construction as a structural engineer. In total, that is 27 years working as a professional and being accountable, publicly and privately, for what I said, what I wrote and how I presented myself, in an environment where making a false or defamatory statement would quickly result in a lawsuit.

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Now, I understand the history of parliamentary privilege and why it exists. Without it, MPs could be under the threat of silence through frivolous lawsuits, and courts could be second-guessing parliamentary debate, but again I go back to my initial point that, at the municipal level, municipalities across Canada have wide-ranging democratic debates without parliamentary privilege protecting members from lawsuits. What it comes down to is that it really only works when members of Parliament approach this role in good faith. People have often asked me what the biggest difference is that I have seen between working at the municipal level and working at the federal level, and it is the hyperbole, nonsense and expanding the truth that we see rather routinely in this chamber, which is at times, I would submit, rampant abuse of parliamentary privilege.

How I am seeing parliamentary privilege being used here, and this is my observation, is that there will be false, defamatory, over-the-top hyperbole or a statement made in the House that is clipped and shared on social media, and then there are legions of followers, trolls and alternative news sources that then share and promote it as if it is true. It is an intentional strategy that builds anger and creates division and an entire industry of political grift. I would be really interested to test this theory: In the House we are protected by parliamentary privilege, but if a member shares a false or defamatory statement on social media, are they still protected by parliamentary privilege when they are publishing false and defamatory statements outside of the House? As far as I know, the courts have not tested that. I am not a lawyer, but I would love to investigate that further.

That brings me to a point about the need for a strong and robust mainstream media, such as the CBC, because legitimate journalists are bound by a code of ethics and the threat of lawsuits. They do not generally re-publish false and defamatory materials. Standing Order 18 on parliamentary privilege does prohibit personal attacks, accusations of dishonesty, and disrespect toward Parliament, the Crown or members. As a member, I cannot say that a member is lying, even when it is a blatant lie, and that is kind of bizarre if we think about it. I can use all kinds of euphemisms. I can say it is misleading, it is misinformation or the member did not understand, but I cannot straight up say it is a lie and the member is lying. That may be something that needs to change.

Technically, the Speaker, under Standing Order 16 on decorum and Standing Order 18 on parliamentary language, can intervene to correct statements such as that, misinformation or lies. Maybe we need to encourage the Speaker and the party whips to be a little more aggressive and use formal points of order to correct blatant lies that are put on the record.

I will make a couple of comments on dress and decorum. The Standing Orders require members to be properly attired in the chamber. Of course, for men, that means wearing a tie. I am strongly in favour of maintaining those provisions. I think losing the tie is the thin end of the wedge to hoodies and track suits in the House of Commons. We have an obligation to Canadians to be professional in our role and project that to the public.

I welcome any questions.

• (1315)

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I found that to be a bit of an ironic speech from the member, because he is one of the most uninformed members on the rules in this place. This is a member who walked into a justice committee meeting and took a photo of the proceedings of the committee. I then raised a point of order with the Liberal chair, who completely whitewashed it and never reported back to the committee about whether the photo was deleted by the member.

He does not care about the rules of this place. He does not respect the few rules that he knows, so I do not understand why he is giving a speech about a whole bunch of Liberal talking points on various different issues when there were probably other better-informed members of the Liberal caucus who should have been speaking today about the actual Standing Orders and making this Parliament function better.

John-Paul Danko: Madam Speaker, as Monica said, “Rules help control the fun.”

As someone who has chaired hundreds, if not thousands, of meetings, of course I very much value the rules that control and direct debate to ensure that everybody has a fair opportunity to contribute.

With respect to taking photos or selfies in the chambers or the standing committees, as I said in my speech, I do not believe there is actually a restriction on that. Rather, it falls under a Speaker's ruling, and we should consider adding that as a Standing Order.

[*Translation*]

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on question period. This morning, I spoke about a situation we recently experienced. The Speaker of the House intervened in order to cut off certain types of questions relating to something that was happening in Quebec City but that could have an impact on us. We felt that our questions were valid.

The Chair would not entertain our arguments, so we asked for a Speaker's ruling on the matter. If the Chair starts controlling the content of the questions, should they not also look at controlling the content of the answers?

When ministers give an answer that is completely off topic, should they not be required to start over and stick to the subject at hand, as the member was asked to do earlier at the beginning of his speech? What does my colleague think about that?

[*English*]

John-Paul Danko: Madam Speaker, question period is its own thing. As others have mentioned, such as my colleague from Calgary, when we have students here observing question period, it is a bit of a shock.

Personally, I would like to see a more forceful intervention from the Speaker in question period. My experience, again working at the municipal level, is that questions have to be on specific topics. I think that is worthwhile to include in our question period, that we stay on the topic of the day and have more robust and truthful answers.

• (1320)

Hon. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have an opposite opinion to that of the member for Brandon—Souris. I think what this member brought up is the thing that has bothered me the most in my 10 and a bit years here, which is that parliamentary privilege allows us to lie in the House. If we call out a lie, we will be made to apologize, but we are never made to correct a lie. That is one of the things that have bothered me the most in 10 years, and it has really upset decorum in this House.

I would ask the member, through you, Madam Speaker, how he might suggest a fix for that.

John-Paul Danko: Madam Speaker, that is a difficult question, because what is a lie is very subjective, and I think the last thing we want to have is the Speaker being a fact-checker. We need to have robust debates. We are going to have different political opinions on things, and statistics or certain facts may be interpreted differently. However, what I would like to see, when it is a blatant lie or an attack against an identifiable person or organization, is that the Speaker becomes more involved and steps in to ask the member to withdraw statements that are clearly false and defamatory.

Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands—Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could comment on this. He talks about decorum in the chamber but is widely known as one of the biggest disruptors. He heckles and uses unparliamentary language, all while hoping that because he sits far enough away from the Speaker, he will not be called out on his terrible behaviour. It is shocking to see him do this today. It is no surprise that he was on the receiving end of a code of conduct complaint and violation when he was a municipal councillor, which he talked a lot about.

He wants more rules here, but he does not seem to want to follow them. Does he have any comments about that?

John-Paul Danko: Madam Speaker, for the record, I was on the receiving end of multiple code of conduct complaints by my political enemies, who used those as a way of retaliation. As I said, Hamilton is a rough place to be an elected official.

However, broadly, we could all use a little bit more respect for the House, the institution and our Canadian democratic values.

Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was unaware of the code of conduct issues that had arisen with regard to the member. I will just observe that it is an excellent introduction to what I am about to deal with here, which is our own code of conduct.

The Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons is an appendix to the Standing Orders, and today's debate is therefore the appropriate forum in which to discuss the code and al-

so to discuss the problematic way in which it has been administered.

In my remarks today, I will demonstrate that, in at least one case, the administration of the code by the former ethics commissioner, Mr. Mario Dion, was itself a very consequential violation of the code. I hope that the current commissioner will take heed.

I have already been vocal in my criticism of Mr. Dion. In February 2021, I wrote an essay, which I published on my website, criticizing Commissioner Dion's report finding the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore guilty of an entirely invented breach of the code. Last October, I had the opportunity to speak out against the former commissioner's outrageous 2019 finding that the member for Ottawa West—Nepean had violated the code by transgressing a preposterously stringent interpretation of the term "using her position as a member of Parliament".

On September 29, 2020, it was my turn; the commissioner went after me. I received a letter on that day in which the commissioner informed me, "Pursuant to subsection 27(4) of the...Code, I am writing to notify you of my concerns that you may have contravened the Code by attempting to use your position as a Member of Parliament to influence a decision so as to further the private interests of a member of your family". Commissioner Dion further stated, "Upon receipt of your response...I will determine whether an inquiry into your conduct is warranted".

I will fast-forward to another piece of correspondence from Commissioner Dion, dated November 25 of the same year, in which he wrote:

I am writing further to the letter from your [legal] counsel...responding to my concerns...that you may have contravened section 11 of the...Code...

...I have determined that I do not have reason to believe you have contravened section 11 of the Code and I will not initiate an inquiry into the matter.

That ended things. I had a clean bill of ethical health. However, members will note that Commissioner Dion makes reference to a letter from my legal counsel. Here is that letter, and as members can see, it is over 100 pages long. I apologize for showing it in the House, but I want to make the point that it is over 100 pages. It includes tax returns, audited statements and other documents. Importantly, my legal bill to respond to Mr. Dion's preliminary review was \$43,423.53, every penny of which was paid out of after-tax income. At the 50% tax bracket in which all MPs sit, the cost to me was over \$80,000.

I have the good fortune to have a significant amount of inherited wealth. However, for the majority of members in this place, the sudden imposition of a legal bill of this magnitude could be ruinous. Had Commissioner Dion decided, as he could well have done, that he would go further and launch an actual inquiry, my legal bills might well have been several multiples higher.

Standing Orders and Procedure

When the costs of responding to an accusation become ruinous, prosecutions, including preliminary reviews and inquiries, can be weaponized. That is to say, the process of prosecution itself can be used as a weapon. Mere accusations, including groundless accusations, become death blows to all but the wealthiest. Our court system has therefore adopted a number of rules to prevent weaponization. One such rule is that the losing party in a court action must pay a share of the court costs of the winning party. Another rule is that the person who is accused has the right to face his or her accuser.

By contrast with the courts, our conflict of interest code contains no version of the first of the two rules I just mentioned, but it does contain an interesting proxy for the right to face one's accuser. Pursuant to subsection 27(1) of the code, the commissioner may pursue a preliminary review only if authorized to do so by a signed, written request from a member of Parliament, who effectively takes on the role of publicly identified accuser, and if at the conclusion of an inquiry, the commissioner is of the opinion that the request for an inquiry was frivolous or vexatious, subsection 27(6) of the code provides that "the commissioner shall so state in dismissing the request in a report...and may recommend that further action be considered against the member who made the request."

• (1325)

However, in my case, the commissioner ignored the limit imposed on him by subsection 27(1). In his letter of September 29, the commissioner informed me that he had been notified by an anonymous tip. He said, "On June 26...I received a letter from a member of the public alleging that you communicated numerous times with councillors and municipal employees of Tay Valley Township in respect of your spouse's operation of a forest school and community garden at [Blueberry Creek Forest School and Nature Centre] on Highway 7."

It was on the basis of this letter, from a party whose identity the commissioner subsequently kept secret, that he informed me that he would launch an inquiry unless, within the next 30 days, I satisfied him as to my innocence. It was the act of satisfying him as to my innocence, by exhaustively demonstrating the fact that Blueberry Creek is a bona fide not-for-profit and that my wife derives no financial benefit from the operation of the forest school, that cost me 43,000 after-tax dollars in legal bills. That is a bit like proving someone's innocence of witchcraft by drowning them during a witch dunking: They are innocent but also dead.

The accusation was costless for my anonymous accuser to make. Refuting the anonymous accusation was devastatingly expensive. Even though the request for the inquiry was indeed vexatious, I have no ability to seek the redress promised by subsection 27(6) because the commissioner has made sure that I cannot find out who made the anonymous denunciation.

However, I was able to draw the commissioner's attention to the fact that, whomever it may have been who contacted him, the ultimate source of this information had to be an interested party on the other side of an ongoing legal dispute between Blueberry Creek Forest School and Tay Valley Township. I sent a letter to the commissioner pointing out that one piece of evidence that had been given to him by the anonymous informant "has never been made pub-

lic". I am quoting from my letter, which continues, "Only the eight members of the Council to whom this was emailed, plus the township's clerk, Amanda Mabo, and the township's Chief Administrative Officer, Larry Donaldson, would ever have seen the...email."

An Ethics Commissioner who allows anonymous denunciations to which the cost of responding are ruinous has set the grounds for the serial use of vexatious assertions of ethical breaches in order to settle scores or to force elected officials to resign as the only means of escaping expensive inquiries.

Now, lest the assertion that I have just made be taken as hysterical, let me point out that this is exactly what has happened to Ontario's system of municipal integrity commissioners. Ironically, this was attested to just a moment ago in the last remark by the previous speaker, the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, who said he faced numerous such accusations for reasons that were entirely personal.

The Ontario system permits anonymous denunciations, arbitrary penalties and provides only the weakest safeguards against the integrity commissioners, as ethics commissioners are called provincially, who are usually external counsel retained on contract by the township or municipality, having their own conflicts of interest. For example, they might be simultaneously a town solicitor and its integrity commissioner, a clear conflict of interest.

In 2024, Ontario's integrity commissioner system was variously described as the "wild west" and as being a "cash cow" for the commissioners themselves, most egregiously for Tony Fleming, a lawyer at the Kingston law firm of Cunningham Swan, who served simultaneously as town councillor and integrity commissioner for 35 municipalities, despite repeated accusations that this represents a conflict of interest on his part.

In 2022, it was reported that the legal bills paid to the integrity commissioner in the town of Elliott Lake over the four-year term of the town council amounted to \$858,000, or about \$80 per town resident. To give another example, at one point in the summer of 2025, the integrity commissioner for the Township of Rideau Lakes, just south of my riding, was involved in 11 simultaneous investigations. The town council in Rideau Lakes has only nine members. A year earlier, the Ontario ombudsman reported that most of the complaints it had received regarding municipal accountability officers were specifically about integrity commissioners.

A similar form of weaponization of our own ethics code is a very real danger should the safeguards that have been built into the code continue to be ignored by the official who is charged with their enforcement.

Commissioner Dion facilitated weaponization. It is my hope that the current commissioner will hear what I am saying today and will firmly reject the dangerous precedent set by his predecessor, and in the event that he takes the position that his predecessor's actions in accepting anonymous denunciations were not a breach of the code, that the House will modify the code to impose this limit in clearer terms in the future.

Standing Orders and Procedure

• (1330)

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is more so in regard to getting the member's thoughts on the issue of concurrence motions.

Today, we have a system where there is a limited amount of time to allow for debate to occur. I understand the arguments for concurrence motions, and I do not necessarily want to take away the need to have concurrence motions. However, I would like to hear his comments on the merits of having them take place, much like we have the late show or emergency debates, after Government Orders.

I am interested in what the member might have to say about having concurrence motions take place after Government Orders.

Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I am here to talk about the weaponization of our ethics code for the purpose of destroying the lives and careers of members of Parliament. I am not going to answer a question on that subject.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have had today to rise to speak to the Standing Orders. If I can, before asking a question of the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac, I want to associate myself with some of the comments made by the member for Calgary Crowfoot.

I strongly agree with his argument that five standing members should be able to ensure a recorded vote and that passing bills on division gives an extreme level of power and authority to a small group of parties in this place, only the recognized parties. It reduces the rights of not just me as the member of Parliament for Saanich—Gulf Islands, but of my constituents, who do not necessarily know where we stand on the issues when we move so quickly. I thought the member for Calgary Crowfoot made very cogent arguments, and I also appreciated his suggestion that we look at the U.K. Parliament and the idea that an MP who is speaking can yield the floor to another MP of their own party.

I want to associate myself very strongly with the comments just now from the member for Lanark—Frontenac and support his concerns. For anyone watching this who does not know the member for Lanark—Frontenac, they will not find a finer person of greater integrity. What he went through with the Tay Valley Township council is appalling, and I want to thank him for always being upright, honest and so well informed.

• (1335)

Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I am not going to respond to that one either, except to say that there is a connection here. There are a number of these kinds of processes that have been weaponized.

One was weaponized against the leader of the Green Party, which was the internal processes in her party, by an individual who had come in as a temporary employee and proceeded to attack her leadership and basically tried to destroy it. It attracted enough attention that its refutation made its way onto the editorial pages of the National Post, where Christie Blatchford attacked the individual who had behaved in this disgraceful manner in attacking the member in her role as Green Party leader.

That individual's name is Rob Rainer, and he is now the reeve or mayor of Tay Valley Township. I have wondered whether it was he

who anonymously denounced me to the Ethics Commissioner, but I have no way of knowing that. Perhaps Mr. Rainer will have the chance to say so, one way or the other, when he gets the opportunity.

Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was a well-informed speech on the Standing Orders, something that we were desperate for, compared with the last speaker. I thank him for delivering that leadership.

This example that he gives shows the ruinous cost. I am not independently wealthy. I am a new, younger member of Parliament. There are many of us on both sides of the aisle. We could not afford those types of legal bills. I just could not do it. I have no idea what I would do if something like that were to happen, and I am sure my gen Z colleagues feel the same.

I wonder if the member could give a little more clarity as to what the path forward might be for Parliament to try to prevent situations like that from happening and to protect all members, but in particular to bring fairness back to those of us who may not be independently wealthy.

Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, the simplest thing would be for PROC, the next time the commissioner is before that committee, to ask whether he agrees or disagrees with the approach of accepting anonymous denunciations, denunciations other than those spelled out in subsection 27(1) of the code. If he says that he disagrees with the precedent and would not accept such an act, I think that settles the matter. If he says that he thinks that Mr. Dion acted correctly, then I think that a firmer wording is needed to make it absolutely transparent that nothing other than a denunciation or an accusation submitted by a member of Parliament or a motion of the House is acceptable.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I approach this debate from the perspective of having been on government benches, on the official opposition benches, on third party benches and also an independent, one of two individuals, when we combine both my provincial and federal experiences. As a parliamentarian, I do believe there are some rules that would improve our system.

I would like to go back to Peter Van Loan. Peter Van Loan was the government House leader when I first got elected to Parliament. It was a very short period, my first election, because I was elected in a by-election. After that, it was a majority Conservative government, in 2011. I was quite surprised and a little disappointed in the manner in which Peter Van Loan would constantly stand up, introduce legislation and then bring in time allocation. Over the years, I can appreciate why.

Standing Orders and Procedure

I suspect there might have been a lot of pent-up frustration, at a time when Stephen Harper was the prime minister, from not being able to get things done that he was hoping to get done because he was in a minority government. When the Conservatives finally had a majority, they had no problem with using the tool of time allocation to get things done. If we advance to the 2015 election, when there was a Liberal majority government, yes, we had to use time allocation. Back then, I was being told by members opposite that I did not support time allocation when I was in opposition. The record would actually show that I did say time allocation is a necessary tool at times in order to get legislation passed.

I say all of that because I believe it is time the House of Commons modernizes its rules. We need to have government legislative programming put into place. This can take many different forms. It has been clearly demonstrated over the last number of years. I have not done the research on the minority years of Stephen Harper, but I would hazard a guess, based on what I saw between 2011 and 2015 of the Harper government, that there was frustration from not being able to get legislation passed.

I have had many opportunities, over the last couple of years in particular, to talk about how government gets frustrated by opposition not allowing legislation to move forward. As opposed to saying, "I am in government; here is what I want," or "They are in opposition; this is what they want to resist," I think we should be approaching it as parliamentarians first and foremost. We have legislative planning for Private Members' Business. If we look at some of the private members' bills we have, even legislation we have passed likely would never have passed if it was not for legislative planning.

Programming does make a difference. I do not say that because I am in government. I believe it would enable more potential debate. One of the appeals I have suggested in the past is, for example, I believe we waste time on Fridays. I think we could make better use of the time we spend every Friday. Yes, we have question period, but beyond question period, I would like to see any member be able to speak on any bill, whether it is a private member's bill or a government bill, by giving notification on the previous Wednesday to the Speaker that they would like to be able to address Bill X. They would be provided the opportunity to speak for five minutes with a five-minute question and answer period.

● (1340)

I do not even believe there should be an adjournment per se. We could at least allow eight hours of debate or go until debate collapses. That way, every member of the House of Commons would be afforded the opportunity to talk on any bill whatsoever, as long as it has been in second reading and has not passed third reading. This would provide every member the opportunity to speak. All they would have to do is notify the Speaker in advance. If no one notifies the Speaker in advance, then we would have a question period and be done for the day.

I really and truly believe every member of the House would be better served if they knew they could come in on Friday and speak on a private member's bill or a piece of government legislation, because it is important for their constituents to hear that particular debate. I used to be a big fan of having a dual chamber. Some sug-

gested that we would even have this room as the second chamber when we go back to the House of Commons. The problem with that, from the feedback that I received, is that this would become the kids' chamber, and the adult chamber would be in the House of Commons, in Centre Block. That is why I think the Friday solution is very real. It is tangible. Every member of the House of Commons would be able to participate in it.

I posed a question on the issue of concurrence. The record would show that on concurrence motions, I do believe there is a better way. There are some very important reports out there. Concurrence debate on these reports would be better served for parliamentarians and Canadians if it took place after adjournment, much like we do for questions that are asked in question period. The reason is that we have a finite amount of time to debate legislation, and I suspect we would have more debate if we allowed for it.

I am aware that one could ultimately say it is an opposition tool. Is it really? I would argue that it seems to be a lazy man's tool, because all that has to be done is to put up a few speakers and make up for those three hours. It does not take much. For my colleague across the way and I, it is an issue. The way I look at it is that if they wanted to filibuster a piece of legislation, they could give me twelve grade 12 graduates from Sisler High, Maples, Children of the Earth or any high school in the north end, and I bet I would be able to filibuster a bill indefinitely, forcing the government to bring in time allocation or that bill would never pass. It does not take much. We should have a concurrence debate, if it is really that important, after the adjournment proceedings.

When we look at ways we can improve the chamber, there are some substantial changes, and I just listed off a couple of them. There are some very simple ones. I think we should have time clocks. Some legislatures, from what I understand, have them. It is a countdown clock. For example, during question period earlier today, we had 35 seconds to answer a question. I would be watching it count down and the Speaker would cut me off once it hits the 35 seconds. If I have a prepared text, and I am just going to read that text and know it is going to take me 25 seconds, it is not a problem. However, if I am giving a 10-minute speech, and I might be passionate about it, to be able to look and see where I am on my countdown clock would be a good thing.

When I was first elected to the House of Commons, from the Manitoba legislature, I came here and I noticed the Sergeant-at-Arms had bare hands touching the mace. I talked to the Speaker and anyone who would listen to me. In the Manitoba legislature, they have to wear white gloves, and that pleases me. I am not saying it was me, but someone made a change, and now they wear the white gloves.

There are rules, low-hanging fruit, and we can actually make some of these changes. It takes the House leadership teams and others to sit around and figure out what other kinds of rules can make our Parliament modernized going forward. I love this topic. I appreciate the time I have been provided to say a few words.

Standing Orders and Procedure

• (1345)

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have debated the merits of concurrence motions often with my friend and colleague. Concurrence motions are an opportunity to debate a matter that the majority of a parliamentary committee has brought to the attention of the House.

I think the member misses the fact, in his discussion, that debate on concurrence motions can always be adjourned or superseded by a majority of the House. A majority of the House has the power and sets its own agenda in a case where a majority of the House wishes to see the conclusion of a concurrence debate.

I think those debates are very important and of immense value. If they were not considered important, either the committees would not have brought them to our attention or a majority of the House would be interested in adjourning or superseding them.

I disagree with the consistent effort to delegitimize concurrence debates as if they are not important. I think they are very important. They are reflective of the good work done at committees, and they are worthy of consideration in the House.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I will go further than that. I would say that they are of great value to all of us.

That is why I believe they been used as a tool for alternative measures rather than actually talking about the report itself in a substantive way. The way to avoid that would be to have it much like we have emergency debates. If the Speaker says that there will be an emergency debate, it does not take away from Private Members' Business or government business. It goes at the end of the day. That is what should apply.

Imagine if we were put all the reports that come out of the standing committees as equal. We would not have any debate. We would not even be able to have opposition days to the degree to which we do. If we believe in the importance of the reports that are being tabled, and we want to have concurrence, I would suggest to members that we could have that debate but that it would be best had after the adjournment of proceedings.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary seems willing to make some changes, like most of the members we have heard from this morning. Unfortunately, we all know that the kind of discussion we are having this morning often ends up fizzling out at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Discussions fizzle out there and are never revived.

It seems to me that we have proposed a number of reasonable things today. Can the member assure me that the government is willing to improve the Standing Orders and that everything will be addressed at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs rather than go there to die?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I love the question. Quite frankly, I have had the opportunity to have significant rule changes when I was in the Manitoba legislature. The way that ulti-

mately happened was that all the decisions were made among a core group of individuals who wanted to see substantive changes.

I sat on the PROC committee. PROC tends to want to deal with the low-hanging fruit, anything that becomes big. We have the voting app because of the pandemic. We were forced to make some rule changes.

I would ultimately argue that it is the mechanism that has denied us the opportunity to have a consensus-built reform of our Standing Orders, at a great cost. I believe we are nowhere near as modernized as our rules should be. All it would take would be the goodwill of a few people who could actually make it happen. I am committed to doing that, and I would love to see the changes.

Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am passionate about the Standing Orders. We do not get nearly enough time to speak about them. As the Green Party member, I do not have an opportunity to participate in PROC to pursue these essential changes.

I want to make a point to the hon. parliamentary secretary. I think things would work better in this place if we were to actually observe the rules we currently have. For instance, members are not supposed to read written speeches. We could shorten the time on debates if the only members who could speak would be, as in the Parliament in the U.K., able to speak without notes.

I also think we would improve our rules a great deal and have better decorum in the House if party whips were not able to have more power over the Speaker. That is not a rule. The rule is that only the Speaker recognizes individual members of Parliament, but the practice has been, just as the practice has been to allow written speeches, against our rules, which gives party whips more power over decorum than the Speaker.

Hon. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I had the challenge of being a non-recognized member when I was one of two members inside a legislature, which forced me to hang around the provincial legislature all the time in order to make sure that, as a party, we were able to get our message across. I look forward to having ongoing discussions on these very important issues in the future.

Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have some family members in town who were planning on skating on the Rideau Canal this afternoon, but when they heard we were debating the Standing Orders, they decided to cancel and come here instead. I want to welcome them.

I want to start by talking about the use of unanimous consent in this chamber. This is an important aspect of our rules, but I think it is of profound importance to the well-being of Canadians. We have made, at various times in my tenure as a member of Parliament, some critical decisions through unanimous consent that have had a big effect on the lives of Canadians.

Standing Orders and Procedure

Parliament is designed to facilitate the considered judgment of elected members over time, and there are multiple steps that facilitate that considered judgment. There is consideration at various stages, detailed study in committee, etc. The considered judgment over time is how we harness the collective wisdom of members from different regions of the country in order to get a good outcome.

However, the rules also allow, without safeguard, the complete abridgement of that process of considered judgment over time if there is, in one instant in time, of the members who are within this chamber, unanimous consent to do something. This is a very serious problem, because it replaces the logic of considered judgment over time with the psychology of a mob.

There is great work by Gustave Le Bon that I would encourage members to review on the issue of the psychology of the mob. He observes that a mob, even if made up of a large group of people, has less wisdom if captured by passions in an instant in time than even one individual within that group would have acting on their own.

We need to be very conscious as parliamentarians about how we can sometimes be seized by the psychology of the mob and think that a decision must be made right now, to think that a decision is necessarily good, even without having studied the decision as well as its full implications.

Unanimous consent is the process by which the considered judgment of members is replaced with the psychology of the mob. Therefore, I think it requires safeguards that prevent this from happening, that prevent legislation from skipping stages without some level of proper consideration.

I would suggest one logical reform, if a request for unanimous consent has been made, would at least be that the bells be rung, that members be recalled to the chamber and that perhaps they be given a period of time, such as 24 hours, during which they can notify the Speaker of their objection. This can be grossly abused, because, as members here know, not every member is in the chamber at any given time. Most members spend most of the day outside the chamber, meeting with stakeholders and people from their riding, in committees and doing other kinds of parliamentary work that do not take place in this chamber.

Therefore, members can try to advance unanimous consent motions when they know particular other members are not present and able to object, and that deprives those members of having their views heard. It is pretty ironic that if a vote is requested on something, bells will ring and there is a set time that allows members to return to the chamber to have their vote recorded or to vote by app, but there is no such provision for unanimous consent.

I think we need clear guardrails. There are cases in which the use of this tool is legitimate, but it still has to draw on the considered judgment of members over time. The best way to do this would be for substantive proposals to have a delay of 12 or 24 hours during which members would be notified by email and could simply reply to the Speaker and say no if they wanted to register their objection.

The other way we see this kind of abuse is when members stand up to request unanimous consent for things that have not been ad-

vertised to the House previously. People do not know what is going on, so they say no. Perhaps it is a very reasonable thing that they object to because they have not had time to look at the question, and perhaps it is something they would support if it were actually debated and considered properly, but instead they are not able to.

We see many abuses of unanimous consent. It requires clear guardrails to be fair to members but more fundamentally to be fair to Canadians, because we do not want to have this mob mentality sweep up decision-making and sweep away safeguards on important issues.

● (1355)

Next, it is time that we did away with all instances of sycophantic onside questions from one party to the same party. Normally, the way it happens in questions and comments is that, after a speech, there is a rotation that goes around this chamber where there is one question from one's own party. Sometimes those questions have the character of, "Tell us why you are so awesome." Some of us may enjoy this type of exchange, but it would be a better use of House time if we did away with it. For instance, after every Conservative speech, there could be two questions from the Liberals and one question from the Bloc, and after every Liberal speech, there could be two questions from the Conservatives and one from the Bloc instead of one from each party, including onside questions.

Other members have said this about committee of the whole and question period, as well as the questioning of ministers at committee. Given that many of the same-party questions tend to be of a more sycophantic, unsubstantial nature, maybe we could try, by mutual agreement, to do away with that and maximize the time for actual exchanges featuring different points of view.

I want to strongly agree with what a member said earlier. It would not be a change to our Standing Orders, but we need changes that would prevent the Senate from indefinitely sitting on private members' bills without even considering them. I believe the Senate has an important function in our democracy as a place of sober second thought, but it is frustrating when we have good bills passed in the House, with unanimous support even, that then are not considered in the Senate. The Senate should be considering and providing its considered judgment on bills that come from the House, not simply refusing to consider them for years on end until they die at the time of the next election.

Standing Orders and Procedure

I was very frustrated by how the government handled Bill C-281, the international human rights bill. This was a bill that the government did not like very much but supported for political reasons. It was a good bill and had unanimous consent in the House, but then the bill was halted in the Senate and not moved forward. I actually think that was deliberate and that the government relied on its appointees in the Senate to stop the bill from moving forward in a way that was undemocratic.

If the Senate considers the bill, has concerns about it, proposes amendments and sends it back to the House, and it can still be dealt with in a timely way, that is very reasonable and in keeping with the function that the Senate is supposed to have. However, it does not make any sense that an unelected chamber would simply refuse to consider a bill at all and stop it from moving forward. There should be a time limit around that, a point at which automatic steps are taken on bills that come from the House.

I also want to address the issue of chair occupants and expertise, specifically as it relates to committees. Right now, we have a system whereby, although a committee chair is formally elected from the committee, they are, in the vast majority of committees, appointed by the government. This is because the government chooses who its members are, and if a chair must be a member of the government, then usually only one member steps forward to be nominated.

In practice, and members of all parties would probably agree to this, if not in public then certainly in private, we have had far too many instances of committee chairs being put in for political reasons, even though those chairs do not understand the rules, do not understand the logic of how committees are supposed to work and are not very good at chairing meetings. We all have different abilities, and we all have different charisms that we can use in different ways. The purpose of putting someone in as committee chair should not be for them to have an extra point on their résumé to tell their constituents about. It should be that they are actually committed to applying the rules of that committee well. If we had a system whereby committee chairs, in particular, were elected, we would be a lot better off.

In a different system from the current election process, I would suggest we consider a system in which any member of Parliament, whether or not they have been assigned to a committee, can run to be chair of that committee, and members of the committee vote by secret ballot on who that chair is. That would facilitate potentially more competitive chair elections and a situation in which someone was chosen as chair, not because the government was trying to shore up their re-election chances in a marginal riding but because they were actually well qualified and trusted by their peers to exercise the role of chair.

I would support broader reforms that would have committee membership elected in general. There does not seem to be any substantial reason why party whips should be able to appoint committee members in general, but if we are looking for incremental steps, by changing the chair process so we actually have chairs who know and apply the rules, we would be a lot better off. I do not think it is fair to the chairs, either, to have them thrust into a situation in which they are trying to coordinate a meeting and simply do not know what the rules are that they are supposed to be applying.

Hopefully, these reforms around guardrails for unanimous consent, eliminating outside questions, addressing PMBs in the Senate and having qualified committee chairs would help this institution continue to grow and move forward in a constructive way.

• (1400)

Helena Konanz (Similkameen—South Okanagan—West Kootenay, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech was excellent. I learn a lot from him every time he stands up in the House.

As a new member, I was not surprised about the virtual voting, as I knew that existed, but I was surprised by how often some members use it; some are not in their seat very often, and they vote from abroad.

Does the member think there should be limitations on virtual voting?

Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, personally I would say that there is a major difference between the use of the voting app and the use of some of the other applications of virtual Parliament. I think a great deal is lost when members try to give speeches remotely or participate in questions and comments from somewhere else. I think that is generally done less now, but I would like us to do away with virtual Parliament completely as it relates to the activities of the chamber, certainly.

When it comes to virtual voting, I do think that having use of the voting app is a reasonable accommodation. I do not think members' flying across the country just to stand in their place and vote is that different from voting on an app. I think we can learn from that experience.

Having said that, I think it is important for the people who are elected as members of Parliament to spend a substantial amount of time in Ottawa and not just think they can be entirely absent and therefore always voting by app. I think a balance is required.

• (1405)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): It being 2:05 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that proceedings on the motion have expired.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 51(2), the matter is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[Translation]***UKRAINIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT**

The House resumed from December 9, 2025, consideration of the motion that Bill S-210, An Act respecting Ukrainian Heritage Month, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill S-210, which seeks to designate September as Ukrainian heritage month. By supporting this bill, we want to recognize the role that the Ukrainian community plays in Quebec society and reaffirm our commitment to supporting the efforts of the individuals and families who settle in Quebec, learn French, discover our culture and demonstrate courage and resilience as they integrate into our society.

Historically, the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada, which is the second largest in the world with approximately 1.3 million Ukrainian people, was mainly settled in the Prairie provinces. However, it should be noted that ties between Quebec and Ukraine are based on a long history of migration, vibrant communities and solidarity between free peoples, which has only grown stronger since the war.

Ukrainian Quebeckers have long formed a community with a unique cultural heritage, as evidenced by its vibrant social fabric. This can be seen, for example, in the work of organizations such as the Alliance des Ukrainiens de Québec, which preserves and enriches the community's cultural heritage and helps to forge strong ties between Ukrainian identity and Quebec identity.

In response to the European migrant crisis caused by Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Quebec mobilized to welcome and support displaced Ukrainians. Quebec has welcomed thousands of Ukrainian nationals who are benefiting from special temporary immigration status, the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel, and specific assistance measures.

We need to recognize that the Ukrainians welcomed into our country face several challenges, such as the cost of living, credential recognition, integrating their children into the school system, and learning French, which some manage to do in just a few months, demonstrating their commitment and courage.

The debate on Bill S-210 should be an opportunity for us to remember our duty of solidarity as a host society toward all Ukrainian nationals who have been welcomed since 2022. In addition to welcoming displaced persons at the international level, Quebec has provided direct international assistance through organizations working in the areas of health, education, and culture. Since 2022, Quebec has participated in supporting educational continuity in Ukraine through the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to ensure the continuity of educational services for Ukrainian pupils and students after thousands of schools were destroyed by the war.

Since 2022, the Ukrainian flag has flown on the third tower of the Quebec National Assembly as a symbol of solidarity with the Ukrainian people. On February 20, 2025, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously passed a motion recalling Quebec's ongoing

commitment toward Ukraine and its people, reaffirming its engagement to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, supporting the reinforcement of international efforts for Ukraine's reconstruction, and expressing its solidarity with the Ukrainian people and Quebeckers of Ukrainian origin.

Since 2022, the Bloc Québécois has been suggesting possible solutions to the federal government to facilitate the process of issuing or renewing visas for Ukrainians. We always support concrete measures to help protect Ukrainian refugees and displaced persons. The Bloc Québécois was also deeply honoured to attend the reception for the President of Ukraine on September 22, 2023. We fondly remember the president's speech to the House, particularly the care he took to thank the House in French.

In closing, the Bloc Québécois solemnly affirms its solidarity with the Ukrainian people and with Quebeckers of Ukrainian origin and their families. We believe in peace and freedom for Ukraine and in the right of Ukrainians to exist as a nation.

● (1410)

[English]

Ernie Klassen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill S-210, an act respecting Ukrainian heritage month. By adopting this bill, Parliament would designate September as Ukrainian heritage month across Canada, offering Canadians a chance each year to reflect upon and celebrate the significant contributions of the Ukrainian community to our shared history, culture and identity.

I am pleased to inform the House that the government supports the bill. In doing so, let me start by saying that Canada's story cannot be told without the story of Ukrainian Canadians. From the first arrivals in September 1891 to the vibrant diaspora that exists today, Ukrainian Canadians have shaped this country in fundamental ways. They came to Canada seeking opportunity, freedom and stability. In turn, they helped build our country, opened businesses, enriched our cultural landscape and contributed to our democratic institutions.

Canada is now home to over 1.5 million people of Ukrainian descent. They live and work in every province and territory. They are leaders in government, the arts, academia, agriculture, sports and the armed forces. They have brought with them a rich cultural heritage of food, music, dance, language, folklore and faith traditions that have become woven into the fabric of Canada itself. We only need to look across the country to see their legacy: thriving community centres, churches, cultural associations, annual festivals that draw thousands of Canadians of all backgrounds and academic contributions that have deepened our understanding of Ukrainian history, language and literature.

In agriculture, Ukrainian Canadians played an essential role in developing Canada's prairie provinces into the breadbasket of the nation. In our armed forces, they served with distinction in both world wars and continue to do so today. Designating Ukrainian heritage month would give all Canadians an annual opportunity to reflect on these contributions and to learn about the resilience, perseverance and achievements of this community.

Declaring September as Ukrainian heritage month would also serve as an invaluable educational opportunity. It would encourage schools, libraries, museums, cultural organizations and community groups to host programs and events that deepen our understanding of Ukrainian history, language, art and traditions. It will inspire young Canadians of all backgrounds to learn about the Holodomor, the struggle for Ukrainian independence, the legacy of immigration and the contemporary challenges facing Ukraine. As we educate, we fortify our national character. We inspire empathy, understanding and unity, values that are essential to the health of any democracy.

This recognition also reflects our broader commitments under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. Section 27 of the charter reminds us that preserving and enhancing our multicultural heritage is a fundamental principle of Canadian democracy. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act calls upon us to recognize communities who share common origins and historic contributions to our society and to ensure that all Canadians can participate fully in our economic, social, cultural and political life.

Formal recognition of September as Ukrainian heritage month would give meaning to these principles. This designation is also consistent with our government's broader priorities, building a country where everyone feels a sense of belonging and strengthening social cohesion. Multiculturalism is not just a policy. It is a unifying symbol of Canadian identity and a source of national pride.

Why should Ukrainian heritage month be in September? It is because the month of September is particularly special. It commemorates the arrival of the first Ukrainian immigrants in September 1891, and it is a time when communities across Canada already gather to celebrate Ukrainian culture and heritage. By designating September as Ukrainian heritage month, Parliament would be aligning with existing provincial designations in Manitoba and Ontario, further strengthening the recognition across the country.

• (1415)

Support for Bill S-210 is expected to be broad and positive beyond the Ukrainian community in Canada. Similar heritage month bills, including those for Italian, Lebanese, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, Tamil, German and Latin American communities, have passed with widespread approval in the House. Cultural recognition initiatives like these acknowledge the fundamental contributions of immigrant communities to Canada and provide an opportunity for all Canadians to learn about and celebrate our inclusive society. Such recognitions also resonate deeply with Canadians because they reflect who we are, which is a country of many cultures, histories and traditions united in a common identity.

Declaring September as Ukrainian heritage month is not a symbolic pat on the back; it is a powerful statement of Canadian identi-

ty and global leadership. It tells the world that Canada stands with Ukraine, Canada honours its Ukrainian citizens, Canada remembers its history and Canada will never waver in its defence of freedom.

I urge all members to support this bill and join Canadians in celebrating Ukrainian heritage month each September. In doing so, we will not only honour the legacy of Ukrainian Canadians but also strengthen the bonds that unite us all as Canadians.

Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of a bill to recognize Ukrainian heritage month. I do so not only as a member of Parliament representing a vibrant region rooted rich in Ukrainian heritage, but also as a proud Canadian of Ukrainian descent myself, whose own story is tied to the same pioneer spirit that built so much of the Prairies.

Canada is a nation built by people who were willing to start with almost nothing and then work hard until something was built. In my rural Manitoba constituency of Riding Mountain, that story is written across the land by the Ukrainian pioneers who settled in the region.

In 1899, 16 ships arrived in Halifax after crossing the Atlantic. These ships were carrying Ukrainian families fleeing oppression from the Austro-Hungarian rule in their home province of Galicia.

I have to say that I did not realize until preparing for this speech that my grandparents could potentially have been on that ship.

Around 400 settlers travelled west by train from Winnipeg to Strathclair, Manitoba, and then moved by wagon and oxen into a region that had little to offer in the Patterson Lake district.

Before they even reached the land they planned to homestead, the hardship began to claim lives. Along the way, children died between Portage la Prairie and Minnedosa and were buried along the railway tracks. Thirteen more children died near Strathclair and were buried at the Bend Cemetery. These deaths resulted in many families being quarantined at Strathclair while others travelled onward to the Patterson Lake region. We sometimes forget this part of the pioneer story. The hardship did not begin at the homesteads; it began on the journey.

Private Members' Business

Then, on May 10, 1899, the settlers who reached Patterson Lake district arrived on a cold, rainy day. They sheltered in canvas tents, exhausted, wet and exposed. That night, a spring snowstorm moved in. The harsh weather and living conditions fuelled an epidemic of scarlet fever that spread fast. Forty-two children and three adults tragically died from this disease. They were buried on a nearby quarter section of land that is now known locally as the mass grave, to which visitors from across Canada travel today to pay their respects and learn about our heritage. It is there, at the gravesite, that a simple wooden sign captures the meaning of this story better than any speech ever could. It reads, "This memorial commemorates the suffering perseverance and courage of those pioneers who overcame tragedy. They carved homesteads out of forest and made life possible for us: their descendants."

The phrase about carving "homesteads out of forest" is not a metaphor but an accurate description of what these pioneers did. The land in the region did not come cleared and ready to farm; it was rugged, hilly, treed and rocky. It was land one had to make livable with an axe and a tremendous amount of hard labour. The rules of settlement reflected that reality.

The Canadian government granted 168 acres to each settler for the sum of \$10, but only if they took up the homestead and broke 30 acres of land. In other words, the opportunity was real, but it came with a clear expectation of work and responsibility, something these pioneers did not shy away from. They were not coming to take advantage of Canada; they were coming to build Canada, to earn their place by contributing to our nation through the toughest conditions. That is the story of these Ukrainian pioneers who settled in the Patterson Lake district of Manitoba.

If one goes to Olha, Manitoba, today, one comes up to a quiet rural intersection, yet within a few miles one can see this entire pioneer story gathered in one place. One can see St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church, a beautiful church that was established in 1904. It serves as a reminder that these settlers built not only farms but faith and community. Inside the church is a metal-bound gospel book from Lviv that records a prayer offered there for "our Canadian Ukraine...written [down] for eternal remembrance".

• (1420)

To the southwest is a mass gravesite, the place that pays tribute to the tragedy I spoke about earlier, when scarlet fever swept through that first camp of settlers. To the east are the Swistun bud-das, reconstructions of the first tent-shaped shelters the pioneers lived in, which are built from mud and hay. Michael Swistun, who was born in a bud-da in 1900, later reconstructed these structures to preserve this heritage.

A few miles north of Olha is the Marconi School, a one-room schoolhouse built in the early 1920s to serve the children of the pioneer families who were building homesteads. Today, it is a well-preserved heritage site where the names of the teachers who taught in the Marconi School are etched in chalk on the blackboard.

Right at the intersection is Olha General Store, which was built in 1940 and is still serving the area today. For decades, it has been run by Marion Koltusky, who was born on the same land her grandparents first homesteaded. Marion is one of the area's most prominent stewards of Ukrainian pioneer heritage, and I thank her. She

has welcomed visitors from all over the world and carried forward the spirit and history of the people who built the region. I was honoured to present her with the King Charles III's Coronation Medal in Olha last summer.

The stories surrounding Olha and the Patterson Lake district are only one pioneer story in the constituency I represent, but it reflects so many others across rural Manitoba. There are hundreds of stories like it throughout the region, from Rossburn to Russell to Sandy Lake and everywhere in between. They are stories of families that arrived with little, worked the difficult land and built lives from the ground up.

They built institutions that made Canada what it is today. With churches, schools, stores and a cultural spirit that still holds many rural regions together today, these communities preserve their heritage because it is part of who they are. For example, the community of Dauphin, Manitoba, is home to Canada's National Ukrainian Festival, where families gather each year to pass down music, dance and tradition to the next generation.

I mentioned earlier the wooden sign next to the mass grave overlooking Patterson Lake. That sign stands on the gravesite where the families buried 42 of their children, and it looks out over the land that these pioneers refused to abandon. The simple, wooden sign reads, "They carved homesteads out of forest and made life possible for us: their descendants".

In closing, may we be worthy descendants who strengthen what we inherited; who do not just enjoy what was built, but build again; and who keep Canada a country where tradition, responsibility and hard work still matter.

• (1425)

Dane Lloyd (Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill S-210, an act to establish September as Ukrainian heritage month. The legislation would recognize and honour the contributions of more than 1.3 million Canadians of Ukrainian heritage. I count many friends and members of my family as proud members of the Ukrainian Canadian community, and I am proud to represent thousands of people of Ukrainian heritage in my constituency of Parkland.

Ukrainian Canadians have served our country in every war since at least the First World War, and despite the sad, regrettable internment of Ukrainians during the First World War, thousands of Ukrainians signed up to fight and to defend Canada, including Filip Konowal, whose story I would like to share today.

Born in Ukraine, then under the Russian empire, Konowal was already an experienced soldier and tree-feller when he moved to Canada in 1913. In 1915, he enlisted in the 77th Canadian Infantry Battalion. He was a member of my own regiment, the Governor General's Foot Guards, the regiment whose tie I wear today.

Konowal took part in two of Canada's greatest military achievements: the Battle of Vimy Ridge and the Battle for Hill 70. For his bravery at Hill 70, Konowal, a Ukrainian, was awarded the Victoria Cross by King George V himself.

The citation describes his gallantry:

For most conspicuous bravery and leadership when in charge of a section in attack. His section had the difficult task of mopping up cellars, craters and machine-gun emplacements. Under his able direction all resistance was overcome successfully, and heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy. In one cellar he himself bayoneted three enemy and attacked single-handed seven others in a crater, killing them all.

On reaching the objective, a machine-gun was holding up the right flank, causing many casualties. Cpl. Konowal rushed forward and entered the emplacement, killed the crew, and brought the gun back to our lines.

The next day he again attacked single-handed another machine-gun emplacement, killed three of the crew, and destroyed the gun and emplacement with explosives.

This non-commissioned officer alone killed at least sixteen of the enemy, and during the two days' actual fighting carried on continuously his good work until severely wounded.

After the war, Konowal continued to suffer from his wounds, physically and also mentally; we know this today as PTSD. Konowal later sought his family in the Soviet Union, only to learn that his wife had died during the Soviet-induced famine, the Holodomor.

In his later years, he actually worked as a custodian in the House of Commons. Later, he was even hired by Prime Minister Mackenzie King, who recognized this custodian's ribbon: the Victoria Cross. Konowal was just one of many Ukrainian Canadians who have proudly served in the Canadian Armed Forces to this day.

I want to pay tribute to another great Ukrainian Canadian, my dear late friend Leo Korownyk. Leo was born October 14, 1930, in Ukraine, and passed to join our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, on March 1, 2024, at the age of 93. He is survived by his wife, Anne Korownyk; his children; and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Leo and his family are members of my church, and I was so blessed to know him.

Leo was the last known survivor in the Edmonton area of the Holodomor, the systemic genocide through starvation imposed on Ukrainians by Stalin's evil regime in Moscow. Leo survived not only the Holodomor but also the Second World War, before eventually making his way to Canada, where he established his family and flourished like so many others.

It is incredibly difficult to imagine what the decision to flee his homeland must have entailed. Leo later wrote, "When the Second World War erupted in 1941 between the Soviet Union and Germany, and also when in 1943 the Germans began retreating, thousands of Ukrainians and millions of Europeans [became refugees]. Our father then said aloud what he was thinking: 'When the front moves back, whether I'm dead or alive I won't spend another single day under the Communists.'"

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In the final stages of the war, Leo, his parents and his siblings, with all their belongings loaded onto a covered wagon, walked westward, fleeing the advance of the Red Army. I remember hearing this incredible story recounted at Leo's funeral: "That one small wagon, already on three wheels only and carrying the youngest member of our family, our sister Luba, had also on it a large shawl, the kind that usually women would wrap around their shoulders when the weather got colder. Mother had made that shawl...back in Ukraine; it was strong and it stretched, and she took it at the last minute. So now Father and Mother took that shawl...and tied [it] together, so that it formed a loop. Father...inserted the wagon's axle and carried the weight of [the wagon], while Mother pulled the wagon" [westward, out of Ukraine].

● (1430)

Like many immigrants, Leo struggled at first to make his way in Canada. He became a door-to-door salesman selling Fuller brushes. He later took up a position at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, where he worked servicing surveying equipment for 18 years.

An incredible writer, Leo's extraordinary contributions to Canada and Ukraine are reflected through his extensive literary achievements, which are collected in his published works, *I lived there, hungered, but survived*, a collection of poems remembering the Holodomor. Leo was incredibly passionate about language and preserving the language and culture of his beloved Ukraine, and for many years Leo would read his powerful poems at the annual Edmonton commemoration of Holodomor.

I would like to share a poem by Leo, which describes the horrors of the Holodomor and Stalin's attempt to destroy the Ukrainian people:

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At times I sit alone and meditate about the world, the human race, chaotic history, uncertain faith, and shadows hide my downcast face.

For in Ukraine there was a restless sky, yet independence she proclaimed. There was great joy in every eye, "Long live our country!" all exclaimed.

And yet, my country's future was not bright. On the horizon, stormy clouds, a sign there may not be real peace inside. Instead, uncertainty and doubts.

For Russia always was our neighbour for engaging in a cunning ploy, thus causing wretchedness and much great woe. She thought her gift was to destroy.

So 1930 was the start to liquidate the kulak class, and Stalin acted with a stony heart. Did more evil, never less.

He sent a quarter million of our people East, and thousands died while going there. Still others, quietly in exile, were deceased. If some survived, lived in despair.

Then, in 1931, horrific deeds were taking place. A fearful sight. Great famine had begun. But Stalin tried to save his face.

150,000 starved to death, but that was nothing to what would come. What you will hear may take away your breath, or even make your body numb.

For Kremlin agents and the troops have gone, to peasants' homes with clubs and arms, to plunder them with zest like Genghis Khan. Then drink and dance in burning barns.

Thus myriads of such Kremlin's rank and file, like pythons coiled around our chests to choke our life, and all our land defile, and poison into hearts injects.

Our world was tumbling like an old brick wall, thus causing ruin and despair. Exhausted people could not walk, but crawl. It was a yawning, open hell.

So three years passed, of hungry nights and days, of Kremlin's shedding blameless blood. All of Ukraine was in shock and dazed. Disease and death came like a flood.

Ten million people Stalin starved to death. Our fathers, mothers, children, youth, he took away God-given life and breath.

He hated God and us and truth. His mission was to see our country die, but we resolved to save our lands. He tried to kill us, jail and crucify; we kept our saber in our hand.

We called the world, "please come, we starve, help us!" They heard us well, and yet passed by, then said, "Why do these people fret and fuss?" We shrugged but did not blink an eye.

Though many decades came and now have gone, the memory still lingers on.

And now, we honour those who loved Ukraine till death, for they believed in her undying breath.

Dear God, all those who died of famine, genocide, grant them eternal rest. May they, in peace, abide.

Leo's legacy will forever endure in the hearts of those who had the privilege to know him. His dedication to Canada and Ukraine, his literary contributions, his humanitarian work and his unwavering faith in God serve as an inspiration to all.

Ukrainians like Leo and Filip Konowal made immense contributions to Canada, and I am honoured as a member of the Governor General's Foot Guards to recognize a heroic Ukrainian Canadian warrior who served in my regiment. I am also honoured to be given the opportunity today to share the story of my dear friend Leo Korownyk.

For Leo and the thousands of other Ukrainians who fled starvation and war, Canada served as a beacon of hope. I will miss seeing my friend again at church on Sunday, but I have faith that I will see him again.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): I recognize the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre for his right of reply.

Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to speak to Bill S-210. This legislation, if passed, would declare September of every year Ukrainian heritage month across Canada.

[Translation]

I would like to begin by thanking the members who just spoke for sharing their stories. I thank them for supporting this bill. There

were members from Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. I thank them.

[English]

The first Ukrainian immigrants to Canada arrived on September 7, 1891, and Ukrainian Canadians have since then helped to make Canada the great country that it is today. Those contributions span our economic, political, social and cultural life. That is why I was so proud in the last three parliaments to introduce a bill that would declare September Ukrainian heritage month, and that is why I am so proud to sponsor this bill in the House today.

● (1435)

Many Canadians are watching this debate at home. Some of them are immigrants to Canada from Ukraine. Some of them are the children and grandchildren of immigrants to Canada from Ukraine. My mother and my grandparents were immigrants to Canada from Ukraine.

My grandparents Ivan and Olena came to Canada after World War II, fleeing oppression and seeking a better life, like so many people who have come to Canada over the years from all around the world. They were incredibly proud of their Ukrainian heritage, but they were also incredibly proud to be Canadian. In fact, I have said this many times, and some members have heard me say it, my grandparents were among the proudest Canadians I have ever known.

To ensure that I learned about my Ukrainian heritage, my grandparents and my parents insisted I attend Saturday school, where we would learn the Ukrainian language, history, traditions and more. Every Saturday, after Saturday school, my grandfather would pick me up. We would have lunch together, and then he would help me with my Saturday school homework for the following week.

Members can imagine that when I was a teenager, when I was a kid, I was not so fond of Saturday school. I was not so fond of doing homework on Saturday afternoons either. One day I was very frustrated, I was struggling, and I said to my grandfather, whom I called Dido, "Dido, I don't want to do this anymore. I want to stop."

He said to me, "Yvan, you cannot stop. Let me tell you why. I'm very proud of my heritage, and I think if you learn more, you will be too." Then he said, "I want you to learn about the Ukrainian people because so many of them came here to Canada. They came before you did, they came before I did, and they helped to make this country great. I want you to learn about the people who made Canada great."

For 135 years, Canadians of Ukrainian descent have left a historic mark on our country. Their contributions span communities across Ontario and every riding represented here in the House of Commons. Most recently, since 2022, Canadians have generously welcomed approximately 200,000 Ukrainians to Canada who were fleeing the war in Ukraine. Those immigrants to Canada from Ukraine have worked very hard. They have contributed to our communities. They are filling jobs that in many cases cannot be filled by Canadians, and they are making important contributions to Canada. Through the bill before us, Parliament would recognize these contributions over those 135 years.

Ukrainian Canadians have contributed to Canada, but Canada has also supported Ukrainian Canadians. Canada was the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence in 1991 and was among the first countries to recognize the Holodomor as a genocide. Our government has been a global leader in supporting the people of Ukraine as they defend themselves against Russia's brutal invasion.

To me, there are two key reasons we support the people of Ukraine right now. The first is, of course, because it is the right thing to do. It is the moral thing to do. Ukrainians are defending themselves against a brutal invasion and war crimes every day. The second reason is that it is the right thing for Canada. Ukraine's victory is vital to Canada's security. If Russia wins, it will not stop at Ukraine. We know this because Vladimir Putin has told us so. If Russia wins, if Russia prevails in Ukraine, then Canadians, Americans and Europeans will be next in defending ourselves against Russian aggression, whether that is in Europe, in the Canadian Arctic or somewhere else in the world. That is why Canada is a global leader in supporting Ukraine, and that is why it has never been more important to pass a Ukrainian heritage month bill than it is today.

Ukraine's most prolific poet, Taras Shevchenko, once famously said:

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[*Member spoke in Ukrainian and provided the following translation:*]

Teach, read and learn from others, but be proud of that which is your own.

[*English*]

Today I feel the way the people at home feel, the way my parents and grandparents would feel if they were here today, the way generations of Ukrainians who came to Canada would feel if they were here today: proud of their Ukrainian heritage, proud of the contributions Ukrainian Canadians have made to Canada and proud to be Canadian.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

• (1440)

[*English*]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Yvan Baker: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 11, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*Translation*]

It being 2:40 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:40 p.m.)

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