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Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

ORLEANS YOUTH COUNCIL

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Orléans Youth Council, which I co-chair with my provincial counterpart Stephen Blais, is made up of 25 dynamic young people. Our first virtual meeting took place on September 19.

I want to thank my colleague, the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, for agreeing to come and talk about the essential role that Canadian youth play in our country. The council has already demonstrated leadership in the community of Orléans, particularly by participating in the Orléans Legion poppy campaign and by writing letters to seniors to help combat social isolation as part of the Together, Let's Write initiative.

In preparation for our next meeting, which will be held on November 21, the council has invited Cumberland's new city councillor, Catherine Kitts, who was recently elected in a by-election, to come speak to us about her experience and knowledge regarding community involvement.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of the Orléans Youth Council for their involvement and leadership in our community.

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[*English*]

LARRY SPILAK

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Foothills is grieving the loss of a loving family man, a passionate community

leader and long-time councillor who was dedicated to his community. Larry Spilak, the former reeve of Foothills County, passed away on November 6 after lengthy battle with cancer.

Larry never allowed his fight with cancer to slow him down. He remained committed to those things most important to him, being a good husband, a proud father and tirelessly supporting his community. Those who served alongside him on council or in the De Winton community would agree that Larry was a hard-working, respected and strong leader.

A champion for his constituents and certainly someone who knew the meaning of service, Larry was a mentor to me. When I entered politics, I looked to people I trusted and admired, people like Larry Spilak.

Our community has lost a friend and a great man. We extend our condolences to his wife Danielle, his son Ben, his friends, family and colleagues in Foothills County, all of whom Larry loved dearly.

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KIDS FOR A CURE

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, insulin remains one of the most significant advances in the history of medicine and continues to save the lives of millions of people globally.

JDRF's Kids for a Cure is honouring Banting's and Best's gift to the world, and I had the privilege of meeting virtually with three of their amazing young leaders, each with big dreams for the future. They are 15-year-old Anne Pettigrew, nine-year-old Maya Webster and seven-year-old Kieran Palmer. They told me about their lives with type 1 diabetes.

While these young champions face challenges, they advocate for all the other children living with type 1 diabetes. They want members of Parliament to know the life-saving impact Canadian research and innovation has had and continues to have on the lives of young people with the disease.

Anne, Maya and Kieran are making a real difference. They are champions and superstars.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

SENNETERRE

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this week, the Corporation des Fleurons du Québec released its 15th municipal horticultural rankings, a wonderful way to recognize communities' efforts to beautify their surroundings and enhance their residents' lives in a lasting way.

I am very proud to announce that Senneterre, one of the most beautiful towns in Abitibi, was awarded four “fleurons”, a sign that all the hard work that has been done to invest in and beautify the community is once again bearing fruit. Senneterre's accomplishments include the Forêt du 100e to mark the town's centennial, the Desjardins pavilion, and the decorative lighting and flowers.

In the years to come, the town will be developing a residential, commercial and institutional beautification strategy. I would like to congratulate the mayor of Senneterre, Jean-Maurice Matte, and everyone who contributed to beautifying the town.

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• (1410)

[English]

KJ DESIGNERS

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that small businesses are the lifeblood of our communities and are vital for Canada's economic recovery.

I am honoured to speak today in recognition of a thriving small business in my riding of Brampton Centre.

Founded in 2001 by Dinesh Gautam, KJ Designers has served the greater Brampton community by providing high-quality Indian wedding fashion outfits throughout Canada. Unfortunately, the business has had some significant downfalls during the pandemic. However, with the help of our government's plans to support small businesses, KJ Designers continues to keep its doors open and the business ought to boom now.

I thank Dinesh, their family and staff and for their commitment to serve the communities. Their efforts never go unnoticed.

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MEFLOQUINE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, racism in all its forms is unacceptable, including within the Canadian Armed Forces.

Recently in *The Globe and Mail*, former defence minister David Pratt was right to call it out. However, his assertion that racism was solely to blame for the Somalia affair misleads Canadians about what truly happened in Somalia.

Members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment were poisoned with illegal use of the anti-malaria drug mefloquine. Shamefully, the Liberals shut down the Somalia inquiry just before the misuse and impact of mefloquine toxicity was to be exposed. As a result, the airborne was disbanded. Mefloquine became DND's preferred

anti-malaria drug until 2107. Families have been destroyed. Lives have been upended and lost to suicide.

The impact of the mefloquine Somalia affair should have been investigated. While our allies have shown compassion and support for their soldiers impacted by this drug, the Liberal government prefers to meet our veterans in court.

The Somalia affair is a painful chapter of our history. Our veterans all Canadians deserve to know the truth. This is one apology for which the Liberals refuse to take responsibility.

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[Translation]

HULL VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the excellent work done by the Centre d'action bénévole de Hull, which is celebrating 25 years of service in my riding, Hull—Aylmer.

Delivering meals to people's homes, driving them to appointments and hosting tax clinics are just a few of the ways this organization is improving the lives of thousands of residents. The centre has always found ways to innovate to meet people's needs. Through its work on the ground with vulnerable seniors, the centre helps combat social isolation and the loneliness felt by too many seniors.

Above all, I want to thank the centre for promoting volunteerism in our community and across Quebec. We are inspired and empowered by its enthusiasm.

Best wishes and happy anniversary to the centre.

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[English]

GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Global Entrepreneurship Week. This initiative is hosted by Futurpreneur, a uniquely Canadian success story that has supported the creation of well over 11,000 Canadian businesses since its inception. Global Entrepreneurship Week celebrates entrepreneurs as the backbone of the Canadian economy. They are a driving force for innovation, job creation and prosperity from coast to coast to coast.

We know that our entrepreneurs have been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, but we also know that they will prove instrumental in our mission to build back better. The entrepreneurial spirit of Canadians remains unflappable, contributing to our culture, economy and local identity. In small towns and big cities across the country, entrepreneurs are still launching new businesses, revitalizing main streets and creating jobs and economic opportunity.

I invite all colleagues to join me in recognizing Global Entrepreneurship Week and thanking Futurpreneur Canada for its peerless work in supporting innovators and risk takers throughout our beautiful country.

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● (1415)

TOURISM

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was able to attend virtually the Annual Tourism Congress hosted by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada. Over 2,400 travel and tourism professionals registered to take part, and much of what was discussed centred on the need for additional and tailored supports from the federal government.

Since the start of this pandemic, our Conservative opposition has been asking the Liberal government to present a sector-specific travel and tourism recovery plan. Nine months later, the government has still not taken any action. The absence of a dedicated sector-specific tourism recovery plan is an abject failure of the Liberal government.

Destination Canada's own state of the industry report from October stated: "We need to help provide a light at the end of the tunnel." This is a call for action. The tourism sector and, more importantly, Canada's travel and tourism workers want to get back to work and do so safely. They are looking to Parliament for timely and critical solutions. Now is the time to deliver.

The Speaker: Before continuing, I want to remind the hon. members that statements are being made. It is nice to see that social distancing is taking place, but it does not mean they have to talk loudly and drown out the person who is trying to speak. I just want to remind them and the people I am speaking to are not listening, so I am going to say it again and hopefully someone will point them out. Thank you.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is focused on minimizing the negative impact of the coronavirus. The second wave is upon us here in Canada, and the government continues to work together with many different stakeholders, whether provinces, territories, indigenous leaders or many others who are making a difference. That is how we are going to ensure that we minimize the impact of the coronavirus.

In the Senate, we have legislation that is about to pass that would deal with an extension of the wage subsidy program, which continues to protect millions of jobs. There are so many things that we can still be doing. We are looking for all interested parties to get on board to be a part of a team Canada approach to defeating the coronavirus.

Statements by Members

FIREARMS

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, gun crimes in the GTA are out of control. Dante Andreatta, a 12-year-old boy, was caught in the crossfire of a gang-related shooting. He lost his life walking home from the grocery store with his mother.

The number of criminals with total disregard for human life is growing. The Toronto Police are reporting more shooting deaths this year. They are six incidents away from an all-time high. The time to act on gun crime is now.

My bill, Bill C-238, is one of the ways we can fight gun crime fuelled by smuggled guns. It would keep dangerous criminals behind bars for longer, and make it more difficult to get bail. That is just part of the solution. Unfortunately, statistics on victims of shootings are not part of the Liberal government's agenda.

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[Translation]

SOLIDARITY IN RICHMOND—ARTHABASKA

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I want to take a moment to commend the sense of unity in my riding during this very difficult time.

The Bois-Francs—Érable chamber of commerce and industry and the Des Sources chamber of commerce and entrepreneurship, among others, have launched a gift certificate fundraiser for local businesses in partnership with Desjardins. Another massive campaign has been launched on social media to encourage local restaurant owners.

In Saint-Camille a crowdfunding campaign was held to support the cultural sector and seniors in the Des Sources RCM and Bas-Saint-François.

There are hundreds of initiatives like these in my region, and across the country, I am sure.

I applaud everyone who is rolling up their sleeves and being so generous and supportive during this difficult time. I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart.

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● (1420)

[English]

CORRECTIONS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, carceral institutions with populations primarily from BIPOC communities violate the fundamental human rights of incarcerated persons, and the pandemic has made it even worse. Federal and provincial institutions in Manitoba are in a public health crisis, dealing with multiple COVID-19 outbreaks, including 27 cases reported yesterday at a women's correctional centre.

Oral Questions

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba has been calling on governments to improve access for families and outside supports and to release youths, individuals who are immunocompromised, those on remand or those imprisoned for administrative reasons.

The right to adequate conditions for health and well-being is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Incarcerated women have the right to health, safety and security of the person. This guarantee is enshrined in our Charter. Women currently being housed in these institutions are grandmothers, mothers, sisters and aunties. The government needs to listen to families and organizations to ensure their safety.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL ECONOMY ORGANIZATION IN SALABERRY— SUROÏT

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight the 50th anniversary of the Centre du partage, a social enterprise that is very important to the community of Salaberry—Suroît.

In 1970, Sister Jeanne Laperle, with the support of Sisters Claire and Blandine, devoted her efforts to the mission of sharing. They believed that people's generosity would generate mutual support and solidarity.

By managing a large thrift store, the Centre du partage helps others while also promoting the environmental objective of reusing our goods. In 2019 alone, almost \$200,000 was donated to other local organizations by the Centre du partage.

I also commend the contribution of Lucie Hallé Lévesque, who managed the organization for more than 20 years, and the entire management team, including Francine Leith Miron and Johanne Viger, as well as the many volunteers carrying on the work of the Sisters of Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Long live the Centre du partage.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): The decision to ban Huawei from deploying 5G should be an easy one for the government. Our closest allies in the Five Eyes have all banned Huawei from their networks. We are the only ones who have not. Next door, the U.S., our most important trading partner and military ally, banned Huawei for national defence and security reasons, yet the Liberals are holding out as if they are buying time.

First, they were going to decide before the election, and then it was after the election. Over a year has gone by, and there is still no decision, but we have seen their delaying tactics before. If the Liberals do not want to take responsibility or stand up for something, they choose death by delay: energy projects, the Teck Frontier mine and illegal train blockades that held industry hostage are examples.

If the Liberals hope to deal with the Chinese government by using a weak tactic that causes suffering here at home, they need a re-

ality check. This ruthless regime has a long record of breaching security and stealing intellectual property, and that was before 5G. The Prime Minister needs to stop wasting time, take a firm stance and say no to Huawei.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have rarely met an elected representative at any level of government as attuned to the interests and concerns of her constituents as Maria Tutino.

Last week, Maria embarked on a well-deserved retirement from public life after serving the good people of Baie-D'Urfé for a decade and a half. Maria led this picturesque and volunteer-driven community with an inspiring combination of vision, energy and personal connection to her fellow citizens.

Maria's leadership also extended well beyond the town. She helped defend the interests of the wider collection of West Island municipalities in the transition period following the 2004 municipal demergers in Quebec. She also poured her trademark dedication into the Train de l'Ouest campaign for better commuter rail service to downtown Montreal that eventually led to the REM light rail project.

We thank Maria and congratulate her on a job well done.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1425)

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, experts are raising alarms about the government's plan to distribute a COVID vaccine. We do not have the freezer capacity. We have signed deals that mean other nations, like the United States, will receive millions of doses before a single Canadian does.

When can Canadians expect to see a real plan for COVID vaccine distribution from the government?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that the best way to get through this COVID crisis is with vaccines. That is why we have been working since the summer on signing deals with a record number of companies around the world to ensure that wherever or however someone gets the right vaccine, it will be available in Canada.

We are actually positioned better than just about any other country in the world in terms of access to a robust portfolio of vaccines because we took leadership as a government and got it done. We are also ensuring that we are going to be able to distribute those vaccines as they become available across Canada. Canadians can count on us.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said they have signed a record number of deals. The minister told the committee that they have signed freezer contracts, but she will not say who got the contracts or how much. Maybe Frank Baylis makes freezers.

Officials said that the Public Health Agency would be responsible for the logistics of handling and distributing the vaccine, but we cannot get a clear answer on that either.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to reveal key information to Canadians, who need to know about the availability and distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the number one question I get from Canadians these days, and actually over the past nine or 10 months, has been this: When is this all going to be over? How much longer are we going to have to go through this? That is what Canadians want to know.

Of course, now that we see there are vaccines on the horizon, people are very excited about it. What I can tell the House is that we are in for a number of more months of needing to do the right things before these vaccines start landing anywhere around the world.

That is why we are working very hard to make sure that Canadians get those vaccines the right way and properly. We are working very hard on a range of different vaccine delivery methods, and we will be there to support Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after obfuscation and after prorogation, the number one question I get when I travel around Canada is this: When will the Prime Minister finally answer a question and be transparent with Canadians? The distribution, he said, would be by the military. The government's distribution story keeps changing. Perhaps it has hired a storyteller.

The Minister of Public Services and Procurement said that she is waiting on Health Canada's approval for any vaccine. Pfizer applied for emergency approvals in the United States. We know that Health Canada's delays on rapid tests led to problems.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to rapid vaccine approval?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that when I speak with Canadians from coast to coast to coast, they are not asking me about QP. They are

asking me about COVID. That is continuing to be what we are working on as our entire focus.

Every step of the way, whether it has been in stepping up on PPE or stepping up on testing and, indeed, on rapid testing, which we have delivered to the provinces, with the provinces now evaluating how they want to deploy it, we have been there to deliver all of these things that Canadians need. We will be there to deliver on vaccines, as we have had their backs in every other way during this pandemic.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Chelsea Craig is the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Ms. Craig recently called Bill 101 oppressive. The Liberals continue to flout Bill 101, 43 years after it was adopted. Why do Liberal leaders continue to undermine French in Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not need any lectures from a party that still refuses to commit to appointing only bilingual justices to the Supreme Court.

We have always done what is necessary to defend the French fact in Canada, including in Quebec, as we said in the throne speech. We know how important it is to promote the French language across the country and also to protect the French language in Quebec, in partnership with the Government of Quebec.

● (1430)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saint-Laurent showed considerable contempt for francophones, but no Liberal members from Quebec have spoken out against that.

These members are doing nothing to defend the French language. No action has been taken on official languages in five years. Will the Prime Minister introduce a bill on official languages before Christmas, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to show his commitment to the French language, will he promise today to appoint only bilingual judges to the Supreme Court of Canada? That is something he did not want to do and we will see whether he agrees to do that.

We will always be there to defend the French language and defend the French fact in Quebec and across Canada. That is why we deplore the comments made by the member for Saint-Laurent and that is why we are pleased that she apologized for what she said.

Oral Questions

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the united government of this country has not spoken so much French since the Quebec Act in 1774, when it was seriously afraid of French Canadians, as they were called at the time.

Over the past few days and weeks, we have seen the huge divide between Quebec values and Canadian values, or Quebec values and Liberal values. Quebeckers value freedom of speech, secularism and language. Let's try to make this clear for the Quebeckers and media representatives who are watching.

Does the Prime Minister of Canada believe, in his heart and in his soul, that French is in jeopardy—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has always been there for the French fact in Quebec and across Canada, and we will continue to be there.

As a Montreal MP and a proud Montrealer and Quebecker, I am concerned about the fact that many people cannot get service in French in Montreal. That is unacceptable. That is why we will keep working to defend the French language and stand by Quebeckers to defend our culture, our language and our identity, as well as the environment and economic growth. Quebeckers can count on our federal government to be here throughout the pandemic.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it will not be long until we get him to say the words “Bill 101”. We will keep pushing.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister dissociated himself from the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Today, he dissociated himself from the Liberal member for Saint-Laurent. He punished her for being honest and saying publicly what many Liberals are thinking privately. Now he would have us believe that the Liberal caucus cares so much about French that its members probably keep a copy of Bill 101 on their bedside tables.

I would imagine the Prime Minister has spoken to his party president and the member for Saint-Laurent. Do both of them now also believe that French is under threat in Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people might well be wondering why the Bloc Québécois keeps hammering us on this subject when we actually agree with them on it. We must continue to protect the French fact in Canada and in Quebec because, yes, the danger is real and the decline is real.

Why, then, is the member trying to pick a fight over something we agree on? It is because he does not want to admit that a federal government is delivering for Quebeckers, whether through the CERB, money for small businesses or the battle we are waging against COVID-19 in lockstep with the Quebec government.

It must be so awful for the Bloc Québécois to see a strong federal government.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to be frank, things are not going well. There are COVID-19 outbreaks happening across the country, and the situation in Quebec is seri-

ous. Canadians and their families are scared. Everyone is frightened for our seniors.

However, we knew all this was coming. We knew that the second wave of COVID-19 would hit hard, yet there is less support for people now than in the first wave of COVID-19. We in the NDP are ready to work together to help people.

When will the Liberal government finally take action?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this pandemic, we have been there to help Canadians, families, young people, seniors and workers. We have been there to help businesses, both small and large, and communities. We have been there to provide personal protective equipment and testing supplies to the provinces. We have sent the provinces more than \$25 billion to help them get ready for this second wave, and we will continue to work with them.

We will continue to be there for all Canadians during this pandemic. For as long as it lasts, we will be there as a federal government.

• (1435)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, crowded homes in Nunavut mean the risk of the outbreak spreading is severe. In Manitoba, outbreaks in long-term care homes means we are losing seniors. In Ontario, hospitals are being overrun, yet, despite how serious the situation is right now in the second wave, there is less help in place for people than there was in the first wave. We, as New Democrats, are ready to work together to get help to people who are in need.

What is the government waiting for to act, now we are in the second wave?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have not waited. We are continuing to increase our supports to individuals, communities, first nations, the north and provinces. Every step of the way during this pandemic, the federal government has made this promise: We have Canadians' backs. That is exactly what we have done and what we will continue to do for as long as it takes, whatever it takes.

I look forward to working with all members of this House to make sure we are moving forward on getting Canadians the supports they need. Every step of the way, this government will be there for Canadians.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know the lengths the Prime Minister went to in his attempt to get a seat at the UN Security Council, including the money he spent, the political capital he used and the tenacity he showed. The Prime Minister, his ministers and even civil servants were relentless in the campaign for the Prime Minister's vanity seat. It did not work, but the entire world knew the Prime Minister wanted this.

Will the Prime Minister use that same focus, determination and zeal in his fight to ensure that Keystone XL, a project that will create thousands of real jobs for Canadians, gets built?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have supported that project for the past seven years. I actually went down to Washington, D.C., to speak to a room full of Democrats before I was Prime Minister to talk about how important that project is for Canadian and American energy security.

I will continue to bring that up. We continue to work on it. I brought it up in a conversation with President-elect Joe Biden. It was in our very first conversation. We will continue to work together on fighting climate change, ensuring energy security and building a better future for all of our citizens.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem is the Prime Minister has said so many negative things about Canadian oil and gas, and done so many things to kill jobs in the Canadian energy sector, that nobody believes him or trusts him to do anything to stand up for these jobs in Canada. Conservatives do not trust him, and I promise members, Canadian families and energy workers do not trust the Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister stand up today and guarantee that he is as committed to Keystone XL pipeline getting built as he was to his vanity UN seat?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is the problem that Conservatives face: Any time someone talks about doing right by the environment, or building a greener or cleaner future, they think it is an attack on workers, the oil sands and the energy industry, when, indeed, moving forward on protecting the environment is the best way to ensure jobs and security for our energy workers and our energy industries.

We know that international investors and consumers are looking for people with plans, with resolve and with a lower carbon future. That is what we are working on building right across the country. Energy, environment and economy go together.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the problem that Canadians face: The Prime Minister had a state dinner with President Obama, but Obama cancelled Keystone XL.

The government is running a whole-of-government campaign to find Bill Morneau a retirement job at the OECD. The Prime Minister toured the world meeting with despots for his UN Security Council bid, but only one phone call for the thousands of jobs that rely on Keystone XL.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to meeting with as many American officials as possible to get this project done, help western Canada and help all of Canada?

Oral Questions

• (1440)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is what Conservatives simply do not understand. We cannot get projects built, and we cannot move forward to create good jobs for Canadians, if we do not have a plan for the environment at the same time, and if we are not committing to fight climate change.

That is where Conservatives are stuck in ideologies of decades past. Canadians know that the only way forward with Americans and people around the world is to show real leadership on climate change, the kind of leadership we have shown over the past five years.

When will Conservatives wake up and realize that to protect jobs, they need to fight climate change?

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[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked questions about the government blindly trusting compromised information.

It seems that the Liberal government is not very concerned about compromised institutions. Today, Democracy Watch announced that it has filed a lawsuit against the government's judicial appointment system, which is politically biased and compromises the impartiality of the courts. The minister refuses to comment.

What does this silence say about this government's transparency?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, we brought in a merit-based process for judicial appointments.

After years of Conservative patronage for its friends and allies, we put in place a system for appointing judges based on merit and on independent recommendations. Now these judges reflect the geographic, ethnic and political diversity of our country. It is important for our judiciary to reflect the reality of our country.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in May 2019, Democracy Watch gave this very government an F in transparency.

The president of the Canadian Bar Association has asked that changes be made to the judicial selection process to prevent partisan manipulation. The minister's office refuses to comment because it knows that he has significant influence over the process.

Oral Questions

Does the government intend to follow the organizations' advice and revise the selection process for judges?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, several years ago, we put in place an independent, merit-based process.

Thanks to our process, high-quality judges with diverse interests, backgrounds and political histories have been appointed across the country. We selected a record number of women and a record number of people from diverse communities. We are improving the judicial appointment process. We will continue to ensure that judges of indisputable quality are appointed across the country.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he mentioned a merit-based selection process.

The media reported that this government was interfering in the judicial appointment process. Democracy Watch said it, as did the Canadian Bar Association. The Prime Minister and his minister are the only ones who disagree.

When will the Prime Minister admit that he is interfering in judicial appointments?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we brought in a robust, independent, merit-based process that helps us get quality judges to the bench across the country.

The leader of the official opposition referenced the media and Democracy Watch, but just look at what the Conservatives did to these two groups when they were in government. The process was completely botched under Harper, and our improvements have made Canada's judiciary more diverse.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister somewhat simplistically refers to as the French fact is Quebec's national and official language.

Every speech, most Supreme Court of Canada rulings, and federal money are being used to challenge and gut Bill 101. Does the Prime Minister regret spending Quebecers' money to oppose the French language? Will he acknowledge that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was used to gut Bill 101 before the Supreme Court? Does the Prime Minister of Canada believe that Bill 101 oppresses English speakers in Quebec?

• (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of the court challenges program, I would like to remind the House that we are the ones who reinstated that program after the Conservatives scrapped it twice. We reinstated it so that people would be able to defend themselves when their rights are violated, and those people include the many francophones who want to be able to live in their own beautiful language. That is and always will be important to us.

With regard to Bill 101, we recognize that, in order for Canada to be bilingual, Quebec must first and foremost be francophone. That is why we support Bill 101 in what it does for Quebec, and that is

why it is important to manage official bilingualism across the country.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he is going to make the front page.

The last time the subject of citizenship came up, the Leader of the Government literally blew a gasket and said that the Bloc was seeking to divide on the basis of language, culture and colour.

If the Prime Minister acknowledges that the French fact is under threat and is suddenly in love with Bill 101, will he tell his caucus to vote in favour of the bill that the Bloc Québécois will be introducing tomorrow?

The bill would require newcomers to have a basic knowledge of French if they are applying for Canadian citizenship in Quebec, the same way knowledge of English is required in Canada. I am confident that our Conservative friends will support this bill.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is a little strange and worrisome that the Bloc is working so closely with the Conservatives on the issue of the French fact in Quebec and Canada, given that the Conservative Party has a tradition of chipping away at the rights of francophones outside Quebec and attacking the French fact by refusing to commit to appointing only judges who could speak French to the Supreme Court.

We will always stand up for the French fact in Canada. We will always stand up for the French language and the French identity in Canada. That is something people can count on the Liberal Party to do.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just said that it would be months and months before a vaccine is available in Canada, so we need to use other tools right now. Yesterday, Anthony Fauci said that Canada must test widely in the community for asymptomatic spreaders in order to stop the spread of COVID. To do this, we need things like at-home tests that people can easily buy and frequently use. Today, the U.S. approved this type of test.

When will Prime Minister allow Canadians to have this life-saving and job-saving tool?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, \$25 billion, that is what we have sent to the provinces so they can invest in testing, in contact tracing. We sent that over the summer for vulnerable people, for back to school, to support their health systems. We understand how important it is for the federal government to be there to support Canadians directly and to support the provinces.

Oral Questions

I certainly look forward to continuing to work with the provinces on delivering these tests that they need. We delivered rapid tests to all the provinces and hopefully soon some of the provinces will start deploying those rapid tests that we have delivered to them by the millions.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to remind the Prime Minister, it is actually his job to approve technologies like at-home tests, which the Americans just approved today. He might not realize in his rich privilege that people might not be getting tested because of the stigma. If we could have at-home tests that people could use in the privacy of their homes frequently, it could be a game-changer. It could keep things open, it could keep kids in schools.

When will the Prime Minister stop blocking Canadians from having access to at-home tests?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it concerns me that in the middle of a pandemic, where health is on everyone's mind, the opposition health critic does not understand that it is not my job to approve tests, it is not the job of the Prime Minister or any politicians to approve tests; it is the job of our professional independent public servants, who we trust to do those jobs.

Maybe she thinks it is all about politics. It is not; it is about protecting Canadians and saving lives. That is what has guided this government every step of the way in this pandemic, science not politics.

• (1450)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): What the Prime Minister does not understand, Mr. Speaker, is that it is his job to go to the bureaucracy and tell it we need both. We need a rapid test review. We need to have that sanctity and that thoroughness of review, but we need to have it quickly so that we can save lives. At-home tests should be something the government is encouraging Health Canada to do a fulsome review on in a short period of time so we can have access to these tests and stop the pandemic in its tracks.

That is his job and it is his lack of ability to get this done that is preventing Canadians from having access to these tools. Why?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way this government has worked closely with scientists and health professionals to ensure they have the tools to do their jobs and can make the best recommendations possible to Canadians. We have amplified those and ensured that Canadians right across the country, from public health officials to premiers, can make the right decisions to keep people safe. We have told them we know they are going to face difficult decisions about whether to shut down quickly or try and stretch it out a little. We have made that job slightly easier by saying we will have the backs of their citizens, we will have the backs of their businesses. We will give them those supports so they can make the decision to shut down quickly. That is what we have been there to do for the provinces and we will continue to be there to support all Canadians.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what concerns me is the arrogance of the Prime Minister.

We ask questions, hoping for a better response from the government.

Science above politics. A year ago the government shut down the early warning pandemic system to focus on vaping, a system that for 20 years protected Canada from an outbreak like this. For 20 years scientists were tasked to rely on their own intelligence, not on China.

Excuse me if we are bothering the Prime Minister with these questions. We want to save lives. We want to save our economy.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that I did not just hear the Leader of the Opposition say that because of something we did last year, Canadians are now facing a pandemic. The level of political attacks the Conservatives are actually tossing out is irresponsible at a time when Canadians are looking to government and political leaders to pull together.

That is exactly what we have done. We have been working, hand in glove, with the provincial governments. We have been working with local health authorities. We have been ensuring that indigenous communities get the supports they need. We have been working directly with Canadians. We will continue to have the backs of Canadians every step of the way.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government has refused to be transparent about the vaccine deals it has signed with drug makers or its plans to deliver COVID vaccines to Canadians. Just today, we learned from the Ontario health minister that six million doses of vaccine will apparently be delivered to Canada between January and March, with almost half for Ontario alone. This is just a fraction of the doses the Prime Minister claims he has secured.

Why are we hearing national vaccine plans from a province, and when will this Prime Minister reveal full vaccine distribution details for Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the summer onwards, we have worked extremely hard to sign deals with as many potential vaccine producers as possible around the world. As a result, Canada has the strongest portfolio of potential vaccines of any of our peer countries, because we have been there to support Canadians.

We know that getting those vaccines out to Canadians across the country is going to be a significant challenge, because there are so many different types of vaccines and so many Canadians who need to get them. However, as we have been every step of the way, we will be there to deliver for Canadians to get us through this pandemic.

*Oral Questions***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Leese Qaqasiq came to Ottawa from Nunavut to treat a broken pelvis. In the hospital here, she was denied water and staff refused to change her diaper. She called 911, and emergency services brought water to her room. This strong indigenous woman said, “We’re done...we’re not going to be treated like that anymore”.

First nations and Inuit health is a federal responsibility, and this is another example of the racism indigenous people face in the health care system. Indigenous people are done with racism. When will the Liberals be?

• (1455)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, systemic racism against indigenous peoples, against racialized Canadians, continues and is something that this government is committed to fighting against.

We made a commitment and are moving forward on distinctions-based health legislation that will ensure that we are doing a better job of supporting indigenous peoples through their health challenges. We will continue to work hand in hand with them and ensure that, through provincial systems as well, there is better treatment for indigenous peoples.

We have a lot of work to do, but this government is committed to doing it, and we will continue to do exactly that.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, Brampton got its fair share. This morning, the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities announced that my community of Brampton South will receive almost \$39 million from our government towards a transformative downtown development project. It is expected that this will create 23,000 jobs and impact the local GDP to the tune of \$1.4 billion.

Can our Prime Minister tell us how local sustainable infrastructure projects, like Brampton's Riverwalk, will play a part in Canada's economic recovery?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brampton South for her tireless advocacy for her community.

Climate change and the severe weather it can bring has increased the risk of flooding in Canada. We are committed to helping communities overcome these new challenges. That is why we announced improvements for the downtown Brampton flood protection project. It will reduce the risk of flooding for hundreds of families across the downtown core, while attracting new investment to the city and creating good jobs for the future.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently at the justice committee we heard moving testimony from individuals in the persons with disabilities community who are gravely con-

cerned about the government's Bill C-7 and its impact on their community. Krista Carr, executive vice-president of Inclusion Canada, said that if Bill C-7 passes, discrimination on the basis of disability would once again be entrenched in Canadian law.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing, listen to the voices of Canadians living with disabilities and support our amendments that would reinstate safeguards to protect vulnerable Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning we have worked closely with advocates within the disability community to hear their concerns and to look at how we can get the balance right. We know how important it is to move forward with a medical assistance in dying bill that is constitutional and that both maintains and protects people's rights while at the same time protects the most vulnerable. It is something we did as we moved forward a number of years ago. We are continuing to move forward, while listening to people, to try to get a very difficult balance right, but Canadians deserve us to get this right.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is listening, he has heard from physicians who have referred to Bill C-7 as a massive failure of compassion. He might have heard from disability advocates from across the country who have raised alarms that the bill goes too far and devalues their lives. One of the witnesses at committee said that she believed all her doctor saw when looking at her was a woman alone, sick, tired and probably tired of living.

Let us get the balance right. Why is the Prime Minister rushing the bill when so many people fear the vulnerable will be impacted? Can he listen and have amendments that will protect society's most vulnerable?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite well knows that the courts have ruled on this and that there are pressures and questions from many different Canadians on all sides of this, wanting to get this bill right and move it forward. We continue to work as a government should, and indeed as a Parliament should, listening to different perspectives and trying to get that balance right because we know that what we need to do is to ensure that all Canadians' rights are protected, while at the same time we protect the most vulnerable. As this Parliament has in the past, I look forward to good, robust conversations as we work to get something very important just right for Canadians.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister stated he thought a trade agreement with the United Kingdom was an easy one to move on, and then he blamed delays on the U.K. lacking bandwidth. U.K. representatives have denied this claim. The Prime Minister patronized one of our most trusted allies.

The government has had years to work on this agreement and now there are only 23 more sitting days of Parliament to make this happen. When is the Prime Minister going to be bringing an agreement to Parliament?

• (1500)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been many years that we have been working on moving forward on a seamless transition for the U.K., following its Brexit, to ensure that the trade relationship between Canada and the United Kingdom continues on the same rhythm.

We are hopeful that we are going to be able to get to an agreement very soon, because, indeed, we know that the transition to Brexit is happening in a matter of weeks. We continue to work to ensure protection for Canadian companies, access for Canadian consumers and certainty for our U.K. friends.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government spent five years chasing a free trade agreement with Communist China until the foreign minister just recently gave up this summer. However, with our oldest ally, the United Kingdom, the government has been missing for 18 months. Yesterday, in the United Kingdom's House of Commons, a minister for the British government suggested that our Prime Minister's statements should not be taken seriously. It has taken them five years to realize what we have known from day one.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to having a Canada-U.K. free trade agreement completed and presented to Parliament by the end of the year?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we are working extremely hard with the U.K. on ensuring that they get a seamless transition. They chose to leave the CETA, the European Union agreement with Canada.

We look forward to seeing that roll over in a seamless transition, but it is really entirely up to the U.K. to get that done. We are there to sign it, and we are very hopeful that we will be able to move forward shortly. We respect the sovereignty of the U.K. and its ability to make its own decisions.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Proline Advantage was awarded an untendered \$371-million contract for medical gowns. The problem is, that company does not make gowns.

FTI Professional Grade was awarded an untendered \$237-million contract for medical ventilators. The problem is, that company does not make ventilators. This summer, WE Charity got an untendered \$900-million contract to create a grant system.

Oral Questions

Why is it so easy for this government to hand out hundreds of millions of dollars to people who do not provide the goods or services required?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the beginning of the pandemic, we have seen Canadians, businesses and creators mobilize to help fight COVID-19.

From manufacturers developing new PPE to individuals finding ways to bring it here from around the world, we have been able to develop solutions right here at home so we would no longer face the challenges of sourcing the necessary medical equipment and PPE.

We are very proud of the efforts that all Canadians have made, and we will continue to work to ensure that all Canadians are protected.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last month, the government pushed for the creation of a special committee to study all COVID-19-related spending.

Since then we have learned that \$371 million was awarded to just one man for medical gowns for twice the price, a man who was selling protein drinks out of his basement, not medical supplies. We also learned that the government had given \$237 million, which is \$100 million too much, to former MP Frank Baylis, who just a year ago was still a Liberal MP.

Can the Prime Minister explain to us why he does not want us to have this committee to study COVID-19 spending?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that some people watching this question period might be worried that there is a tremendous shortage of medical equipment or personal protective equipment. I can assure the House and Canadians who are watching.

Over the past few days alone, the following products have been delivered to the provinces and territories: more than 5.2 million N95 masks, more than three million surgical masks and more than one million gowns. We will continue to deliver the necessary equipment to the provinces and territories and to all Canadians in the country during this pandemic.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member from Saint-Laurent shocked francophones when she called into question the decline of French in Quebec.

Privately, we are even hearing that other Liberals believe that French is not all that important. It was the Prime Minister who appointed the member to the official languages committee, and she no longer has the legitimacy to sit and remain on the committee.

Oral Questions

When will he do what is required and immediately replace her on the Standing Committee on Official Languages?

• (1505)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member apologized for her comments.

We will always be there to protect the French language. We will always be there to protect the French fact in Quebec and across the country. It is this government that has always been there to protect linguistic minorities. We have always recognized how important it is to have a bilingual country. For Canada to be bilingual, Quebec must first and foremost be francophone. That is exactly what we are fighting for.

We will take no lessons from the Conservative Party, which has always attacked the rights of Canada's francophones.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but the Prime Minister's comments are disrespectful and do not reflect reality. Here are the facts.

Chelsea Craig, the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada, said, and I quote, “[Bill 101 is] an oppressive piece of legislation that has ruined English education in this province...dictating the language I speak to my coworkers in is oppressive.”

This makes no sense, and that came from the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada. The Liberal Party has completely lost its way.

Will the Prime Minister immediately condemn these disrespectful comments from the Liberal president, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party and the Liberal government will always defend our two official languages.

I am giving my hon. colleague an opportunity to affirm that the Conservative Party will only appoint judges who speak French to the Supreme Court in the future. I have made this promise as Prime Minister, and the Liberal Party of Canada has made that commitment.

Will the Conservative Party only appoint bilingual judges to the Supreme Court in the future, yes or no?

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he claims they will “always defend” them.

The Prime Minister and his Minister of Official Languages are all talk and no action. The Liberals have been in power for five years, and for five years they have done nothing on official languages. French is not a priority for this government.

The Prime Minister should introduce a bill to modernize the Official Languages Act in the House before Christmas.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party has missed yet another opportunity to defend the French fact.

The leader of the Conservative Party rose in the House to answer my question as to whether he would promise to appoint only bilingual judges to the Supreme Court in the future. He did not make that promise.

Let me be clear: It is not the Conservative Party that will be there to defend francophones or the French fact in Canada. As always, it is Liberal governments that will do so.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today more than ever, Canadians need to be connected to high-speed broadband Internet. That is essential because more and more Canadians are working, attending school and accessing important services such as telehealth from home.

Can the Prime Minister provide an update on the universal broadband fund and how it will improve connectivity for all Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Miramichi—Grand Lake, who is absolutely right.

Canadians rely on the Internet to help them connect to resources and loved ones. That is why we announced a \$1.75-billion investment to give all Canadians access to high-speed Internet. That will connect nearly 400,000 more households to high-speed Internet, particularly in rural areas. This is the biggest federal investment of its kind, and it will really make a difference in people's lives.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are reaching epidemic levels of suicide in our country. The Prime Minister's own cabinet has acknowledged that suicide is on the rise and that we face a mental health crisis.

Last week, the Prime Minister told Canadians who were feeling anxious or overwhelmed to call 211. Again, for the record, 211 is a directory. It is not even available in all regions of our country and it is not a national suicide prevention hotline.

Is the Prime Minister comfortable with telling Canadians in crisis to please hold?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to be there for Canadians when they need us the most. Canadians deserve access to mental health services regardless of where they live or when they need help.

We are having discussions with partners on how we can help more people get the access to the help they need. We are open to having discussions about a consolidated hotline. We will work with members of the House on how we can continue to support Canadians through this pandemic and beyond.

Oral Questions

This pandemic has exposed many challenges in our society that we will continue to fix, not just for now but for the years forward as well.

• (1510)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. has taken real action on suicide prevention by moving to a 988 national suicide prevention hotline. The Prime Minister has said over and over again in question period about protecting Canadians and saving lives. Therefore, this is a simple question. The time for him to step up is right now and it is right here.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing, commit to working together in a bipartisan way and bring 988 to Canada, yes, or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working together to figure out how to best serve Canadians suffering from mental health challenges. In the very beginning, in 2015, we brought in record investments to the provinces on mental health.

We have continued to work, including during this pandemic, on increasing the funding for Kids Help Phone by \$7.5 million, by reaching out to the United Way to help it provide more services, but we are always happy to do more.

I look forward to working with the hon. member on this issue and making sure we are getting the very best help to Canadians that we possibly can.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are rare occasions where I agree with the Prime Minister. We do need to be there.

We all know that mental health issues have been aggravated by COVID-19. We all know that a single point of contact for those in need in their darkest hours will save lives. Isolation has already been a death sentence for too many. All MPs in the House know members of their families, their communities and even their political families who have been struggling. We have an opportunity to work together for the mental health and well-being of all Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister join our effort to have a 988 hotline national by Christmas?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made many investments in mental health. We have made many investments in programs that offer supports, from Kids Help Phone to the United Way to others. We are happy to work with all members of the House on something, yes, indeed, we can all agree on. We need better supports and we look forward to working with members to figure out exactly what that is and how we can get it delivered to Canadians.

* * *

DIGITAL SERVICES

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians we take our digital privacy seriously, and there has been good reason for increasing concerns about how that data and personal information is being collected and used.

In a fast-moving digital world, we need both strong privacy and digital rights and a strong regulator to enforce them.

Could the Prime Minister tell my constituents and all Canadians how our government plans to modernize and strengthen Canada's digital privacy laws?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Beaches—East York for his tireless advocacy on this important file.

To be competitive and to recover from the effects of this pandemic, our economy must harness the power of data while at the same time protecting the privacy of Canadians. Canadians deserve more control and greater transparency over how companies handle their personal information. This is why we are proud to introduce the consumer privacy protection act, which would establish Canada as a global leader in protecting digital privacy.

* * *

[Translation]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic has been very hard on everyone, but some segments of the population have been hit harder than others.

Women, young people and racialized people are more severely affected by this crisis. The progress women have made in the workforce has regressed. Unemployment among young people is approaching 20%. In some racialized communities, unemployment is over 30%.

How does the government plan to help these young people? How does the government plan to help our young people regain confidence and hope for the future?

• (1515)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

We are also very concerned about this situation. The pandemic is harder on the most vulnerable. That is why we have been there all along to support women, young people and minority communities. We will continue to support them.

I thank all the members who have pointed out that we need to do more for certain communities. We will continue to invest to get everyone through this pandemic and to ensure that the world is a better place when the crisis is over.

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

I think we have a point of order from the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

*Business of Supply***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if you ask the House, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the House recognize that the status of French remains fragile and that the use of French is declining in Quebec and Canada and call on the government to commit to developing an action plan together with the provinces and territories to better protect and promote French in Quebec and Canada.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will ask only those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

There being no opposition, the House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD CHINA

The House resumed from November 17 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:16 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, September 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1555)

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

(*Division No. 23*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultatif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Angus
Arnold	Atwin
Bachrach	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blaikie	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bragdon	Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Carrie
Chabot	Champoux
Charbonneau	Chiu

Chong	Collins
Cooper	Cumming
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Diotte
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duvall	Easter
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Gallant	Garrison
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Gray
Green	Hallan
Harder	Hardie
Harris	Hoback
Hughes	Jansen
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kurek	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Manly	Martel
Masse	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McKay	McLean
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	McPherson
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Nater	Normandin
O'Connell	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perron
Plamondon	Poilievre
Ratansi	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Rood	Ruff
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shin
Shiple	Simard
Singh	Sloan
Soroka	Stanton
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Therrien
Tochor	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vignola
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williamson
Wilson-Raybould	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 178

NAYS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arseneault	Arya
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bessette	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blois	Bratina
Brière	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cormier	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Garneau
Gerretsen	Gould
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Jaczek
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Medicino	Miller
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Ng
Oliphant	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms	Sorbara
Spengemann	Tabbara
Tassi	Trudeau
Turnbull	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weiler

Routine Proceedings

Wilkinson	Yip
Young	Zahid
Zann	Zuberi— 146

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 14 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled "Main Estimates 2020-21: Vote 1 under Office of the Auditor General".

I also have the honour of tabling, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, entitled "Funding of the Office of the Auditor General".

* * *

TRADE AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT PROTECTION AGREEMENTS TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-252, an act to provide for transparency in entering trade agreements and foreign investment protection agreements.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to table this private member's bill today. During the debate on NAFTA and the CUS-MA trade agreement, the opposition Conservatives complained about the lack of transparency in the negotiations. When the Conservatives were in power, the opposition parties complained about the lack of transparency in the CETA and TPP negotiations. This Parliament is only able to debate the merits of a trade agreement after negotiations are complete and the agreement is signed.

Routine Proceedings

This private member's bill, the trade and foreign investment protection agreements transparency act, is modelled on the European Union's process of transparent trade negotiations. The purpose of this act is to create a transparent consultation and assessment process to ensure that Canada's trade and foreign investment protection agreements reflect the values and interests of Canada as a whole, taking into account the perspectives of various groups, including local communities, civil society organizations and indigenous peoples; promote sustainable development and respect for the environment; and adhere to the principles of economic fairness, social justice and internationally recognized human rights.

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

* * *

● (1600)

PETITIONS**HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I have a number of petitions to present.

The first petition is from people across Canada who are calling on the government to focus in on the treatment of Uighurs in China. Particularly, they are calling for Magnitsky sanctions to be placed on the Chinese officials who are contributing to the Uighur persecution and for the Canadian government to recognize the treatment of Uighurs in China as genocide.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians from across the country who are calling on the House of Commons to provide conscience protections for physicians, health care workers and institutions.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is on behalf of Canadians from across the country who are seeking to support the health and safety of Canadian firearms owners. They recognize the importance of the ownership of firearms and the impact on hearing loss from the noise level with the use of firearms.

The petitioners are calling on the government to ensure that we can bring in useful tools to ensure that Canadians' health and safety is protected while using their firearms.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition is from Canadians from across Canada who are calling on the government to implement a national strategy on palliative care.

The petitioners are calling for Canada to ensure that all Canadians have access to palliative care and are comfortable in the time of their death. The Canadians who have signed the petition are hoping for a national strategy on palliative care.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when COVID-19 shut down Canada earlier this year, we

knew that the air transport industry would be among the worst impacted. What we did not know is that this government was going to do absolutely nothing to provide the Canadians employed in that industry any support.

Today, on behalf of the 14,645 Canadians who have signed the petition and the over 633,000 Canadians who depend on our air transport industry for their livelihoods, I am tabling a petition calling on the government to get back to work, show some leadership and come up with a plan to save our air transport industry.

It is time that this minister and this government get out of the lounge, into the cockpit and pilot our industry through this pandemic.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have asked that I present this petition.

The petitioners call on the government to formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been, and are, subject to genocide. As well, they are calling for the use of the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, the Magnitsky Act, to sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise here today, again, to present a petition from young people in my riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay and the neighbouring riding of Kootenay—Columbia.

The petitioners are concerned about climate change and point out that Canada's targets are inadequate, and action on those targets is even weaker. They want jobs that are sustainable and not for short-term gain at the expense of future generations.

The petitioners therefore ask the government to support their future with a detailed climate strategy with science-based targets, the elimination of fossil fuel subsidies, and redirecting those funds to renewable energy systems, energy efficiency, low carbon transportation and job training.

● (1605)

CHILD SUPPORT

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present. The first is an e-petition signed by 1,050 Canadians who are calling on the federal government to establish a committee to update the federal child support guidelines.

The petitioners note that the guidelines have not been updated since 1997, are based upon outdated assumptions that pick winners and losers, and do not bear the true costs of rearing a child, particularly for parents with less access and who have had more than one divorce.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to international human organ trafficking.

The petitioners call upon the government to amend the Criminal Code, as well as the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent, and to deem inadmissible all permanent residents or foreign nationals involved in this egregious human rights abuse.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition is signed by 46 Canadians.

The petitioners wish to bring to this House's attention egregious human rights abuses being perpetrated by the Chinese communist regime against Uighur Muslims, including invasive surveillance, arbitrary detention, destruction of cultural sites, forced labour, and even forced human organ harvesting.

The petitioners call for the House to recognize that the Uighurs have been subjected to a genocide, and call on the government to impose Magnitsky sanctions on those responsible.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners call on the government to draw attention to the practice of trafficking in human organs. They are ripped out of the bodies of the victims without consent and sold for profit. Canadians are allowed to go abroad and buy these organs. There are two bills before Parliament, one here in the House of Commons and one before the Senate. The petitioners want Parliament to get on with it and get them passed.

WILD SALMON

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to table e-petition 2776. The petitioners are concerned about the Canada pension plan investments of over \$200 million in foreign open-net pen salmon farms. Open-net pen salmon farms contaminate wild salmon habitat with chemicals, parasites, viruses and diseases, all of which threaten the health of wild Pacific salmon runs. To protect their wild salmon populations, Washington state passed legislation banning PRV-infected farmed salmon in 2018. Divesting Canadians' pensions from PRV-infected salmon farms is an important step in protecting wild salmon. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to request that the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board divest from open-net pen aquaculture investment opportunities, foreign-owned or otherwise.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today on two very serious subjects. One petition wants the government to formal-

Routine Proceedings

ly recognize that the Uighurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide, use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act and sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is very similar to my colleague's from Ontario, raising concerns about international trafficking in human organs removed from victims without consent. These organs are being harvested and being sold. There is a group of many Canadians who are concerned about this issue as well.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a similar petition to those raised by my two colleagues in relation to the concern that we have with international trafficking in human organs and harvesting that is done without the victim's consent, a truly grisly practice. There are two bills, Bill C-350 and Bill S-204, that address this. The petition is in relation to concerns the petitioners have with that practice.

• (1610)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This might be an appropriate time, given the presentation of one of the earlier petitions, to remind members that when they present a petition they should not express their view or give a personal speech related to the petition, just what is in the petition.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yukon has a very good point. I have reminded members before to try to keep it as concise as possible and just tell us what the petition is. It is not a time for debate. That will come later on if it ever hits the floor of the chamber.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Questions Nos. 102 to 104, 108, 111 and 114.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 102—**Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to the government's announcement in the Speech from the Throne to create one million jobs through environmentally focused measures: (a) what sectors will these jobs be in, and how many jobs are expected to be created in each sector; (b) what is the breakdown of where these jobs are expected to be created by province or territory and municipal region; (c) what is the breakdown of the educational attainment required for these jobs; (d) what is the projected cost to create these jobs; (e) is it the government's intent to employ unemployed retail and hospitality workers to build green infrastructure; (f) what is the projected cost to retrain a million workers for these jobs; (g) what is the demographic balance of people who currently work in the green energy sector; (h) what is the demographic balance of people currently most unemployed due to the crisis; (i) will there be private sector investment to create these jobs or will it be solely government funding; (j) how long does the government anticipate it will take to train unemployed retail, hospitality, and entertainment workers to build green infrastructure; and (k) what is the projected cost of this training?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne outlined the government's intent to launch a plan to create over one million jobs to help restore employment to previous levels. The plan will use a range of tools, including direct investment in the social sector and infrastructure, immediate training to quickly skill up workers and incentives for employers to hire and retain workers.

This commitment is part of the government's four-pillar foundation to help build a stronger and more resilient Canada, including, first, fight the pandemic and save lives; second, support people and businesses through this crisis; third, build back better by strengthening the middle class, supporting job creation and long-term competitiveness with clean growth; and fourth, stand up for who we are as Canadians by achieving progress on gender equality, walking the road of reconciliation and fighting discrimination of every kind.

This plan also builds on the Government of Canada's immediate and decisive action to support Canadians and businesses facing hardship as a result of the pandemic. Programs such as the Canada emergency response benefit, or CERB, have provided millions of Canadians with the financial support they needed to get by. Other measures such as the Canada emergency wage subsidy, or CEWS, have provided support to Canadian businesses, helping them to avoid layoffs, rehire employees and create new jobs. Close to nine million Canadians were helped by the CERB and over 3.5 million jobs were supported by the wage subsidy.

This plan is already working. The Canadian economy had lost three million jobs at the peak of the COVID-19 economic impact. By September, the Canadian economy had recovered about 2.3 million jobs.

However, clearly more needs to be done. This is why, through the Speech from the Throne, the government laid out a solid economic recovery plan that will restore employment to previous levels and ensure Canadians return to work and thrive economically.

Question No. 103—**Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to the government's plan to declare single-use plastics as a harmful substance: (a) what is the timeline for implementing such a declaration; (b) has there been any analysis of the trade implications of such a declaration, and, if so, who conducted the analysis, and what were the findings; (c) has there been a job impact analysis prepared, and, if so, who conducted the analysis, and what were the findings; (d) if this plan is implemented, what are the projected job impacts in Canada's petrochemical industry; (e) were there consultations undertaken with the

provinces on such a declaration, and, if so, what are the details; (f) what is the policy justification to use environmental protection legislation to ban a consumer good, which is regulated provincially; and (g) has a legal analysis been conducted to ensure the legality of such a declaration, and, if so, who conducted the analysis and what were the findings?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regarding part (a) of the question, as required under section 332 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, CEPA, a draft order in council proposing to add "plastic manufactured items" to schedule 1 of CEPA was published in the Canada Gazette, part I, on October 9, 2020, for a 60-day public comment period. After the public comment period is complete, Health Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada will review comments received and determine whether adjustments are needed to the draft order. A final order in council adding "plastic manufactured items" to schedule 1 will be published in Canada Gazette, part II, in 2021.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the "Cabinet Directive on Regulation" requires departments and agencies to ensure Canada's international commitments are met when carrying out their regulatory activities, including in the area of international trade. In addition, the directive requires departments and agencies to analyze the potential positive and negative impacts of a proposed regulation and its feasible alternative options on Canadians, businesses, governments and the environment, and identify how impacts are distributed across the various parties.

A cost-benefit analysis was conducted for the draft order in council that proposes to add "plastic manufactured items" to schedule 1 of CEPA, and found that the addition of "plastic manufactured items" to schedule 1 would not, on its own, impose any regulatory requirements on businesses or other entities, and would therefore not result in any incremental compliance costs for stakeholders. The small business lens analysis concluded that the proposed order would have no associated impact on small business, as it does not impose any administrative or compliance costs on businesses. This can be found in the "Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement" accompanying the draft order in council in Canada Gazette, part I.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (c) of the question, the “Cabinet Directive on Regulation” requires departments and agencies to examine the potential impacts on employment of a proposed regulation and its feasible alternative options on Canadians, businesses, governments and the environment, and identify how impacts are distributed across the various parties. A cost-benefit analysis was conducted for the draft order in council that proposes to add “plastic manufactured items” to schedule 1 of CEPA and found that the addition of “plastic manufactured items” to schedule 1 would not, on its own, impose any regulatory requirements on businesses or other entities, and would therefore not result in any incremental compliance costs for stakeholders. The small business lens analysis concluded that the proposed order would have no associated impact on small business, as it does not impose any administrative or compliance costs on businesses. This can be found in the “Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement” accompanying the draft order in council in Canada Gazette, part I.

Regarding part (d) of the question, any risk management measures developed using the enabling authorities provided by adding “plastic manufactured items” to schedule 1 of CEPA, including regulations prohibiting or restricting the use of certain single-use plastic items, will undergo all of the analysis required by the “Cabinet Directive on Regulations”, including analysis of benefits and costs. As the government is still consulting partners and stakeholders and is still developing an approach for prohibiting or restricting certain single-use plastic items, this level of analysis is not yet available. However, this detailed analysis will accompany any draft regulations published in Canada Gazette, part I.

Regarding part (e) of the question, the Government of Canada has been working closely with provinces and territories through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to develop and implement the strategy on zero plastic waste, which seeks to move Canada toward a circular economy for plastics, positioning the country as a leader in forward-looking and innovative waste prevention and management solutions.

Provinces and territories have been provided regular updates on the Government of Canada’s comprehensive agenda for achieving zero plastic waste through the CCME, which often serves a forum for exchanging information on federal, provincial and territorial initiatives. For example, at the latest CCME meeting in July 2020, federal, provincial and territorial ministers devoted a major portion of their meeting to sharing perspectives and strategies for a sustainable post-pandemic recovery. Provinces and territories were also provided with early copies of the discussion paper that was released on October 7 for their review, and federal officials presented on the integrated management approach to the CCME’s waste reduction and recovery committee in September 2020.

With regard to part (f) of the question, the Government of Canada’s approach is based on the best available science and evidence. The scientific basis is outlined in the “Science Assessment of Plastic Pollution”, developed jointly by Environment and Climate Change Canada and Health Canada. The science assessment confirms that, among other things, plastic items greater than five millimetres in diameter have been shown to cause harm to living organisms and their habitat. Wildlife ingest or become entangled in these plastics, which result in direct harm and, in many cases, mor-

tality. The science assessment confirms that action is needed to reduce plastics that end up in the environment.

In addition, data from shoreline cleanups and municipal litter audits show that single-use plastics are prevalent in the environment and pose a threat to wildlife. With this basis of science and evidence, the Government of Canada has proposed using enabling authorities under CEPA to regulate certain single-use plastics. CEPA is an important part of Canada’s federal environmental legislation aimed at preventing pollution and protecting the environment and human health. CEPA provides a range of tools that allows the government to target sources of plastic pollution and change behaviour at key stages in the life cycle of plastic products, such as design, manufacture, use, disposal and recovery, in order to reduce pollution and create the conditions for achieving a circular plastics economy.

Regarding part (g) of the question, the recommendation to add a substance to schedule 1 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, CEPA, is on the basis of the provisions outlined in CEPA. In particular, subsection 90(1) of CEPA authorizes the Governor in Council to add a substance to schedule 1 if it is satisfied, on the recommendation of the ministers of health and environment, that the substance meets any of the criteria set out in section 64 of the act, i.e., if the substance poses a risk to the environment, human health or both. The “Science Assessment of Plastic Pollution” provided the ministers with the evidence to recommend adding “plastic manufactured items” to schedule 1 of CEPA, an action that would help address the potential ecological risks associated with plastic manufactured items becoming plastic pollution.

Question No. 104—**Mr. Eric Melillo:**

With regard to the decision by the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor) to provide a \$800,000 loan to skritswap Inc.: (a) how many of the seven positions the government’s website claims will be created from the loan will be located (i) in Northern Ontario, broken down by location, (ii) in Canada, (iii) in the United States; (b) did the government verify that the company was actually primarily based out of Sault Ste. Marie as opposed to the company’s locations in Waterloo, Ontario, or San Mateo, California; (c) if the government did verify that the company had a permanent head office in Northern Ontario by visiting the location, which government official visited the location; (d) did FedNor receive a commitment from the company that any jobs created from the loan would be created in Northern Ontario, and, if so, what are the details of the commitment; and (e) what is the breakdown of the anticipated economic benefit or jobs being created by municipality?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to growing the economy in northern Ontario and creating good local jobs. The Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, or FedNor, has always been a key partner for entrepreneurs in northern Ontario and an integral part of the economic development of the region.

In this specific case, the funding was given to support a woman entrepreneur in growing her business in northern Ontario. FedNor is aware of this situation, is in contact with the business and will continue to monitor the situation closely. The business is fully aware that if it fails to meet the parameters set by the contribution agreement, it will need to immediately pay back the funds it received.

FedNor will continue to work closely and strategically with businesses and community partners to build a stronger northern Ontario.

Question No. 108—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to changes or modifications made to the operations and alert systems of the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, since January 1, 2016: (a) what are the specific details of each change or modification, including (i) the description of change or modification, (ii) the date of the decision, (iii) the date the change came into effect, (iv) who recommended the change or modification, (v) the date the Office of the Minister of Health was notified; (vi) the date the Privy Council Office or the Prime Minister's Office was notified; (vii) the date on which the change was made public, if applicable; (b) for each change in (a), were other countries informed of the change and what are the details of each such instance, including (i) the date, (ii) notified countries, (iii) the summary of change; and (c) for each change in (a), was the World Health Organization notified, and, if so, on what date?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a) (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), from the program's inception until late 2018, the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, GPHIN, alerts were identified and issued by the program's analysts. The purpose of an alert is to direct international and Canadian subscribers to a particular media article without any summary or additional analysis. In the fall of 2018, the health security infrastructure branch, HSIB, began a review of program information products, including GPHIN alerts and their associated approval processes.

Following internal discussions, a decision was made to raise the approval level to HSIB's vice-president in order to maintain awareness of the Public Health Agency of Canada's, PHAC's, senior officials concerning alerts being published by the system.

Approval of the GPHIN daily reports, which provides a comprehensive summary of multiple media articles, remained at the analyst level and so had no change. In September 2020, approval for alerts was set at the director level.

All other GPHIN information products, such as the GPHIN daily report, previously called the situational awareness section daily report, continue to be distributed directly from GPHIN to subscribers, including senior management at PHAC and other government departments.

At no time has GPHIN been directed to cease or slow its information gathering. Information-sharing activities continue to take place in a timely manner. GPHIN's primary role as a global event-based surveillance system has remained unchanged, and its capaci-

ty has been enhanced over a number of years via collaborations with partners such as the National Research Council.

With regard to part (a) (v), (vi), (vii), and parts (b) and (c), the above changes were made internally to PHAC. There is no documentation indicating that the change in the approval process for GPHIN alerts was communicated to the organizations listed above.

Question No. 111—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to the distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine: (a) what is the expected timeline for the distribution of a vaccine; (b) once the vaccine is approved by Health Canada, which population groups will be designated priority groups to receive the vaccine first; (c) what is the current time estimate to vaccinate all of the groups in (b), broken down by priority groups; (d) what is the current time estimate to give access to the general population once a vaccine is approved; (e) what is the current time estimate to vaccinate all Canadians who desire or require a vaccine; (f) what percentage of doses will be allocated to each of the initial priority groups; (g) what percentage of doses will be allocated to the general population; and (h) what criteria did the government use to determine which groups would receive priority access?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, anticipates limited vaccine to be available for distribution in Canada in the first part of 2021. Any vaccine that is distributed in Canada must have regulatory approval or an interim order. The initial supply is expected to be constrained, improving over time as manufacturing is scaled up and the availability of products that have completed clinical trials are approved by Health Canada.

With regard to part (b), guidance on the use of a pandemic vaccine, including recommendations on key populations for early vaccination when initial vaccine supply is limited, has been provided by Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization, NACI, an external expert advisory body that provides advice to PHAC on the optimal use of vaccines in Canada. NACI is identified in the federal, provincial and territorial Canadian pandemic plan as the authoritative body for advice on vaccine prioritization and vaccine public health program design.

On November 3, 2020, NACI released preliminary guidance on key populations for early COVID-19 immunization, with the goal of providing a plan for the efficient, effective and equitable allocation of a COVID-19 vaccine once it is authorized for use in Canada when limited initial vaccine supply will necessitate the prioritization of immunization in some populations earlier than others. This document can be found online at www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/guidance-key-populations-early-covid-19-immunization.html

Once a vaccine candidate has completed advanced clinical trials, NACI will refine and recalibrate its preliminary guidance on target groups, based on additional safety and efficacy data from advanced clinical trials; availability of supply; one- or multi-dose schedules; whether/how to vaccinate children and pregnant women; and policy frameworks regarding ethics, equity and economics.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (c), at this time, a number of vaccines for COVID-19 are undergoing clinical testing in Canada and internationally and PHAC does not yet know which ones will prove safe and effective. In addition, significant uncertainty remains regarding the level and type of protection an approved vaccine might be able to induce in different population groups, e.g., age, underlying condition, previous infection, etc.. Until this information is known, PHAC cannot estimate the time it will take to vaccinate priority groups.

With regard to part (d), see response for part (a).

With regard to part (e), see response for part (a).

With regard to part (f), once a vaccine candidate has completed advanced clinical trials, NACI will refine and recalibrate its preliminary guidance on target groups, based on additional safety and efficacy data from advanced clinical trials; availability of supply; one- or multi-dose schedules; whether/how to vaccinate children and pregnant women; and policy frameworks regarding ethics, equity and economics.

Provinces and territories, P/Ts, are responsible for the administration and delivery of health care services, including immunization-related programs. Immunization policies and schedules are developed by P/Ts or their expert immunization advisory committees, based on jurisdiction-specific needs, other immunization recommendations, such as NACI, program resource availability and constraints, and identified priorities. As such, each P/T will determine the percentage of doses that will be allocated to each of its initial priority groups.

With regard to part (g), see response for part (f).

With regard to part (h), NACI reviewed available evidence on the epidemiology and burden of COVID-19 to develop its preliminary guidance on priority immunization strategies with associated target groups. As noted, once a vaccine candidate has completed advanced clinical trials, NACI will refine and recalibrate its preliminary guidance on target groups, based on additional safety and efficacy data from advanced clinical trials; availability of supply; one- or multi-dose schedules; whether/how to vaccinate children and pregnant women; and policy frameworks regarding ethics, equity and economics.

Question No. 114—Mr. Arnold Viersen:

With regard to taxpayer money being used to sue the Conservative Party of Canada: what are the total legal fees and other related expenditures to date spent by CBC/Radio-Canada in relation to its ongoing lawsuit against the Conservative Party of Canada?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act. Information on the expenditures made in relation to the current civil litigation action against the Conservative Party of Canada has been withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes solicitor-client privilege.

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if a revised response to Question No. 79, originally tabled on November 16, 2020, and the government's responses to Questions Nos. 98 to 101, 105 to 107, 109, 110, 112 and 113, could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 79—Mr. Doug Shipley:

With regard to ministers and exempt staff members flying on government aircraft, including helicopters, since January 1, 2019: what are the details of all such flights, including (i) date, (ii) origin, (iii) destination, (iv) type of aircraft, (v) which ministers and exempt staff members were on board?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 98—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the handling of cases and claims pursuant to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement by the Department of Justice Canada, Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada: how much has been spent on settled cases, requests for direction, and other proceedings where Canada has been either the plaintiff or defendant before appellate courts (such as the Ontario Superior Court or the Supreme Court of British Columbia) related to survivors of St. Anne's Residential School between 2013 and October 1, 2020, (i) in total, (ii) broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 99—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to federal funding in the constituency of Timmins—James Bay, between January 2019 and October 2020: (a) what applications for funding have been received, including for each the (i) name of the organization, (ii) department, (iii) program and sub-program under which they applied for funding, (iv) date of the application, (v) amount applied for, (vi) whether the funding has been approved or not, (vii) total amount of funding allocated, if the funding was approved; (b) what funds, grants, loans, and loan guarantees has the government issued through its various departments and agencies in the constituency of Timmins—James Bay that did not require a direct application from the applicant, including for each the (i) name of the organization, (ii) department, (iii) program and sub-program under which they received funding, (iv) total amount of funding allocated, if the funding was approved; and (c) what projects have been funded in the constituency of Timmins—James Bay by organizations tasked with subgranting government funds (e.g. Community Foundations of Canada), including for each the (i) name of the organization, (ii) department, (iii) program and sub-program under which they received funding, (iv) total amount of funding allocated, if the funding was approved?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

Question No. 100—Mr. Richard Cannings:

With regards to federal expenditures in the electoral district of South Okanagan—West Kootenay, broken down by fiscal years 2018-19 and 2019-20: what were the total amounts spent by the federal government, broken down by the (i) department or agency, (ii) community, (iii) contribution agreement, (iv) purpose of spending?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 101—Mr. Richard Cannings:

With regard to the Softwood Lumber Action Plan announced on June 1, 2017, broken down by department or agency and contribution agreement: (a) what companies, organizations or communities have received funding; (b) how much has been received by each community, company or organization; (c) for what purpose has each contribution been used; (d) for each community, company or organization, how many people have been assisted; (e) have all of the original \$867 million dollars been expended, and, if not, how much remains to be expended; and (f) have additional funds been allocated to this action plan or under other government initiatives to assist those negatively impacted by the tariffs put in place by the United States?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 105—Ms. Christine Normandin:

With regard to the activities of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) during the pandemic: (a) for each of the IRB's four divisions, broken down by month and for the Eastern, Central and Vancouver divisions, how many hearings were held during the months of April to September in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020; (b) broken down by month, how many refugee protection claims eligible for file review were processed during the months of April to August in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020; (c) between April and August 2020, how many members, as a percentage, received their full pay; (d) what work was required for members working for the IRB; (e) on what date did the IRB Registry and mail room resume processing claims received by mail and fax; (f) as of March 16, 2020, how many Refugee Protection Division (RPD), Refugee Appeal Division (RAD), Immigration Division (ID) and Immigration Appeal Division (IAD) files were pending (backlog) and what was the average time between referral and decision; (g) to date, how many RPD, RAD, ID and IAD files are awaiting a hearing; (h) to date, what is the average time between referral and decision; and (i) how many IRB employees have had vacation leave since the resumption of operations?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 106—Ms. Christine Normandin:

With regard to the activities of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) during the pandemic: (a) broken down by month, how many confirmations of permanent residence were issued during the months of April to August in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020; (b) broken down by month, how many visas (tourist, student, etc.) were issued during the months of April to August in (i) 2019, (ii) 2020; (c) to date, how many IRCC officers, as a percentage, received the necessary information equipment (telephones, computers, etc.) to enable them to work from home; (d) how many refugee protection claims were received by IRCC between March 17, 2020, and July 31, 2020, and of these, how many were referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB); and (e) what is the current processing time for permanent resident cards, and what was the processing time for the same period in 2019?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 107—Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:

With regard to federal public servants living in the National Capital Region (NCR): (a) how many public servants worked in the NCR between 2010 and 2019, inclusively, broken down by year and province of residence, and what percentage of public servants (i) lived in Quebec but worked in Ontario, (ii) lived in Ontario, but worked in Quebec, (iii) lived and worked in Ontario, (iv) lived and worked in Quebec; (b) for each year between 2010 and 2019, inclusively, what percentage of the public service payroll is represented by the wages of federal public servants living in the NCR and working in (i) Ontario, (ii) Quebec; and (c) for each year between 2010 and 2019, inclusively, what is the mother tongue of federal public servants living in the NCR and the language most often spoken at work, broken down by province of (i) residence, (ii) work?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 109—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to the organization and structure of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC): (a) what was the organizational structure of PHAC, including a breakdown of how many employees or full-time equivalents (FTEs) working in each branch, location and in each position, as of (i) January 1, 2016, (ii) October 1, 2020; and (b) what are the details of the positions that have been eliminated or modified since January 1, 2016, including the (i) previous job title, (ii) new job title, if applicable, (iii) previous job description, (iv) new job description, (v) number of positions impacted, (vi) date position was eliminated or modified, (vii) number of previous positions eliminated, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 110—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to drug products currently awaiting approval and market authorization by Health Canada: (a) what is the complete list of products currently awaiting approval; (b) for each product in (a), what was the (i) date the application was received by the government, (ii) manufacturer, (iii) product name, (iv) summary of product claims, including the list of diseases and conditions the product claims to treat, (v) expected date of decision of approval by Health Canada, if known; and (c) has the time period between the date of application and the decision date by Health Canada, for non-COVID-19 related products increased as a result of reallocating resources during the pandemic, and, if so, what are the specific details, including for which applications and for which products the time period has increased?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 112—Mr. Chris d'Entremont:

With regard to the organization and structure of Health Canada: (a) what was the organizational structure of Health Canada, including a breakdown of how many employees or fulltime equivalents (FTEs) working in each branch, location, and in each position, as of (i) January 1, 2016, (ii) October 1, 2020; and (b) what are the details of the positions that have been eliminated or modified since January 1, 2016, including the (i) previous job title, (ii) new job title, if applicable, (iii) previous job description, (iv) new job description, (v) number of positions impacted, (vi) date position was eliminated or modified, (vii) number of previous positions eliminated, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 113—Mr. Tony Baldinelli:

With regard to the decision by VIA Rail to layoff workers during the pandemic: (a) what is the total number of workers laid off since March 1, 2020; (b) what is the number of layoffs broken down by date; (c) on what date did the minister responsible for VIA Rail become informed of plans for each of the layoffs in (b); (d) why did VIA Rail not use the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) to prevent the layoffs; (e) will VIA Rail management and executives continue to receive bonuses in light of the layoffs; (f) what is the total amount of bonus money paid out so far in 2020; and (g) what is the total amount VIA Rail has received so far in 2020 through (i) CEWS, (ii) other sources of government funding, broken down by source?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

KEYSTONE XL PROJECT

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on an imperative matter for discussion requiring urgent consideration by the House, pursuant to Standing Order 52.

A new administration has just been elected in the United States, and it indicated during its campaign that it intends to cancel the Keystone XL project. Of course, the Liberal government has made it clear that it will give no more than a half-hearted, supposed attempt at advocacy for such an important project for this country.

This is a vital project that would bring billions of dollars to the Canadian economy every year, and it requires urgent and sustained advocacy immediately from the government. That is why Parliament must give this matter emergency consideration.

“We are all in this together” is a phrase we have heard often as of late, but it appears to only be empty rhetoric for the Liberal government when it comes to standing up for Alberta, for our natural resource sector and for the Keystone XL project.

Within days of the Liberals being elected in 2015, the American administration rejected the Keystone XL proposal and the Prime Minister infamously refused to stand up for this important project, instead saying, “The Canada-U.S. relationship is much bigger than any one project and I look forward to a fresh start”. In other words, he was just brushing it off and brushing it aside. He refused to initiate a NAFTA challenge for the project. He refused to support any legal challenges in support of the project. In essence, he refused to show any actual tangible support for the project.

The Prime Minister has also been abundantly clear on his plan to landlock Canadian oil with Bill C-48, Bill C-69 and his comment that the oil sands need to be phased out.

Every day I hear from Westerners about how they are struggling to make ends meet, feed their children or pay their rent because they are out of work. I received a text from my brother recently, after I asked him if he had been able to find a job. He is one of many people in this situation. He said to me that he had phoned 18 different companies the other day, like he does basically every week, and that not one of them had a job right now. He said that last winter they all would have had at least one project on the go and some of them would have had two or three projects, but now none of them do. He said that out of all the guys he knew from the industry, and he has worked in the industry for decades now, only three of them were working right now. That is three out of the dozens and dozens of people he knows. He talked about how on his street alone basically none of his neighbours were working right now and four of them had homes up for sale.

That is very typical of what we see in my province of Alberta right now, and that is because the government has shown no attention, care or concern for the need for this project and for the need to put this industry, which supplies so much for this country, back to work. The responsibility clearly then lies directly at the feet of the Liberal government and its misguided policies that have absolutely kneecapped the Alberta economy.

I want to make it clear that this is also bigger than just Alberta or the west. This is a project for all of Canada. It is a way forward for economic recovery post-COVID-19. For every direct job created in the oil sands industry, there are two and a half indirect jobs created in the rest of Canada, so when Alberta succeeds Canada succeeds.

I am thankful for your consideration on this very important matter, and I sincerely hope you will grant this request. Thousands of

jobs and thousands of families' livelihoods are at stake. Frankly, the very unity of this country could be at stake.

● (1615)

Privilege

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Banff—Airdrie for his intervention. However, I am not satisfied that his request meets the exigencies of the Standing Orders at this time.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ORDER PAPER QUESTION NO. 97

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise on a question of privilege to bring your attention to the government's response to my question on the Order Paper, Question No. 97, that was tabled earlier this week on November 16. I am bringing this matter up at the first available opportunity since I have become aware of it.

Question No. 97 asked the following:

With regard to flights on government aircraft for personal and non-governmental business by the Prime Minister and his family, and by ministers and their families, since January 1, 2016: (a) what are the details of all such flights, including the (i) date, (ii) origin, (iii) destination, (iv) names of passengers, excluding security detail; and (b) for each flight, what was the total amount reimbursed to the government by each passenger?

The response was signed by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence on behalf of the Minister of National Defence.

According to the government's response on July 31, 2016, a government aircraft flew the Prime Minister, his immediate family, along with Ms. Grégoire Trudeau's parents and caregiver Marian Pueyo, from Vancouver to Tofino. However, the government's own flight logs, which have been released through an access to information request, indicate that the information contained in the government's response to Question No. 97 is factually incorrect.

For example, the flight logs for the trip indicate that Ms. Anna Gainey, then the Liberal Party president, was on that flight on July 31, 2016. In addition, the answer to Question No. 97 indicates that Anna Gainey was on the flight from Tofino to Vancouver, on August 13, 2016. However, according to the government's own flight logs, Ms. Gainey was not on the August 13, 2016, flight.

Government Orders

There is also a significant discrepancy in the government's response to Question No. 97 and the flight logs about which the family caregivers of the Prime Minister were on a number of flights in July and August of 2016. According to the response, signed on behalf of the Minister of National Defence, Marian Pueyo was on the flights both to and from Tofino. However, according to the flight logs, Ms. Pueyo was not on those flights, while Alexandra Overing, who was identified as a caregiver in a Globe and Mail article, from October 31, 2016, is listed on the flight logs. In fact, that same Globe and Mail article from October 31, 2016, confirmed that Anna Gainey travelled from Vancouver to Tofino. Kate Purchase, who was the Prime Minister's director of communications, is also quoted in that article, saying that Ms. Gainey travelled to Tofino as a guest of the Prime Minister and reimbursed the cost of an equivalent commercial flight.

It is clear from both the flight logs and the comments of the Prime Minister's former communications director that Ms. Gainey was on the flight from Vancouver to Tofino. However, the answer that I got to Question No. 97 does not list Ms. Gainey as a passenger on the flight.

The fact that this basic information in the government's response is incorrect and does not match up with the facts contained in the government's own logs is very concerning and hinders my ability as a member of Parliament to hold the government to account.

On December 16, 1980, at page 5797 of Hansard, the Speaker ruled:

While it is correct to say that the government is not required by our rules to answer written or oral questions, it would be bold to suggest that no circumstances could ever exist for a prima facie question of privilege to be made where there was a deliberate attempt to deny answers to an hon. member...

On page 234 of Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, it states that in order for the Speaker to find a prima facie question of privilege "an admission by someone in authority, such as a Minister of the Crown or an officer of a department, an instrument of a government policy, or a government agency, either that a Member of the House of Commons was intentionally misled or an admission of facts that leads naturally to the conclusion that a Member was intentionally misled...."

As I mentioned earlier, a Globe and Mail article from October 31, 2016, quoted Kate Purchase admitting to the facts that lead naturally to the conclusion that I was misled; namely, that Anna Gainey travelled from Tofino as a guest of the Prime Minister.

• (1620)

It is vital for the House that this information be tabled accurately in Parliament. False or misleading information should never be tabled in the House, especially not in response to a formal question on the Order Paper.

I would suggest that in the case of the Minister of National Defence and his parliamentary secretary, who signed the letter, they have misled the House in an answer containing false information. At the very least, various actors involved in this case have cast enough doubt as to warrant an investigation by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, at page 227, states:

In the final analysis, in areas of doubt, the Speaker asks simply:

Does the act complained of appear at first sight to be a breach of privilege...or to put it shortly, has the Member an arguable point? If the Speaker feels any doubt on the question, he should...leave it to the House.

This citation is in reference to the ruling from March 21, 1978, page 3975 of the Debates, where the Speaker cites the report of the U.K. Select Committee on Parliamentary Privileges, and from a ruling of October 10, 1989, at pages 4457 to 4461 of the Debates.

Finally, in a ruling on October 24, 1966, at page 9005 of the Debates, the Speaker said:

In considering this matter I ask myself, what is the duty of the Speaker in cases of doubt? If we take into consideration that at the moment the Speaker is not asked to render a decision as to whether or not the article complained of constitutes a breach of privilege...considering also that the Speaker is the guardian of the rules, rights and privileges of the house and of its members and that he cannot deprive them of such privileges when there is uncertainty in his mind...I think at this preliminary stage of the proceedings the doubt which I have in my mind should be interpreted to the benefit of the member.

I hope you take this matter under consideration, Mr. Speaker, and I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock. I will take that under advisement and return to the House should I see fit.

Before proceeding, I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 37 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1625)

[Translation]

BROADCASTING ACT

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.) moved that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe.

I am honoured to speak today to Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

[English]

I would like to start by illustrating the situation in which we live to the House. Digital technologies have completely changed the way Canadians discover stories, how they stay informed, how they are entertained and how they learn and share with each other.

Government Orders

From 2011 to 2019, the number of Canadians with Netflix subscriptions has grown from one in 10 to nearly six in 10. The number of Canadians using Spotify to listen to music online has jumped from 2% in 2014 to nearly 30% in 2019. We welcome these innovations that bring so much richness to our lives and so much diverse content. However, prolonging the status quo will only further undermine our ability to tell our own Canadian stories.

[*Translation*]

If we do not react, funding for Canadian television and music production will continue to decline. What we risk in the long term is nothing less than the loss of our cultural sovereignty. The production of francophone, anglophone and indigenous works and programs will be jeopardized.

That is why we are taking action. The Broadcasting Act was enacted in 1991, before the Internet, smart phones and online platforms. Its regulatory framework is frozen in the past.

On the one hand, we have Canadian companies that play by the rules and invest in our Canadian stories. On the other, we have online broadcasters that operate outside any regulatory framework and make money off the system with no obligation to give back. No, resistance is not futile.

[*English*]

One system for our traditional broadcasters and a lack of for online broadcasters does not work. This outdated regulatory framework is unfair for our Canadian businesses; it threatens Canadian jobs. It undermines the ability of Canadians to tell and hear their own stories.

[*Translation*]

We are tabling this bill for three main reasons. First, the act will strengthen our cultural sovereignty. Canada is blessed with two official languages and the unique history and stories of our indigenous peoples.

[*English*]

We need to put mechanisms in place to ensure Canadians can tell their own stories and express their own culture, now and in the future.

[*Translation*]

Second, implementing the new Canadian audiovisual regime under the act will generate almost \$1 billion in foreign investment per year in our films, television and music.

That means more quality jobs for our economy, more opportunities for our creators and talent in the production sector, for our artists, designers and authors, and for many other people who specialize in areas in which Canada is internationally renowned.

It means greater stability for the sector. These are the same people who entertained us and made us smile during the first wave of COVID-19, and who are still doing so now, during the second wave we are now in.

Third, the act aims to ensure fairness. Asking online broadcasters to shoulder their fair share of the effort is not a luxury. It is a matter of fairness.

[*English*]

Our government believes those who benefit from the Canadian system should contribute to it fairly. This legislation would provide stronger financing mechanisms and would give more prominence to what is produced in Canada in English, French and indigenous languages. It will encourage better representation at all levels of production for equity-seeking groups: for women, for members of the LGBTQ2 communities, for people with disabilities and for racialized Canadians, including Blacks and people of colour.

[*Translation*]

In fact, this bill provides Canadian creators and producers with the means of achieving their ambitions. It takes into account the diversity of Canadian perspectives and their contribution to our rich and unique culture. A modernized act would guarantee that Canadians of all identities and from every background are reflected in their broadcasting system and that they can take part in it and enjoy it. In short, our stories and music must have a place in the online broadcasting universe.

• (1630)

[*English*]

In a more practical manner, the bill proposes the implementation of a modern, flexible regulatory framework for the CRTC to apply fair rules to all broadcasters and ensure it has the necessary tools to do its job effectively.

We will also go a step further and will instruct the CRTC on how to use these new tools. This will happen once the bill receives royal assent, as the bill makes amendments that allow for this essential policy directive.

[*Translation*]

In our direction to the CRTC, we want the specific needs of the French language and Canadian francophones to be recognized in a digital world dominated by the English language. On this point, I would like to add that this is perfectly in line with the throne speech, which states that the government “has the responsibility to protect and promote French not only outside of Quebec, but also within Quebec.” I know that this is an important point for all members of the House and for all Canadians, since the protection and promotion of the French language are essential for everyone.

Let me get back to our direction to the CRTC. We also want to accord special consideration to indigenous communities, as well as greater recognition of their realities and contributions. Lastly, we want to focus on racialized communities to ensure that they are fairly represented in the ecosystem.

[*English*]

The way the regulation currently works is it establishes a minimum investment from Canadian broadcasters into our ecosystem. In effect, this creates a baseline of investment.

Government Orders

With the bill and this intended policy direction to the CRTC, we aim for the CRTC to add an additional mechanism on top of this baseline. We intend to ask the CRTC to implement an incentive mechanism that would encourage behaviours that are inclusive and ensure no one is left behind.

Some of the elements we would like to see being incentivized are: diversity in key creative positions, the role and place of Black Canadians in our system, the retention of our rich intellectual property in Canada and fair and transparent compensation for our musicians.

[Translation]

I would like to point out that we are listening to Canadians. This bill addresses key recommendations presented by the independent expert panel in January. Urgent action was needed to bring online broadcasters into the system.

[English]

Our approach is balanced, and we have made the choice to exclude a number of areas from the new regime. User-generated content will not be regulated, news content will not be regulated and video games will be excluded. Furthermore, only broadcasters that have a significant impact in Canada will be subject to the legislation. In practice this means that only known names and brands will be subject to this legislation.

[Translation]

When my daughter opens an online streaming platform, I, like many other parents, want to know that she is being offered the choice to see a Canadian series with her favourite actors, like *District 31* with Vincent-Guillaume Otis. I would like her to have the choice to see a documentary on the history of indigenous peoples in Canada, for example. After all, it is our history and it is up to us to tell it.

When my daughter listens to music on another platform, I want her to be presented with a list of local artists and even, why not, someone from my home region of Mauricie.

What we are proposing will allow her not only to take advantage of an international offering, but also to discover Canadian content, which could be funded by contributions from these same digital platforms.

We know how important it is to see ourselves represented in all our complexity, either on screen or in productions. With the modernization of the Broadcasting Act, our francophone, anglophone and indigenous creators, our creators with disabilities, our creators from visible minorities and the LGBTQ+ community will have the means of telling their own stories and, more importantly, of making sure they are seen and heard.

It will be beneficial for both broadcasters and the public to produce stories that resonate with us, that speak to us and that look like us as Canadians and Quebecers.

This bill is part of a larger process. Our government is committed to ensuring greater equity among all Canadians.

The web giants are raking in billions of dollars from our content and our economy. Some of these companies are the most powerful in the world, and they operate outside any regulatory framework.

• (1635)

[English]

Time is up. There are no more free rides. It is about fairness. It is about everyone doing their fair share.

We are, in fact, starting to see this across the world. The European Union has adopted new rules on streamers resulting in increased investment, jobs, choice of content and ability to assert one's own cultural sovereignty. The United States has launched legal proceedings against Google for abusing its dominant market position. Australia is tackling a threat that journalism is facing, through a mandatory code of conduct targeted at Facebook and Google. As well, several other countries, including Canada, are concerned about misinformation, online hate and web giants' blatant inability to self-regulate. Voluntary self-regulation does not work.

I will remind the House that most, if not all, of these initiatives have garnered support across the political spectrum around the world. There should not be a left-right divide on these issues. Divisions only benefit large multi-billion dollar companies, not our constituents. That is why I am urging all members of the House to work together constructively and ensure that this important bill passes through second reading hastily, so that the committee can start doing its important work to amend, improve and move forward.

Let us show the world that Canada is united and standing up for itself.

[Translation]

Today, by proposing that we modernize the Broadcasting Act, we are standing up for our culture and forging ahead with essential reforms. We are standing up for Canadian companies and creators by saying that everyone who profits from the system must contribute to the system. We are also standing up for Canadians and Quebecers. We are standing up for indigenous peoples, who have been under-represented for far too long. We are standing up for artists, musicians, directors and producers across the country who want to create their art in French.

These same Canadians, Quebecers and indigenous people want, and expect, to see themselves in the programs they choose to listen to and watch. They expect their stories to be told in their own language and to reflect Canada's diversity and the rich culture of indigenous peoples.

The Broadcasting Act enacted in 1991 served our society well, but it came into force before the digital era and is ill adapted to today's reality, a fact we can no longer ignore.

Our regulatory agency, the CRTC, also has few tools in its kit to ensure that the broadcasting ecosystem continues to serve Canadians. It is dealing with a media landscape that has changed considerably in the past 30 years. By introducing this bill, our government is meeting a pressing need, namely to adapt Canada's legislative framework to today's digital reality.

In the mandate letter the Prime Minister gave me, modernizing the Broadcasting Act is my primary responsibility. In fact, the Prime Minister asked me to examine "how best to support Canadian [stories] in English and French". He asked me to "introduce legislation by the end of 2020 that will take appropriate measures to ensure that all content providers, including internet giants, offer meaningful levels of Canadian [stories] in their catalogues, contribute to the creation of Canadian content in both Official Languages, promote [Canadian stories] and make [them] easily accessible on their platforms", while also considering "additional cultural and linguistic communities."

The bill our government tabled in the House on November 3 is a direct response to this mandate. It aims to update this important act to ensure the sustainability and vitality of our Canadian series, films and music, as well as of the people who make them and broadcast them.

I hope that the members of the House now understand that, on the one hand, we have Canadian companies that play by the rules and invest in Canadian culture, while, on the other hand, we have online broadcasters that take advantage of the system without any obligation to contribute to it. Having one regime for conventional broadcasters and another for online broadcasters does not work.

• (1640)

[*English*]

That is why we are proposing amendments to the act to support Canadian creators and independent Canadian producers: to ensure the viability of Canadian broadcasting and to protect Canada's cultural sovereignty.

The purpose of the bill is to level the playing field and ensure funding for Canadian stories and Canadian talent. It would allow us to give a higher profile to what is produced in Canada in English, French and indigenous languages, and encourage better representation of racialized Canadians, women and equity-seeking groups at all levels of production.

This bill would truly empower Canadian creators and producers. It reflects the diversity of Canadian perspectives. A modernized act would affirm and strengthen our francophone, anglophone, indigenous and Black identities, as well as all of our country's diversity by helping us to tell stories that speak to our experiences and values.

Bear in mind that we are imposing a number of guardrails. As I said earlier, user-generated content, news content and video games would not be subject to the new regulations. Furthermore, entities would need to reach a significant economic threshold before any regulation could be imposed. This keeps the nature of the Internet as it is. It simply asks companies that generate large revenues in Canada to contribute in a fair manner.

Government Orders

What we are proposing will not impact consumers' choices. It will not limit what any of those streamers can showcase in Canada and it will not impose a price increase. Foreign platforms will benefit from proposing local content that resonates with their subscribers.

[*Translation*]

These will be stories presented from their perspective and in their own language, or stories that will introduce them to the experiences of their fellow Canadians. This initiative will bring people together and promote social cohesion.

[*English*]

In these increasingly polarized times, having varied content that reflects our different experiences and perspectives across the country, through our shared stories, helps us to understand one another and to listen. Whether the perspective is from an indigenous person, a Black person, a person with a disability or a woman, we all have something to learn from each other.

Through their creative work, artists truly have a way to make us reflect, understand and feel what others feel. Global platforms will invest in local content and, by the same token, will allow our local content a greater reach globally.

This legislation will also generate investment in Canada and create jobs: two important drivers for reopening creative industries and ensuring their sustainability. This is no small feat when we consider that the broadcasting, audiovisual, music and interactive media sectors contribute \$20.4 billion to Canada's GDP and represent more than 160,000 jobs.

I would like to conclude by saying that Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, is the result of a collective effort. It is the result of a considerable amount of work by my colleagues, the public service, a vast array of stakeholders and the Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review Panel.

I would like to thank the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages and the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry for establishing the review panel, and for putting forward the notion that every participant in the Canadian broadcasting system has to contribute to the creation, production and promotion of Canadian stories.

I would also like to thank the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for making this bill a legislative priority for our government.

Last, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to this important file.

Government Orders

[Translation]

With this bill, we are taking a step in the right direction. Our government has opted for a step-by-step, targeted approach to modernize the Canadian broadcasting system quickly and appropriately. We recognize that the work is not over. Other measures will come, particularly regarding the important role of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the various funding mechanisms for the audiovisual production sector.

● (1645)

[English]

This is a bill about jobs, investing in Canada, equity and what it means, at the very core, to be Canadian. If members do not agree with all of the bill, or if members do not believe in our cultural sovereignty and that we as Canadians, as francophones, as first nations, as Métis and as Inuit are different, they can still support the bill for the jobs it will create.

However, let me reiterate that resistance is not futile. If jobs and investment in the cultural sector are not what members believe in for the future of our country, they should support this bill for its much-needed equity and fairness. We need to re-establish the fact that everyone, including web giants, must contribute to our society.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech.

There is a broad consensus that we must take action and that the status quo is no longer acceptable, especially after the release of the Yale report.

In his speech, the minister spoke a great deal about fairness, but unfortunately, it seems like Bill C-10 gives web giants a free pass. We cannot see how the bill will deal with all of Facebook's revenue from Canadian news sources and from advertising, for example, or with the credits granted to these web giants by the Government of Canada.

Why is the minister ultimately giving a free pass to the web giants, and Facebook in particular?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis for his question.

As I said several times, this bill is a first step in this venture of implementing a regulatory framework on the web giants' various operations. I am the first to admit that there is still work to be done. Bill C-10 goes after web giants in the field of broadcasting and streaming music. I committed to introducing another bill that will specifically target the web giants that my colleague just mentioned.

We are working with the governments of Australia and France, which are also in the process of putting these types of regulations in place.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to commend the heritage minister for this bill, the first bill he has introduced as a minister. Bill C-10 was eagerly awaited. Overhauling the Broadcasting Act after nearly 30 years is no small matter.

As I have already mentioned several times in our discussions, I was expecting something more consistent. However, I would like to ask the minister about paragraph 3(1)(a) of the act, which states that any Canadian broadcasting system must be effectively owned by Canadians. This provision of the act is nowhere to be found in Bill C-10.

I would like to know what the minister intends to do to protect Canada's broadcasting market from invasion by foreign giants.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

We cannot say that we have to make sure that the legislation and regulations apply to web giants if we do not allow this legislation and these regulations to apply to them. Paragraph 3(1)(a) is precisely what will allow us to ensure that Canadian laws and Canadian regulations apply to web giants.

Paragraph 3(1)(a) is not what ensures that Canadian companies have to be owned by Canadians. That was a CRTC decision in 1997. We are not changing anything with respect to ownership of Canadian companies.

What is more, Canadian companies in the field of broadcasting will still have to obtain licences from the CRTC. Beyond the current bill, there are other safeguards against foreign acquisition of Canadian companies that my colleague, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, and I have to consider. There are other safeguards for that.

This paragraph allows us to apply our laws and regulations to web giants. How else could we do this?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech and for introducing the bill.

I have a question that may seem a bit technical. In the wake of the Yale report, the goal is to have all stakeholders participate in the ecosystem of Quebec and Canadian cultural production.

If I access cultural content through a cable that is plugged into my TV, the provider must contribute to regional, local, Quebec and Canadian production. However, if I access the content over Wi-Fi, the Internet service provider is not required to participate.

Could someone explain that logic to me?

● (1650)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Madam Speaker, I have the Yale report right here. Members will recall that the Yale report said that service providers are in the business of infrastructure, so they should invest in infrastructure, and content providers are in the business of content, so they should invest in content. That is the gist of what the Yale report said.

I want to remind the House that for the first time in this country's history, Canada's broadcasting laws and regulations will apply to web giants. That has never been done before.

Earlier I said that this will generate nearly \$1 billion a year in investments from these companies, but it is actually more than \$1 billion, because if nothing is done by 2023, Canadian productions and Canadian artists will miss out on \$1 billion.

On top of reversing the trend, this bill will generate more than \$1 billion in investments for our artists and musicians.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for bringing forward this legislation. As somebody who has worked in the broadcast industry for years, with first nations producers, television producers and others who have been marginalized by the mainstream media historically, I think it is really important that the bill comes forward.

I am wondering about the CBC. We have heard from Friends of Canadian Broadcasting that it is disappointed the CBC was not included in the bill. I am wondering if there are plans to amend how the government works with the CBC or if there will be budget changes. Is anything coming up that will improve the situation for our national broadcaster?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Madam Speaker, the CBC/Radio-Canada is a very important institution to Canadians from coast to coast to coast. The member may recall that it was our government that made a record level of investments in the CBC in our previous mandate.

After 10 years of cutbacks by the Harper government, we have every intention to implement other reforms in the coming months. We could not do this as part of the bill, but we strongly believe on this side of the House in the importance of the CBC and the role it plays in Canada. We will continue to be there for it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister not only for this outstanding legislation, but for his high sense of commitment to Canada's arts and culture community. This is reflected in the bill. He actually met with a group from one of my favourite festivals in Winnipeg, Folklorama, which spends so much energy on arts and festivals and so forth.

Could the minister provide his thoughts in regard to how the bill will not only protect our culture going forward, but provide the needed jobs in an industry that is so critical to our nation?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, this is a very important sector. It is contributing \$20 billion to Canada's GDP and 160,000 jobs across the country.

What we are doing by introducing the bill is protecting Canadian cultural sovereignty and these jobs. Of course, some American companies are coming to Canada to film series and movies, service productions. This is great, but unless we intervene, we will lose our ability to tell our own stories.

I watch series from all around the world and I really love them, but first and foremost I like to watch Canadian series and movies

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and listen to Canadian music. Unless something is done, Canada will become nothing more than a production service outlet for the United States of America. This government does not want that. The bill prevents that from happening and gives us back our cultural sovereignty.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Before resuming debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove, Infrastructure.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the minister for introducing this bill today. I am very pleased to respond on behalf of our party and to take part in the debates that will be held today, tomorrow and in the coming days.

Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts, is quite important. The entire community has been waiting a long time for this bill and for the act to be amended, given the advent of the Internet and the digital players we are all familiar with. I think it is important to remember that the Broadcasting Act has not been amended in 28 years.

This bill is a response to the Yale report. Its main purpose is to subject online undertakings to the Broadcasting Act and to update Canada's broadcasting policy. I think all parties and stakeholders agree that the Broadcasting Act needs to be modernized. There is also a broad consensus among many stakeholders and, I believe, the other opposition parties, about how the bill should have included web giants and social media along with a number of other elements.

We have been waiting for this bill for a long time. I think many of us expected the government to come up with something a little more robust that included all the things I just mentioned. I would also consider print media, which say they are in a state of emergency and are having a hard time surviving at the moment because of how advertising revenue is being divided up.

The minister explained that the Liberal Party's strategy was to split the issues up into several parts and put some of them off until later. We think that is the wrong approach and that things should have been done differently, given the urgency of the situation and the existence of some degree of consensus around moving forward in the right direction.

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In principle, this bill should have addressed some of the inequities between the so-called traditional broadcasting undertakings and those that are also online. As I said, there are serious flaws. I would like to point out what is missing from this bill that should have been in it, in our view.

First of all, there is nothing in the bill to force social media companies like Facebook and Google to pay their fair share. Furthermore, this bill does not address royalty sharing by these companies for content that is delivered via their digital platforms. The bill also does not explain how digital platforms like Netflix, Spotify, Crave and others will be treated fairly compared to conventional players.

On top of that, this bill grants the CRTC all the powers to enforce the act and the rules, and we think this is short-sighted. We believe that the legislative responsibilities of MPs and Parliament are being shifted away from us and handed over to the CRTC. The minister will no doubt argue that it is difficult to amend legislation quickly and that when adjustments need to be made in the next few years, it will be much easier to have the CRTC take care of it. However, as we have seen, it is not always easy with the CRTC, and the sector does not necessarily agree with this course of action.

There are no details about guidelines for the production of Canadian content and contributions to the Canada Media Fund. That, too, is placed in the hands of the CRTC, and months will pass before it is all implemented, months in which there will be no investment in Canadian content.

There are also no particulars about a legally required percentage of French-language content. Later, I will list several organizations that are complaining about that. There is also nothing about modernizing the Copyright Act, even though many parties asked for it.

This bill will lead to additional costs for the CRTC because naturally there will be more regulations, more paperwork for businesses and more monitoring. We do not know how much all this will cost. Lastly, in the different reports, we were also expecting that the mandate of CBC/Radio-Canada would be updated. There is not one word about the corporation in the bill.

This bill is being introduced because we have a duty to modernize a 28-year-old law that has not kept pace with an evolving sector and the arrival of the Internet and social media on the market. The major online platforms such as Facebook, Google, Netflix, Crave, Spotify and others are not subject to the same rules as conventional players. Thus, the Broadcasting Act was supposed to be revised to include all of them in the system, which has not been done.

• (1700)

This was supposed to be done with a view to systematically reiterating the will to modernize the act and to find a solution that is fair to all Canadian producers and broadcasters.

The costs associated with Bill C-10 are hard to estimate at this time because the scope of the additional powers that will be given to the CRTC is unclear. For those who are interested, the CRTC's projected budget for 2020-21 is about \$71.9 million, which will mainly come from the licensing fees it collects. Naturally, this budget will have to be increased considerably to take into account the

new oversight powers that the CRTC will be given. As we know, it is always the same people who pay in the end.

Bill C-10 gives the CRTC extremely broad discretion to define what is meant by an online undertaking and to require such undertakings to spend money to produce and broadcast Canadian content. For conventional broadcasters, this will take the form of a percentage of Canadian content to produce, which is about 25% to 40%, based on the information we have, and an obligation to contribute about 5% of their gross revenues to the Canada Media Fund, which subsidizes Canadian productions.

Broadcasters' contributions to the fund totalled \$193 million in 2019-20. That makes it hard to understand how the minister could have come up with the \$830-million or \$1-billion figure he talked about in various interviews.

Neither Bill C-10 nor the minister's statements about it indicate whether online undertakings will have to make that 5% contribution, nor do they specify the Canadian content percentage they will have to comply with. Even so, the minister announced that online undertakings' additional investments in Canadian content under the act would add up to \$830 million as of 2023. We have even heard amounts of up to \$1 billion or thereabouts.

However, the minister has not yet responded to our request for information about how that amount was calculated. That said, I want to acknowledge that the request was made at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and that we were told the committee would get that information from the minister and his officials. I would have liked to receive it today before the debate because I think it would have been relevant, but we do not have it yet. We are still waiting for that information, and I am confident we will get it.

Based on the information they do have, affected stakeholders like Netflix are uncertain whether they will be able to abide by the new regulations. Conventional broadcasters can easily meet the content targets with sports and news programming. However, companies like Netflix are telling us that it will be hard for them, since they produce only fictional programs and documentaries and do not have that option.

That said, Netflix also told us about a problem it has that is not addressed in the bill. Netflix is still not able to fund or produce Canadian content. Allow me to explain.

Netflix's library includes the Quebec feature film *The Decline*, which many here are familiar with. It was filmed in Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, was viewed 21 million times in the first four weeks following its release, and generated \$5.3 million in investments in Quebec alone. It met six key creative requirements of the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office. However, the film could not be certified as Canadian content because it was financed and produced exclusively by Netflix.

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I think this aspect is important. It employed Canadian actors, Canadian crew members and Canadian camera operators, but it was not considered Canadian content because it was all funded by Netflix. Bill C-10 offers no solution to this conundrum.

With this bill, the Prime Minister's government is granting the CRTC vast powers without including clear guidelines on things like the percentage of Canadian content required, contribution fees and expenses, French-language content requirements, and so on.

The bill even limits the oversight powers of parliamentary committees in relation to guidelines and regulations adopted by the CRTC and broadcasters' ability to appeal a decision. The message this bill sends is this: "Trust us, and you will see later." Understandably, for us, the opposition, that is not good enough. It will take several months for the CRTC to take action, at which point parliamentarians will have only very limited oversight powers.

The bill does nothing to remedy the inequity between digital and conventional media. The regulation of social media, such as Facebook, and the sharing of the advertising revenue requested by traditional media are urgent because the longer we wait, the less there will be, which will be dangerous for our democracy.

● (1705)

Given its minority situation, it would have been more appropriate for the government to introduce a clear bill that set out its approach on all of these issues in concrete terms, rather than just giving the CRTC more discretion and telling us to wait and see what happens next.

I would like to talk about the matter of French in Quebec and in francophone communities. That is also important. We have seen the statements made by several organizations. The only measure to strengthen the place of French involves replacing paragraph 3(1) (k), which currently states, "a range of broadcasting services in English and in French shall be extended to all Canadians as resources become available" with "a range of broadcasting services in English and in French shall be progressively extended to all Canadians".

I am getting to the matter of French. I even made a few comments to the minister, and my opposition colleagues who were with me during the various briefings asked questions about quotas and benchmarks. The government tried to put us in a tight corner by saying that quotas were not a good idea, that it was unreasonable to ask for such a thing and that we should trust the CRTC.

They also said that imposing a quota was like setting a limit. That is like saying that judges lose their discretionary power when parliamentarians legislate minimum and maximum sentences. I do not believe that. Market forces always work things out. If the need is really there, people will go well beyond any minimums that might be set in order to provide protection.

Naturally, the minister did his job. He published his information on social media, mentioning only those who were happy with the bill from then on. Some organizations said it was a very good bill, a historic bill and so on, but I would like to name some others.

One of them is the Union des producteurs et productrices de cinéma du Québec, the UPPCQ, which would like to see one-third

of all production and content on Netflix and other platforms be in French. The UPPCQ is worried about the future of Quebec culture as people's media habits become anglicized under the influence of online giants such as Netflix and Disney.

We know how topical the issue of French is. The Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada publicly denounced Bill 101 and whatnot, then deleted tweets and apologized. Plus, we heard the comments made by the member for Saint-Laurent. There was the whole WE Charity scandal involving a unilingual anglophone organization during the pandemic. Then there was the English-only labels during the pandemic. On top of that, the Minister of Official Languages and the Prime Minister refuse to respond to a clear request from Quebec and all opposition parties. The Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Conservatives are calling on the government to allow Quebec to subject federally regulated businesses to Bill 101, because urgent protections are needed for French.

The people I mentioned earlier are worried about culture and identity. It is one of our greatest assets, and our country is proud to have two official languages. It gives us access to a market of 300 million francophones around the world, to share our culture, our economic expertise, and so on. I think it is normal for us on this side of the House to find it worrisome that the Liberals want to rely solely on the CRTC to protect French.

It is not just the opposition MPs saying so. Some organizations have unambiguously denounced it. Here is the title of an article for you, "Web giants still have the last laugh". It was not an opposition MP who said that. It was political analysts. The article says:

The Minister of Canadian Heritage chose the day of the U.S. election to introduce his baby. If he was so proud, the minister surely would have chosen another time. In politics, the timing of this sort of announcement is never left to chance.

Friends of Canadian Broadcasting says that the bill introduced by the Minister of Canadian Heritage leaves Canadian broadcasters at the mercy of foreign competition. Friends of Canadian Broadcasting believes that the legislation needs to be more precise and more exact, as we have been calling for by the way, with requirements on the percentage of local content to be broadcast. They maintain that the change enshrines the rights of the web giants into law and neglects our cultural and journalistic sovereignty. Friends of Canadian Broadcasting also condemn the prerogative given to the CRTC to deal with the web giants. Netflix and company will be able to send their lobbyists to Ottawa to negotiate secret agreements with the CRTC, which could sanction them or compel them to comply with the legislation at their discretion.

Once again, it is not opposition MPs who are saying this, but the organizations that are directly impacted.

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• (1710)

Friends of Canadian Broadcasting has also pointed out that this bill does not update the CBC's mandate. Bill C-10 makes no substantial changes to the CBC's mandate or governance structure. It does not put an end to political appointments to its board; it does not put an end to the political appointment of its president; it does not specify that its programming must be ad-free; and it does not clarify its obligation to produce local information and news.

The National Assembly of Quebec and Quebec are the beating heart of the French language in North America. The National Assembly asked Quebec to demand that the Government of Canada set fair and equitable quotas for original Quebec and French-language content and that they be included in the Broadcasting Act.

Clearly we are not the only ones disappointed by what is in this bill. We expected something more robust. We were expecting, and everyone agreed on this, new legislation that would modernize the Broadcasting Act, that would ensure that all stakeholders contributed equally, that would protect Canadian, Quebec and francophone content. It was expected that everyone would be contributing equally. That is not what is in the bill, though.

As the minister often points out in his speeches, there are other issues, such as hate speech on social networks and discrimination, that need to be regulated. We were surprised that these topics were not even touched on. That will come in an upcoming bill. I spoke about copyright and certain organizations. There are some urgent problems that could have been solved easily. These organizations are starving, and they were expecting these problems to be solved. Artists, writers and performers were expecting something more satisfying, but they too will have to go hungry.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage made an appearance on *Tout le monde en parle* to talk about his bill. Naturally, the discussion got off topic a bit. Obviously, it was not a very tough interview with Guy A. Lepage, but the minister talked about hate speech and freedom of speech.

One of the political analysts, Mathieu Bock-Côté, was one of the few who pointed out something that the minister said that was a bit disturbing. When speaking about freedom of speech, the minister said, "Our rights end where another's pain begins".

I am mentioning this because these issues should have been worked on in conjunction with the whole issue of web giants and social media, which will come in a next step. However, there is a quite a debate going on about freedom of speech. Radio-Canada pulled an episode of *La petite vie* because it was worried certain people would be hurt. In the end, after some pressure was exerted, the episode was reinstated, and it is very funny.

We then hear the minister make this comment about freedom of expression. Where does it end, if that is what our Minister of Canadian Heritage is saying, the one who comes up with the rules and the legislation on such fundamental issues? This means that the moment another citizen is offended, everything we say has to be regulated. Does this mean that we will withdraw all comments and we can no longer allow people to express themselves freely, under the pretext that it could hurt someone? In my view, we are witnessing a

shift that could undermine this freedom that we hold so dear in this country.

Let me come back to my analysis of Bill C-10, introduced in the House.

Many issues remain, such as the fact that the CRTC has vast powers, powers that should be in the hands of legislators so they can make important decisions. There is also the issue of Canadian content, which we believe should be safeguarded to ensure its presence among the players in the digital world. I would also add that French is once again being sidelined by the Liberal Party of Canada.

We will continue to examine the bill. I hope the minister will accept the various amendments that will be brought forward by all opposition parties.

• (1715)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a lot to say.

I would first like to point out that the party my hon. colleague represents had 10 years to tackle most of these issues while it was in power, but it did nothing. It actually reversed progress on a number of these issues.

My colleague seems to be saying that we are doing too much but that it is not enough and will cost too much, so I am a little confused. I have already answered the question about Facebook and Google, but I would like to read an excerpt from the Yale report, which the member mentioned and the former opposition leader said should be tossed in the trash the day it was released.

Here is what the Yale report says on page 146, in the recommendations section: "The actual percentage that might apply and the conditions relating to it would be a matter for the CRTC to determine after public hearings." Those are the very same points my colleague raised.

Far from perpetuating inequity, this bill will level the playing field between traditional Canadian broadcasters and online broadcasters.

Speaking of the French language, I want to mention that I was honoured to receive the Impératif français award in 2017. I am one of the few members of Parliament to have earned this honour. French is very important to me, and this bill does even more to protect the French language. In the directive we will give the CRTC, we will ask for even more requirements relating to the French language.

If I understand correctly, my hon. colleague is accusing us of not doing enough for CBC/Radio-Canada. Does this mean that the leader of the official opposition has abandoned the promise he made during the Conservative Party leadership race to defund CBC/Radio-Canada?

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Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate the minister on the award he received. I think that is fantastic, and I say that from the heart. I think that he should go and sit next to the member for Saint-Laurent to show her the importance of such an award and of defending French everywhere. It would surely do us some good on this side of the House to see someone fiercely defending French.

That being said, I want to point out that I am not questioning his willingness to defend the French language and to ensure that his agreement includes French- and English-language Canadian content. However, I think that it could have been more robust and that it could have been included in the act. There could have been guidelines.

I would like to reiterate that it is not the member for Richmond—Arthabaska or the other members here who are saying this. It is the organizations that I mentioned and that are directly affected by this bill. I am not making anything up. I did not give my opinion. I just talked about the people who will be affected by this act.

I hope that the minister will listen to the concerns of these stakeholders and the recommendations that will be made by the opposition parties, including the Conservative Party. I hope that will make it possible for us to come up with a stronger and more substantial bill, rather than trying to avoid these topics and passing the buck to the CRTC in nine months, knowing full well that this bill fails to address a number of issues.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to show good faith.

We are pleased that there has been some movement here. This is a first step.

However, the most logical and simplest first step in my mind would be to require these companies to collect taxes. We are able to do so in Quebec. How is the federal government unable to do that?

I do not understand it. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that. Does he think that the government is once again shirking its responsibilities by delegating virtually all of the decisions to the CRTC?

Is this not just an excuse for the Liberals to come back in a year or two and say it is not their fault that our industry took a nosedive?

• (1720)

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé, which is a really beautiful region that I am very familiar with. Is it more beautiful than Richmond—Arthabaska? That could be the subject of another debate.

My colleague has asked a very pertinent question. I will refer again to the program *Tout le monde en parle* because I watched it. I do not watch a lot of television, but I did on that occasion because it was important and I knew that we would be debating Bill C-10 today.

I spoke earlier about hate speech, freedom and so on. The minister mentioned that he was collaborating with the Minister of Public Safety and with other departments. He skirted the issue of taxation

by saying that it was in the hands of the Minister of Finance and he was not the finance minister.

It is very nice that they work with their colleagues when they see fit to do so. They form the government and they can talk amongst themselves in cabinet about how important it is.

The issue of tax inequity has been clearly stated. There are different avenues, including ensuring that everyone pays equally. We could offer to remove the GST for all digital players to make it fair. That is another way of looking at things, but at the very least we have to ensure that it is fair for everyone.

Again, this is an urgent file on which everyone agrees. Even the minister says that this might come up in the next budget. We have to keep trusting them and wait for later. By then there might be an election.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He addressed a number of very interesting points and just between him and me, as far as his interventions on CBC/Radio-Canada are concerned, I am not sure where his party stands on the public broadcaster.

I would like to ask him about something very specific. In the previous legislation, there was a direction to use Quebec and Canadian talent and resources as much as possible when there was a production of Canadian content. The request to use as many employees and resources from here at home as possible has disappeared in the current bill. That is a concern for the NDP.

I would like to know what my colleague's thoughts are on this.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very pertinent question.

When we discussed this—as MPs we meet with representatives of various organizations—I was really surprised. I think I even saw the Speaker nod when I talked about the Netflix situation. I was told about cases where only Quebecers or Canadians were hired, but the production was still not considered Canadian content.

We say that we want to go further, but why would we want to do so if we are not even able to recognize all these investments that were made?

When we speak to the stakeholders, we realize that they are ready to do their part. They do not oppose this. They tell us that they want to pay their share, that they want it to be fair. In return, they are asking for the bill to be fair, equitable and clear, that it not be arbitrary or dependent upon certain people in a regulatory body who can only be reached by certain lobbyists. We know that those who like lobbyists could meet with them.

I am concerned about the disappearance of that provision. Now it will be part of our job to talk more about that and propose amendments. We will see how the government behaves and whether it acknowledges that the bill is not perfect.

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I want to reiterate to the House that everyone agrees this act needed to be reviewed. Nobody was against that, but some of us are disappointed with what the government came up with. Even so, we will give the minister a chance to show that he genuinely wants to make necessary changes when the time is right.

[English]

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, my question is about the lack of regulation on content that is going onto YouTube and Facebook. We know that a lot of misinformation has been put onto these platforms. There has been racist content and a lot of misogynist content. Would the hon. member like to see regulation on these platforms?

They are not really platforms; they are publishers. Would he like to see them treated as publishers and the content that they publish come under this act?

• (1725)

Mr. Alain Rayes: Madam Speaker, it is very simple. The answer is yes.

[Translation]

That is not covered in this bill though. There is nothing in it that would regulate social media or platforms like YouTube.

We would have liked to talk about it. As the minister rightly said, we need to find a way to avoid hate speech, conspiracies that may exist in some cases and the dissemination of misinformation. Unfortunately, we will not even be able to propose amendments to improve the bill on that score because that aspect is just not addressed.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-10, the first of the long-awaited bills from our heritage minister.

The Liberal government has been working on this bill for five years. We have gone through five years, three ministers, a media crisis, a cultural industry in jeopardy, a Yale report and, just to take things to another level, a pandemic that has finished off many players in this industry that we all enjoy.

When the Yale report was released, the minister said that he would not wait for a bill to intervene and that he was going to make changes via regulation. We are here today to talk about a bill that will change the CRTC's regulatory powers.

Members will understand my lukewarm reaction to this bill. All that for this? Even some important industry players, a few of whom my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska spoke about earlier, reacted enthusiastically at first but then tempered their views a few days later and recognized that there were still a lot of loose ends that need to be tied up before this bill passes muster.

When someone takes that long to bake a cake, people expect it to be covered in icing and nicely decorated.

Here is a little history lesson. In 1929, the government of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau enacted a broadcasting act for Quebec, the first of its kind in Canada. Three years later, on May 26, 1932, the Bennett government here in Ottawa passed the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act, the first of its kind. The act created a broadcasting regulatory body, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commis-

sion, which was to regulate and control all Canadian broadcasting and establish a national service.

At the time, speaking right here in the House, Prime Minister Bennett stressed the idea of complete Canadian control over broadcasting as well as the benefits of public versus private ownership. The act also stated that the airwaves were a public asset and that the government had a duty and a role to play in monitoring their use. From the very beginning, it was understood that broadcasting, the people's primary means of communication, should be under Canadian control. Quebec had realized that three years earlier, but that happens a lot. We can come back to that later.

This year, we had reason to expect a major overhaul of the act because, as we have heard repeatedly, it has not been altered substantially since 1991.

Here is another little reminder to provide some context. Back in 1991, we were recording our music on little cassette tapes and programming our VCRs to record *L'Or du temps*, *Entre chien et loup* or *Les Filles de Caleb*, at least in Quebec. The current House Leader of the Official Opposition was a journalist at TQS in Quebec at the time, and the winner of album of the year at the ADISQ gala was Gerry Boulet's *Rendez-vous doux*.

That provides some perspective and serves to remind us how long this act has been in need of reform. I agree that an overhaul was urgently needed.

I think that Bill C-10 provides a very interesting foundation on which something solid and lasting could be built to respond to today's broadcasting reality. However, urgent action is needed. This is according to the Yale report, and Ms. Yale herself, not me.

This bill needs far too much work for it to be fast-tracked. While this may be urgent, we will not rush the work, and we will not cut corners. The world of broadcasting is extremely complex and has transformed radically over the past 30 years.

I have another little story to share. In the early 2000s, a senior CRTC executive said that it would be pointless to pass legislation for online broadcasting because no one would ever watch TV on their phone. Today, who does not have a mobile device they use to watch videos, news clips and sometimes entire shows?

That was 20 years ago. Just imagine the challenges we will face in the next 10, 20 or 30 years in the broadcasting industry. Today, it is important to demonstrate vision, but also prudence, when making decisions about Bill C-10, because we may have to live with the consequences for a long time.

I think that everyone basically agrees that many elements are missing from this bill. We expected something more substantial.

• (1730)

I will not repeat everything that my colleagues have already said, but I will list some of the missing elements that I am particularly concerned about, especially when it comes to the issue of hate speech and the dissemination of fake news. The purpose of a bill is not necessarily to tell the CRTC how to do things, but to clearly state the government's intent. When the CRTC enforces the regulations, it will have to keep in mind the intent of the legislation it is using and have a clear understanding of it.

I think it would have been a good idea to incorporate into the legislation an obligation for online broadcasters to put safeguards in place against hate speech and against the ever-popular fake news. Right now, content sharing platforms are subject to the law, but when these platforms allow users to upload content, those users can continue to spread material that we would do well to regulate.

Members will not be surprised to hear that I think that the way the issue of French is addressed in this bill is pathetic. For example, it could have included slightly more rigorous, more sincere protections. Take, for example, clause 9.1, which states that the CRTC may impose conditions regarding the proportion of Canadian content and the discoverability of Canadian programs. I have no problem with that, but how hard would it have been to say the same thing about a fair proportion of French-language content? As Cicero said, "*Quid enim Bonum est, Bonum canem felem*", which is Latin for "what is good for the goose is good for the gander". Well, it may actually have been the centurion Crismus Bonus who said that in *Asterix the Gaul*, but never mind.

Another element that is missing from the bill is thresholds for investment in Canadian and French-language content. If the government does not give the CRTC parameters for specific expectations regarding contributions to content production, the CRTC will end up having to negotiate with companies or groups of companies. Given the weight that giants like Netflix can bring to bear on such negotiations, we can expect to see agreements that benefit some companies disproportionately at the expense of Canadian companies like Bell, Videotron and the rest, which currently have to invest 30% of their revenue in Canadian production.

Are they likely to tell the CRTC they want Netflix to pay more? Quite the opposite: they will lobby for equal treatment, which is perfectly reasonable. However, they too will demand the most advantageous treatment possible, which may be problematic because we want the system to benefit content creators, artists, and the francophone and Canadian cultural industry.

That section is important, because the future of the entire industry could be jeopardized if this protection is not put into law. I also agree that there is not a word about the CBC's mandate. The Yale report suggested a review of the Broadcasting Act as well as the mandate of our public broadcaster. Bill C-10 contains nothing on that.

A number of measures could have been taken. For example, the funding could have been reviewed, and funding parameters could have been set to avoid relying on advertising revenue, especially

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for educational programming. Funding over five years could have been introduced, with a renewal at the end of year four, to ensure greater predictability. The CBC licence renewal hearings will be held in just a few weeks or months from now. This would have been an excellent opportunity, which the government is passing up, much like leaving a \$100 bill lying on the sidewalk because they are too tired to pick it up. I do not think it would have taken much effort.

Our regional news media are also complaining. In August, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, or CAB, sounded the alarm when it released data from a study indicating that, if nothing was done, 737 private radio stations could shut down in the next few months. In the next 18 months, up to 150 stations could close their doors. Private radio stations account for more than 2,000 jobs across the country. As the CAB clearly stated in its report, the broadcasting industry needs the government's help and regulations to ensure a more equitable and sustainable future. I do not know if the government got the message, but the answer is nowhere to be found in Bill C-10.

One of the most important measures that protect Canada's broadcasting market is paragraph 3(1)(a) of the act, which states that businesses must be effectively owned and controlled by Canadian interests. This requirement would be removed from the act on the grounds that it cannot apply to online broadcasters.

• (1735)

Since a legislative overhaul is justified by the growing presence of these online broadcasters in our market, it is reasonable to want to loosen the provision, but getting rid of it entirely is a leap I am not willing to take. Instead of making an exception for online businesses by taking into account the fact that they are often foreign businesses, the government has decided to eliminate nearly 90 years of Canadian ownership from the legislation.

In the Yale report, recommendation 53 states that the landscape of Canadian broadcasting should "consist of Canadian-owned and -controlled companies alongside foreign companies". The wording was there. It was a good recommendation and it could have been used in Bill C-10. Opening the door to foreign acquisition of broadcasting companies is handing over the keys of our culture to someone who does not care one iota about it.

The absence of clear protection of francophone and Quebec culture has me deeply concerned. Quebec's cultural industry developed thanks to the protection measures put in place to preserve the place that the French language has in our anglophone ocean. It did not settle for the place it was given, but took advantage of the importance it was given to develop, diversify and shine around the world.

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Francophone artists and artisans been able to learn a living from their art, but on top of that, our industry has been so strong that artists from all around the world, both francophones and anglophones, have chosen to settle in Quebec. That is a direct result of the hard work of our organizations and representatives from the music, entertainment, theatre, arts, film and television industries.

Shows that were created in Quebec have found audiences around the world. Take, for example, shows like *Un gars, une fille*, *Les beaux malaises* or *30 Vies*, and then you have directors like Denis Villeneuve, Jean-Marc Vallée and Xavier Dolan. There are too many to name.

We need to protect the French language, especially now, because with the influx of money from digital platforms, producers will be tempted to create English content, since that market is much more lucrative. That is also a major argument in support of the Bloc Québécois's request to enshrine in law the requirement that 40% of money spent on Canadian productions be used to create French-language content.

Believing that the CRTC will protect French-language content on online distribution platforms is like believing in unicorns. The CRTC is already under enormous pressure from various lobbies. I cannot imagine what will happen when billionaire multinationals deploy their weapons of mass seduction to make their case before them. Our domestic cultural organizations will never be able to hold their own, and we will lose out.

The Broadcasting Act must set much clearer and more precise parameters for the CRTC without necessarily taking away its flexibility within those parameters. That is the distinction to make. We are not talking about interfering; we are simply talking about expressing expectations clearly so they are easy to understand. The government needs to take this all too rare opportunity to review the act much more seriously than it is doing now.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Drummond for his speech. I have some questions for him.

He said that francophone producers and artists across Quebec and Canada had thrived because of the protections we put in place. Here is one of my questions for him: Where are these measures in the current act? I do not see any.

All of the measures he is alluding to came from the CRTC. The government gave directives to the CRTC which led to protections for francophone culture in Quebec and across the country. That is what was reported in the Yale report, which the member supported at the time, saying it was good work. However, the Yale report, which he quoted earlier, says that it is up to the CRTC to determine these things and that it is not in the act.

The member said that some groups had been very enthusiastic in the beginning but then changed their minds. I will not name them all, but here are a few: the Association québécoise de la production médiatique; the Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, or ADISQ; the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française; the Canadian Independent Music Association, or CIMA; the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists, or ACTRA; Unifor; the

Fonds de solidarité FTQ; and the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, or CSN.

I have here a press release issued yesterday by independent producers titled "Broadcasting bill: the AQPM refutes the Bloc Québécois's allegations"—

• (1740)

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

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I think the minister and I should go out for a drink together. We clearly need to set the record straight.

I admire and commend his passion because I know that this file is extremely important to him. I am well aware of everything he had to navigate to get to Bill C-10. I would like to come back to something I was saying about the first question he asked.

He talked about measures that were put in place. I would like to elaborate on that point by talking about the tireless battle that Quebec's cultural industry has fought to preserve the French fact and Quebec culture in the vast North American anglophone ocean.

It is thanks to the countless representations of organizations before the CRTC—when radios and other agencies tried to relax the rules on music quotas, for example—it is thanks to their constant fight and the fact that they never gave up that we managed to develop a rather vibrant cultural economy and industry that, beyond Quebec culture, attract artists from all over and now shines abroad.

To answer the minister's question, the game-changer has been the arrival of digital content providers. It is not in the current Broadcasting Act because it was not needed before. However, the arrival of digital content providers has changed the entire market. It is altogether different. That is why we need clear measures that must be clearly articulated so the CRTC knows where the government wants to go with this.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, along the same lines, I would nevertheless like to congratulate my colleague from Drummond, who reminded us that it was a Conservative prime minister who first thought of legislating broadcasting in Canada.

However, as part of the discussion, he clearly stated in his speech that there is a fundamental link between language and culture. What he deplores about Bill C-10 is that it does not address the importance of preserving Quebec and French-Canadian culture in this new environment.

Is that not a fundamental flaw of the bill? I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for that question. I relish the opportunity to elaborate.

I do think there is a flaw and I do think there is a case for this being enshrined in legislation. Anyone following the news may have noticed that the riding of Saint-Laurent has had a rough go of it this week, but I am not trying to pile on. This would be a good opportunity to show that the French language and Quebec culture are important and to put measures in the bill that acknowledge the distinction and acknowledge the value. The bill should ensure that the language and the culture are preserved and protected so they can continue to flourish.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Drummond for his very interesting speech.

The NDP is concerned about the definition of online undertakings. The purpose of Bill C-10 is to place the web and Internet under the CRTC's authority, but we have some doubts about subsection 31.1(2), because some undertakings and some tools, such as Chromecast or the Roku interface, might not have a licence or might have an exemption and would not be included.

Does my colleague not agree that the government should clarify the definition of "online undertaking" to be sure that it covers all existing technologies as well as future technologies?

• (1745)

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question.

I think there are a lot of surprises and new things that we will have to deal with, with the arrival and invasion of digital technologies. As I mentioned in my speech, I think we need to proceed with caution and be very careful about the decisions that we make today because they will most likely have an impact on the next 10 to 20 years.

When we talk about ownership and the permission this will give to online undertakings to come and set up shop on our territory, we need to find ways to regulate that, to ensure that the regulations apply to all of these undertakings, not just the ones that generate a certain amount of revenue. Every undertaking that broadcasts in Canada, whatever the content may be, must be subject to the same regulations as the others.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passionate speech.

I would like to come back to a point he made in his speech. Given our history in media, we have that in common. He talked about how important it is to ensure the survival of some private radio stations, particularly for the sake of regional information and because of the fact that if we do not properly regulate digital giants and put enough guidelines in place, there will always be a threat hanging over regional media, which is essential to our democracy. Back home we have an exceptional radio co-op.

I would like my colleague to say more on this.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question, and I thank my colleague from Shefford for asking it.

During our meetings with industry representatives in recent months, we heard over and over that this was the most urgent issue.

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The regional media and local news media were most concerned, as they face more uncertainty over their future.

Because this is so urgent, we expected to see something much more specific to help this segment of the media. At the very least, we would have expected a GAFSA tax. The idea is to tax GAFSA and charge royalties on the content they use for free while they rake in billions of dollars. I feel like things are not being done in the right order.

Do we urgently need to take care of our regional media outlets? Do we urgently need to make the web giants pay their fair share? To ask that question is to answer it. That the government has yet to move on this defies logic.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister did such a passionate job explaining what this bill is about. It is something that is long overdue. Many, including myself, would suggest it is somewhat historic.

Just to be perfectly clear with the member of the Bloc Party, does he see the Bloc supporting the legislation? Does the member have some specific amendments that the Bloc is considering?

In his opening remarks, the minister talked about his willingness to listen for the possibility of good amendments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his question.

Of course we are open to discussion. The minister himself seems very open to making sure this bill meets our expectations and can be implemented as quickly as possible.

Will the Bloc Qu b cois vote in favour of this bill? Given the minister's openness, the industry's support and the importance of implementing this bill quickly, we are feeling optimistic about it at the moment. That said, there will be lots of work to do in committee.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate with my colleagues in the House this evening.

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We heard some very interesting comments. First, I would like to remind members of just how critical I think this bill is. We are talking about artists, artisans, technicians and people who work in the film, television and music industries. However, above and beyond economic development and jobs, which are very important, we are also talking about who we are and our identity as Quebecers and Canadians. This is an important subject, and this is not just any industry. Our cultural industries define us, tell our stories, take us out into the world, and that is part of Quebec's and Canada's great national narrative.

It is with that in mind that I want to address this subject. It is not just important for sustainable and fair development and ensuring a level playing field for everyone in the ecosystem; it is about more than that, because it gives us more soul and defines us collectively.

I thought it was important to point that out from the beginning. This evening's speeches are not just administrative or technical. They are about who we are and how we should be seen and how we want to be seen by our fellow citizens and the rest of the world.

This is an interesting debate. It was decided years ago that the Hertzian waves were public property. If we lose sight of that, we are on the wrong track for understanding exactly why and how to legislate and regulate this sector.

It was decided that waves that move through the air, whether for television or radio, do not belong to any one company or individual, but rather are a collective good, a public property, whose use must be subject to rules. The CRTC was created to manage this public property, the airwaves, and to grant licences, or permits, to companies to use these airwaves to broadcast television programs, films, or music in the case of radio stations.

This system worked well for a while. Unfortunately, the Broadcasting Act has not been reviewed since 1991, which is around the time I was finishing high school.

Things have changed since then. Back then, no one wanted to intervene too much to regulate the new baby that had just arrived on the market, by which I mean the World Wide Web. They thought that this new medium was a new way to distribute content and that they would give this poor little thing a chance. They would not regulate or control it too much, but instead give it breathing room so that it could grow and thrive.

Over the years, the poor little thing has grown into a juggernaut that is crushing everyone in its path. It is part of life, and that is okay, but our legislative and regulatory framework was completely out of step with the significant role that Internet and web broadcasting came to play.

Then came the Yale report and its 97 recommendations. It includes many very serious elements and gave rise to an almost unanimous observation, namely that the success of a cultural, film, television or radio production sector depends on universal participation.

Right now, there are some stakeholders that do contribute and that are required to invest part of their revenue in the system to help our creators and producers of original Quebec and Canadian content. However, there are other stakeholders that do not. That point

was raised by the Yale report, which stated that this situation cannot go on. For that reason, today we have Bill C-10, which tries to make the legislative changes that will get us there.

● (1750)

The intent is noble, and we agree with it. It is required. This bill should have been introduced 10 or 15 years ago. It is a little bit late.

That said, the bill has many flaws, and I will get to them. I believe that we have a duty as parliamentarians and members of opposition parties. Some of my Conservative and Bloc colleagues have demonstrated that they want to enhance and improve the bill by minimizing the flaws while retaining a certain flexibility and openness for the future.

This bill will not be reviewed every two or three years. It has not been reviewed in 30 years, and I hope we will not wait another 30 years. That said, I do not want to box us in or handcuff us.

How come, once again, some stakeholders are not contributing? This was not in the Yale report, but I bring it up because I do not understand this disconnect. When Vidéotron, my service provider, plugs a cable into my TV, it has to pay a 5% royalty to the Canada Media Fund to support the production of Quebec and Canadian cultural content. That is great. However, Vidéotron does not have to contribute a thing for the Wi-Fi device I have in my home. A cable is a cable. Whether it is transmitting cable TV or the Internet, everyone should have to contribute to helping our producers and creators deliver original Quebec and Canadian content. I still do not understand this.

This bill should have been much more ambitious, but I get the impression that the government was looking for the lowest common denominator. In the end, we did not end up with much. The NDP is worried that this bill does not really include everyone. Internet service providers are not included. Another quirk is that ad revenue earned by web giants like Facebook and Google is excluded. All of Facebook's and Google's revenue comes from advertising. Why did the Liberals choose to exclude Facebook's and Google's ad revenue from the bill? Would it have anything to do with the hundreds of meetings that assorted Liberal ministers have had with the web giants? That may be the case, although I hope not. This was a strange thing to leave out, and it will have an impact on help for the media and for journalism, which were also completely left out of this bill. I will come back to this later. We had hoped to see concrete measures to help newsrooms, journalists and people who are doing important journalistic work. We were close to getting something, but that all disappeared at the last minute. We have a lot of questions about this for the Liberal government and the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

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Another thing that is missing is YouTube. We can talk about television and film production, but we must not forget that the broadcasting bill also affects musicians. That is very important. For now, Bill C-10 appears to cover Spotify, but not YouTube, even though it is an indispensable platform for many artists, be they well established or up-and-coming. It is an absolutely fantastic way for artists to share their work and their creations. I use it, and so do my children and my friends. It is not covered, though.

I realize we need to draw a distinction with someone who takes a video of their cat in their basement and puts it on YouTube because they think it is cute. I get that Bill C-10 does not cover that. However, for artists like Pierre Lapointe and Ariane Moffatt, we can make that distinction and include YouTube so that it too contributes resources for the creation of more original Quebec and Canadian content.

The major things that are missing are social media, YouTube, Facebook's and Google's ad revenue, and Internet service providers. There are a lot of things missing. I am very much looking forward to the committee studying this bill and fixing all those problems.

● (1755)

What is more, the government has been telling us for months that it will make sure that Netflix collects GST. Other members spoke about that. That was supposed to happen without any problem, but it still has not been done. The Minister of Canadian Heritage will say that it is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance, but could he not sit down with her to work on a plan and give us a clear indication of when the web giants and Netflixes of the world will have to collect GST like every other business in Quebec and Canada? For now, it is still just an empty promise.

Moreover, why are the GAFAM, the web giants, not paying taxes in Quebec and Canada when they are making a fortune? They are not paying a cent in taxes, nor are they helping to fund our health care and education systems or infrastructure in Quebec and Canada.

I want to share a statistic that I find very interesting that was recently released by Oxfam Canada. With the pandemic, some companies have made huge profits. Amazon is one of them. Jeff Bezos, the owner of Amazon, does not pay taxes in Canada. Amazon does not pay taxes in Canada. However, as we all know, online shopping has increased dramatically.

According to Oxfam-Québec, Amazon has 876,000 employees worldwide, and Jeff Bezos could write each and every one of them a cheque for \$100,000 and still be as rich as he was before the pandemic. However, people like him are not paying taxes here. It is absolutely appalling. I would like the Liberals to show some backbone and promise to force these web giants to pay taxes in Quebec and Canada.

Furthermore, I am disappointed that there is no mention of CBC/Radio-Canada in the broadcasting bill. This is a bit worrisome, since CBC/Radio-Canada is a major player in content production, as well as journalism. It is as if it no longer exists. I would like to believe that the Minister of Canadian Heritage cares about the future of CBC/Radio-Canada, but there is no indication of any clear intentions in Bill C-10 at this time. We see this as a flaw that could be fixed and worked on in committee.

I am not the first to talk about this, but I want to emphasize that the NDP is not necessarily in favour of legislating quotas for French-language content. We think legislation is not necessarily the best place to put these objectives, because it is a bit constraining, and we want to provide some flexibility.

However, the legislation must provide clear direction and objectives. That is currently missing from the bill, and we very much doubt that the direction given to the Governor in Council or the CRTC on original French-language content will be very clear. We believe it is absolutely essential that the content be original, not purchased from abroad and dubbed by Canadian or Quebec actors. We want original content created in French.

We think there is a way to strengthen the wording of the legislation to ensure that it is extremely clear and essential that additional resources be provided for indigenous and Inuit productions, but also to ensure fair and equitable treatment for producers of French-language content, whether in television or film.

With regard to Canadian ownership of licensed undertakings, we share the same concerns about section 3 that have already been mentioned here. We want a system that allows us to preserve and protect the ownership rights of producers of Quebec and Canadian cultural content. We do not want them to be bought up by foreign companies. That is a major concern for us right now. It is the type of thing that we all need to work on together, to ensure that we end up with the best possible system.

On a more technical note, there is some uncertainty because we are moving from a licensing system to an order system.

● (1800)

With the licensing system, licences were renewed every five or seven years, and industry stakeholders and members of the public could participate and intervene in CRTC hearings.

Under the new system of orders and conditions of service, there does not seem to be a renewal process that offers an opportunity to challenge, add or change certain conditions. The NDP feels it is very important to put that on the agenda.

Furthermore, a process for petitioning the Governor in Council would allow industry stakeholders, creators, and artists to report violations of the spirit of the act, the directives or the orders. The option of filing a complaint seems to have disappeared in Bill C-10, and we would like the appeal process to be reinstated.

Private Members' Business

In closing, one of the elements missing from the bill is assistance for newsrooms and for the production of news content. Many web giants are stealing journalists' work and posting it on their websites. While these giants profit from this free content, newsrooms are suffering and journalists are losing their jobs. This is extremely important for our democratic life and social life. We were expecting that there would be something in this bill. It is very disappointing that there is no support for newsrooms.

I would like to share some figures. Between 2008 and 2018, 189 community newspapers and 36 daily newspapers were closed in Canada. In Quebec, 57 weekly or biweekly newspapers, 12 monthly and bimonthly newspapers, six online newspapers and one regional daily newspaper closed between 2011 and 2018. The sector has been devastated.

If we want to live in a democratic society with healthy, rational debates based on verifiable facts, we must force the web giants to financially compensate news organizations and journalists, which are doing very important work. Their work is not free. It must be compensated and rewarded.

We hope that the Liberal government will make adjustments and choose to help local and regional media.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1805)

[*English*]

CANADA PHARMACARE ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP) moved that Bill C-213, an act to enact the Canada pharmacare act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to kick off this historic debate in the House of Commons on a very important measure that would help millions of Canadians.

I want to start by thanking the seconder of the bill, our national leader, the member for Burnaby South, who is a strong advocate for national pharmacare. I also want to thank my seconder tonight, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, our deputy leader, who is also a very strong advocate. I want to thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway, who is our health critic and knows more about pharmacare than any other member of Parliament, and our deputy health critic, the member for Vancouver East.

In other words, this is not an initiative of one member, though it is presented under Private Members' Business. This is an initiative of the entire NDP caucus. The entire NDP team is stepping forward to meet a need that, we know, is urgent across this country.

I want to preface this important debate by talking about another historic debate that took place in the House of Commons, in the old chamber in Centre Block, 100 metres from here, about half a century ago. Members will recall from the history books that at that time there was no medicare in our country. Anyone who has read the stories of life before medicare will know what hardship and desperate choices took place in Canada at that time.

People were having to choose between whether they could pay for the food on the table and keep making their payments for their home or for their farm, and having to cope with sudden and unexpected injury or severe disease or disability. What resulted was that often Canadians had to sell the farm or the home. They had to go bankrupt. They had to make desperate choices.

As members know, a man stepped forward, represented in this House as he was the national leader of the NDP, Tommy Douglas. At that time in Saskatchewan, he saw the necessity for universal health care, and what Tommy Douglas did as premier of Saskatchewan was put in place universal health care. He transformed Canada in a very real sense.

When he arrived here in the House of Commons, in the series of minority parliaments that we had in the 1960s, he, his House leader Stanley Knowles and the entire NDP caucus reached across the aisle to the prime minister at the time, Lester B. Pearson. They came together to put in place our universal health care.

As members are well aware, that has transformed Canada. When we ask Canadians what institution they are proudest of, often Canadians will say it is having universal health care in place. It is no longer having to pay for health care and making those desperate choices that happened in life before medicare. This remains an institution that Canadians are proudest of. Tommy Douglas went on to become judged by Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, as the greatest Canadian in our history for his endeavour and the work he did to put in place the universal health care system.

When we look at the Debates of the House from that time, we read that Tommy Douglas talked about how important it was to put in place medication as part of universal health care. It was very much a practical, realistic and necessary dream that he had, to extend universal health care to include pharmacare. Half a century later, Canadians are still waiting, but with Bill C-213, our Parliament and parliamentarians, members of Parliament from all parties, can come together. We can complete that vision by passing this important legislation.

The backbone of Bill C-213 is to put in place, in the same way we have with the Canada Health Act, the principles around pharmacare. Those principles are exactly the same as in the Canada Health Act for our universal health care. Those principles are for public administration and not for profit, for reasons that I will get into in a moment. As well, they are for sharing the comprehensiveness and universality of our pharmacare program, and making sure that the principles of portability and accessibility are also maintained.

● (1810)

What it does is set the legal framework that allows the government to negotiate the financial arrangements with the provinces that will bring into being pharmacare in our country. That is why it is so important to pass Bill C-213. We have waited half a century and now is the time to complete the vision Tommy Douglas had and ensure pharmacare becomes a reality.

Why? The reasons are very compelling. We know that eight million Canadians have no coverage for medications. UBC tells us, in consortium with other academic institutions from across the country, that a million Canadians have to make those desperate choices of putting food on the table, paying for their medications or heating their homes. Canada is one of the coldest countries in the world in December, January and February.

Those are compelling choices, but when we add to it the fact, as the CFNU tells us, that hundreds of Canadians die each year because they cannot afford to pay for their medications, we know we absolutely have to make the right choice and adopt this bill.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

People in Quebec have also been saying that we need a pharmacare program. The major unions have all said that, because Quebec's current system is so flawed, we need a publicly managed universal pharmacare program. People all across the country agree that such a program is needed.

[*English*]

As the Parliamentary Budget Officer has told us, this is a very cost-effective thing to do. The PBO tells us that Canadians as a whole will save about \$4 billion by putting in place universal pharmacare. Why? With its universal discount, which the PBO estimates that at 25%, we reduce the costs of medication overall. The reality is that with this proliferation and patchwork of private and public plans right now, one in five Canadians have no coverage at all. At the same time, it increases the overall costs, not just administrative costs but also the costs of acquiring the medication, which is so important to the health and welfare of so many Canadians. The PBO put it at 25%, but we have seen other countries, like New Zealand, reduce the costs of certain medications by up to 90%. Therefore, that universal discount is a very real reality.

As well, the PBO tells us that Canadians as a whole pay about \$5 billion out of pocket, but small and medium-sized businesses across the country pay about \$6 billion in drug plans for their employees. This is another reason why the bill is so important. As members know, our universal health care is a major competitive advantage. In general, it is about \$3,000 per employee for a Canadian company compared to its American competitor.

In Canada, with universal health care, we do not have those additional expenses that those companies have to pay in the United States. Pharmacare is about a \$600 cost advantage, so it is competitive and an advantage for our business community. We spend about \$13 billion through a variety of this patchwork of provincial plans, so putting into place universal pharmacare makes sense financially.

I have spoken in the House before about the \$750 billion in liquidity supports that were provided to Canada's big banks within days of the pandemic hitting. If anything, this pandemic has taught us the importance of bringing in universal pharmacare. That \$750 billion in liquidity supports equates to more than 35 years of universal pharmacare. It is the right decision to make.

Private Members' Business

We speak in this House, but we also need to listen, and I want to talk about three friends and how their lives would be advantaged by putting into place universal pharmacare. There is Jennifer, a friend of mine from New Westminster. She has Crohn's disease and is recovering from ovarian cancer. Her medication is a considerable cost. She is a campaigner for pharmacare because she understands, not just for herself but so many others, that universal pharmacare would make such a difference in her life.

There is Jim, who, up until a few months ago when the pandemic started, was begging in front of the Château Laurier because his medication costs about \$500 a month and he lives on a fixed income. The only way he can afford to pay for the medication that keeps him healthy is to beg outside the Château Laurier.

No Canadian should be forced to do that. That is why we need universal pharmacare. Because of the pandemic, Jim has been unable to beg and is now facing huge debts. He has had to make that desperate choice between making sure he takes his medication to maintain his health and going into debt because there is no pharmacare.

Then there is Cole, a friend of mine from Burnaby, British Columbia. His family spends about \$1,000 a month on his father's heart medication and is struggling to keep a roof over their heads. These are three voices saying to all of us in this House that it is time to put universal pharmacare into place.

This strikes back to the heart of the point I am making, and I hope other speakers will make it too. We have an initial hour tonight. We will have a second hour of debate in about 90 days, and then, subsequent to that, as we know, a vote in principle on the Canada pharmacare act. Over the next 90 days, every member of Parliament should be listening to the people in their ridings, their constituents, their bosses, our bosses, to make sure they have an understanding of how pharmacare would change their lives for the better.

There are a million Canadians tonight having to make desperate choices. They are deciding if they can afford their medications. They are scrimping on them and trying to get by with taking half as much, even though their doctors know that is dangerous for them, so they can put food on the table or keep their homes heated in the dead of winter. These are choices that Canadians should never have to make.

Private Members' Business

For members of Parliament to hear Canadians, Canadians' voices need to be heard. I am urging all of the people listening tonight who care about, as we do, putting into place universal pharmacare, to phone, email, do whatever it takes to contact their local member of Parliament and tell them to vote yes on Bill C-213. I urge them to share their stories. I have shared three tonight, but there are so many compelling stories of Canadians who are forced to make desperate choices because we have no universal pharmacare.

Canadians can speak up over the next 90 days. Canadians, I believe, will have an impact on each member of Parliament's vote and Canadians, in that way, can influence the result. If we vote yes on Bill C-213 in 90 days' time and move it through committee, we could have pharmacare within a short time frame. People having to beg and borrow could get the money to pay for their medications. All of the people cutting back on their food or heat right now, as a million Canadians do, to pay for their medications will see this Parliament acting in their interest.

I said earlier that this is a date with destiny for each member of Parliament. Each member of Parliament will have to make that crucial decision in the interests of their constituents and all Canadians. I ask all members of Parliament to please vote yes on Bill C-213, the Canada pharmacare act.

• (1820)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his intervention today and his passionate plea. I think he did an extremely good job of pointing out a lot of the challenges that exist, unfortunately, for so many Canadians. He is absolutely right. No person should have to decide between taking their medication and putting food on the table. No senior should have to make the decision of reducing their prescription in order to make it last longer.

If he canvassed the House, I think he would find that a majority of its members support the concept of universal pharmacare. This government has been committed to that and put together an agency to review it in the last session of Parliament, which came back with suggestions, as my colleague knows.

The one thing I did not hear the hon. member talk about was the fact that creating a program like this relies so much on the relationship with the provincial government and developing it in partnership with the provincial government. How would he see that rolling out and how do we do that, practically, to make sure that we have buy-in from the provinces?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is important. I mentioned earlier the \$13 billion that provinces are paying right now for a patchwork of public plans that leave so many Canadians behind. We saw all of the provincial governments come together for universal health care. The same thing can take place with universal pharmacare.

What the bill would do is provide the legal framework for the government to have negotiations and discussions with the provinces, so that pharmacare can become a reality. We can move very quickly on this, if we choose to.

We saw \$750 billion going to banks in a heartbeat. Now is the time to provide the same level of support to regular Canadians. We can do that through universal pharmacare.

• (1825)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also share my colleague's objective of ensuring that vulnerable Canadians have access to pharmaceuticals. We can do that.

I am just concerned about examples of nationalization of pharmaceutical care having unintended consequences, as we saw with the OHIP+ program in Ontario, where 2.1 million Ontarians ended up, with the elimination of their privately funded system, having worse levels of care than they did before. They did not have access to drugs that they needed.

Has the member given any thought to that potentially unintended consequence of the bill and how he would mitigate that?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I think the principles are very clear. They are the principles Canadians already accept in our universal health care system. There is not a single party in this country that would want us to go back to the days before our universal health care. The same principles would apply to universal pharmacare. It means making sure that we put this into place and that we follow those five principles that I mentioned earlier: public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility.

Those are the guiding principles that will lead us to the same level of public buy-in around universal pharmacare that we already see with our universal health care.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. The Government of Quebec has decided that it does not want to be part of a Canada-wide pharmacare system.

Does my colleague acknowledge that Quebec society is more advanced than any other North American society when it comes to family policies, access to post-secondary education, taxation and pharmacare? Yes, Quebec already has a system, albeit one that is not perfect and could certainly be improved.

Can he tell me if he thinks Quebec should have the right to opt out unconditionally with full compensation, which would in no way preclude Quebec's collaborating to purchase drugs for less?

I would like him to comment on that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I think he should talk to major unions in Quebec, such as the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, the FTQ, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the CSN, and the Centrale des syndicats démocratiques, the CSD.

The four major unions have said it is important to set up this universal pharmacare program. They know perfectly well that Quebec's existing system has a lot of problems and that many Quebecers slip through the cracks.

We have to set up the system we are proposing. That is what Quebec's major unions are saying, and it is important to listen to them.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to join the debate tonight, even if it is virtually, to address Bill C-213.

I must say to my colleague that it is great that he took the initiative to bring the bill forward. I think that any time we have a chance to move the discussion on things that we know clearly Canadians would like us to discuss, we should take it. The work that is required to make that all happen, of course, is way ahead of us. Every time we have a debate, I think it is terrific.

I never thought that I, as a member of Parliament, would deliver a speech from the comfort of my home office, but this is a new normal that we are all experiencing in order to stay safe and flatten the curve of COVID-19. It is my hope that I will soon join my colleagues in the House to continue the great work that this government is providing for Canadians.

● (1830)

We know Canadians should not have to choose between buying groceries and paying for medication. That is just unacceptable, and I believe every one of us in the House believes that.

When constituents from my riding of Humber River—Black Creek visit the Yorkgate Mall or Jane Finch Mall, they should be able to reach into their pockets and purchase the food and medication they need. That is why the government is committed to implementing a national pharmacare program that would ensure all Canadians have access to the prescription drugs they need, and why I also welcome this discussion tonight.

It is a goal we have been working toward since we first formed the government in 2015, and it remains our goal. No matter how difficult COVID has been, it is still our goal to see national pharmacare, as we clearly stated in the most recent 2020 Speech from the Throne to remind everyone that we intend for this to happen.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us how important it is that Canadians have access to the medicines that keep them healthy. We need to implement a national pharmacare plan that gets Canadians the drug coverage they need as soon as possible. People are struggling: we know that. I get calls at my constituency office every day from seniors and others looking for help, who want to visit loved ones, play cards at their local community centres and simply want to get their lives back to normal.

I tell them we are doing everything we can to fight the pandemic. National pharmacare would make a significant difference in the lives of many people in my riding. It would be a relief to many of these individuals if we could assure them that in their lifetimes they would have the dream of seeing national pharmacare happen.

Private Members' Business

People today need a break, and while we are now more committed than ever, it is important we get this plan right. To modernize the whole issue of drug regulations, we need to address the rising cost of drugs in this country. As the price of drugs continues to go up, trying to find sustainable drug costs has to be a solution.

Canada's approach to patented drug price regulations was outdated. Our previous pricing regime was established a very long time ago, and it needs to change to be brought up to date with current issues. We have more than 100 different public drug plans and thousands of private drug plans. All this means is we have many drug plans. It does not necessarily mean they are doing what they are supposed to be doing, other than being a patchwork.

It is well past time to bring these regulations into the 21st century. In order to make drugs more affordable, Canada needed a modernized approach to regulating patented drug prices that would protect Canadians from excessive prices. That is why last summer the government modernized the Patented Medicines Regulations, which provide the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board with the tools and the information it needs to protect Canadians from excessive prices.

Secondly, we want to consider the value a drug offers and its overall affordability. Most other countries with national pharmacare programs already do this, so we are behind the eight ball on this. When setting a price, one needs to have many discussions on things such as value for money, if the drug offers a therapeutic benefit that justifies its cost, the size of the market, how many people will benefit, Canada's GDP and GDP per capita, and if we can afford to pay for it. These things are not easy.

These changes would provide the Patented Medicines Price Review Board with the tools it needs to protect Canadians from excessive drug prices, and would bring us in line with the policies and practices of most other developed countries.

These regulatory changes were critical steps toward improving the affordability and accessibility of prescription drugs. Along with other consumer protection initiatives at the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board, we anticipate that these changes will save roughly \$13 billion over the next 10 years. These are significant savings for Canadians. From the savings, public and private drug plans will have greater capacity to improve benefits for plan members or to consider new therapies not currently covered. All Canadians, including those with drug plans and those paying out of pocket, will benefit from lower prices for prescription drugs.

Private Members' Business

Modernizing pricing regulations complements the work already under way at Health Canada to streamline the regulatory review process for drugs by enabling priority drugs to reach the market more quickly. This supports the work already taking place under the pan-Canadian pharmaceutical alliance to negotiate lower prices for prescription drugs. As a member of this alliance, the Government of Canada is able to combine its buying power with that of the public plans in the provinces and territories. It is estimated that the alliance will save public drug plans more than \$3 billion over the next five years. Successful negotiations will result in more affordable prescription drug prices for public drug plans and will lower generic drug prices for all payers.

These steps that we have taken to increase the affordability of drugs will improve the viability of a national pharmacare program. A national pharmacare program would be another step that could help us further control drug prices and make drugs more affordable for Canadians, especially drugs for patients of ALS and some of the other very serious rare disorders.

The government has also made some significant investments to ensure that we continue to take important steps in the right direction as we build this national pharmacare program we all want.

Budget 2019 earmarked \$1 billion over two years beginning in 2022-23, with up to \$500 million ongoing, to help Canadians with the rare diseases that I alluded to earlier access the drugs they need. Budget 2019 also proposed \$35 million over four years to support the implementation of a Canadian drug agency, including the development of a national formulary, an important step toward a national pharmacare program.

A national formulary and increased capacity to coordinate across drug plans would bolster Canada's negotiating power to achieve better prescription drug prices on behalf of all Canadians. Negotiating better prices could help lower the cost of prescription drugs for Canadians. However, as we develop this formulary, we must work with the provinces and territories to determine which medicines represent the best value for money for Canadians from coast to coast.

The people of Humber River—Black Creek and across Canada want a national pharmacare plan. I am confident that the government will be successful in implementing the initiatives that I have outlined today, and I congratulate my colleague for bringing this issue forward in a private member's bill so that we can continue to keep everybody's feet to the fire. That includes all of the provinces and territories, which have to be partners with us on this issue.

● (1835)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians should have affordable access to prescription drugs. It is a key component of health care. Income and ability to pay should not stop people from having access to life-saving treatments.

I do want to thank my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby for bringing forward a suggestion on how we can help people like his friends Jennifer and Jim. For us to evaluate whether his potential approach is the best one or would actually work, we must

begin with a review of the current state. There are three points to consider.

First, how many Canadians have drug coverage at present and how many do not? At present, most recent estimates suggest that between 90% and 98% of Canadians have some form of prescription drug coverage, whether through private insurance or a public plan. While a smaller percentage of Canadians do not have coverage, many Canadians already do. We should be targeting our intervention to Canadians without adequate coverage and clearly defining what that means.

Second, the gaps in coverage are not just for those who cannot afford to pay for prescription drugs. There are also gaps in coverage when drugs are available elsewhere in the world, but not in Canada. One example is the life-saving drug for cystic fibrosis patients called Trikafta.

Third, health care delivery has a large jurisdictional responsibility within the provinces. While I believe federal and provincial governments should work together to address issues like this, we also need to ensure that any potential solution respects jurisdiction and the unique regional challenges of our Confederation.

In the context of these three points, I will evaluate whether the proposal of this bill is the best option to address this issue.

First, let us start with what this bill does. To re-emphasize, many Canadians already have some form of drug coverage, but the coverage these plans do provide is provided by employers and insurers, not taxpayers. This bill proposes that the best way to provide coverage to the smaller percentage of Canadians who do not have adequate coverage is to eliminate access to private plans for those who currently have them and replace them with plans provided by a government agency and the taxpayer with varying degrees of coverage that might be less than their current level of coverage and likely with a tax increase to cover the significant associated cost. This is what is commonly referred to as pharmacare in Canadian politics.

Many people do not understand that what proponents of pharmacare mean to do is eliminate the coverage many Canadians already have, replace everything with state-run coverage that might not be as good as their current coverage and likely significantly increase taxes to do so. I believe that instead of this approach, it would be better to focus on targeting support to those who do not have it, rather than entirely scrapping a system that works for a majority of others.

Second, this bill does not address the potentially unintended negative impact it might have on patient care. We do not know the level of coverage this proposal would provide and whether it would be a lower standard than what many Canadians already have in their current plans. This needs to be clarified.

A good example of this is what happened with the OHIP+ program under the Ontario Liberals. OHIP+ was supposed to fix access to drug coverage for people under 25 by providing public coverage. However, Ontarian Jackie Bain had to start paying out of pocket for her son's ADHD medication because her private insurance was no longer recognized. Many Ontarians face similar issues with access to other prescription drugs for epilepsy and rheumatoid arthritis.

OHIP+ transferred 2.1 million Ontarians who already had private plans to a public plan that provided worse coverage than what they had before and at a higher cost. In other words, the government's attempt to increase drug coverage by fully eliminating private plans removed more people from drug coverage than it added. The vagueness of this bill gives rise to this possibility, but on a national scale.

Third, this bill needs to clarify the potential impact of nationalizing access to pharmaceuticals on workers in pharmacies across this country. Would their jobs and businesses and ability to provide expert advice to Canadians be affected? This impact needs to be addressed.

Fourth, there is no consensus on whether this bill's approach would actually provide savings. For example, the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada estimates a single-payer, pharmaceutical care plan would cost between \$10 billion and \$14 billion, which is different from what this bill's sponsor has suggested. That cost estimate is on top of other issues it would produce in terms of dismantling existing private coverage and replacing it with government bureaucracy, for which detailed publicly available costing is not available.

On the issue of bulk purchasing, nationalization is not needed for provinces and territories to buy drugs in bulk.

Fifth, this bill does not address the issue of lack of access to life-saving drugs in Canada. There is no doubt that we need a strong drug and therapeutic safety review process, but as we have seen with the Liberals' slow and backward approach to reviewing COVID rapid tests, this system could use improvement.

• (1840)

Drug access for Canadians has arguably been threatened by the government's changes to what are called the PMPRB regulations. We have seen how this regulatory uncertainty has deterred some life-saving drugs from entering the Canadian market. These changes could dramatically alter pharmacists' abilities to run patient-support programs. While the new guidelines may lower some drug prices, they might also harm our ability to get access to certain new therapeutics, and this needs to be addressed.

Sixth, the bill does not adequately address other issues related to drug supply. Our drug supply has been in jeopardy since the start of the COVID pandemic because of disruptions to supply chains.

Private Members' Business

Canadian pharmacists have been ringing alarm bells for months, but the government has not done anything. Given that government usually does not do anything particularly well, in this regard I worry about what would happen if the government took total control of access to prescription drugs, as the bill may propose.

Seventh, I am worried that the member has not addressed jurisdictional issues raised by members during debate today.

In short, I believe the bill will not provide access to pharmaceuticals to vulnerable Canadians who need them the most and could have significant negative unintended consequences that could actually make drug access worse for some Canadians and add another tax burden to already heavily taxed working Canadians. However, I do agree with the bill's sponsor that we need to help vulnerable Canadians who do not have access to prescription drug coverage, like his friends Jennifer and Jim.

This is what I suggest.

We should encourage the government to finally come up with a fully costed plan in coordination with the provinces to provide support for those without prescription drug coverage within the system that already provides significant coverage to millions of Canadians. That plan should be compassionate and first aimed to help those who are in critical need of access to life-saving drugs.

It should reduce bureaucracy rather than create it, as the bill proposes; sustain access to coverage for those who already have it; and protect jobs and businesses rather than looking to replace them with unnecessary government bureaucracy.

It should respect provincial jurisdiction while taking a leadership role to help those in need. It should also work with the provinces on creative ways to enable bulk purchases within existing regulatory structures.

It should look at innovative ways to reduce costs for these products within the existing system, such as looking at policy options like classifying common drugs that are classified as over the counter in allied countries like the U.S. and the U.K. as over the counter here. Some estimates suggest that if we did that for just three drugs, we could ensure Canadians save \$1 billion a year on spending on drugs.

Private Members' Business

This plan should also bolster Canada's capacity to domestically manufacture critical drugs. It should ensure strong safety reviews for therapeutics and devices, while eliminating the pedantic, slow and innovation-killing systems that prevented Canadians from getting COVID rapid tests and Trikafta. It should correct policies that prevent Canadian medical innovations from being commercialized in Canada, as many of our innovations are currently licensed out of the country instead of being retained here.

I strongly believe that we have a duty to provide support to people who do not have access to pharmaceuticals in Canada. I think it is long overdue, and it is something federal Liberal governments have been talking about since the 1970s. However, I do not think the bill gets it right. I think we should be looking at a hybrid system that takes into consideration the points I have made and allows Canadians to have adequate coverage. We should then build on that rather than just seeking to nationalize it. I think we should also be questioning what the role of government is in this regard, and we should be targeting our plan to the people the member for New Westminster—Burnaby talked about in his speech, rather than trying to eliminate coverage for people who already have it.

I certainly want to emphasize that the Conservatives will continue to support government action that makes prescription drugs more accessible and affordable for Canadians. We will hold governments to account, especially the current Liberal government, which has not addressed issues like access to novel therapeutics like Trikafta. However, we do not think we need to nationalize the entire system to do this, and we are concerned about examples like OHIP+, which really failed a large portion of people who enrolled in it.

I look forward to working with my colleague in a non-partisan way on this approach, but I think his bill needs a lot of improvement.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly 25 years since Quebec adopted its pharmacare program.

The program was far from perfect and implemented with limited resources since, at the time, Ottawa was cutting transfers for health, education and social services and imposing austerity. The Quebec program helped reduce poverty. In 25 years, no other province has adopted such a program.

If Ottawa ever goes forward with a universal public pharmacare program, which seems unlikely to me, then Quebec must have the right to opt out with full compensation so it can, for example, increase the coverage provided by its own program.

Quebec's labour unions have been sounding the alarm for several years now. The downside to Quebec's program is that pharmaceutical companies are generating revenue at the expense of union health care plans. They said, and I quote:

Rising premiums are eating into salary increases and threatening other collective insurance coverage...Funding through premiums is not fair because it places a heavier burden on low-income earners and even leads some part-time workers to resign.

It is costing them a fortune and the situation is becoming untenable. We need to take appropriate action. Ottawa's role with respect

to health is to provide as much funding as possible, which it has not been doing for the past 25 years.

The Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec, the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, the Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux, the Union des consommateurs, the Centrale des syndicats du Québec, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux and the Table des regroupements provinciaux d'organismes communautaires et bénévoles all want a universal public system.

In their request, they stress that such a system must respect provincial jurisdiction and that the federal government must allow provinces to opt out with full compensation as long as they create an equivalent or better system of their own. All members of Quebec's National Assembly agree with that condition.

On June 14, the National Assembly unanimously stated that, "Quebec refuses to adhere to a pan-Canadian pharmacare plan". In its motion, the National Assembly called for "full and unconditional financial compensation if a proposal for a pan-Canadian pharmacare plan is officially introduced." Members of all four parties represented in Quebec's National Assembly agreed to that motion.

The NDP in 2005 adopted the Sherbrooke declaration, in which it said it recognized asymmetrical federalism and intended to give Quebec the systematic right to opt out, but it seems to have written off Quebec ever since. That is what the drafting of this bill suggests.

Why did it not take into account the specification requested by the major unions or the unanimous motion of the National Assembly in the drafting of this bill? Why did it not use the demands of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec, the FTQ, as inspiration?

For the FTQ, the terms and conditions of a public, universal pharmacare program must first and foremost be discussed in Quebec and established according to the needs of its people. That is why Quebec must be able to opt out with full compensation from any pharmacare plan. Furthermore, the federal government cannot discuss pharmacare without addressing the problems in health care funding. To ensure the sustainability of Quebec's health care system, the federal share of funding must be increased.

Ottawa has to increase health funding. Just before the Speech from the Throne, the provinces came together to call on Ottawa to increase its share of health care spending from 22% to 35% with no strings attached, a request that 75% of the population supports. Despite all that, the government chose to dig in its heels against the provinces.

The NDP's and the Liberals' obsession with wanting to interfere and decide for Quebec where it should spend its own money is toxic. The NDP and the Liberals should instead agree to the provinces' requests and increase federal health transfers permanently.

When it comes to access to drugs, there are things the federal government can do starting with regulating prices. According to the federal government's own data, drug prices in Canada are among the highest in the world, costing 19% more than the average country in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

This situation did not come out of nowhere. It is the result of a government decision. The patented medicine regulations, which regulate the price of drugs, harmonize prices in Canada with the pricing used in countries with the highest prices. The Bloc has been after the government for years to change the list of countries it bases its pricing on and to exclude the United States and Switzerland, where prices are prohibitive.

• (1850)

We thought that we had prevailed. Members will recall that in 2017, draft regulations that met our demands were released. However, under pressure from the pharmaceutical industry, the government withdrew the regulations before their scheduled entry into force, set for January 2019. The regulations were then supposed to come into force in July 2020, but that was pushed to January 1, 2021. We shall see if, four years on, the date will be pushed back once again. I had to laugh when I heard my Liberal colleague talking about big accomplishments, when this matter has been delayed for four years for no reason.

Under these new regulations, whenever they come into force, the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board will be in a better position to do its job of ensuring that pharmaceutical companies do not overcharge for their patented drugs in Canada.

Once these regulations come into force, taxpayers could save \$220 million in the first year, and up to \$13 billion over 10 years. That is a huge difference. All the government has to do is implement the regulations it has been delaying for nearly four years.

During the election campaign, the Liberals also said that they wanted to take action to bring down the cost of drugs used to treat rare diseases. We have heard nothing for more than a year. They reiterated this intention in the Speech from the Throne, but we are still waiting for their strategy. The federal government must provide more information about what it plans to do. Above all, it must decide if it will coordinate with the rare disease strategy that Quebec intends to establish.

I hope that Quebec will have a universal pharmacare program. I really hope it will. Given that Ottawa underfunds health care, Quebec cannot afford to implement it. Quebec innovated with its system almost 25 years ago. It made a difference, and in the context of the austerity imposed by Ottawa, it was a remarkable policy. Twenty-five years later, we see the problematic consequences, especially for unions' group insurance plans.

Private Members' Business

That is why I would be very surprised if a universal plan were adopted here. If it ever does happen, Quebec should have the right to opt out with full compensation so it can enhance its own plan, in accordance with the areas of jurisdiction, the will of the National Assembly and the demands of unions.

I am gobsmacked that this was not included in the bill. It would have led to change, for once.

• (1855)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I speak to Bill C-213, the Canada pharmacare act.

I would like to recognize my colleague for New Westminster—Burnaby for his tireless advocacy in support of universal public drug coverage and thank him for introducing this historic legislation.

We introduce this bill in a unique moment in time. One hundred years ago next year, Sir Frederick Banting, a Canadian orthopaedic surgeon, along with his colleagues, Charles Best and J.J. Macleod, discovered insulin at the University of Toronto. However, Dr. Banting did something exceptional with his life-saving medicine: He sold the patent rights to the university for one dollar, claiming that the discovery belonged to the world, not to him. This allowed insulin to be mass produced, making it widely available to all who needed it no matter their financial means. The bill before the House reflects this noble principle.

The Canada pharmacare act would establish a framework for the implementation of universal public pharmacare in Canada. This legislation is modelled on our cherished Canada Health Act. It mirrors the 2018 majority support of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, which studied the issue of pharmacare for two solid years. It also is based squarely on the recommendations of the Hoskins Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare.

Like the Canada Health Act, the Canada pharmacare act specifies the conditions that provincial and territorial prescription drug insurance programs must meet to receive federal funding. This includes the core principles of public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility. The Canada pharmacare act would establish a new Canadian pharmaceutical policy by declaring that it would be the duty of the Government of Canada to facilitate access to prescription drugs without financial or other barriers in order to protect and promote the physical and mental well-being of Canadians.

Private Members' Business

The overarching purpose of universal public pharmacare is simple. It will ensure that all Canadians get access to the medication they need regardless of their ability to pay. For too long, prescribing decisions in Canada have been influenced by industry profits, marketing and lobbying efforts. Instead, decisions about what drugs are covered ought to be based on empirical evidence and the best health outcomes for patients.

To accomplish this, formulary coverage must be managed by an agency that is arm's length from government and free of industry interference. As such, New Democrats believe that it is imperative to construct a comprehensive public drug list that meets this goal.

For this reason, the Canada pharmacare act would give the federal health minister the authority to work with the provinces and territories to establish an independent drug agency with the mandate to the following: assess the clinical and cost-effectiveness of prescription drugs compared to other treatment options; advise on which prescription drugs, supplies and devices should be covered; negotiate prices and supply arrangements with drug manufacturers; provide advice to health care practitioners and patients on how best to use prescription drugs; and monitor the safety and clinical effectiveness of prescription drugs.

New Democrats are also very mindful of the need to ensure that Canadians with rare diseases and disorders are well served and that promising drug therapies are accessible. We believe that special care must be taken to ensure that drug listing decisions are responsive to these requirements and future pharmaceutical innovation. Ultimately, the goal must be to construct a broad, comprehensive, national drug list that all provinces and territories agree to cover, without cost to their residents, in exchange for federal transfers. This is the premise of our successful medicare system. It works and it is deeply valued by Canadians.

Importantly, New Democrats believe that pharmacare is an important piece of a large, comprehensive pharmaceutical policy reform. In addition to public pharmacare, Canada needs the re-establishment of public drug manufacturing in Canada, an intellectual property innovation fund that ensures taxpayer-funded research is commercialized for our citizens' benefit, patented medicine pricing transparency and the use of compulsory licensing when drug companies refuse to make patented pharmaceuticals available to Canadians on reasonable terms.

To situate this legislation in its historical context, it is important to remember that universal public drug coverage was always intended to be part of the medicare. In 1961, the Royal Commission on Health Services was appointed by Progressive Conservative prime minister John Diefenbaker to study the concept of universal public health care. Mr. Diefenbaker appointed a fellow Conservative, Justice Emmett Hall, to chair that royal commission.

• (1900)

In 1964, the Hall commission released its report, which surprised many by recommending the adoption of the comprehensive health insurance program based on New Democrat Tommy Douglas's Saskatchewan model. In response, some provincial premiers charged that this approach was an intrusion into their jurisdiction, and there was reluctance to proceed within then prime minister

Lester Pearson's Liberal caucus. Ironically, we hear much of the same claptrap today.

However, because Canadians had elected a minority Parliament in 1963, with New Democrats holding the balance of power, Tommy Douglas was able to leverage this influence and work with the Pearson government to advance the implementation of medicare, and indeed they did. In 1966, Parliament adopted the Medical Care Act by a vote of 177 to two.

At that time, it was understood that prescription drugs and other essential health services would incrementally be integrated into medicare. In particular, the urgent need to provide coverage for out-of-hospital prescription drugs was specifically highlighted by the Hall commission. However, over a half-century has now passed and, despite repeated studies, proposals, pledges and solemn political promises in campaign platforms, Canada remains the only major country that offers universal health care without some form of universal pharmaceutical coverage. This is not just unjust; it is perplexing from both a health and fiscal perspective.

Canada's failure to implement universal public drug coverage means that at least 20% of Canadians, some seven and a half million Canadians, cannot access the medicine they need when they need it. One in four Canadians is forced to avoid filling or renewing a prescription due to cost, or skips doses because they cannot afford it. To add injury, Canadians pay among the highest prescription drug prices in the industrialized world, due to our U.S.-style private patchwork approach to drug coverage. Even those with private coverage are seeing their employer-sponsored benefits shrink, a trend that has accelerated due to the economic impacts of COVID. In fact, Canadians now are twice as likely to have lost prescription drug coverage as to have gained it in the past year. Worst of all, Canadians die each year simply because they cannot afford the medicine they need.

It is time to finally address this serious deficiency. Evidence has been clear for decades that universal public pharmacare would expand coverage and improve outcomes, while reducing costs for Canadians. Most recently, the Liberals' own Hoskins advisory council found that universal public pharmacare would reduce annual system-wide spending on prescription drugs by \$5 billion through the negotiation of lower drug prices, increased generic substitution and streamlined benefits administration. The Hoskins report also found that businesses and employees would see their prescription drug costs reduced by \$16 billion annually under pharmacare, and families would see their out-of-pocket drug costs reduced by over \$6 billion.

Under this NDP bill, the average Canadian family would save \$500 per year and the average employer would save \$600 per employee. Universal public drug coverage would also mean long-term savings for our public health care system when those who cannot afford to fill prescriptions achieve improved health outcomes. Yes, it is a fact. With universal, comprehensive and public pharmacare, we can cover every single Canadian's prescription medicine and devices and save billions of dollars every year.

In public life, it is rare to find such an effective policy innovation staring us in the face. Only the most obtuse right-wing ideologue or courage-challenged centrist could fail to see the clear health and economic benefits of this necessary and sensible public policy. It is time and Canadians know it. Polls repeatedly demonstrate astronomical support for public pharmacare because, as with medicare, Canadians know a good idea when they see it. Just as establishing universal hospital and physician care took courage and cross-partisan collaboration, so too will the implementation of pharmacare.

I urge all parliamentarians to join us at this historic hour by supporting the swift passage of the Canada pharmacare act. Let us follow in the brave footsteps of those who served before us, and march forward together toward a more just and healthy society for all.

• (1905)

The Deputy Speaker: We have only a couple of minutes left in the time for Private Members' Business this afternoon, but we will get started with the next speaker. He will only have about a minute and a half, but he will have the remaining time when the House gets back to debate on the question.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here this evening to speak about universal pharmacare.

I want to start by congratulating the member for New Westminster—Burnaby for beginning the conversation with all 338 members of the House of Commons on this very important issue. I say that because it is going to be up to all of us, not one party, not some parties or others throughout the different levels of government, but all of us working together in the House of Commons and at all levels of government, provincial and territorial, who are going to be part of the process of putting this in place. We want to ensure that we in fact get this right and strengthen the universal medicare program that Tommy Douglas championed many decades ago.

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As was said earlier, no Canadian should have to choose between paying for prescriptions, putting food on the table, putting their children through school and living the life that every Canadian should live. That is why we, as a government, have done more than any government in a generation to lower drug prices, and have included new rules on patented drugs that will save Canadians over \$13 billion annually.

I want to emphasize two points. First, this is an important program to move forward with. Second, all of us at all levels of government, in the House of Commons and provinces and territories, can and will work together to ensure that we bring universal pharmacare to this great nation.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed I am participating in this session virtually. I am metaphorically rising to address the issue of the election for the presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In some sense, the Inter-Parliamentary Union is like the United Nations for parliaments. It is a global body that represents parliaments and parliamentarians, as opposed to governments. It does important work diplomatically and on a variety of different fronts, including on the advancement of human rights.

When I initially raised this question in the House the election was ongoing. It is now complete, and I want to congratulate MP Pacheco from Portugal as the president-elect. In particular, my question is about the candidacy of Canadian Senator Salma Atallahjan, who I and many of my colleagues, at least on our side of the House, were pleased to support. At the time, I raised a question about the government's failure to offer support for this Canadian senator.

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I think all of us should agree that we want more Canada, more Canadian voices and more Canadian legislators represented on the world stage, especially someone like Senator Ataullahjan, who, although a proud member of the Conservative Party and caucus, has also done a great deal of non-partisan work on human rights working with colleagues from across the aisle and of different political backgrounds.

Unfortunately, while the Government of Canada has vigorously supported the candidacy of Bill Morneau, the former Liberal finance minister, for the OECD, it failed to offer meaningful support for Senator Ataullahjan at all for this position. The speculation was that this was the government not wanting to see a Conservative succeed in this position. It was putting partisanship ahead of the national interest, the national interest being expressed and having Senator Ataullahjan's voice.

● (1910)

At the time I raised these issues, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs told the House that this was different because it was a parliamentary body so it would be inappropriate for the government to offer support. That does not appear to be the case at all insofar as international media remarked on the lack of support the Canadian government was providing as being unique and odd, and identifying that as an explanation for why Senator Ataullahjan was not successful. For many voters it was important that they see the support of the government behind the candidate, and that was not the case here.

I want to quote an article in *The Tribune* in India from November 2. It states, "Sources said Sanjrani", who is a different candidate, "might have lost because of his inexperience while the Canadian candidate did not have the full backing of her government." That appeared in *The Tribune*, a leading Indian English-language paper.

An earlier article stated, "Ataullahjan is a candidate reluctantly put up by the liberal Ottawa government as she belongs to the Conservative camp but has had long innings in public life." I love the cricket metaphors in that article, but not the substance, which is that our Liberal government was failing to support an eminently qualified Conservative senator, who has had "long innings in public life", simply on the basis of partisanship.

Given that international media is contradicting the previous explanations of the parliamentary secretary, I wonder if he has an explanation as to why, other than naked partisanship, the government has failed to get behind and support the Canadian national interest and a stronger voice for Canadians on the world stage. We need that voice. We want to work together internationally to advance human rights and the national interest, but the government has gotten in the way of that in this case. I think that is a crying shame.

● (1915)

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak about this subject tonight, for the second time in the House at adjournment proceedings, along with my colleague, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

With him, I want to echo my congratulations to Portuguese member of Parliament Duarte Pacheco who, overwhelmingly, was elected as the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

I would like to remind the member and the House that the IPU is an important international parliamentary organization that I have been a supporter of and advocate for throughout my years as a parliamentarian. Also, I am hoping the member has had a chance to join the union since we last had the issue raised by him in the House.

Again, the IPU is a parliamentary organization, not a governmental organization. That is a key distinction. It is a long-standing practice that the Canadian government does not inappropriately interfere in the elections of interparliamentary organizations by advocating for one candidate, either of Canadian origin or from one of our allied countries.

That was the case here. Although we were disappointed to see that Senator Ataullahjan was not successful, as it is always a good thing to have Canadians in leadership roles internationally, we recognize the independence of Parliament as opposed to government.

I want to be clear, however, that the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his office spoke with the senator a number of times. Her specific ask was for a letter that was co-signed by the Speakers of the House and the other place, the Senate, to be sent to the Canadian heads of mission around the world, and then shared by them with their host country Speakers. That is exactly what was done by Global Affairs. Those letters were shared by heads of mission with Speakers who were interested in the issue.

I also want to again say that I have known Senator Ataullahjan for many years, both here and in Toronto where we both come from. I profoundly respect the work she does on human rights and on other international issues. I also value my personal friendship with her.

The accusation that there is anything related to gender in the government's following of a long-standing practice on interparliamentary organizations is completely without basis in fact or reflective of our record. We stand on our intention to maintain a feminist foreign policy, as well as a feminist international development policy. We will stand with women and girls throughout the world and do so proudly, as I would hope every member of the House does.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I certainly look forward to buying Celina Caesar-Chavannes' new book to find out more about the government's approach to diversity and inclusion.

However, if I could respond specifically to some of the comments the parliamentary secretary made, he spoke about the fact that this was a long-standing practice. This is contradicted by the fact that the lack of support from the Government of Canada was noted and remarked on by international media. I quoted articles in the India media that parliamentarians were making choices about who to support based on the fact that some candidates were supported by their government and not others.

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The parliamentary secretary referenced letters of support. He knows that these letters of support were sent far too late. The asks were there repeatedly and letters of support were only sent a few days before the election after many IPU members had already made commitments to other candidates. This sort of perfunctory last minute sending of the letter was not meaningful support by any stretch. I think people know what is going on here.

Mr. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, I would never undervalue the independence, the thoughtful nature of members of the IPU in their considered choice of their president. I do not think it is fair and it would be naive to say that there would be any kind of undermining that was done by any other country. Each of those members had a vote, and I will respect their votes and the decision of the organization of which I am proud to be a member.

I also respect the work of Senator Ataullahjan. I congratulate her for putting a candidacy forward and I look forward to working with her in a variety of ways in the coming weeks, months and years to come.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight because of a question we asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans about. She simply did not answer it.

The Liberal strategy for Fraser chinook salmon has been an utter failure. Instead of implementing an effective recovery strategy for our iconic Pacific salmon, the Liberals chose once again to place unnecessary restrictions on fishing opportunities for British Columbians.

I have an example here of a story. It is getting to be such a concern to B.C. fishers, especially in the Fraser Valley, that, “Some avid sports fishers call it 'discrimination' that there are openings for fishing for chinook in the ocean, at the mouth of the Fraser and at interior rivers and lakes, but not in the Lower Fraser River where Fisheries and Oceans Canada is hoping to protect endangered sockeye runs.”

The question was about unnecessary closures. I was going to speak about this more generally, but I am going to defer to some experts we have in our very own province of British Columbia.

I want to talk about Dave Brown from the Public Fishery Alliance. From April 1 to August 31 of 2020, there were unprecedented chinook closures placed on the public fishery around Vancouver that had devastating socio-economic impacts on the Vancouver guiding industry, marine industry and recreational salt water fishing industry. Why were there no fishing for chinook regulations implemented for Howe Sound?

Second, the historic data show that the area has an extremely low encounter rate on chinook stocks of concern. They were less than 0.5% of all fish sampled over many years by DFO, and the prevalence of marked hatchery chinook was high. What is the rationale for this area being closed, when the potential impact on stocks of concern is virtually zero? It can provide a critical opportunity for the province's largest angling community. It shows the disdain of DFO for the recreational fishing community in B.C., unfortunately.

I want to talk about Peter Krahn, selective fisheries expert. In 2008, over 90 sports fishermen in the lower Fraser Valley, Chilliwack, dedicated the month of August to assist in the DFO plan to determine the impact of a non-selective fishing technique for salmon, called bottom bouncing. The report, published in 2009, found over 90% survival for catch and release using that technique.

For the 12 years since, the sport fishing community has been petitioning DFO to do a similar study of a selective fishing technique using bar rigs, which is virtually guaranteed not to intercept the endangered sockeye.

Why have the minister and DFO refused to do the required study? It puts the sport fishing community, and the 1.5 billion economic benefits and jobs in peril, when such a study would only cost about \$225,000 for all the sports anglers' time and it would be voluntary. We are talking about folks who do this for free. They would go out and try to see our increase in salmon on their own dime.

Chris Bos, South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition, says that we must get back to our hybrid version of chinook mark-selective fishery as soon as possible. He also sees the need for DFO to start 100% marking of all hatchery Canadian chinook for proper and accurate conservation, as the State of Washington already does. He also wants southern B.C. to transition into adopting mark-selective fishing for the public fishery where plausible.

The bottom line is that here we see groups that are really trying to help our B.C. salmon get back to populations where we can fish without concern again. They are doing it voluntarily. They want to do it on their own time, yet it seems at every step the minister, instead of helping these folks out and letting them do what they love to do, which is to fish and see our B.C. salmon increase, is trying to impede their efforts to do that very thing.

When is the minister going to help recreational fishers increase B.C. salmon populations?

• (1920)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to go out with recreational fishers a number of weeks ago. We talked about important issues like mark-selective fishing.

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Pacific salmon stocks are declining, many to historic lows, particularly in the Fraser River. Over 50 Pacific salmon populations are being considered for potential listing under the Species at Risk Act or are pending assessment by COSEWIC. Fraser chinook are included on this list, with 12 of 13 Fraser River chinook populations assessed as at risk of extinction. Only one is healthy.

The 2019 state of the salmon report indicated that Pacific salmon are being negatively affected by a range of factors, including climate change and warming waters, habitat degradation, changes in land and water use, increasing intensity of contaminants, acute one-time events such as toxic spills and landslides, illegal and unregulated fishing, and international fishing pressures.

Air, ocean and freshwater temperatures have reached record highs in B.C. and the Yukon in recent years. This impacts snowfall and snowmelt, which keep the rivers cool and flowing. Increasing water temperatures, changes to river flow patterns, flash floods, increased erosion and landslides are all climate change impacts affecting the quality of precious river and lake salmon habitat.

In the short term, DFO has acted to substantially reduce fishing pressure on Fraser chinook stocks to reduce the risk of further declines and provide time for recovery measures, with longer time horizons to produce results. While these fishing measures have had significant impacts on first nations, recreational and commercial harvesters, they have been necessary to protect dwindling populations.

Short-term recovery efforts have been further challenged on the Fraser by the discovery of the massive Big Bar landslide in June 2019. The slide has significantly impacted natural salmon passage, and extraordinary efforts by DFO, the Province of B.C. and first nations have been required to support the passage of thousands of salmon past the slide. In addition, several new emergency hatchery-enhancement efforts are also under way to support impacted chinook populations.

Over the longer term, the challenges facing many Pacific salmon stocks on the Canadian west coast are complex and require a long-term transformative strategy. There are a number of initiatives currently under way. They include the wild salmon policy implementation plan, the coastal restoration fund, the B.C. salmon restoration and innovation fund, additional funding from the Pacific Salmon Foundation, implementation funding for the renewed Pacific Salmon Treaty and the renewed Fisheries Act. They all focus on sustaining and recovering wild salmon from a variety of directions, including habitat restoration and protection, science and research, and education and stewardship.

While these new federal investments will help to support recovery, we also need to work with first nations, other levels of government and fishers to support innovative approaches and support salmon recovery and resiliency so we can continue to enjoy the ecological, cultural, social and economic benefits of a healthy Pacific salmon population and work to increase the amount of access and opportunity available to British Columbians and British Columbia fishers.

• (1925)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, what the parliamentary secretary just said sounds great, but we have actually talked to fishers on the water who are trying to implement some of these projects. I will list one. So far, the South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition has successfully reared 1.87 million juvenile chinook through its Sooke sea pen project since it started in 2017. That has been achieved with 100% private funding. They have raised in excess of \$300,000 to cover project costs, and DFO has not put up one single dollar, which is a shame.

Members can guess where these fish go. This year, fishers have seen the chinook return to the fishery, the southern resident killer whales feeding in the Juan de Fuca Strait near Sooke in late August and early September and double the number of fish in the Sooke River. It all indicates that the success of their efforts is real.

The parliamentary secretary talks about all this as being a great effort. The bottom line is that our fishers are so frustrated. They want to demonstrate areas for selective fishing where populations of salmon are sufficient. The recreational fishing industry can survive, and they can use these techniques to keep fishing. They are so frustrated that DFO is not listening to their concerns that they are protesting and demonstrating to say to DFO, "Look what we are doing." They can really save these fish. They can catch the ones that are plentiful and not catch the ones that are having problems.

All I ask the minister and the parliamentary secretary to do is simply listen to these recreational fishers and truly listen to what they have to say. They have some great advice.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, our salmon are in crisis, and there are many factors causing this, which I outlined in my speech.

I believe that, like me, my colleague wants to see increased access and opportunity for our fishers. I also believe we both want to see a more sustainable and abundant fishery available for the benefit of future generations.

To get to that future, we need to make tough decisions today, and not just tact decisions. If the member wants to get serious about saving wild Pacific salmon, then he needs to ask why he and his party voted against the Fisheries Act, why they voted against the Oceans Act and why they voted against the \$142-million B.C. salmon restoration and innovation fund. He must also ask why his party continues to either vote against measures that fight climate change or, worse, deny it is even a serious problem altogether.

The member's party has a record that is glaringly against wild Pacific salmon, and I would encourage him to work with our government and his party to change that record going forward.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here to talk about public transit in Metro Vancouver. It is a follow-up to a question I asked a couple of weeks ago, which I do not think I got an adequate answer to.

I will provide a bit of background. Metro Vancouver is located in the Lower Mainland area of British Columbia, which is a relatively small piece of real estate compared to the province and the country, but it is huge when it comes to strategic importance. Vancouver is Canada's front door to the Pacific Rim and our gateway to global trade in that part of the world.

However, it is also a very complex piece of real estate. It is bound to the north and the east by mountains, to the south by the U.S. border and to the west by the sea. There is nowhere to go. There is some spare land, but it is protected by the agricultural land reserve and there is a strong community consensus in the Lower Mainland that it is untouchable. Take it from me that there is nowhere to go except up, and we do that very well.

For any new real estate development in that area, the first step is to take down what is already there and rebuild to a much higher density, whether it is residential, commercial or industrial. That is the way Vancouver operates.

On top of all of that complexity, two and a half million people live in that area and every year about 50,000 people are added. The population of a small town drops right into the middle of all of that complexity. The only way that development works or is sustainable is that we have a great public transit system. The SkyTrain, contrary to other transit systems in North America, has an ever-increasing transit ridership and that is because the focus is on transit-oriented development.

That brings me to my ask, and that is for a federal funding commitment to extend the eastern end of the SkyTrain, which is in downtown Surrey, all way to downtown Langley. There are federal, provincial and municipal funding commitments to build the first phase of that to the Fleetwood area of Surrey, but we are looking for another \$550 million from the federal government to extend it all the way into Langley.

I also want to talk about the housing affordability crisis in my area. Even in this year of COVID, prices have been going steadily up. There are about 9% or 10% price increases in my area. Rather than trying to reduce demand, which goes completely contrary to what we are trying to do, I would say we should increase the supply of housing, and a great way to do that is to extend the SkyTrain into

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Langley and urge the provincial and municipal governments to continue developing in that area.

Hundreds of thousands of people in this area now live an elevator ride and about 400 steps from the nearest SkyTrain station. Flying into Vancouver on a clear day, people can see exactly where the SkyTrain route is from the cluster of high-rises that spring up in close proximity to the SkyTrain station. That is what we are looking for: a commitment of \$550 million to complete the project all the way to Langley city.

I was talking to Mike Buda, who is the executive director of the Mayors' Council on Regional Transportation, and he said that it would be imprudent for us to put the shovels down at the end of phase one. We need to continue right into phase two. There are economies of scale, there will be savings to be able to do that and it is required. We are looking for a federal funding commitment of \$550 million.

● (1930)

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member for Langley—Aldergrove that as a career city planner with a 20-plus year career before I came to this place, I know very well that the best land use plan is, in fact, a good transit plan. I appreciate his remarks on transit-oriented development.

That is one of the reasons why I know and live the knowledge that safe, modern, effective and efficient public transit systems are absolutely fundamental for the health and sustainability of our communities even at the best of times. However, now more than ever we recognize the important role that transit continues to play in moving Canadians during this time of the pandemic, including getting health professionals, first responders, grocery store workers and others to their places of work.

Key to the health and sustainability of our public transit networks are strategic investments. That is why the government committed \$28.7 billion in stable, predictable, long-term funding to build the new urban transit networks and service extensions that will transform the way Canadians live, move and work. In fact, the member will be happy to know that since November 2015, our government has already invested more than \$13.3 billion in public transit. That is about 13 times the previous government's expenditure on transit from 2011 to 2015.

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Public transit is a major focus of Infrastructure Canada's funding programs. It is key to a more sustainable, lower-carbon economy and absolutely critical to supporting mobility and growth in our cities. It is about getting people around faster, cleaner and more cheaply. That is why, under the investing in Canada infrastructure program, ICIP, British Columbia stands to benefit from over \$2.6 billion in funding for public transit projects that the province identifies as a priority.

The Government of Canada is very pleased, happy and committed to working closely with the Province of British Columbia to ensure that together we are investing in infrastructure that makes the lives of British Columbians better and greener, infrastructure like the funding for approximately 110 new handyDART buses in View Royal, which is double the current fleet size. That investment is strengthening the existing transit services for people with disabilities and helping to ensure that all residents have access to the opportunities and services they need.

The Surrey Langley SkyTrain extension project will create significant benefits for the surrounding communities. The project proposes to build 16 kilometres of elevated extension from the current Expo line along Fraser Highway, from King George Station to a new terminus in Langley City Centre. It includes eight new stations, two transit exchanges and 55 new vehicles. It is not only going to help further reduce gridlock, but it is going to shorten commutes for locals and give them more time to spend with their families, not to mention the air quality measures.

I am pleased to note that a business case for phase 1 of the project was submitted to Infrastructure Canada, requesting federal funding for the King George Station to Fleetwood part of the project. This would include four new stations and 25 new skytrains. We are working closely with our provincial counterparts to perform due diligence and analyze the business case that has been submitted by our provincial partner to ensure value for taxpayer money. We

look forward to getting it built, creating jobs, reducing emissions and helping people get around their communities faster.

I want to thank the member for the opportunity to speak to what the Government of Canada is doing to support British Columbia's public transit priorities.

● (1935)

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Mr. Speaker, that was good to hear, but what was missing was a commitment for the \$550 million to be invested by the federal government into phase 2 of the Fleetwood to Langley project. Is that ready to go? It has provincial support. The provincial government has promised to fund its portion of it. It has the regional mayors' council support. All it needs is a final commitment from the federal government. It is ready to go.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Government of Canada is committed to investing in public transit infrastructure projects across the country and has made the dollars necessary available. We entirely understand that projects of all sizes can have a major impact.

For example, a new handi-van can change the lives of residents living with disabilities by making their communities more accessible and increasing their independence. A new light rail transit network can get hundreds of buses off the street and significantly reduce GHG emissions, commute times and gridlock.

It is through exactly this kind of smart, strategic investment in public transit infrastructure that we will help improve the quality of life of British Columbians and all Canadians and make their communities more liveable, sustainable and healthier.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 7:38 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:38 p.m.)

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