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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 19, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to section 28 of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, Appendix I, a report from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner entitled “Maloney Report 2020”, dated November 2020.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government’s response to 12 petitions. These returns will be tabled in electronic format.

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CANADIAN NET-ZERO EMISSIONS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-12, An Act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada’s efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.

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

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PETITIONS

OPIOIDS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table this petition today on behalf of petitioners who are raising concerns regarding the fentanyl poisoning crisis and demanding action be taken. This is timely, given that the Mayor of Vancouver is calling on the government to decriminalize the possession of opioids in Vancouver and all drug supply.

They are calling on the Government of Canada to declare the current opioid overdose and fentanyl poisoning crisis a national public health emergency under the Emergencies Act in order to manage and resource it, with the aim of reducing and eliminating preventable deaths; reform current drug policy and decriminalize personal possession, which is what the mayor of Vancouver is asking for; and create with urgency and immediacy a system to provide safe, unadulterated access to substances, so the people who use substances, whether experimentally, recreationally or chronically, are not at imminent risk of overdose due to contaminated sources. The petitioners cite that the 15,000 deaths in our country were all preventable.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present e-petition 2827. The climate crisis and destruction of ecosystems, or ecocide, are the result of many years of harmful industrial activities permitted by law, with many of the risks having been known for decades by the companies choosing to continue these practices and the governments subsidizing those activities.

The international community lacks a legal framework to ensure shared nation responsibility for financing humanitarian and environmental aid and assistance to ecocide territories, despite numerous treaties, agreements and civil lawsuits. The petitioners call upon the House of Commons and Parliament to declare its support for an amendment to the Rome Statute and advocate its adoption internationally in the knowledge that many countries must stand together for the long-term protection of all life on earth.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BROADCASTING ACT**

The House resumed from November 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. 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, it is with pleasure that I rise to speak to Bill C-10, which is an initiative that has been a work-in-progress for a number of months, possibly even years. The government has recognized the importance of the growth of the Internet, which has been applauded universally. There is no doubt about that, but it has a number of different issues that governments around the world have had to deal with. That is the primary reason we have Bill C-10 before us today.

There are many multinational or large corporations that play a very important role in terms of broadcasting. This is something Bill C-10 attempts to deal with. I have had the opportunity to listen to the minister's comments in regard to the bill, and I would encourage members to review what the minister said because there is a great deal of substance, not to mention passion, in the words that were spoken.

There are three parts to what the minister said that I want to take the opportunity to highlight, along with providing some further comments in terms of how important culture and arts are to our nation.

First, we would probably find the minister wants to talk about the need for equity. There is a real need for equity when it comes to our broadcasting industries. We have Canadian companies that fall under the CRTC. There are regulations in place, and those regulations do a number of things. They have ultimately served Canadians well over the years.

However, we then have, for a lack of better words, foreign web giants. We know what many of those web companies are. We are talking about companies like Google and Facebook. It is really important that we recognize that expecting industries such as Google to voluntarily comply with regulations in Canada is the wrong direction for us to be going.

Bill C-10 would ensure that the regulatory framework applies not only to Canadian companies, but also to those foreign web giants. That will go a long way in ensuring that Canadian interests are in fact being protected.

Then we look at the issue of Canadian content as a whole and how this legislation will benefit it. In terms of dollar value, it has been suggested by the minister and others that we are talking about hundreds of millions additional new dollars going to the support of Canadian content. That injection of new dollars will help the industry substantially.

This is the type of thing that I believe is going to have a very positive impact on such an important industry to our country.

Again, it will be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1 billion, which equates to hundreds of millions of dollars. That is a very strong positive.

When young people go onto different types of platforms, whether it is Netflix, Amazon, Spotify or other platforms, it can be a challenge to identify Canadian content. Within Bill C-10 we find, particularly for young people, that it will be easier to discover Canadian content. The issue of discoverability is something that is really important and has been identified in this legislation.

• (1010)

I look at Bill C-10 as a win-win-win. I look to the Conservatives, the New Democrats and the Bloc Québécois to get on board and support the legislation.

In listening to the minister responsible for the legislation, I thought he was very open to ideas for amendments and was looking to opposition parties, if they have a good idea, to not hesitate to make the minister aware of it. I would encourage my opposition colleagues, if they have some thoughts on the bill, even during second reading, to develop those ideas and possible amendments and bring them forward to the minister's office, even before it gets to the standing committee level, because in the minister's comments he was inviting members to do so. It was quite encouraging when at the very beginning of the minister's remarks he extended that invitation and a sense of wanting to work with all members of this House to ensure that this legislation, which is somewhat historic in the sense of outreach to the World Wide Web, protects the Canadian interest. Therefore, I look forward to having Bill C-10 advance to the committee stage.

There is a good reason, and I have had the opportunity in the past to talk about the importance of culture and heritage. Yesterday, in one of my questions, I made reference to an organization that I have mentioned in the past to the House. It embodies a lot of things that would assist the industry.

We often overlook the economic impact that culture and arts groups throughout our country have, and how they contribute. There is the most obvious, and we have had some fantastic programs. In fact, one of the programs, *Schitt's Creek*, is something that I, unfortunately, did not even know existed until not that long ago. I know that surprises a number of people in the chamber. When it received all those awards, it was being talked about more and I thought that maybe it was time that I investigated this show. I must admit that periodically I do a bit of Netflix bingeing. I have taken the time to watch every episode of it over a three-week period.

For those who have not seen the program, I would encourage people who are following the debate on Bill C-10 to watch it because it embodies why it is so critically important that we advance bills like Bill C-10 and recognize the industry. *Schitt's Creek* really does reflect many of the values that Canadians have today in a very wide spectrum of people. I suspect it is one of the reasons why we did so well with that particular program and that it has now been recognized worldwide.

Government Orders

It is not alone. Another show that comes to my mind is *Corner Gas* out of Saskatchewan, and that should appeal to a lot of my western colleagues, in particular those in Saskatchewan, as we take pride in now. I do not know if I have watched every episode, but the attempt has been there.

• (1015)

It is nice when we get this reference to the wonderful province of Saskatchewan and the fine work that it does. Another program that I have had the opportunity to watch at least a few episodes of is *Kim's Convenience*, a program that takes place in Toronto. Again, we see different types of reflection. Canada over the years has been recognized as having some phenomenal comedians and many different actors and actresses. One of my favourites has always been *Star Trek* and good old Captain Kirk. He is Canadian-born, and I think he might be from Saskatchewan. I am not 100% sure of that.

The point is that we have so many actors and actresses and individuals with so much potential, many of whom are yet to be discovered. Bill C-10 would go a long way in supporting those new discoveries and ensuring that an industry that is so critically important to all of us is better served.

We talk about those who get the light shone on them as a result of being an actor or actress, but that is only a part of it. I really enjoy it when I see these large numbers of vans and semis pulling up into our communities, because they often are there for productions. I remember over the summer I wanted to get a large van for rental purposes, and I could not. I asked when I could get one, and the agency said that it would not be for a while because they had them rented out to a movie production. To me, that is one of those spin-off benefits that are really important for us to recognize.

I suspect that if I were to check with people in all the different areas of our country, I would find at times, in different regions, that I would see multiple sets being established in public buildings like, for example, the Manitoba legislative building, or our streets and communities, and I would see production crews. There is a high level of expertise. As the industry continues to grow, that level of expertise will grow, and when we see that, not only does it increase the skill sets of thousands of Canadians, it provides jobs.

When a movie set goes into a community, those individuals who are operating that movie set are getting paid. They are more often than not local employees or people from Canada with Canadian expertise moving into these communities and getting a salary. They are also buying lunches and snacks, they are occupying hotels for extended and short periods of time, and contributing to the local economy.

Suffice to say, when we take a look at a production that comes in, it creates interest. I am very much interested, for example, when I see a facility that is being used for a movie production and then I see it in the movie. Whenever I hear the city of Winnipeg being sighted in a movie or a TV production, there is that sense of pride. These are the types of things showing why it is so important that members on all sides of the House recognize the real value of Bill C-10.

• (1020)

On the surface, it does not take too much to read through. We can appreciate what the bill is hoping to accomplish, with hundreds of millions of dollars, ensuring that we have more new money and more Canadian content, it is a good thing. The bill talks about discoverability, where young people would have easier means to locate that Canadian content, and that, too, is a good thing. We talk about having those multinational companies, those large platforms, being put on a more level playing field by incorporating them into the regulatory system, and that is a good thing.

The CRTC has done exceptionally well for Canadians over the years. It is hard to imagine what the industry would look like today if we did not have the CRTC, and if we did not have a government that valued Canadian content in the creation and distribution, and supporting the industry as a whole. This is legislation that would ensure the longevity of that.

Like everything else, the coronavirus has had an impact on the industry today, and at different levels. That is why I made reference yesterday, when I was with the minister, to the organization of Folklorama. There are many talents that ultimately go on to become productions here in Canada and abroad that come out of other organizations and smaller cultural events, and I should not use the word "smaller".

I often make reference to Folklorama, which is an organization in Winnipeg that has been in place for over 50 years now. It has literally thousands of volunteers. Every year, during the summer, for a solid two weeks, there are all forms of entertainment and heritage promotion. Fifty-plus pavilions often participate in it. I have seen presentations that have gone from a pavilion into actual television production or have been a starting point for many artists who have originated in Winnipeg. The benefits by government continue, whether directly or indirectly.

I was so pleased when the current Minister of Heritage had a virtual meeting, and so did the Prime Minister, with Folklorama and the Folk Arts Council, because we were concerned about how they were being impacted by the coronavirus. It is the type of organization that, as a country, we cannot afford to lose. Whether it was from the Minister of Heritage or the Prime Minister, it was so nice to hear that, through things such as the wage subsidy program, these organizations were able to continue on during this very difficult time. As a result, I know that we will have Folklorama for another 50 years.

Our cultural and heritage industry as a whole needs organizations like Folklorama, because that is where many of the future actors, actresses and production people will be coming from. That is why it is so absolutely critical that when people look at Bill C-10 they recognize its true value to Canadian society.

• (1025)

I encourage all members of the House to follow the advice of the minister. If they have ideas or amendments, they should bring them forward. We are open to ensuring that we have the best possible legislation.

Government Orders

• (1030)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here listening to the member opposite. I always appreciate his interventions in this place.

My dog ran away and it did take three days.

I had been reading the minister's mandate letter, which talks about creating new regulations for social media platforms. Does the bill clarify whether social media platforms are publishers, or are they just curators?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what is really encouraging is that the Prime Minister has made mandate letters public. As a result, the member can read the mandate letters of all the different ministers.

What members will find is that Bill C-10 incorporates a good part of the mandate letter that has been given to the Minister of Heritage. A part of his mandate was to look at the web giants, such as Facebook and Google, and how the government will ensure that we are taking proactive actions to support Canadian society.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech to justify Bill C-10, which is currently before us.

I have to admit that I was rather disappointed. The Liberals are saying that this is a great bill with extraordinary content, but the bill surrenders our culture to foreign businesses and leaves us with no control over anything. What is more, it does not provide any guarantees regarding French-language content.

Since the beginning of this week, we have been talking about the importance of preserving the French language. The member for Saint-Laurent denied the decline of French and the president of the Liberal Party said that Bill 101 is oppressive. On top of all that, the Liberal government is not imposing any obligations for French-language content on the media's future cultural productions. I cannot understand that at all.

Wilfrid Laurier described Confederation as the tomb of the French race and the ruin of Lower Canada. The Conservatives are denying climate change and the Liberals are denying the fact that the French language is in jeopardy.

I would like to know whether the member opposite, as a living representative of francophones who are losing their language, is ashamed to be part of Canada. Does he not understand that, in a way, his government's measures justify Quebecers' desire to have their own country?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I want to be kind, but at the end of the day the Bloc is trying to give a false impression.

The Prime Minister, the government House leader and the Minister of Canadian Heritage have been so clear, and not just during this debate or in the last week. I remember the Prime Minister sitting as leader of the third party. I believe the Prime Minister of Canada is one of the strongest, most able-minded advocates for French language not only in the province of Quebec, but across Canada.

Members of the Bloc would do the province of Quebec well by recognizing that the French language is a beautiful language that needs to continue to be promoted and encouraged throughout our nation. The opportunity for this is there, and I hope the Bloc will recognize the true value of the French language and make sure that we do whatever we can throughout Canada to do that.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my friend's description of *Corner Gas* and Captain Kirk. He thinks this is going to somehow create a vision for dealing with Facebook and Google, even though we know that the government has been deeply embedded with the web giants. The Prime Minister deals with Amazon; Leslie Church, a top Google executive, became head of the department that is over-seeing whether Google comes under regulations; and the Prime Minister has close involvement with Facebook.

The idea that the CRTC is going to regulate the digital platforms may be the best idea of 1994, but it certainly does not recognize the real issues we need to deal with regarding the web giants today. For example, as a simple issue, they are not paying taxes, and with the bill they would still not be paying taxes.

The idea is that the government is going to handle the web giants by giving this over to the CRTC while they have a huge advantage in not paying taxes. Cable companies have to pay taxes, newspapers have to pay taxes and artists have to pay taxes, yet Google and Facebook, which are so deeply embedded with the government, do not. It is ridiculous.

I do not know if there was an episode of *Corner Gas* that talked about this or—

• (1035)

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to leave it there and move on to get in other questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if the member is mocking me and is saying he does not like *Corner Gas*, that is fine. There are a lot of Canadian productions out there that I hope the member likes. However, that is not necessarily the issue we are debating today. I was trying to highlight the importance of the industry by using some examples, and I think most Canadians would agree with the examples I was using.

What the NDP seems to think is that we can just click our heels and hundreds and hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars will magically flood into the country. They are trying to give the impression that the bill does not have an impact, but close to \$1 billion of new money will be going into the industry as a result of the bill. That is the reality.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, William Shatner is, in fact, from the wonderful city of Montreal.

Government Orders

One of the interesting aspects of the bill, one could argue, is that for the first time ever, it puts an emphasis on indigenous production, whether it be with regard to music, TV or the big screen. I am wondering if my hon. colleague could help us understand how this would help reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, incorporating this into the legislation continues the idea of reconciliation. It complements other things the government has done, such as recognizing the importance of indigenous languages by establishing a fund and legislation to support ongoing education and promotion of indigenous languages that were being lost.

Introducing legislation to ensure that we recognize the true value of indigenous heritage, making sure that dollars ultimately flow for the creation of programs and supporting languages are all important to this government and the idea of reconciliation.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to celebrate Canadian content as well and highlight *Trickster*, which is a new series that is really great.

There have been comments about making Netflix finance Canadian programming. It appears as though the government has passed the buck back to the CRTC. The bill says that the CRTC should regulate similar types of broadcasters in an equitable way, but it also leaves the CRTC the option to not regulate Netflix and the foreign streamers at all. This would be entirely up to the CRTC.

Given its history of inaction on this front, is there reason to be concerned that nothing will change?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate what the member is saying. I do not believe that is the case. I believe the CRTC has done a fantastic job overall in protecting the interests of Canadians.

The legislation is fairly clear in what it is doing, and the CRTC is most capable of doing what is necessary to generate the type of Canadian content we all expect and want to see from web giants.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to the bill before us today, Bill C-10.

Canada's cultural sector, communications and broadcasting companies and the media in general have been eagerly awaiting this bill.

The thing is, everyone was expecting a bill that would be in step with changes in the communications sector since the Broadcasting Act was first enacted decades ago.

I have a great deal of respect for the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who made a passionate case for Bill C-10 this week. Here is how he began his speech:

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.

Unfortunately, it did not take long for the minister, who signed on to the Liberal Party of Canada shortly before the 2019 general election, to pick up the Prime Minister's and the Liberal government's bad habits.

Bill C-10 is full of fine words and intentions, but provides few measures and, more importantly, few answers to the many questions Canadian consumers, companies and media are rightfully asking. The media industry was expecting, and calling for, more.

I will tell you about the developments in the media industry as I experienced them myself over the years. I started my career in radio, in 1984, at a tiny station in Asbestos, now called Val-des-Sources. That radio station was CJAN. I was a casual employee and hosted a weekend show. I was also a news host when the need arose.

At the time, the radio station and the local newspaper were the only sources of local information in the Or-Blanc RCM, as it used to be called. Two hosts and a reporter worked full time, and then there was a casual employee and the management staff. There were a lot of hours of local production.

Then I went to Thetford Mines, a bigger city, and worked in an AM radio station. Some of the people who were elected in the last election probably do not even know what AM radio is. CKLD had about 30 advertising employees, reporters and hosts. Production was 100% local.

These two stations were part of what was called the Appalaches network, an independent association covering the Eastern Townships, Chaudière-Appalaches and part of Centre-du-Québec. At the time, I wrote my stories using a typewriter and carbon paper so I could keep a copy. That is how it was.

Then we began to see technological developments and I was given a typewriter that miraculously kept one line of text at a time in memory, which meant that I no longer needed correction fluid to fix my mistakes.

Then FM radio, computers and cellphones came along. All of this turned broadcasting on its head. When I started at the station in 1985, there were between 25 and 30 employees. Seven years later, I had to leave. There were only four full-time news hosts left. This was before the Internet.

I took a break from radio for a few months and became editor-in-chief of the Thetford Mines *Courier Frontenac*. At the time, we were publishing the *Courier Frontenac*, the Wednesday edition and a monthly for another sector of the RCM, and there was also another specialized newspaper. We had a team of five reporters, as well as collaborators. In short, it was a prime example of a local communication undertaking.

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To put things in perspective, at that time we had to have our camera film developed, layouts were done almost entirely by hand, and we had to deliver the finished pages to the printer ourselves for printing and distribution. That is how it was. Thetford Mines even had a second weekly.

• (1045)

There were enough journalists in Thetford Mines at the time to form a softball team. We called ourselves “Les Chevaliers du Crayon”, the knights of the pencil. There was enough local coverage and enough journalists in our community to have a softball team. That says it all.

When I left in 1998 to go into politics, there was only one weekly paper left and a dwindling number of journalists. Competition was still fierce, but it was still local. Then came the electronic bulletin boards that people could connect to through their modems and get access to free content. Cellphones became increasingly portable, and then there was the Internet, data compression protocols, high speed, Yahoo, YouTube, Facebook and all the social media.

Back home in Thetford Mines these days, we still have one radio station and one weekly paper. I can count on two hands the number of people who work at those two places, and I need only two fingers to count the number of full-time journalists left in Thetford Mines.

Yesterday was rather serendipitous. The *Courier Frontenac* published an article in its weekly edition under the byline of News Media Canada. I will read a quote from it:

From the very inception of newspapers in Canada, the best journalism in Canada has been supported and sustained by advertising revenues. Yet virtually all our digital media outlets now face an existential threat because of the anti-competitive practices of web giants Facebook and Google. These two global giants control 80% of all advertising revenues.

Now let's talk about radio. Last August, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, or CAB, released the results of an economic study on the crisis in their field and the future of local broadcasting. The numbers that were released are terrifying. According to the forecasts in the report, 50 radio stations could well close their doors in the next four to six months, another 150 radio stations could do the same in the next 18 months and at least 40 of the 94 private local television stations in Canada could close down in the next 12 to 36 months.

These numbers have me worried. Lenore Gibson, chair of CAB's executive council, said the following in the press release accompanying this report:

Without immediate action, Canada will see a wave of local television and radio closures over the next three years. This will deny many communities a daily local media voice, and significantly reduce the diversity of news choices and voices in almost every community in Canada.

This is worrisome. Carmela Laurignano, vice-president and radio group manager of Evanov Radio Group, rightly stated, “If we allow local news to die, the health of Canadian society will be seriously undermined.”

Let us get back to Bill C-10. How does it help radio stations and newspapers in my region and other Quebec regions? It does absolutely nothing for them. This was, however, a unique opportunity

for the Minister of Canadian Heritage to take concrete action to help local production. When I say local, I really mean local, and that is 100% francophone back home.

Members will understand that I expected the amendments to the Broadcasting Act to be in step with the changes in the media industry in recent years. I am extremely disappointed. This bill will not hold Internet giants like Google and Facebook to the same competition rules as Canadian undertakings.

In its report entitled “Addressing the Tax Challenges of the Digital Economy”, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, of which Canada is a member, made several recommendations concerning the collection of information in the digital economy and companies without a physical address.

The other members of the G20 and the European Union, Australia—which has been much talked about—South Africa, Japan and South Korea have all modernized their laws to adapt to the new realities of e-commerce, but not Canada.

In recent weeks, and since 2015, we have often heard say that Canada comes last among the G7 and G20 countries. There is one exception, namely that the Liberal government has made Canada the first country in the G7, the G20 and the world to approve an agreement with Netflix for a one-off investment, but with no guarantee from the Internet giant with respect to French-language content.

• (1050)

We do not know the details, but one thing is certain: Netflix, Disney, Apple, Amazon and Spotify are not taxed in Canada. They do not contribute to the Canada Media Fund, and they are in no way obliged to broadcast Canadian content. We are helping these companies that generate billions of dollars by allowing them to play by rules different from the ones imposed on local undertakings, which are obliged to pay taxes in Canada.

The result of all this is unfair competition that leads to significant job losses in the cultural and journalism industries and that erodes the quality of our national product. The problem is not a lack of creativity. We are well aware of Canada's vast wealth of creativity. However, to create, we need resources and if we do not have the necessary resources because profits are leaving the country, we will lose hundreds of millions of tax dollars that could have been used to improve creation in Canada and Quebec.

When we started hearing about reforming the Broadcasting Act, we were all expecting taxation to figure into the reform. After all, this was one of the main recommendations in the Yale report, entitled “Canada's communications future: Time to act”, which was the basis for Bill C-10. I quote:

The application of GST/HST to foreign online services is a different matter. Consistent with actions taken by some provinces and many other countries, we recommend that sales tax be applied equitably to media communications services provided by foreign online providers. This would eliminate the disadvantage to competing Canadian providers.

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Businesses are either taxed or they are not. During the Conservative Party leadership campaign, the member for Durham and Leader of the Opposition quite rightly proposed that the GST be removed for subscriptions to Canadian digital platforms, which would promote online cultural content broadcast by Canadian cultural businesses, such as Club illico and ICI Tou.tv. That would level the playing field with foreign digital platforms, such as Netflix, Crave or Disney+.

Historically, every substantive reform of the Broadcasting Act has brought clear definitions for new technologies and how they compare to conventional players. In 1929, it was radio; in 1968, cable television; and in 1986, satellite television and pay TV. Then, there was a review in 1991. Now, almost 30 years later, there has been an unprecedented number of major technological breakthroughs, all occurring in a very short period of time. However, the bill introduced by the Liberal government does not explain how or on what terms the digital platforms and conventional players will compete with each other in the same market.

Furthermore, the definitions are vague and at times absent. What is the definition of “social media”, as mentioned in the exclusions list under the “carrying on broadcasting undertaking” category? Subclause 1(3) of the bill amends the Broadcasting Act by adding the following after subsection (2):

(2.1) A person who uses a social media service to upload programs for transmission over the Internet and reception by other users of the service — and who is not the provider of the service or the provider’s affiliate, or the agent or mandatary of either of them — does not, by the fact of that use, carry on a broadcasting undertaking for the purposes of this Act.

Does this include Facebook or YouTube? Does this include YouTube’s pay channels, which have 2.5 billion views?

Another point that absolutely needs to be addressed is the fact that Bill C-10 will give the CRTC broad discretionary powers to define what is an online undertaking and to require such undertakings to spend money on producing and distributing Canadian content. Furthermore, the requirement for undertakings to contribute up to 5% of their gross revenues to the Canada Media Fund, which subsidizes Canadian productions, is not explicitly stated in the bill, nor is the calculation used to estimate the \$830 million in contributions that the minister referred to. It could also be \$1 billion, because the minister sometimes gives that figure as well.

Broadcaster contributions to the Canada Media Fund for 2019-20 totalled \$193 million. The minister says that Bill C-10 will increase that to \$1 billion. I would like to know what math he used to come up with that estimate.

The government chose, in the end, to hand over its responsibility to the CRTC rather than stick its neck out. First, we know the CRTC’s position on this issue. In a 2018 interview with *La Presse*, CRTC chairman Ian Scott explained that there was no need to impose conditions on Netflix or other undertakings regarding French-language content. I quote:

● (1055)

It works very well because the objectives of the Broadcasting Act are being met: there is a healthy industry that is successful in both official languages. We see that the system is not broken, even though it is under severe pressure.

This is the CRTC chairman saying that.

Second, there are decisions such as the exemption order for digital media, which is continually renewed. We know that the CRTC is going to take at least nine months to make a decision. With Bill C-10, the Liberal government is rolling out a broad delegation of powers to the CRTC, without including clear guidelines on the percentage of Canadian content, contribution fees and expenses, French content requirements, and so on.

In fact, the bill even chooses to limit the oversight powers of parliamentary committees with respect to CRTC directives and regulations and the ability of a broadcaster to appeal a CRTC decision.

The message that the government is sending to the CRTC, ultimately, is that we need to just trust them and that we will see later. It will therefore wait several months for the CRTC to act, and Parliament will have a very limited oversight powers.

Not everyone shares the minister’s optimistic opinion about the benefits of Bill C-10 for Canadian production. Here is what Michael Geist, a professor of law at the University of Ottawa and the Canada research chair in Internet and e-commerce law, had to say.

[*English*]

In the short term, this bill creates considerable uncertainty that could lead to reduced investment in Canadian film and television production and less consumer choice as potential new streaming entrants avoid the Canadian market until there is greater clarity on the cost of doing business. Canada is set to become a highly regulated market for Internet streaming services and the uncertainty regarding those costs are sure to have an impact. The regulatory process will take years to unfold with a call for public comment, a lengthy hearing, the initial decision, applications to review and vary the decision, judicial reviews, and potential judicial appeals. If any of the appeals are successful, the CRTC would be required to re-examine its decision and the process starts anew.

[*Translation*]

It is someone who studies laws and everything that is happening in the area of commerce and digital distribution who said that. I want to once again quote the Minister of Canadian Heritage. He said:

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.

What does “once the bill receives royal assent” mean? What will these instructions be? Why did the minister not include the instructions for the CRTC in a schedule to the bill? What is there in those instructions that the minister does not want Canadians to see? Are the instructions in question a way of saying that the government did not do the work, that it promised to do something but was not sure how to go about it and that it certainly does not want to be seen as the bad guy who hurt the social networks? Are they a way of saying that the government is going to make the CRTC do the dirty work and give it the responsibility for making all the decisions?

Government Orders

That is the problem with Bill C-10 and the Liberals. They are all about appearances instead of action.

In short, the bill is vague, and fails to address a number of important aspects. It does not guarantee that Internet giants such as Google and Facebook will have to compete with other companies and play by the same rules as Canadian companies. It does not explain how digital platforms and the traditional media will compete under similar conditions. It does not address the issue of exclusive content shared on digital platforms. It does not set out guidelines for the production of Canadian content and contributions to the Canada Media Fund.

We will propose amendments in committee. It is time to reform the Broadcasting Act. It has allowed too many local radio stations across the country to go under. It is allowing newspapers and traditional media to disappear, and is doing nothing to halt the propagation of hate speech.

The minister is asking that we help improve his bill. We will work with him, but we must agree that the current version is far from acceptable. We will need content, clarity and clarifications. The ball is in the minister's court. We will see whether the minister is prepared to listen to the opposition parties' recommendations and proposals.

• (1100)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech and his passionate testimonial about local media.

I myself delivered La Tuque's L'Écho when I was a boy. I also wrote for several local media outlets. However, there appears to be some confusion. Bill C-10 is about broadcasting, not the media. I publicly announced my intention to table another bill on the media and the use by Internet giants like Facebook and Google of Canadian content without appropriate compensation.

My hon. colleague is talking about the Yale report on which our bill is indeed based. It is somewhat ironic, since the former leader of my hon. colleague's party, on the day the report was published, proposed that we scrap it, so I am not sure I understand.

If the local media is so important, and I believe my hon. colleague in that regard, why is it that the Conservative Party has opposed our every effort to help Canadian media?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the best way to help local media, local radio and Canadian media would be to make their market free and fair. Unfortunately, the government's approach is to throw money at the problem over and over again, without actually dealing with the issues that put the media in this situation to begin with.

Focusing on cash-intensive band-aid solutions will not fix things for Canadian media. That is what we are against, the fact that the government is breaking out the band-aids and making itself look good, but does not want to tackle the real issue. That is what is so sad about what the Liberal government is doing now.

Plenty of articles have reported that the much-touted assistance the media is expecting from the government has not gone out the door yet. Many media organizations are still waiting for that

promised assistance. Once again, the government is all talk and no action.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which was very interesting, especially the personal and professional aspects. It was nice to hear him talk about his past.

We all agree that this bill is a weak response to the Yale report. However, this legislation was long overdue. It is important to remember that 16,000 journalists have lost their jobs since 2016. In Quebec and Canada, 250 media outlets have been forced to shut down, and there has been endless restructuring everywhere, including at La Presse, CTV and TVA.

I would like my colleague to give a clear answer to the following question: Will the Conservatives be voting against the bill, or will they propose a series of amendments?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his kind comments.

I am glad to have had a career in local and regional media and to be able to share my experience with my colleagues. I worked in radio for a long time and had to live with the CRTC rules for years, so I know how CRTC decisions can impact different sectors.

The current version of Bill C-10 is imperfect, incomplete and insufficiently transparent. It is therefore very difficult for me to agree to support it in its current form. However, as the time has come to overhaul the Broadcasting Act, I hope that the committee will be able to make it more acceptable and ensure that the much-touted directives to the CRTC are made public. I hope that they will be included in the bill so that when we vote on the final version of Bill C-10, we will know what we are voting on.

At present, the government has good intentions, but Bill C-10 has so few tangible applications that it is hard for us to support the bill as drafted.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my colleague for sharing his thoughts on the bill and for sharing his own experience, which is highly relevant to our debate today.

My colleagues have already highlighted the NDP's concerns about this bill, especially about whether the CRTC will be able to take real action and whether it will have the authority needed to protect Canadian content and Canadian artists. Does my colleague share these concerns?

Also, is my colleague concerned about the fact that the Liberals have already shown they are siding with the web giants? This is a problem for this bill, but also for Canadian media in general.

Government Orders

• (1105)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I share some of her concerns about how the current Liberal government is cozying up to the web giants.

The CRTC is being given a huge new mandate and is being asked to do the government's job for it. We have yet to see how the CRTC is supposed to discharge these obligations. It already has a lot on its plate, what with expanding Internet access in rural areas and taking care of its other responsibilities. Now, with Bill C-10, the government thinks it can snap its fingers and call on the CRTC to fix the problems that the government has not been able to fix since it came to power.

I am also very concerned about whether the CRTC will be able to quickly carry out the mandate that the government is assigning it through Bill C-10.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. He obviously has a lot of experience in this field.

Many francophones in my riding in Alberta enjoy French-language media content and would like to get even more. They are pleased with the work that our party is doing to protect the French language. This is important not just in Quebec, but also in the west and for francophones in every region of Canada.

The minister says that other topics will be addressed in a future bill. I think it is rather ridiculous that a clear plan was not presented in the bill. It is hard to assess a future bill that we have not seen.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on this process.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I quite liked my colleague's question.

During the last Parliament, I had the opportunity to visit a francophone radio station in Alberta. I can say that the people there were very passionate about their work and their mission, which is to inform francophone Canadians living in Alberta about local and national news and to be at the heart of their community. We must not forget that important aspect.

As for the minister's comments about another bill being introduced, we will judge that other bill when the time comes. Today we have to study the bill before us. As I was saying, we expected Bill C-10 to be in step with the changes that have occurred in the communications sector in the past few years.

Unfortunately, it is full of grey areas and uncertainty. There are no guidelines. The government is asking the CRTC to do our job. Then it criticizes us for asking questions about what is missing from the bill, when the minister himself says there is nothing in this bill because there will be another one that will have something in it. It is a bit hard to follow.

I completely agree with my colleague. He asked a very good question.

[*English*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Davenport.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to debate Bill C-10 and the measures it contains to support francophone creators and French-language content.

Our government is the first since 1991 to modernize the Broadcasting Act in response to technological change. I want to remind the House why this legislation is so important and crucial for our artists and creators.

TV and radio have been with us all of our lives. I remember TV shows such as *Bobino et Bobinette* and *Passe-partout* and films that have marked our history such as *The Decline of the American Empire* and *Crazy*. Each of us fondly remembers the programs that shaped our lives.

TV and radio are sources of entertainment, discovery, culture, and information. They move us, inspire us, fill us with wonder, and give us a window to the world. Television and radio help forge our identity, especially our francophone identity. They also help us to get to know and to understand one another in all of our diversity.

Historically, under the Canadian broadcasting system, traditional broadcasting services, such as radio, TV, and cable, were required to fund Canadian content, our stories, and our songs. However, online broadcasting services, such as Netflix, Crave, Spotify, and QUB Musique, are not subject to the same types of regulatory requirements as traditional services.

This situation has resulted in a regulatory imbalance and jeopardizes the future of Canadian content funding. Our bill seeks to ensure that traditional and online broadcasting services contribute to the creative sector. To achieve this, we need to change the definition of what constitutes a broadcasting undertaking to include online undertakings, which did not exist in 1991.

Amending this definition in the Broadcasting Act will require online undertakings to contribute financially to Canadian and Quebec cultural production. Of course, these contributions will need to support a wide range of Canadian creators and consumers, as well as francophones across the country.

We know that French Canadians and Quebeckers enjoy their TV productions and musical artists. French-language programming in the francophone market and francophone musical artists are very successful and enjoy good ratings.

Government Orders

For Quebec and all francophone minority communities, French-language TV and radio play a vital role in encouraging children to learn and use French and creating a sense of belonging among communities that are often isolated.

Television and radio play a very important role in forging our identity, and even more so in the case of francophones, who are a minority in North America. The arrival of online broadcasters has disrupted the Canadian broadcasting sector, and the French-language market was not spared.

Online broadcasters pose tremendous challenges to the availability and promotion of French-language content, especially content produced by our minority francophone communities and content produced in Quebec.

Statistics show that 47% of francophones watch mostly English content on Netflix, whereas French-language services capture 92% of the audience in the French-language market on traditional television. This shows that francophones look for content in their language.

We must also point out that the average budget for English-language film and video productions has been increasing for several years unlike the average budget for French-language productions, which has decreased and for which foreign funding remains relatively low.

With respect to music and digital platforms, in 2017, only six French Canadian artists were among the top 1,000 music artists with the most popular streams in Canada. Clearly, we must stop twiddling our thumbs. We must take action.

The creation of content in both official languages is a vital cultural objective, no matter the technological or other advances in the broadcasting sector.

• (1110)

That is why our bill gives the CRTC the tools it needs to ensure that the funding and regulations support Canadian content in both official languages and, more importantly, that they take into account the particular needs of francophones. The survival of French-language content and the protection of our cultural sovereignty depend on it.

For many years, the CRTC has been overseeing the implementation of a strict regulatory framework for traditional services to support and promote French-language content. Thanks to its efforts, in the past 10 years, the volume of French-language television production has been stable, accounting for 25% of the total volume of Canadian television production. The CRTC has also succeeded in promoting French-language music. French-language radio stations must devote at least 65% of their weekly popular music programming to French-language music.

We can be sure that the CRTC will establish a regulatory framework for online broadcasters that is just as strict. It will ensure that online broadcasters fairly and equitably support Canadian content in both official languages and that they take into account the particular needs of francophone creators across Canada, especially in Quebec.

I am pleased that the modernization of the Broadcasting Act will give the CRTC a regulatory framework for expenditures, to ensure that a portion of revenues is reinvested in Canadian productions.

In short, this bill acknowledges the importance of investing in the creation of diversified content that reflects all francophones and all Canadians from coast to coast to coast. It demonstrates our commitment to fostering the creation of stories and songs in both official languages in the digital era.

We are committed to strengthening the Official Languages Act, taking into account the particular reality of francophones in North America. I know that my colleague is preparing to present this shortly. The ultimate goal of this bill is to preserve an enduring broadcasting ecosystem that continues to support Canadian stories and songs. This legislative and regulatory framework will provide Canadian broadcasters, producers and creators with unqualified support.

Since the creation of the first Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting in 1928, the Government of Canada has continually worked to develop policies in step with technological developments. I am proud that our government is continuing that tradition by modernizing the Broadcasting Act for the new digital era. I am convinced that every member in the House is keen to preserve our cultural sovereignty and encourage the all-important cultural sector.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, good morning on a cold snowy Edmonton day.

Does anything in Bill C-10 suggest that CRTC would change its mandate or limit its role as an effect of the bill?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, the bill we are studying today aims to give the CRTC the regulatory powers it needs to better invest in Canadian creators. That is what is in the bill before us today.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said some things that really made my ears perk up.

She said that the bill aims to maintain an ecosystem and that we need to protect our culture.

All that takes money. In the last Parliament, the Bloc Québécois repeatedly reminded members that the web giants pay no taxes here, despite being billionaires. They use Canadian culture and news but do not produce any at all.

Would my colleague not agree that this bill has more holes in it than Swiss cheese?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I thank my opposition colleague for her question.

I would like to remind her that our government is the first in 30 years to have invested so much in culture in Canada, particularly in Quebec.

We doubled the budget of the Canada Council for the Arts. We reinvested in the CBC to protect our public broadcaster.

I would like to remind my colleague that people from the Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo, the ADISQ, and the Association québécoise de la production médiatique, the AQPM, are very pleased that we are giving the CRTC the obligation and power to regulate web giants so that we can reinvest in our culture and creators.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend said something very important. She said that we have to act. The problem is that, in the midst of this public crisis, our cultural sector workers have been fearing job losses in the face of unfair competition from the web giants. They were expecting concrete action. While the Liberals seem to want to fix this disaster, such as they did with Netflix in 2017, using some band-aid solution, time is running out for the industry and its workers.

With Bill C-10, the minister is punting the problem to the CRTC, which means it could take almost a year before we see any real changes, if anything at all. Does the member not feel this is just a little irresponsible?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I would like to remind him that we have an agency, the CRTC, that has been enforcing regulations to protect the creative sector and other local sectors since 1928. It is the best tool we have right now to ensure that, in the future, the web giants will contribute to local productions.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how will the bill ensure that online producers of content produce content in both official languages?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Once again, I think that it is important to give the CRTC the powers it needs to regulate what the web giants are doing so that we can reinvest in our creators and productions.

The most important thing for the future is to increase investment revenue in local production. That is the only way we can be internationally competitive.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our broadcasting rules are pretty clear. Content must be 55% Canadian, and 50% of that must be in French, if memory serves, although that was over 25 years ago.

In addition to collecting tax dollars, would it not also be a good idea to think about increasing those quotas, specifically to protect and promote our artists?

Government Orders

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very important question. I would like to share with her some comments made by the ADISQ and the AQPM:

...it would be hard to include percentages in the legislation and...it would be better to debate the best conditions to impose on broadcasters and online businesses before the CRTC.

We have an institution, the CRTC, so let's trust it. This institution has been defending quotas and the French language for many years now. I think we can trust the CRTC.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute privilege for me to stand in the House today on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport to speak in support of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts. I am truly grateful for the leadership of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the work that he, his parliamentary secretary, his department and his team have done with respect to the bill.

As I have mentioned a number of times in the chamber, my riding of Davenport in Toronto's west end is home to more artists, creators and those in the culture industry than probably most ridings across this country. They include film producers, writers, directors and musicians, and also art galleries and museums. Anything that impacts the arts and culture sector is of great interest to my riding.

The Canadian broadcasting, film, television and interactive media sectors are also a huge part of the Canadian economy. They contribute about \$19.7 billion to Canada's GDP and account for nearly 160,000 jobs. A lot of people do not know this, but the arts, culture and heritage sector is a \$47.8 billion contribution to the Canadian economy. It employs over 650,000 Canadians in this country. It is a huge and very important sector, so this type of legislation is particularly important.

We have been promising to update the Broadcasting Act to level the playing field for a number of years now, so I am really happy that Bill C-10 is now before the House.

We mentioned in our 2019 platform that within our first year we wanted to move forward with legislation that would take appropriate measures to ensure that all content providers, including Internet giants, offer meaningful levels of Canadian content in their catalogues, contribute to the creation of Canadian content in both official languages, promote this content and make it easily accessible on their platforms.

Government Orders

We also know that in January 2020, the broadcasting and telecommunications panel released its report entitled “Canada's Communications Future: Time to Act”. It included a number of recommendations and proposals on how to improve our broadcasting system here in Canada, which we now see encompassed in Bill C-10.

What is being proposed in Bill C-10?

The first is to modernize the Broadcasting Act, which has not been updated since before the digital age. My understanding, as my colleague just said, is that the last major reform to the Broadcasting Act was almost 30 years ago, in 1991.

Canada has a long history of supporting the creation of and access to Canadian film, music, television and digital media programming, while at the same time facilitating the access of Canadians to foreign content. Historically, we have had what we call a closed broadcasting system, which has been oriented around Canadian ownership and control of businesses showing Canadian content. However, today, with the increase in programming being consumed over the Internet, the legislative and regulatory framework for broadcasting needs to be modernized. That is the first thing that Bill C-10 does. It clarifies that online broadcasting is within the scope of the act. It is crazy that it took us so long to do this.

As we know, Canadians have more and more access to music and television through online services like Netflix, Spotify, Crave and CBC Gem. We know these online video services have grown their revenues by approximately 90% per year over the last two years, while traditional broadcasters have seen a steady decline of almost 2% per year over the last five years. The shifting market dominance illustrated by Netflix, which is now present in most Canadian households, including my own, generated over a billion dollars in revenue in Canada in 2019.

We also know that online broadcasting services are not subject to the same rules as traditional broadcasting services like over-the-air television, cable and radio. Under Canadian broadcasting laws, online broadcasters are not required to support Canadian music and storytelling, and other important broadcasting objectives. What is the result? We see the revenues of online broadcasters growing, yet they are not required to contribute to Canadian music and storytelling. At the same time, the revenues of traditional broadcasters are stagnating and declining, which means we have an overall negative impact on funding Canadian content and Canadian creators moving forward. Therefore, support for Canadian content is at risk and this bill is hoping to address that issue.

• (1125)

Furthermore, it would also address a regulatory imbalance that puts traditional Canadian broadcasters at a competitive disadvantage compared with online broadcasters. Bill C-10 would update broadcasting and regulatory policy to ensure a fair and equitable treatment of online and traditional broadcasters, so we do not have one set of rules for Canadian broadcasters and another one for foreign broadcasters.

The amendments proposed by Bill C-10 would empower the CRTC to implement a modernized broadcasting regulatory framework that would ensure both traditional and online broadcasting un-

dertakings contribute in an appropriate manner to the Canadian broadcasting system.

It is important to note that while we know this is an important first step, we also know we are going to have to engage in further reforms in order to more fully modernize the broadcasting system and ensure Canada will continue to support the creation and production of audiovisual content in the digital age.

What else would Bill C-10 do? It would also update broadcasting regulatory policy so the CRTC would be enabled to showcase more diverse creative voices in the broadcasting sector, most notably with respect to indigenous peoples, racialized communities and persons with disabilities.

This is a huge ask from those artists and creators in my riding of Davenport, where 40% of them were born outside of the country. For them, it is really important to hear the creative voices from our diverse ethnocultural backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, abilities and disabilities, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions and ages. It is a huge ask from my community, so I want to thank them for their continued advocacy. I am delighted this would be enabled by Bill C-10.

The bill would also amend the act to take greater account of indigenous cultures and languages. To me, this is extraordinarily important because it is part of our ongoing effort to build a new nation-to-nation relationship with Canada's aboriginal people. A way for us to better understand and learn about each other is through our stories.

I am also pleased to say that an updated Broadcasting Act, one that treats online and traditional broadcasters equally, would increase the funding available to Canadian artists and creators. Indeed, it is estimated these changes would result in an increase in contributions to Canadian music and stories of as much as \$830 million per year once the new system is put into place.

We should note that how artists and creators receive income has changed. A world that has become increasingly digital has exacerbated the overall issue of how Canadian artists earn their income. Providing some changes to the Broadcasting Act to start addressing this issue is really important for us to do.

I also want to note that we are going through an unprecedented pandemic right now, and arts and culture are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. These types of legislation would help make some of the structural changes and help us create a more healthy and economically viable sector moving forward.

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I should mention that what is not included in Bill C-10 is user-generated content, so video games and news media would not be affected by our proposed changes. It is important to note that.

I know my time is coming to an end, so I am going to conclude by saying I am absolutely delighted by the efforts of our hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage to modernize the Broadcasting Act and level the playing field so all our creators have more funding for Canadian stories. I very much favour this bill. It provides us with an opportunity to have a more inclusive broadcasting sector for all Canadians, whether francophone, anglophone or from racialized communities: Canadians of all diversities and statuses.

The bill would ensure the circumstances and aspirations of all Canadians are reflected in the Broadcasting Act. It would result in a more equitable broadcasting system, requiring online broadcasters to contribute their fair share. These amendments would absolutely modernize the Broadcasting Act for the digital age for many years to come.

I would like to end by saying I want to echo the Minister of Canadian Heritage's words yesterday, urging all of my hon. colleagues to support this bill. The sooner we get this bill passed, the sooner we will be able to put a fairer system in place.

• (1130)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I find interesting about the Liberals is that whenever they are doing something it usually involves new taxation, and this bill is no exception to that. It looks like we are headed for new taxation here.

What I am a little frustrated with is that there is no clarity in this bill around whether our online content creators and the online social media platforms would be deemed as publishers or as just platforms. That is an ongoing debate happening around the world. I thought the government was headed in the direction of clarifying that, so I am disappointed.

I am just wondering if the hon. member opposite thinks we should be classifying the social media platforms as content curators or platforms.

• (1135)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, this bill would do nothing to increase anyone's taxes.

The objective of the bill is truly just to modernize the Broadcasting Act in order to ensure that online broadcasting is within the scope of the act. It also provides some updates around the broadcasting and regulatory policy so that it better reflects the enormous, wonderful diversity we have in this country. It also has a renewed approach to regulations so that we have fair and equitable treatment between Canadian broadcasters, who are sort of traditional broadcasters, and those who are online broadcasters. It would modernize the enforcement powers of the CRTC and provide some additional oversight and information-sharing provisions. However, there is absolutely nothing in here that says we would increase taxes in any way.

[*Translation*]

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

I am quite worried every time I hear that we need to trust the CRTC. There is no requirement in the bill to broadcast or fund French-language content. That is left up to the CRTC.

In another life, I was a spokesperson for Mouvement Montréal français, and we made a complaint to the CRTC because some privately owned radio stations in Quebec were getting around their French-language music quotas, which I believe were set at 65% at the time. During peak listening hours, they would skip the end of French songs and segue into up to 10 consecutive English songs.

This meant that the 15 minutes of English music counted for one song under the quotas. It also meant that those stations were respecting the quotas, but there were 15 minutes of English music during peak listening hours instead of having French music. That is a problem. We also know that they would get around CRTC regulations by playing French music at night, when no one was listening.

Therefore, we cannot trust the CRTC. If we are not able to give it clear broadcasting guidelines, the CRTC will not do it out of its own accord. Private radio stations will do everything they can to get around the rules.

It seems, then, that the government should impose certain limits on the CRTC in its bill. Why has it not done so?

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, for those who do not know, the CRTC is the regulatory agency that is responsible for the broadcasting sector. It governs the regulatory framework that supports creators and producers of Canadian content in Canada.

I very much appreciate the hon. member's question. I know that there are those in my community of Davenport who tried to bring issues before the CRTC, and they found it very difficult to actually bring their issues forward. They found that there were some regulations that need more clarity, as the hon. member mentioned, and I agree with him. I think that we also have to do a much better job of encouraging the CRTC to make sure that where there is not clarity around regulations that they be made clear, and when there are some legitimate concerns, it is made much easier for Canadians to bring them forward to the CRTC.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Broadcasting Act of 1991 was brought in to safeguard the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada, but we saw, from 2008 to 2018, 189 community newspapers go under and 36 daily newspapers close down. Now, with the pandemic, many of them are struggling.

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We learned from the Yale report that Google and Facebook receive nearly 75% of the advertising revenue in Canada. In comparison, the websites of conventional television stations and local newspapers account for only 8.5%. We know that the government has been meeting a lot of secret lobbyists, and we know that it wants to fix its disastrous Netflix deal of 2017 with band-aids with the bill, but time is running out for this industry and for its workers.

Is it not irresponsible that, in Bill C-10, the minister is moving this problem by punting it down the road to the CRTC? It could take almost a year before we see any change.

I am hoping the member can acknowledge the seriousness of this issue, given the pandemic and the plight of local newspapers, especially in my riding, which are struggling right now. They are reaching out and calling on Parliament to take action on the unfair, plain advantage of Netflix and these huge web giants.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I will tell the House that those in my riding have almost exactly the same concerns as those that the hon. member has mentioned. I am just going to clarify.

We hope the changes we are proposing to the Broadcasting Act will help to unleash as much as \$830 million that could help Canadian content creators, both online and from traditional sources, in Canada. I will acknowledge with my colleague that we absolutely have to provide a level playing field and ensure there is a fair contribution made by platforms like Netflix and Yahoo, that all the money that comes from them goes directly into local media and in to any way to support independent information sharing across the country, and also that it goes directly back to supporting our Canadian creators and artists across the country. I would say it is absolutely vital for us to do so.

I will also say that I am extraordinarily concerned by the loss of our local media. Mine might be the only riding in the whole country that actually has a local newspaper, the West End Phoenix, that has been created in the last five years. It has been a very successful local publication, but it is one of too few. We need to find solutions, urgently and immediately, to support local journalism across the country.

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to speak to Bill C-10, the broadcasting bill introduced by the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The Broadcasting Act clearly needs modernizing. The last time it was dusted off and updated was over 28 years ago. At the time, the Internet did not exist. Social media did not exist. There was no such thing as web giants, and we were not permanently attached to our tablets and constantly using apps. The context has most certainly changed. If there is one thing all members of the House can agree on, it is that urgent action is needed. Implementing these measures is important.

Back in 2015, the government promised it would modernize the act. Expectations were high. The government conducted extensive consultations. It made lots of promises. It envisioned a very good scenario in which everyone would have to pay and contribute.

Things were going well in that regard. Now, three ministers and over five years later, a bill has been introduced.

Earlier I heard a member from Quebec use a cheese analogy, saying that the bill reminded her of Swiss cheese, because it has so many holes in it. We are looking for the cheese, but all we see are the holes. This metaphor is also apt because we are talking about cheese and the Liberals have delivered a mouse. This is actually a very serious subject, since we are talking about an incredible industry. It is part of our Canadian identity, which includes language, culture and Canadian content.

Unfortunately, the bill does not really do much. Basically, it off-loads all responsibility onto the CRTC, which ultimately will have to take action. There are many things this bill does not do.

We are told the bill makes changes to ensure that online broadcasting falls within the scope of the act. What does that mean? It means that the legislation governing the CRTC will apply to online broadcasters. We know that. My Liberal colleague mentioned how the CRTC can sometimes be a rather cumbersome administrative straitjacket. Things are not easy for our traditional media in Canada.

The minister is telling us that he is going to off-load the responsibility to the CRTC and that a year from now, as another colleague mentioned, slightly stricter rules will be applied to online broadcasting. That is not what the Yale report called for, and it is certainly a far cry from what the industry is asking for.

Web giants like Google and Facebook are not affected by this bill, and yet we know that they are generating major revenues from our society and competing with our Canadian companies.

Bill C-10 also fails to explain how digital platforms and conventional players can compete under these conditions. In a way, the playing field is not level for everyone. The bill also fails to say how exclusive content will be shared on digital platforms. There are no details about guidelines for the production of Canadian content and the famous contribution to the Canada Media Fund. Some companies, therefore, have to make a contribution based on established parameters. Finally, we can see that the parameters here are very flexible. There does not seem to be any apparent fairness in the bill.

As we have seen this week, culture is also a factor. Canadian culture comprises the English language, the French language and Quebec culture. This bill seems to ignore that reality, and as some of my colleagues in the Bloc have pointed out, what's in it for Quebec culture? That is not clear at all.

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• (1145)

With respect to copyright, Quebec artists have complained about seeing their works circulated on digital platforms without fair compensation for their own investment. This bill does nothing to address that issue, however.

Ultimately, the bill would essentially subject online broadcasters to the CRTC. The government is off-loading this issue onto the CRTC and waiting to see what happens.

I do appreciate that the bill mentions indigenous culture, persons with disabilities and Canadian diversity. However, it would also be important to mention Quebec and French-Canadian culture, as well as the concept of our country's linguistic and cultural duality.

We need a level playing field here, and we think that policies should account for changing markets. All this bill does, however, is put off to tomorrow what should have been done a long time ago. We would also have liked the minister to find a way to reinject tens of millions of dollars, or even hundreds of millions of dollars, in our system.

For those who are watching at home, section 19 of the Income Tax Act applies to the Canada Revenue Agency and would allow for the full deduction of any money spent on advertising with foreign digital media distributors. That means that, in its attempts to restore balance, the Canadian government is contributing to the imbalance.

The agency has not changed its interpretation of the act since 1996, an interpretation that is based on jurisdictions established prior to that time and that date back even as far as 1935. There was a small loophole, because computers did not exist at that time. The definitions of newspaper and broadcasting do not reflect what is known as the technological neutrality of the Broadcasting Act, which was modernized in 1991, nor do they reflect the tremendous revolution that has occurred since 1996. This small loophole has become a giant vortex.

As a result, foreign companies like Facebook and Google, which represent up to 80% of Canada's online advertising revenues, are competing with our advertisers and our traditional broadcasting and print media while receiving a bit of a leg-up from the government. This situation has been criticized. We cannot encourage foreign companies to compete with our Canadian companies, but the government is complicit in that.

My colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable said that the government's problem is that it is always looking for superficial solutions instead of trying to fix systemic problems. The government needs to fix this problem with Canada's tax system and create a level playing field for Canadian and foreign players by restoring market conditions that do not give web giants an edge.

The Standing Senate Committee on Transport and Communications urged the government to take a close look at the loophole in section 19 of the Income Tax Act, which is contributing to the media's decline. The committee also asked the government to look at ways to make things better for all Canadian companies. The committee's report was tabled a year and a half ago and has just been gathering dust since then.

We heard that message over and over from witnesses representing various segments of Canada's media industry. They told the committee that eliminating the tax deduction for ads on foreign websites could give Canada's industry a much-needed boost.

Friends of Canadian Broadcasting is also strongly advocating for the elimination of this tax deduction. This organization produced a very detailed document on the situation. It argues that closing the loophole would enable the Canadian government to collect more taxes, because companies would not stop advertising in foreign media, but they would have an incentive to choose Canadian media. Companies would not be encouraged to do business with foreign companies. Instead, there would be neutral conditions that would allow them to choose.

The Public Policy Forum shares this view. It says that simply fixing section 19 could produce a revenue stream of \$300 million to \$400 million a year for the media industry.

• (1150)

The government has presented band-aid solutions even though real solutions do exist. They do not need to look for them, they simply have to stop subsidizing web giants.

The time has come to conduct an in-depth review of section 19 of the Income Tax Act. That is the responsibility of the Minister of Heritage because it goes to the crux of the matter, namely the money that the cultural sector, in this case the media and print media, is losing to web giants.

Companies like Google and Facebook are free to operate in a business-friendly environment like ours, but they are not contributing anything. In this bill, there is a blatant inequality between traditional media and web giants, which, I will repeat, are not covered. That is one of the bill's flaws.

Another flaw is that the bill does not address the issue of disclosure. The bill refers the matter to the CRTC, but there must be some facility for disclosure. How much revenue do the web giants earn? What is the breakdown of their revenue and expenses? We need to know this so that we can make sure they are treated the same as other Canadian businesses. That is something that is also not in the bill.

One journalist said that the web giants burst out laughing when they saw the minister's bill. The Liberal government introduced a highly anticipated bill the day after the U.S. election. I think all members would agree that that is a good time to introduce a bill under the radar.

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The web giants burst out laughing because this bill has some huge flaws, some gaping holes. The idea is good: The government wants to regulate the web giants, which are sucking the life out of our media. In reality, however, the bill gives them free rein. That is a problem because, again, web giants like Google and Facebook are in no way required to pay royalties to news media for the content they share.

People use social media to access information, and this information often comes from Canadian media. When people get it off Facebook, Canadian media outlets come away empty-handed. They do not earn anything. The bill does not address this issue that is very important for our media, especially in a pandemic.

The same goes for taxing ad revenue generated by these platforms in Canada. They do not even collect taxes per se, whereas Canadian businesses do. This too is unfair, yet the bill does not address it. Billions of dollars in revenue are at stake for the government, and Canadian businesses are being unfairly treated.

All in all, I would say that the bill unfortunately misses the mark. The most worrisome aspect is that even as the government introduced the bill, we learned that Facebook was already trying to hire the CRTC officials who draft legislation. I can see why the web giants are taking notice, because 70% to 80% of ad revenue in Canada comes from digital and media platforms.

Why is this cozy relationship between the CRTC and Facebook being permitted, when we know that the CRTC will be responsible for enforcing the act? Is this not like letting the fox into the henhouse? That is what troubles me.

Friends of Canadian Broadcasting and others have criticized this situation. As I mentioned, they pointed out that the Broadcasting Act was modernized in 1991 but that there is still some flexibility. The bill seeks to include digital media in the act, but the CRTC already has the regulatory capacity to do that. All the minister has to do is tell the CRTC to apply the provisions of the 1991 legislation rather than undertaking a process that will take another year.

We know that these web giants are continuing to rake in huge profits with each passing week and month, while our Canadian media are in a very precarious situation. The Conservatives are not the ones saying that. It is the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting that are saying that the bill does not definitively eliminate all of the ambiguity surrounding digital distribution.

• (1155)

Ultimately, the bill does not clarify this important issue, which creates a double standard. As I said earlier, the government is taking an approach that addresses issues in a piecemeal fashion.

As a result, new digital media will benefit from a flexible approach while traditional media will be caught in a regulatory straitjacket. The government is not trying to restore balance by loosening the regulatory straitjacket on traditional media but is instead trying to impose it on new players.

The Yale report makes some interesting points. One thing in the report that we agree with is that there is an urgent need to act. Unfortunately, the government is not taking action. It is off-loading those powers to the CRTC, a year in the future, when it could have

been quite possible to exercise those powers through regulatory means.

At the same time, they say that the ecosystem needs to be opened up so that the conventional players have room to breathe and are able to compete with the new ones. In this regard, the minister does not seem to be willing to create this breathing room for our Canadian undertakings, which are being smothered under a straitjacket, while there are no rules for the new players. Now they are saying that they are going to start trying to impose things on them. That said, this only applies to digital broadcasters. I would point out that this does not apply to the web giants. That is a major flaw in this bill.

Our friends at the CBC are critical of the fact that the bill is vague about Canadian content. This is fundamental. We see the web giants investing in the production of Canadian content, but we do not know how to define that. It is not at all clear.

The Yale report mentioned the review of CBC/Radio-Canada's mandate. That is another major flaw in the bill. The report made recommendations in that regard, but again, there is nothing on that.

That is what we are left with in theory. It is not much.

What is even more troubling, given the last few days and weeks, is the minister looking to have an open media landscape where both Canadian and foreign media would be allowed to freely disseminate information.

This brings us to a statement by the minister, who appeared this week on Radio-Canada. He spoke about freedom of speech, and we found his statement somewhat disturbing and quite surprising. He said that the right to express oneself ends where another's pain begins.

A Quebec commentator, journalist and intellectual asked whether the minister wanted to make information channels subject to the tyranny of sensitivity. For example, if you do not like someone saying something about a community or a religion, can you say that this person needs to be silenced?

Freedom of expression is a fundamental part of our democracy. It is the reason we can express ourselves. As my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent said, freedom of expression does not apply only when we like what we are hearing. There are some things we do not like hearing. That is exactly what freedom of expression is, and we already have laws governing it. Hate speech and statements that incite hatred or violence are not allowed.

If the minister has a hidden agenda, that would be good to know. This is not the first time he has said something fishy. At one point, he wanted to make news media companies get licences, so it is not clear.

In conclusion, this is a major issue for Canada. This week, we saw just how problematic the status of French in Montreal is. Our culture itself is at stake. The question we are asking ourselves is whether there truly is a will to preserve Quebec's cultural ecosystem and recognize it. Just recognizing it would be good, but there is nothing in the bill to suggest that is the case.

Unfortunately, what we saw this week was the president of the Liberal Party saying that legislation to protect the very foundation of Quebec's ecosystem, its language, is oppressive.

Does the government have reservations, some reluctance preventing it from protecting the foundation of Quebec's cultural ecosystem? The bill is silent on that subject.

• (1200)

Other colleagues have stressed this, including our Bloc Québécois colleagues—

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

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech, especially the part about the tyranny of sensitivity. That is a new concept.

My colleague talked about the gaping hole in the bill with regard to taxing the web giants, GAFAM. I am surprised, because I always thought that Conservatives supported the principle of the less taxes, the better.

Do my colleague and his party agree with taxing web giants?

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

I cannot take credit for the expression “tyranny of sensitivity”. It was coined by the intellectual Mathieu Bock-Côté, to give credit where credit is due. It means that we have to be able to express ourselves even if we occasionally offend someone. That is freedom of expression.

Getting back to my colleague's question, one of the major Conservative principles in supporting our Canadian businesses is fairness. There is currently a tax fairness problem, since the web giants are not contributing to the Canadian ecosystem, while Canadian businesses are in a fiscal straitjacket as well as being shackled by the CRTC.

We believe it is important to have the same conditions for all players. The bill does not create these conditions. It is more hole than cheese.

[*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, throughout my history in the House, I have never seen the Conservatives as allies for protecting our arts community. I see Bill C-10 as very supportive of ensuring Canadian content, among many other things.

The member critiqued the bill, and it is fair for the official opposition to provide criticism. However, I am curious if the member

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supports the bill going to committee. There he could again critique the bill, and possibly show some initiative on behalf of the Conservative Party by not only talking about it, but supporting it and possibly bringing forward some amendments.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague in return.

[*Translation*]

If we can use regulatory means, then why have a bill?

[*English*]

I thank the member for recognizing the immense contribution of the Conservatives to our culture in the country. The member might be interested to know that the first bill to promote culture in Canada was introduced by former prime minister Bennett. I was not born then and the member was not either.

I recommend that my colleague look at what the Harper government did during the economic crisis. What the cultural sector is asking for now is a package, and at that time, a package was provided to support the cultural sector in a very difficult period. All experts recognize that this was a very well done state-of-the-art program. It supported our cultural sector when it needed it the most during the economic crisis. That is exactly what is needed now as we go through this pandemic.

• (1205)

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was interested in my colleague's comment that the Conservatives believe in equity and the importance of making sure there is an even playing field. I wonder if he could elaborate a little on that. Because of the cozy nature of the government's relationship with Facebook, for example, does the member feel this is again about the Liberals picking winners and losers?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, as I just mentioned, it is a basic Conservative principle that we have fairness among businesses. What we have now, and the Yale report has recognized it, is unfairness and an emergency to act. Unfortunately, the Liberal bill in front of us does not address this critical issue. It would be so simple for the government to come up with measures to establish a level playing field for all players, but unfortunately it is not. The Liberals have been talking about it for a while, and it is a lot of talk but no action.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate everything my hon. colleague contributes to this place. He was one of the first MPs I met when I got here. He is one of my caucus colleagues, and I appreciate him and all he does.

He spoke at length about the uneven playing field. In this country, concerning media, we have a national broadcaster that seems to compete in every field. It is pushing out the little guys and being subsidized by the government.

What are the member's thoughts on that?

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Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his interest in this very important issue, which is about the role of the CBC in our country and the way the CBC can coexist with the private sector, especially at a time when the private sector has been hard hit. How can we ensure that the CBC is focused on its mandate, instead of competing with the private sector, and that we get the funds that could be very useful?

Again, there is a big void in the bill. There is nothing in it about the role played by the CBC or its mandate, nor about the fact that at times it can interfere with the private sector when the private sector has been hard hit.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about equality. I would like to talk about equality between the traditional media, which are considered important, and media like Facebook. During the election campaign, the two major parties spent tens of thousands of dollars on Facebook ads.

Would my colleague agree that they could choose to give money to our traditional media instead, to help them survive?

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question. She is quite right.

During the pandemic, I even approached the minister about investing in our regional weeklies and community radio stations. This was done on a very small scale. Many Quebec organizations are reaching people across the country. Ricardo's website and Véro's website come to mind. Unfortunately, our own government, the Liberal government, is investing more in the web giants' digital platforms than in our own media. As the saying goes, charity begins at home.

I fully agree with my colleague that the Canadian government has a duty to invest first and foremost in Canadian media. That should be the priority.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I am a recovering broadcaster, like many of my colleagues in the room, it was very troubling to hear yesterday about another wave of layoffs, this time hitting Rogers Communications. Several very good friends of mine at the outlet in Vancouver lost their jobs. This trend has been going on for some time.

Seeing as my hon. colleague brought up the CBC, I want to know if he is onside with his leader's contention that CBC News should be defunded or basically disbanded?

• (1210)

Hon. Steven Blaney: Madam Speaker, I share the member's grief in seeing some of his friends lose their jobs. In my riding, there is some rationalization among local media. There used to be two newspapers in Lévis and now there is only one. The media sector has been impacted hard.

As I mentioned in my speech, the way to incentivize Canadian companies to invest in Canadian newspapers is by correcting section 19. However, this is not in the bill.

It is certainly important to review the mandate of the CBC. It was recommended in the Yale report. However, again, there is a void in the bill in this regard; there is nothing about it. We are willing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to share my time with the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

I have stated the obvious on a few occasions in the past, and I would like to make it crystal clear today: One nation does not entrust its soul, identity, art, culture, history, dance, music, theatre, cinema and, least of all, language to another nation.

We learned that the Liberals and their NDP butlers will vote against the Bloc Québécois's bill on French-language proficiency. This is proof that one should not entrust one's language to another nation. This is not posturing. It is based on something we can measure and assess over time. Bill C-10 contains two clear examples of the danger of entrusting one's soul, culture, language and art to another nation.

I will start with foreign ownership. This is so blatant that nobody could get me to believe that the government does not know what it is doing. If it does not, it should not be here. Right now, there are rules saying that a broadcasting or telecommunications undertaking must be under Canadian control. This gives some protection to the arts and various forms of expression—Canadian, in this case—from the hegemony of power that dominates global culture today. It makes no sense to give up this protection and replace it with a cheque, as if our soul were for sale to the highest bidder. In our case, that is our next-door neighbour.

The idea that one's soul, culture, arts, music, and songs should not be left in the hands of another nation applies to Canada as well. Margaret Atwood is not Californian, and Robert J. Sawyer is not Texan. This surrender, this laying down of arms before American culture is extremely dangerous.

Here is an extreme example: An American web multinational required to invest 30% in Canadian production can mandate an undertaking it bought in Canada to produce a TV series in English only. What is in it for us? This is a serious setback.

The other example, of course, is the percentage of French. In previous programs, particularly the music ones that I am familiar with—I even sat on the Canadian Music Council, which some will find amusing—there were rules requiring a certain percentage of French. Often, in the agreement, it was 40% French. Why was that? Because first of all, it takes a critical mass to provide a basis for professionalizing these sectors. This was true in the music sector for Musicaction, FACTOR or even Fonds RadioStar, among others.

That was before a formal review of the rules, as is now proposed. Today, this obligation must be enshrined into law. This assurance that French-language production has access to basic tools and a minimum of resources must be maintained. It now needs to be formalized.

Let us not kid ourselves. If this obligation is not enshrined into law, then what the CRTC will understand is that, both for Canadian ownership and for maintaining the percentage of French content, Parliament's intention is not to protect, but rather to not protect. Indeed, there is no such thing as a neutral position, and the law is supposed to set out Parliament's intent.

• (1215)

The government said that it did not want to set a percentage for French-language content, for fear that the minimum percentage would become a maximum. I felt a pang, and realized it was true. Imagine Netflix, Disney+, Spotify and Canada deciding one day that they want to invest 45% in French content but they would not dare do so because the minimum was set at 35%. It is as though they do not understand the meaning of the word “minimum”. People are smarter than they think.

This does not have a neutral effect. The call for capital that comes with that 30%, on top of what companies are already able to do under this kind of legislation, is channelled to English-language productions. We have all seen those series produced by Netflix for Netflix, some of which are filmed in the native language and then dubbed in English, but the English subtitles do not match the English words being said. People generally stop watching halfway through an episode because it is completely unwatchable. The lips do not match the words being spoken, and those do not even match the subtitles. It may be because I am not too bright, but I do not find that enjoyable. Others decide to do the series in English right off the bat. Netflix is happy, people are watching at home and everyone is happy.

This does not have a neutral effect. We emphatically stand up for these people. These are actors, singers, authors, performers of all kinds who have the desire, because that is in their soul, to express themselves in French, to bring out what they have inside that needs to come out, because that is what being an artist is all about. They want to express themselves and to do it in French. Some may dabble in other languages from time to time, but that is where their soul is and that is what they want to do.

It is not just the current money or the new money that will be channelled. There is a call for capital to do business and take over the world. Producers are doing business. I used to be a producer and I was not making songs. I was selling the product. Producers want to go and work where there is the biggest market in English, with all the money that is in those web multinationals. This does not have a neutral effect. I tell francophone artists that they must not let themselves be taken for a ride. The resources that are now invested in French-language production will drop. It will not be the same. It will certainly not go up. It will drop, because, without any form of protection, the call for capital will go to English.

I think it is fair to say that the bill in its current form does not make anything better. In fact, it could even make things worse. Everyone is gushing over the French language at this point, but their

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actions will reveal how they truly feel; before then, however, someone has to stand up and say that this will not do.

If this is corrected and if Canadian ownership and the percentage of French is included in the act, then the modest expertise of the Bloc Québécois, which has occasionally touched on this a bit, will be put to good use.

Otherwise, I wish to inform the House that the Bloc Québécois will take as much time as it takes, but it will never give up its soul, which is first and foremost, like Quebec's, French.

• (1220)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to say a few words about the importance of Quebec culture.

Does he believe it is being protected by the bill? Does the bill promote it? I did not see anything in the bill to suggest that to be true.

Does my colleague believe that the bill as currently worded will improve or deteriorate the situation?

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

Let me give an example that comes to mind because the holiday season is approaching. There is an old tradition of making a cake and baking a coin into it. The person who gets the coin wins something. I am not sure what the prize is, but the person wins something. The entire cake is good, but it is the coin that counts.

The coin in this legislation is Canadian ownership without any obligation to French. This legislation essentially tells producers that they can do whatever they want. They can buy Canadian companies and turn them into content producers for Netflix. They can even pay a little less, which is music to their ears. No Canadian ownership and no protection of French, that is the coin.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to know what the leader of the Bloc Québécois thinks of the concerns we raised about the CRTC's capacity to do what the government is asking it to do.

I would like to know if he shares concerns about the close relationship between the Liberals and the web giants, media giants who are neither Quebecers nor Canadians and about the repercussions of this close relationship on the ability to protect the work of Quebec and Canadian artists.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, on the topic of the close relationship between Internet giants and the government, there are days where I expect to see Facebook lobbyists in the seats of the members opposite.

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They do have a close relationship. For a while, when he was dealing with these issues, it was as if there were a line at the Prime Minister's door. They are a bit more discreet nowadays, but at one point, a few years ago, it was common knowledge. That led to the Netflix debacle, which we should actually be bringing up more often as an example, not that the people at Netflix are not fine people. They do business. We tell them to come do business with us, that we will give them ideal terms and that they are required to spend x amount of money in Canada. Quebec really missed out, because of the language issue and because they essentially wanted American content, preferably with lasers.

They are way too close. There needs to be a buffer. This lobby must be regulated, and this is true in many areas. We could even talk about judges, but I digress.

The other fundamental issue is the protection of arts and culture, which is a passion of mine because I am familiar with that community. That responsibility falls to the CRTC.

I think the CRTC acts in good faith but that it adopts the legislator's intention. Right now, the legislator, which is never neutral, is saying to forget about the protection of Canadian ownership and forget about the percentage of French content. That is extremely serious and I invite associations of artists and artisans in the industry to remain open. We began talking to them because, together, we may be able to correct this legislation.

I am not talking about stalling for time, getting things done quickly or trying to get a cheque but about correcting this legislation so that it really serves the soul of Quebecers.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed the speech given by my colleague, the leader of the Bloc Québécois and the member for Beloeil—Chambly.

In the context of Bill C-10, where we clearly see that that the Liberals neglected or even ignored or snubbed francophone culture and the importance of protecting it, I would like to know whether we can draw a parallel with what we saw this week, including the fact that the member for Saint-Laurent said that French is not in jeopardy and the fact that the government announced that it is going to vote against our bill to make knowledge of French mandatory for citizenship.

I would like to know whether parallels can be drawn between all of these things the government has done.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly has time for a very short answer.

• (1225)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Madam Speaker, French is the best language in the world for expressing love, and it is a language that is easy to love. Loving French means loving its expressions and all its forms. If not for the allure of my French, my wife would never have married me.

When we are like that, we are sincere in—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am going to stop the hon. member there, but he will have the opportunity to continue.

The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois, who is the member for Beloeil—Chambly and a friend.

I am at a bit of a loss. I am a little intimidated by my colleague's eloquence. It is not easy to speak after such a political legend.

I will speak about my personal experience. Arts and culture is a vast field. It includes all forms of creations and inspirations. We could talk about painters, dancers, film, screenwriters, authors. I am not going to be invited to testify at any of the committees because I am an MP, so I will share my personal experience with the House.

I am an artist by vocation. I also work in the hospitality industry at my parents' hotel. I was born to it, as the saying goes. When I was young, my influencers, to borrow the popular term, were the visitors who came to our little hotel at the end of the island, and who enjoyed seeing one another in this intimate setting and would arrange to meet at our place. Sixty years later, nothing has changed. I grew up in a world where Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault would have a chat and later Gilles Pelletier and Françoise Graton would show up with their big dog. These people would sit around the fireplace and talk with my father and mother. I was a child at the time, so I became accustomed at very young age to these profound discussions with these famous Quebecers, who left a mark on Quebec's history through their art.

People may be familiar with Pierre Perrault's films, such as *La Trilogie de l'Île-aux-Coudres* and *Pour la suite du monde*, which earned accolades throughout the francophone world. That experience sparked my desire to write songs. That is my art form. I inherited my mother's big, warm voice and my father's love of words, which means I am comfortable expressing myself in French and in poetry.

After participating in the Festival international de la chanson de Granby, a festival that has launched quite a few Quebec artists and where I got to the semi-finals, I wanted to write my own songs. I had signed up as a singer who covered other people's songs, and all of a sudden, I wanted to write my own songs and share my own messages. I realized that I could make my mark on Quebec's cultural landscape and join the ranks of those who have stopped time for the length of a song, to create something that did not exist before.

I immediately saw the effect this had on people. It was a joyful, beneficial, stimulating effect. Depending on the message we send as creators, when we sit down and put our message to paper, yes, we do influence society. We influence the people we work with, the people we publish with, the people we rub shoulders with. All of a sudden, when a creator hears their song on stage, sees their film in theatres or sees their painting hanging in a gallery, the message gets through, the message is delivered.

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We want to deliver our messages in our mother tongue, for that is the language we grew up with, the language we were socialized in, the language that taught us how to say what we want to say to others, if only to pack up and take our songs on the road. Although I am not very famous, I have been lucky enough to travel to Switzerland, France and even the United States to sing in my own language.

Even though people in the U.S. did not always understand what I was singing, they appreciated the energy and passion I put into delivering my message. People bought my CDs, and some told me that they had gotten a dictionary so they could understand French and try to translate my lyrics. These people saw how passionate I was about my message.

That kind of passion really comes out in its mother tongue. That is why I rise today to speak to Bill C-10 and say that we must not stray too far when we make legislation. We need to stick to the basics.

• (1230)

The basics in this case means the content created by artists, artisans, journalists, singers, writers, film producers and many others.

To put this in terms I am familiar with as an islander, the high tide of the online world has surged into our community. This is a good thing in some respects. Not everything is black and white. However, we need to build levees to protect ourselves against the rising tide, or else it will quickly flood the land we have spent years tending to, planting beautiful flowers and all kinds of things. This is nothing new to the people of Isle-aux-Coudres. This is a common occurrence with the arrival of the autumn tides. They do not ask for permission.

If there is no levee to contain the flood tide of the online world, we will lose the essence of who we are, our cultural territory. That is what concerns me about the bill that was introduced by our colleague opposite, the Minister of Canadian Heritage. I get the impression that the government is straying from the basics and drifting off course, to use another maritime term. It is not attached to the very essence of the subject it is dealing with.

That is what I want to bring to the House, an attachment to the subject we are dealing with, namely our entertainment and our culture, which basically describes who we are. Our culture describes our dances, our stories, our songs, our dreams, our ambitions and our values, and it influences who we will be in the future. In order for that to happen, we need to support our creators and find ways to help them keep creating.

The situation was desperate before, but it has become downright alarming since COVID-19. We now see many top-notch artists taking other paths. They are investing their energy in something other than what they did best. Right now, it is very dangerous to rush things and to set aside what is most important because of the urgent nature of the situation.

I urge my colleagues to think about that. Without our content creators, there will be nothing left of our culture. At this moment in time, protecting the French language and the market share held by cultural content producers and companies is essential, as is making

sure the House understands the importance of staying on course. The Bloc Québécois will do its utmost to make sure of that. That is what we are here for.

I would also remind the House that Quebec's National Assembly unanimously adopted a recommendation that the government include a percentage in the act so as to protect the francophone character of our culture.

I thank all my colleagues for listening to me. I hope my remarks will put everyone here back on course.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's heartfelt speech. Her strong attachment to her culture and her language came through loud and clear. She herself is a very talented artist.

In her speech, she talked about protecting content creators. This morning, I talked about protecting copyright. I would like her to explain to me what that means to artists financially, for, as they say, money makes the world go round.

Is there some way that this bill could address that, because it is extremely important to the survival of Quebec culture?

• (1235)

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. It is true that we have had some chats in the lobbies and we have had an opportunity to convey the affection we both share for culture.

Indeed, this bill amends the Broadcasting Act and does not deal with copyright. The government and the heritage minister have informed us that there will be another bill on copyright and neighbouring rights, and we eagerly await that legislation.

At the time, before more than 50% of our rights and royalties were gobbled up by the tide of the web, it was easier to control and measure what we earned from our creative endeavours. If there was a problem, someone like Luc Plamondon would get up at the ADISQ gala and make a statement, and things would suddenly begin to move. Corrective measures could be taken if necessary, because we had tools to take tangible measurements.

However, we have given up a lot of ground since then. I am really looking forward to what the government has to say on this topic, and I hope it will come very soon.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend for her passionate speech. It was very interesting.

We, in the NDP, feel it is very important that we protect the French language and culture. I am hoping that we can have an open dialogue when we go to committee to improve and enhance this bill.

I am also wondering if the member will work with us to make that happen, not only to protect the French language, but also the cultures of indigenous and racialized communities, from the overwhelming dumping of American culture on our screens. Are Bloc members willing to do that?

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[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We are naturally open to all forms of collaboration and discussion. Our disagreement with what is being proposed does not mean that we cannot discuss and improve it. We will work with our colleagues from different parties to that end.

We must naturally protect other languages besides French. I had the opportunity to share the stage with my friend Florent Vollant, who sings in his mother tongue. I enjoy that a lot. I even have a song about this language that I love so much, and I tell myself every day that I will learn it, except that I do not have the time to do so.

We will certainly look at this issue and work with our colleagues on both sides of the House to improve this bill so that it becomes a useful tool for us. We have been waiting 30 years, which is a long time. Therefore, we are going to take the time to work on it and polish it with much conviction and passion.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech today.

I remind her that an order in council requires licence holders to be controlled by Canadian interests, and this order will not be affected by the bill. My question for her is the following. Would my colleague prefer that online companies not be subject to the provisions of section 3 of the act?

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, these issues will be handled in committee, and I very much look forward to debating them with my colleagues opposite.

There are a lot of factors we will have to study in this bill before making a decision. The topic of licences is a complicated one. We will probably have to very thoroughly study this aspect, but we do not have the time for that today.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be able to join the debate today on Bill C-10, the government's bill that purports to modernize Canada's Broadcasting Act. It raises many issues.

I have certainly enjoyed listening to the debate and seeing the passion that colleagues from all parties on all sides of the House have for Canadian culture and for the particular linguistic or regional identities that animate their corner of what constitutes Canadian culture. I want to start by identifying the objectives of the bill and then highlighting some of the challenges and some of the concerns that we have in the Conservative caucus with respect to Bill C-10.

As I said, Bill C-10 proposes to modernize the Canadian Broadcasting Act and certainly Conservatives recognize the need for change, modernization and updating, but we have some significant concerns about the way the bill fails to live up to its stated objectives. I am struck again and again by this.

I think a particular thing about the government and the way its members speak about their proposals is that they often want to fo-

cus on the objectives of what they are doing instead of on the substance of what they are doing. Regularly, government members talk about the objective being this or the objective being that, but it falls to us in the opposition to then point out that good intentions are not enough. It is not the intention but the text of the bill that becomes law, and the failure of the text of the bill to live up to the intention of the bill creates big problems for those who are then impacted by the measures that have been put in place.

More precisely, under the ambit of modernization, the bill confirms that online broadcasting is covered under the act. It seeks to introduce additional provisions for encouraging more diverse content in Canadian broadcasting, including content that is reflective of the experiences of Canadians around gender equality, as well as those of LGBTQ2+, racialized communities, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. That is one of the identified objectives.

It purports to create a more flexible approach to regulation that would allow the CRTC to establish rules for all broadcasting services that operate in Canada. I will speak more about this in a few minutes, but, when the government talks about a more flexible regulatory approach while in the process of giving powers to an external agency, this should be a red flag for all of us.

Effectively, what this gets at, in coded language, is the fact that vaguely worded legislation is giving powers to the CRTC. These powers are not as clearly or precisely described as I think most Canadians would expect them to be. The language that the government uses around regulatory flexibility is something that I think we should watch out for and understand what is underneath it.

The legislation also purports to “modernize the CRTC's enforcement powers [and] update oversight and information sharing provisions to reinforce the CRTC's role as a modern and independent regulator”. What is the context in which we see this legislation, and what do we make of these purported objectives?

One thing that all of us as members of Parliament should think about is how we are defining broadcasting in the world of changing technology. In a sense, as a member of Parliament, I am a broadcaster. While I do not think this speech is being livestreamed on my Facebook currently, although obviously sometimes we do that, it is likely that clips of what I am saying will end up being broadcast to my some 30,000 followers on Facebook, as well as possibly on Twitter and Instagram. Therefore, I am a small broadcaster. There are many people out there who have podcasts or YouTube channels who are using the unique power they have through social media and other channels to broadcast their own opinions. This is really a revolutionary power for everyday citizens to have.

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• (1240)

Historically, when we spoke about regulating broadcasting, it was because there was a limited amount of bandwidth in terms of radio and television air waves. Decisions had to be made collectively about who had access to that bandwidth. There was a hope that certain content would be broadcast in that way.

However, now we are living in a world of unlimited broadcast capacity on the Internet, where people can access more of the different kinds of content that they want. That world of unlimited broadcast capacities lowers the barriers to entry in terms of becoming a broadcaster and being a person who is broadcasting their views to a wider and wider audience. This is the new world we are living in.

There are many cases where somebody working out of their basement on their own YouTube channel may have far more views and importance as a voice than certain “mainstream” networks and channels, so how do we define what constitutes a broadcaster? If somebody is running a very popular YouTube channel where they express their own views, are we going to expect them, through the CRTC, to have a certain proportion of a certain kind of content? Is that where we want to be going with modernizing this act?

I think most members would accept that it is not particularly reasonable for that to happen, and that the idea of prescribing parameters around broadcasting is aimed at only the very large producers and purveyors of content, but that is a slippery space to be in. It raises, I think, some questions on the regulations around the parameters of content in a world where the barriers to entry are so low. We are not dealing with the same limited supply of bandwidth in terms of television or radio that we dealt with historically.

Under the label of modernization, this bill brings the online world into the existing legislative framework, but I do not think that it engages enough with this question of whether or not the current frameworks are aligned with the kind of world we find ourselves in today. I would be concerned about the possibility that Canadians who are not running big budget operations, who are just broadcasting their views and making content of different kinds, would become subject to CRTC intervention if the level of public attention crossed a certain threshold.

I want to flag as well a continuing issue concerning broadcast regulation, and that is this issue of market demand and how we define Canadian content. It is my observation and my contention that there is actually a strong market demand for more and more diverse content. There is a great deal of interest among people I talk to in learning more about indigenous culture and indigenous communities. I think there is a real demand for that content, and that is good to see.

I think there is growing interest among people in my Alberta constituency to learn French and consume content in French. That market demand is really necessary for the increasing knowledge of those things, because if there is no market demand for these shows and messages to be produced, then people will not consume them.

It is one thing to say someone may want more diverse content on a major online video platform. The question comes down to, though, whether people will consume that content. If people are ea-

ger to consume that content then, presumably, the incentives will exist for there to be increased production of that content. As parliamentarians, I think we all want to see increasing diversity and to see that reflected in media.

• (1245)

I also think we should recognize there is demand for that content and some of that increase in diversity is happening. It will continue to happen, naturally, but I think it is something we should be aware of and looking at. We should be seen putting in place policies to reasonably incentivize that development, without giving the CRTC powers that are excessive, in terms of its intervention.

Then there is the question of how we define Canadian content, or how we define content in terms of whether it is reflective of different diverse communities. Something that I looked at in university was precise definitions of what Canadian content is. It always struck me as a little odd that we could have a story that takes place in California, and that is the film, but then we have an actor who was born in Canada playing a prominent role, or we have a director who is Canadian, or maybe it was filmed in a location in Canada, even though the story purports to take place in California. However, by some definitions, that film is defined as Canadian content because of the national backgrounds of some of the people involved, even though the story that is being told is not actually about Canada.

When we talk about indigenous content, I think there are some questions that perhaps should be looked at by the committee in terms of what is meant by this. If we have an indigenous actor, but the story does not show that character as being indigenous, is that indigenous content? If we have a story that purports to be about indigenous culture, but does not represent that culture accurately, and that particular show was not created through engagement with indigenous communities, does that still constitute indigenous content?

The challenge is that at an individual level we might be able to look at whether a particular representation qualifies or not and come to our own conclusions. When we have regulatory definitions of these concepts, it can raise some significant problems in terms of whether the regulations, in the way they are applied, actually achieve the intended objectives. I think that is something that members need to think about as well, as we study and go deeper into this legislation.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

I think there many problems with this vague bill, which seems to be typical of Liberal bills.

The bill is vague with regard to the powers of the CRTC. First of all, it does not guarantee that foreign tech giants like Google and Facebook will follow the same rules as Canadian tech companies. Some people have accused these foreign tech giants of misusing Canadians' personal information and censoring some Canadians' opinions. Unfortunately, this bill will allow the tech giants to continue their unfettered reign over Canadians.

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I am also concerned about the lack of specific guidelines regarding Canadian content and the distribution of funding to Canadian media. We know that the French language is under threat in Canada, as my colleagues have emphasized in recent days. Canada is a proudly bilingual country, and our French culture, which has such a strong presence in Quebec, is the key to Canada's bilingual future.

Canadian French-language media outlets have a wealth of unique cultural content. That is why the Conservatives will work to preserve and maintain funding for French cultural programming once we are elected.

I am proud to be speaking in French today, even though it is not my first language. Many people in my province of Alberta enrol their children in French immersion programs because they want their children to proudly speak both official languages.

I am also concerned that this bill does not modernize copyright. At a time when the Internet dominates our lives, it is crucial that content produced by Canadians be protected against unfair use such as plagiarism.

Canadian artists work hard to produce high-quality content, and we ensure that their rights are fully protected. Unlike the Liberals, we Conservatives believe in modernized copyright legislation, new measures to preserve the French language, and protecting Canadians from foreign tech giants that need to assume their responsibilities.

Once our leader is elected prime minister after the next election, our Conservative government would eliminate the GST on Canadian digital platforms to support and promote Canadian media content that showcases the beauty of Canadian culture. We understand that proper CRTC legislation is important for the benefit of our nation and its people, and we wish that the Liberals understood that too.

The Conservative Party is a national party that is there for all Canadians. We are the only party with MPs in every region of the country. We are proud to have Alberta MPs who, like me, stand up for the French language, and Quebec MPs who stand up for oil workers. We are the party that unites all Canadians and respects the unique characteristics of each region.

The French language is important not just to Quebec. There is a strong francophone community in my riding in Alberta, and I love working with that community. There are francophones as well as francophiles. There are communities of francophones who have been there a long time, and there are francophone communities full of newcomers.

I invite my francophone colleagues, especially those in the Bloc Québécois, to come to Alberta to discover our vibrant francophone community, as well as to visit Fort McMurray.

• (1255)

[*English*]

I would like to reiterate some of those points in English.

I am very proud to be part of a Conservative Party that is studying these issues carefully, diligently and recommending amend-

ments, identifying problems and looking at the text as well as the intentions. I am proud to be part of a Conservative Party that is serious about uniting Canadians from coast to coast. We have MPs all across the country, anglophones and francophones, who recognize and defend the importance of English and French in all regions of the country. Also, we are a party that stands up for jobs and the economy in all regions of the country.

As a final note, I want to briefly touch on this. It is striking to me that the legislation speaks about the representation of people with disabilities, and it is very important it does that. However, people from all kinds of disability organizations are descending on Parliament Hill. They are deeply concerned about how the poorly drafted Bill C-7 entrenches discrimination against people with disabilities.

At the justice committee, so many different disability organizations have spoken out about those problems, calling for real and meaningful changes. The best the government can do for people with disabilities is to include in an amendment to the Broadcasting Act an expectation for representation of people with disabilities.

Sure, that is a nice to have, but if the government were really listening to people from diverse communities facing particular challenges, including people with disabilities, it would be doing far more than including a line in the Broadcasting Act. It would be taking the steps that are necessary, and that groups have been calling for, to support the dignified life for people living with disabilities. It would support reasonable amendments that have been put forward by disability organizations. It would be engaging in proper consultation instead of shutting it off.

I look forward to continuing debate on the bill.

• (1300)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the bill before us now is the first major revision to the Broadcast Act since 1991. During that period of time a number of governments, including Conservative governments, just let things slide. It was also, by the way, a time when, during Mr. Harper's reign, funding to the CBC was cut quite drastically, damaging that organization, which we have been trying to restore.

On the hon. member's point about diversity in media, over the years we have seen a huge range of diversity appear, with so many cable channels and radio stations. In fact, I would submit that nobody is broadcasting anymore; they are narrowcasting.

What would the member like to see in the bill that would get more diversity on an individual channel so people might be exposed to contrary views or different views of things rather than a constant stream of Conservatism, Liberalism, NDPism or any other -ism.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, my colleague began his comment by saying that he wished Stephen Harper had passed more bills. If only we had been re-elected in 2015, we would have passed so many more bills. It is somewhat an inconsistent complaint coming from the Liberals.

His point about the value of individuals consuming content from a variety of different perspectives and not just being in an echo chamber is a very good and important point. However, I do not necessarily think this is a point that the government can do all that much to solve or should do all that much to solve. It is always going to be up to individuals in a free society to consume the content they want. Even if we have intellectual diversity in a particular newspaper or particular channel, it is up to people to read what they want, or watch the shows they want or tune things out. This is an important cultural question, but not everything comes down to the action of government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and for his efforts to speak French. I commend him for that.

I would like him to clarify something. I am not sure I heard the same thing in French as I did in English. In French, the member said that it was important to protect francophone culture. In English, he seemed to be saying that too much legislation is bad and that the free market and diversity are good.

The issue for Quebec is the protection of francophone culture. If the government does not intervene in this regard, nothing will happen. The government needs to intervene by setting guidelines for francophone content and subsidizing it. I would like to remind my colleague that less than 50% of people in Montreal have French as their mother tongue, and that figure has fallen below 80% in Quebec as a whole. There is an important culture to protect. This requires legislation that will protect French-language content in the media. This legislation is flawed, and the government should give the CRTC guidelines.

Does the member believe that the government should intervene to protect francophone culture? Over the past few days, his leader has been saying that francophone culture is important. Conservative members took a stand in favour of francophone culture.

Is this really important to my hon. colleague?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member is right that I did not repeat the same words in English and French. We have interpreters operating and I think the point is available to people in both languages.

In response to his question, I am happy to emphasize the point that the French language is very important. There are absolutely legitimate measures for government to step in, protect the French language and preserve its use, recognizing the reality that the use of French is threatened and that the Government of Canada can and should step up on the protection of the French language. However, I do not think that is exclusive with the recognition that there is real demand in the market and communities. People want to learn French as well. It is not just a matter of the government. It is also a

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fact that the government, individuals and civil society all have an interest in working together and taking steps to do this.

As Conservatives, we take a balanced approach. The government has a role. At the same time, it is not all about the government in every case. There is a role for government, there is a role for civil society and there is a role for everybody—

• (1305)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking about the gap in the share of advertising going to Google and Facebook. We have seen over 200 publications and local newspapers collapse over the last decade. We have seen a lot of producers of Canadian content displaced by the pandemic and the disparity has grown even further.

The government talks about building back better, yet it tables a bill without a sense of urgency when many jobs are at stake, whether in local media or producers, especially in my riding where indigenous communities are having a difficult time getting their stories out. How are they supposed to compete with these multinational web giants, which do not pay their fair share of taxes in Canada?

While we have this opportunity to build back better, could my colleague speak to the sense of urgency that is needed right now to improve the legislation?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, Canadian content is very important. The member mentioned the indigenous communities in his riding that want to tell their stories, and I think there is a significant appetite for people to hear those stories. I have talked to many people in Canada who are not from indigenous backgrounds. They desperately want to learn more about how they can engage better and really understand the ideas and traditions that are part of our indigenous communities. We need to think of how to do that on a level playing field where we do not have existing tax advantages for some of these non-Canadian organizations.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague has raised a very good point about the Liberal government talking a lot about supporting official languages. However, in places like Quebec, many Quebecers are unsatisfied with the government's handling of that, ensuring they can receive services in English or French, particularly French, when they are looking for government services.

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A number of people in the community of Peachland in my riding have retired from Great Britain. Many of them have told me they watch BritBox on Amazon Prime. BritBox is a British channel devoted exclusively to British drama, soap operas and other types of content. Under this bill, these streaming companies have to provide Canadian content. How does that work with a service that has specific British content for the retirees in my riding to enjoy a narrow-cast, as my fellow member from British Columbia has said? What will they do if they cannot have this diversity and enjoyment in the quiet of their homes?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, my colleague makes a very important and thoughtful point.

In this age of online content, there are so many different kinds of “broadcasters”. They are, in many cases, focused on very specific things. There is BritBox, which provides British television shows. I presume there will not be much French language or Canadian content on BritBox. On the other hand, there might be a broadcaster from France or another French-speaking country that does not have any English content.

There are different examples like this where a broadcaster is focused on a specific thing. It is reasonable for those entities to exist. The way we will see more diversity and content is when people seek it out. I think that is starting to happen. Giving vague powers to the CRTC without clarity with respect to what they are, what they mean or how they would function creates significant concerns for people regarding how services like BritBox would be affected.

● (1310)

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

I am happy to speak to this particular bill because it would really bring us into the 21st century. As everyone has said, it was in 1991 that we amended the Broadcasting Act and we have done nothing about it since, so I am happy to speak to this amendment of the Broadcasting Act.

In 1991, we were in a predigital era. From 1991 until now, we have seen a change in how people access information and entertainment. It is through streaming on their own devices, iPads, computers or whatever. They are not accessing it the usual way anymore, so we need to get in tune with the times and move this forward.

At the same time, we have heard since 1991 from Senate committees, House of Commons committees, independent panels, and the media and cultural sectors that it is an important time for us to recognize that, while we have certain rules for Canadian media and entertainment, we do not have the same rules for the Internet giants from the United States and internationally that enter our homes every day through these various devices and are not regulated.

They have shown that they do not wish to self-regulate. They have been asked to self-regulate and they have shown they will not do that, so it is time to regulate them because we regulate Canadian content, Canadian broadcasting, Canadian news, everything about Canadian media. Therefore, Canadian media is at a total disadvantage when we look at the unregulated international media. This is not something we are doing just because we are Canadians and want to be parochial. It is not.

The European Union is saying it needs to maintain European cultural content. Australia is saying it needs to look at Australian cultural content. Everyone is concerned about the disinformation that is unregulated and spread by international giants. Our own Canadian media have to be careful about how they process information, what they say and how they say it, because they are subject to CRTC rules on this issue. We are bringing everything down to what I call “levelling the playing field”.

One of the important things about this is that 1997 was the last time Sheila Copps decided to go to bat for Canadian content, when she looked at how magazines coming into Canada were giving us news from the United States and everywhere else, but very little Canadian news. Journalism is under stress right now because we are not getting a lot of Canadian news from our own journalists as they are being laid off rapidly. Therefore, we are getting the news from international news aggregators, such as Google and Facebook, that are taking everybody else's news from whatever source, not necessarily a source that is regulated for the veracity of its content. They are taking it from anywhere, they are aggregating it, people are reading it and they do not know what is true or what is misinformation or disinformation.

By not regulating themselves, these Internet giants are also not following rules on things like hate content or looking at the content that is spread that is very dangerous and harmful, yet our Canadian media have to follow all these rules. We are bringing this up to scratch so that we are on a level playing field.

It is also important that when Sheila Copps in the 1990s talked about Canadian content, she also looked at how she could protect the music sector. She got a lot of flak for it, but it worked out to be exactly what we needed. People were buying blank tapes, downloading everybody's music and playing it without having to pay a charge, so she added a surtax on the buying of blank tapes. That money went into a pot so that we could create what later turned out to be a great time for Canadian music. It began to be spread around the world. We saw that the divas were mostly Canadian. We saw all of this happening.

It is time we stand up not only for Canadian content but for Canadian cultural sovereignty.

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• (1315)

We also want to reflect that Canadian culture is very diverse. It is a culture made up of official bilingualism, of French within and outside of Quebec. The government said clearly in the throne speech that it is going to protect that. We have indigenous cultures, which are so rich. We have many ethnic and racialized cultures, along with LGBTQ voices. We know, geographically, the Atlantic provinces' cultural content is very different from B.C.'s. We need to get to know each other as Canadians. We need to understand each other's stories, hear them and tell them.

What I always hear from Canadian creators is that they are actually out there writing stories, etc., and it is being pilfered by other people. They are not getting any kind of reimbursement for their intellectual property. Let us talk about how we are going to reimburse Canadian intellectual property. Let us talk about how we are leveling the playing field. That is what this bill is doing.

It is not a nefarious bill. Nobody is saying that people will not have the opportunity to stream what they want. All we are saying is that the CRTC has required that Canadian entertainment must have up to 45% of its production as Canadian content. They must put money into creating that. However, we have not said this for all of the other media content we get from media giants, which are making a lot of money from Canadian content and not reimbursing that to Canadians and not reflecting the diversity of Canadian life and Canadian regionalism. We do not want this in a global world.

Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, from UNESCO, said something about this back in the late 1990s. He said that globalization has one flaw to it: that the world is now in some kind of amorphous culture and we are losing a sense of our own sovereignty, our own cultural identities.

Europe has taken a step to make sure that is not going to happen. It is doing something similar to what we are doing. Australia has also taken steps to ensure this. We do not want Canadian media to be under certain restrictions and regulations, and then have international media giants spreading information, disinformation, hate and all kinds of inappropriate things on the Internet, which we cannot regulate.

This is a good time. The idea that we could get money and that they are required, like Canadian media, to put money into creating Canadian content is something that our creators need. Our music industry needs this. All of that wonderful intellectual property needs this.

Nobody has to tell us, as Canadians, what great storytellers we are, what great writers we have, what fabulous producers or content we have. We can just look at *Schitt's Creek* and see it has become a major piece of Canadian storytelling and Canadian comedic acting.

We need to protect that, but more than anything else, we need to level the playing field. This is not asking the CRTC to do something nefarious. It is just asking them to make the same requirements and regulations for the international media giants, which do not have to follow any of these rules, and level the playing field for Canadian media.

They are also going to be required to contribute to Canadian content in the same way that Canadian media must do. We are also saying that they need to reflect the diversity of Canadian culture, which is very different from other international cultures. This is not something that is strange, big brother or anything like that. We are just trying to level the playing field. We are trying to give our Canadian content a break and make sure we tell and hear our own stories. This is important. The regulation of information is very important.

We look at all the panels, Senate committees and House of Commons committees, the last one being the committee I chaired that gave its report in 2017, which pointed out that we are not seeing ourselves in our own news, media and entertainment. We are not hearing indigenous voices or regional voices. We are not seeing the racialized, LGBTQ and ethnic groups within our country telling their stories.

We are unique as a nation. We are very different and we need to reflect that difference. Maybe other people streaming Canadian content out there in France, the United States or anywhere else might learn about who we are as Canadians. They might actually be inspired by some of the things we can do and say—

• (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to go to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, Irene Berkowitz published a report on behalf of her and her colleagues called the “Watchtime Canada” report. I have spoken about this in the House before. There are over 160,000 Canadian YouTube content creators right now and, under the existing rules, 40,000 of them have been able to monetize and hire 28,000 Canadians.

These particular content creators have been able to produce such good content, made in Canada by Canadians, that it is now pushed up and they are able to make a living from it. Is the member not concerned that by arbitrarily changing the rules we will see other Canadian content that may not be as high quality get pushed to the front of many Canadian YouTube screens? That could harm an industry, these mom-and-pop operators that have worked so hard to produce high-quality content.

Is the member not concerned that by changing those rules, it actually may harm some Canadian content that is already being watched because it is great content, not because it meets an artificial algorithm dictated by the CRTC?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I would like to say that I am not concerned.

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Specifically this bill, as the member would understand if he had read it carefully, does not apply to the mom-and-pops or the guy in his mother's garage doing whatever they need to do. This applies to international megabusinesses that are making money by entering everyone's homes without any regulation whatsoever. We are talking about Google. We are talking about Facebook. We are not talking about me making a dance video in my living room tomorrow morning, which I intend to do. We are not talking about those things.

We are talking about regulating groups that are making billions of dollars by using other people's intellectual property—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this issue is really important. Facebook has \$19 billion in global revenues, and it does not pay any tax.

What concerns me, however, is that our previous heritage minister was supposed to regulate and bring taxes in, but her chief of staff was a top Google executive brought in by the Prime Minister's Office, Leslie Church. The Prime Minister's close connections to Google and Facebook raise really serious questions.

When I look at this bill, I see the fact that Facebook and Google, which have 64% of all the Internet advertising dollars in Canada, are not going to be paying any tax on that advertising, still. This is one of the biggest outstanding issues, and the government is ignoring it.

How can we have a level playing field when all advertisers, artists and cable companies pay advertising and taxes, yet under this bill Facebook and Google still will not be paying tax?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question the hon. member is asking. In fact, in our 2017 House of Commons heritage report, we pointed out that level playing field with regard to GST and HST being levelled against Canadian media and Canadian content, and not being levelled against the Internet giants.

This bill will be going to committee, and there will be an opportunity for people to talk about levelling the playing field. However, when we brought it forward at the committee, it was very clear that the Conservative Party was spreading the rumour that we were taxing people.

We are talking about levelling the playing field. It could mean removing taxes Canadian media has to pay. We could talk about increasing the taxes on international media. I do not know, but I agree with the member about taxation. I think it is an important piece that we have to look at, because it gives the international giants a 15% advantage over Canadian media.

[*Translation*]

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

This bill is obviously very important for us Quebecers. It could become something that helps to protect the French language, even though it does not right now.

Does the member agree with her hon. colleague from Saint-Laurent and the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada, who think that the decline of the French language is a myth and that Bill 101 is oppressive?

• (1325)

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Madam Speaker, I know how our Prime Minister feels about Bill 101, and I am not here to talk about that right now.

In our Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister said very clearly that the Government of Canada has a responsibility to ensure the French language inside and outside of Quebec is promoted, and it is assured we are going to tell the stories outside and inside Quebec. This is something that we—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada did not happen by accident. Canada is a conscious act of will to create a distinct political, economic and cultural space in the upper reaches of the North American continent. Today we are focusing on our cultural space.

Ensuring the continued vitality of Canadian cultural content is what this bill is all about. In so many ways, Quebec is the model and inspiration for Canada's broader cultural affirmation. It is proof that it is possible to preserve and fortify one's cultural voice against unrelenting pressure, and that it is possible, and indeed a duty to oneself and one's fellow citizens, to build and sustain a cultural realm that reflects, supports and strengthens our collective identity.

[*Translation*]

Culture is a reservoir of ideas, values, symbols, ways of doing things, and individual stories woven together into shared stories. We need to keep replenishing that reservoir if we want it to remain full and deep. If we do not, it will evaporate over time or be refilled by other sources that no longer reflect who we are or offer up nothing but faded outlines.

Quebec has taken care to sustain its cultural reservoir, and so has the rest of Canada, often inspired by Quebec.

[*English*]

This affirmation of the value of one's culture as an alternative lens through which to view the world accounts in part, I believe, for the long overdue attention now being given to supporting Canada's indigenous languages and cultures, including, incidentally, through the provisions of the bill we are debating today.

As Canadians, it is vitally important that we be able to see ourselves in books, plays, TV shows and films, and hear ourselves in music. When we see ourselves reflected through these media, we see ourselves in motion doing, accomplishing, overcoming challenges and sorting out contradictions and complexities moving forward. We are also witnessing our potential. What could be more invigorating and motivating than that, on both an individual and collective basis?

For well over a century, we in Canada have proved there is no such thing as cultural determinism. There are no foregone conclusions about a culture's ability to survive and thrive, even in the face of powerful outside cultural forces. The strength of a culture, its staying power, is a function of people's determination and ability to craft effective cultural strategies that are continuously adapted to a changing environment.

[*Translation*]

Whether our culture survives and thrives depends on us, on our desire to keep creating content and to ensure we have the means to share that content. Everything depends on us tuning in and paying attention to the sometimes rapid changes and technological and economic challenges that keep coming our way.

[*English*]

The creation of the CBC was an act of political will. It was a conscious collective response to the challenge of a new medium: radio. Cancon on radio was an act of political will that spawned a homegrown music industry that, 30 years later, conquered global markets in the genres of country, jazz and rock.

The list of studies, analyses and policy initiatives we have undertaken over decades with the aim of shoring up Canadian culture in the face of technological and economic challenges is too long to describe in the time I have, but here is a sample.

In 1929, the Royal Commission on Radio, called the Aird commission, recommended that Canada establish a single national, publicly owned broadcasting system. Not long after, in 1932, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act was passed.

In 1936, a parliamentary committee called for a corporation resembling the BBC. Thus the CBC was created and, in 1937, it opened a French-language radio station in Montreal that became the beacon Radio-Canada is today for francophone culture in Quebec, for francophones outside of Quebec and, it should be added, for francophiles across the country, whose numbers increased following the adoption of the Official Languages Act by the government of Pierre Trudeau.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

When I think of our cultural infrastructure, which Canada cannot do without, one of the things I think of is CBC/Radio-Canada. We cannot underestimate the crucial importance of Radio-Canada in particular. It disappoints me to hear the Conservatives talk about privatizing CBC/Radio-Canada. In many ways, the Crown corporation is the spring that keeps Canada's francophone cultural reservoir full.

To continue, the Massey commission was created in 1949 and tasked with examining radio and television broadcasting in Canada. In 1958, the Broadcasting Act was passed. In 1959, quotas for Canadian content on TV were instituted.

[*English*]

In 1969, the CRTC noted that cable technology had become a major factor in the Canadian broadcasting system, and it set out

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rules for the services cable systems were required to carry, which we refer to today as “must-carry” rules.

In 1971, the Canadian content regulations came into force for AM radio music and the CRTC allowed simultaneous substitution, whereby a local TV channel was substituted for a U.S. one on cable if both stations were carrying the same program. This was designed to help local stations keep their local audiences and the advertising dollars that go with those audiences.

In 1983, the broadcast program development fund was created to ensure the production of high-quality Canadian television in the under-represented categories of drama, variety, children and documentary.

In 1984, the Federal-Provincial Committee on the Future of French-language Television was created to examine challenges facing French-language television.

In 1992, the CRTC issued its policy on gender portrayal.

In 1996, the minister of Canadian heritage, Sheila Copps, announced the creation of the Canada television and cable production fund, combining the cable production fund and telefilms broadcast fund.

In 2002, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, published “Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting.”

Jumping to 2018, our government created a six-member panel to review Canada's Broadcasting Act, Telecommunications Act and Radiocommunication Act. The Yale report, entitled “Canada's Communications Future: Time to Act”, is the basis of today's bill.

There was a time not long ago when conventional wisdom held that we could not interfere in any way with the Internet, and that resistance to the all-encompassing juggernaut of the worldwide web was, plainly, naive and futile. Partly in keeping with this view, in 1999 the CRTC exempted Internet retransmitters from the requirement to be licensed or regulated under the Broadcasting Act. The decision was reviewed and upheld in 2009.

In 2001, Bill C-48 attempted to bring Internet retransmitters under the umbrella of Canada's copyright regime. However, the bill was amended in favour of a continued prohibition on retransmitters using proprietary content.

In a sense, Bill C-10 is taking care of unfinished business. Bill C-10 will bring online streaming services within the scope of the Broadcasting Act. Internet-based platforms such as Crave, Netflix, Amazon Prime and Spotify will be required to contribute a percentage of their gross revenues to the creation of Canadian programming, as is required of traditional broadcasters.

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[Translation]

Furthermore, cabinet will have the power to order the CRTC to ensure that adequate funding is dedicated to French-language programming. In the modern world of mass communications, cultural transmission has become extremely high tech, whether we are talking about radio, television, film, recorded music or online content. This bill will strengthen our modern cultural infrastructure. In order for a culture to thrive, it takes a collective will, as well as resources, meaning money. This bill aims to ensure that the necessary resources are made available to ensure that our beautiful, magnificent culture survives and thrives.

• (1335)

[English]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member opposite that I would appreciate his feedback on. Any time the CRTC seems to get involved in making decisions on regulations and different things like that, the one person who ends up always paying more and, in the end, losing, is the end user or the consumer.

I am wondering what the government would do to protect the end user, or the consumer, from being the one who ends up losing in this situation.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, I do not agree that the end user ends up losing. The end user in Canada has access to an array of programming but also to homegrown programming through private broadcasters, and especially through CBC/Radio-Canada. Yes, we pay fees for cable and so on, but we do not pay a fee when we buy a television. That used to be the case, but the CRTC removed that fee many decades ago, so I do not agree with the premise of the member's question.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech given by my colleague across the aisle in support of Bill C-10.

I must say that I personally am very disappointed with Bill C-10. The web giants are still not paying taxes. Now web giants might be required to produce Canadian content, but not French-language content. Of course, Canadian content is not French content.

These are still foreign-controlled and foreign-owned companies. The government's refusal to require the production of French-language content is perfectly consistent with the comments made by the member for Saint-Laurent, who said that French does not need to be protected. It is perfectly consistent with the comments of the president of the Liberal Party of Canada, who said that Bill 101 is an oppressive law. It is perfectly consistent with the government's opposition to requiring knowledge of French for people to immigrate to Quebec.

Rather than shedding crocodile tears, can the member opposite be honest and admit that the Liberals do not care about French in Quebec?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, according to some estimates, this bill will allow us to collect approximately \$1 billion

that could go towards Canadian programming, which obviously includes Quebec programming.

One of the government's priorities is to ensure that we have enough French-language programming to allow Quebecers and all French-speaking Canadians to express their views, values and culture.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question to the government member is with respect to the concern that we have raised about the documented close and collaborative relationship that this government has been proven to have with web giants, and the extent to which that relationship is coming ahead of good policy on behalf of Canadians, whether it is affordable service or Canadian content, including French content from Quebec. We are very concerned about the role that web giants have had with respect to this government. We also believe that they should be taxed, and that is something we have not seen leadership from the federal government on.

Does the Liberal government believe that web giants like Netflix, Amazon and others should be taxed like everybody else?

• (1340)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, this bill is going to raise almost \$1 billion from the web giants that was not being raised before. I am not sure what relationship the hon. member is talking about between the government and web giants, but that relationship is going to result in almost \$1 billion more for Canadian programming.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak to the bill and I will be sharing my time with the member for Milton.

The bill is about building sustainability back into the Canadian broadcasting system and putting Canadian broadcasters on equal footing with their online competitors. The objective of the bill is to ensure that online broadcasting services that operate in Canada contribute to the creation of Canadian content and support the Canadian audio and audiovisual creative ecosystems, just as licensed Canadian radio and television broadcasters have been doing for decades.

Up until the web giants came along, the broadcasting system was managed by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, CRTC, as a Canadian regulated sector. To operate a broadcasting service in Canada's protected market, one had to get a licence from the CRTC. As a condition of that licence, these broadcasters had to contribute to the overall broadcasting system. They had to support the creation and promotion of Canadian stories and music. This was the framework of the Canadian regulatory bargain.

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This regime worked well for decades as our broadcasting system grew and matured. Over time, Canadians went from receiving two or three TV channels, I actually remember having that clicker on my TV for those, to the hundreds that are available now. As a result of the globalized ecosystem, the CRTC established new rules and regulations to allow some foreign channels such as CNN to be distributed on cable and satellite systems in Canada, while ensuring that Canadian operators would remain competitive.

Even as it expanded, the closed licence broadcasting system was maintained. TV stations, radio stations and cable and satellite distributors were largely profitable and film and video creators and musicians benefited from sustained and stable support from the broadcasting system. However, the emergence of multinational web giants has changed the game. Early on, the CRTC chose to exempt those services from licensing in order to encourage the development of innovative technologies and business models. As a result of this, foreign online broadcasters are now able to sell their services to Canadians while avoiding the regulatory obligations placed on traditional broadcasters, including the requirement to support Canadian creators.

However, these online broadcasters do not get a free ride any longer. The revenues of online video services have grown some 90% each year over the last two years, while the situation for Canadian traditional broadcasters has worsened. They have seen a steady decline in revenues of 1.8% per year over the last five years. Not to put too fine of a point on it, the legislation as it stands has been putting our own Canadian companies at a disadvantage. We need to help the home team. For too long, we have been helping the away team.

Traditional Canadian broadcasters are forced to compete against online platforms that are playing by different rules. This needs to change. Bill C-10 would restore competitive balance to the system. It would provide the CRTC with the tools it needs to establish a modern regulatory framework for broadcasting that is appropriate for the digital, online and on-demand era that we live in today.

Importantly, this new regulatory regime would encompass both traditional broadcasters as well as online services. Our approach is a balanced one, which includes strong guardrails. We would be excluding user-generated content, news content and video games from any regulation.

Additionally, while these amendments would apply to online broadcasters, obligations would only be imposed on those that have a material impact on Canada. In practice, this means it would only impact common household name streamers. The very first broadcasting policy objective that would appear in the amended Broadcasting Act would state that all broadcasting undertakings shall contribute in a manner that furthers the implementation of the broadcasting policy for Canada. This would help level the playing field and restore equity and fairness to the system. Online broadcasting services would be required to support the creation and promotion of Canadian stories and music. This would help stabilize funding for Canadian film, video and music creators and establish sustainable support for a new generation of Canadian artists.

• (1345)

Canadians have benefited from the flexibility and choice that online platforms have to offer. Canadian creators, stories and music have achieved international success and reached new audiences through global streaming platforms. When I think about it, I think of people like Alessia Cara or programs like *Anne with an E*, the TV show that many people have loved.

However, I need to emphasize for hon. members that the intent of this bill is not to restrict the ability of Canadians to access online broadcasting services or to subject foreign online platforms to rules that do not also apply to Canadian broadcasters. The intent is equally not to subject Canadian online broadcasting services to rules that do not apply to foreign ones.

The CRTC, as the expert regulator, would be expected to put in place a regime that does not discriminate and treats similar services in a similar manner. No online broadcaster, Canadian or foreign, would require a licence from the CRTC. The message is that they are welcome to come in and join the game, but must play by the same rules as the other players on the field.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage has indicated that the bill before us is just the first step in a broader approach that the government plans to implement to position Canadian broadcasting for the on-demand online environment. He has indicated that he intends to direct the CRTC to act quickly to ensure that online broadcasters contribute appropriately to the Canadian broadcasting system. The CRTC would be asked to address existing regulatory asymmetries. Regulatory requirements should be flexible, yet predictable, recognizing the amazing diversity of creators Canada has to offer, as well as business models and technologies in the Canadian broadcasting system today.

We need to restore a measure of fairness in the broadcasting system. A lot has changed from the time I mentioned when we had TV sets with a turn dial, and we had maybe six channels. This bill maps a way forward toward a more equitable regulatory framework that would allow traditional broadcasters to compete on a more level playing field. It would have direct impact toward increasing stable and sustained income to Canadian creators.

Bill C-10 would put the online broadcasters on fair footing with traditional Canadian broadcasters, and it is up to us, as members of this House, to pass this bill quickly in order to restore competitive balance to the broadcasting system and give our Canadian broadcasters a fair shot at getting back into the game.

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Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, DAZN is a streaming service that allows for people to watch the NFL and Major League Baseball, as well as soccer leagues, content that is not available by any other source online. Yet, this member is saying, as the Liberals are, that somehow the CRTC is going to be able to require these services to have Canadian content.

I would like to ask the member a question, because she said that if a broadcaster wants to get in the game, it has to play by these rules. How, precisely, will the National Football League get Canadian content sufficient enough to be able to pass this legislation? Will DAZN simply say that Canada was a great run and that it is no longer offered? What will the Liberals and this member say to their constituents when they cannot receive this content via streaming?

• (1350)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, this bill is actually so that we can continue to build out the system that has been coming into play. It is actually taking into account the fact that the world has changed and that new streaming services are available that we did not have many years ago when these rules were put into place. It is simply not fair to be able to have certain services, and that all of the name-brand kinds of services that people talk about, like Netflix and Spotify, should be able to profit from being here in Canada without also paying to the creation of Canadian content. When I say this, it also includes being able to support important jobs that all of our communities rely upon.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hear my colleague say that there needs to be a sense of urgency, but what she is talking about doing is fast-tracking a bill and sending it to the CRTC, which could take up to a year for it to come back with solutions. We knew from the Yale report that Google and Facebook had taken over 75% of the market share for advertising compared to 8.5% for local newspapers like the Comox Valley Record in my riding, the Parksville Qualicum Beach News, the Alberni Valley News, the Westerly News or the Ha-Shilth-Sa, all important newspapers in my riding telling really important stories, covering really important issues.

We need the government to amend this bill, protect those newspapers and important media and make sure that these web giants are paying their fair share. They are still not paying their fair share and it is very important that the member and her government take immediate action instead of punting this down the road and expecting the CRTC to do something on this, especially with the vulnerability of these publications during COVID right now.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I am happy my friend across the way raised media, because it is absolutely important to all of our communities. I was happy that Jerry Dias of Unifor, who represents many people who work in the media industry, said that this is a good bill, but what it deals with is broadcasting reform. It would create a framework by which there would be further investments in Canadian culture and content.

However, the news media piece is also something the Minister of Canadian Heritage is working on. He has been speaking with his counterparts in Australia and France to talk about their different models so that we can take action on the very issue that was raised, and we will.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, Bill C-10 has some very good pieces of progress in it. I am certainly looking forward to studying it in committee and proposing amendments.

I want to ask the hon. parliamentary secretary whether she believes we need to improve the act to do more to define Canadian culture and creative activity. I take the point from my friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan that we do not just want Canadian cities used as backdrops for filming stories that are taking place in Chicago or New York. I wonder if the hon. parliamentary secretary has any comments.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, the member across the way and I have had some interesting conversations about this very topic.

The point of this bill is to increase investments in Canadian culture and to level the playing field. The CRTC will ultimately be the body, as it has been all along under our existing system, to determine the set rules as far as domestic content, but—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first begin by acknowledging that, while the House sits on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe, I join the House from my community office here in Milton, the traditional territory of many first nations, including the Haudenosaunee, the Huron-Wendat, the Anishinabek, the Attawandaron and, more recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Major changes to the Broadcasting Act occurred in 1991 and since then, we have seen the rise of the Internet and online broadcasting services, which has completely changed the ways that Canadians listen to music and watch television. The Broadcasting Act has not kept pace with these changes and as a result, online broadcasters have been left unregulated.

Bill C-10 would modernize the Broadcasting Act for the digital age. It would provide the CRTC with the tools it needs to be regulated online and to ensure that they contribute to the creation of Canadian stories and music, just as traditional broadcasters have done for decades. This will mean more funding for Canadian producers, directors, screenwriters, actors and musicians to create high-quality audio and audiovisual content. It would generate more opportunities for them to make their stories and music available to Canadians. It would mean a more fair and flexible regulatory system where comparable services are subject to similar regulatory requirements, regardless of whether they operate online or over the air.

Our approach also includes strong guardrails, where we exclude user-generated content, news content and video games from any regulation. Additionally, while these amendments apply to online broadcasters, obligations would only be imposed on those that have a material impact in Canada. In practice, this means that it would only impact common household names.

[*Translation*]

This means that Canadian music and stories will be more widely available through various broadcasting services. However, technology is not the only thing that has changed since 1991. Canadian society has also changed.

[*English*]

That is why, today, I want to highlight the important changes that the bill would make to the Broadcasting Act to support greater diversity for women; indigenous peoples; racialized communities; anglophones and francophones, including those who belong to official language minority communities; the LGBTQ2S community; and persons with a disability.

The bill makes it clear that we need to encourage individuals from all of these groups to express themselves and share their stories and music. It also makes it clear that these voices and stories are important and a defining part of Canadian culture.

Broadcasting plays a critical role in sharing cultures, experiences and perspectives. That is why it is so important for creators from more marginalized communities to participate in the broadcasting system.

[*Translation*]

Broadcasting is an essential medium for sharing our lived experiences with one another. By presenting content that is representative of different cultures, communities and languages, it can help build a welcoming, empathetic, compassionate and inclusive society. Broadcasting can help us celebrate our differences while strengthening the common bonds that unite our society.

[*English*]

Lately it has become very clear that this has become more important than ever. Recent events have shone a bright light on the fractures and inequities that still exist in this country.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls both highlighted the persistent colonial, patriarchal and racist policies that resulted in generations of trauma, marginalization and abuse for indigenous peoples. The #MeToo movement made us re-examine how we support victims of sexual abuse and sexual harassment, and it underscored how important it is for us to work harder to address elements in our culture that perpetrate gender inequity and inequality.

We have more work to do to ensure that all gender identities and gender expressions are recognized and respected. We need to continue to strive for equality and acceptance for all two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual people. The Black Lives Matter movement has drawn attention to

systemic racism that continues to result in discrimination, aggression, oppression and violence against the Black community—

• (1400)

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. member, as it is two o'clock. The hon. member will have five minutes and 22 seconds remaining when we return from question period and take up this topic again.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

BE A SANTA TO A SENIOR PROGRAM

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seniors have faced significant challenges during COVID-19. During this holiday season, many of our seniors will experience loneliness and will receive neither a gift nor a visit.

I am proud to rise in the House today to highlight the Be a Santa to a Senior program, led locally by Home Instead Senior Care in Tecumseh. The program is a national campaign that asks residents and businesses to donate gifts, such as grocery gift cards, blankets, and small gift items, to be shared with our seniors. Since 2003, the program has provided approximately 2.1 million gifts to more than 750,000 seniors across Canada and the U.S.

This will be the 10th year for this program in Windsor-Essex, and through the leadership of Ryan and Colleen Jershy at Home Instead, the Be a Santa to a Senior program has provided 10,000 seniors in my community with gifts and comfort.

I encourage all Canadians to be a Santa to a senior and spread some holiday cheer with our most vulnerable seniors, who have helped make Canada the home we love.

* * *

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians living with cystic fibrosis need the government to deliver for them. Patients across Canada, like my constituents Martin in Taber and Amanda in Chestermere, have been advocating fiercely for Health Canada to provide the potential life-saving drug Trikafta. This drug has been called a miracle drug and has the potential to not only stop the degeneration of the lungs and organs, but actually improve them. For cystic fibrosis patients struggling to breathe and living through COVID-19, this drug is what matters.

Statements by Members

Martin and Amanda needed this drug yesterday. It is approved in 17 other countries, such as the U.K. and U.S., but not in Canada. The manufacturer has indicated it is applying for approval, despite its concerns about the government's PMPRB reforms. Once this application is submitted, Health Canada needs to consider it as the highest priority, and not within years or months, but within weeks at the most. Martin and Amanda, and thousands of Canadians with CF, have waited long enough.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to recognize small businesses, which are the backbone of our local economy, especially in my community of Newmarket—Aurora. During COVID-19, small business owners have demonstrated an exceptional resilience by innovating and adapting their business models and finding ways to support our community. I am proud to support them every chance I get, especially when it is my turn to cook dinner.

Today, I would like to thank the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce for their outstanding support for local businesses, especially over the last eight months. From hosting virtual networking sessions to creating learning opportunities to hosting town halls, including a recent one held with the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity, there is no doubt that our local chambers have gone above and beyond.

It has not been an easy year, but I want to assure small businesses that we will continue to do whatever it takes to support them. We will get through this together.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BERTHA FRIGON

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today Bertha Frigon is blowing out 100 candles.

This caring and engaged citizen from my riding has 17 children, 36 grandchildren, 52 great-grandchildren and seven great-great-grandchildren, but she still found time to get involved in our community.

Whether running a Christian women's group, a second-hand clothing service, a day care, or the One Child, One Tree project, which teaches children about environmental protection, nothing has ever stopped Mrs. Frigon from doing whatever she set her mind to. At 87, she even published her first book, with the title *Les jours meilleurs, on les construit*, or better days are what we make of them.

As everyone knows, this year has not been easy. I know that in Lac-Saint-Jean, the days are made better by the people in the community.

Mrs. Frigon, on behalf of our community, thank you and happy 100th birthday.

• (1405)

WORLD DIABETES DAY

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November 14 is World Diabetes Day, a day aimed at raising public awareness about this disease.

To mark the occasion, I spoke to Stéphane Leblond, chairman of the board of the Eastern Townships diabetes association. We talked about the dramatic growth of the disease and the challenges for the people living with it.

I know a thing or two about diabetes, because in February 2017, at age 18, my son Charles was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Charles needs four injections of insulin a day, but that does not stop him from playing all kinds of sports with prodigious energy.

I just want to take a moment today to highlight the courage of people with diabetes, but also to commend the family and friends, health professionals and organizations that all work together to give them a good quality of life. Thank you.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, National Child Day is recognized on November 20 each year. It celebrates the adoption of two documents: the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1959 under Prime Minister Diefenbaker, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 under Prime Minister Mulroney.

National Child Day is a symbol of our commitment to ensuring that all children are treated with dignity and respect and that children have a voice, are safe from harm and are guaranteed the opportunities to reach their full potential. As parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, teachers and legislators, we all have the responsibility to keep our children safe, healthy and engaged. National Child Day is about recognizing children as active citizens who are learning about their place in society, while at the same time reinforcing the rights of children and youth in Canada.

I ask members to please join me in wearing blue tomorrow to show their support for National Child Day in Canada.

* * *

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past month in British Columbia, over 4,400 people residing south of the Fraser have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Currently, in Surrey, a staggering one out of 178 people has tested positive over the same period. At the current rate, the Fraser south region could have up to 1,000 new cases per day within the next month. This is a critical situation.

I ask residents south of the Fraser to please wear a mask, isolate with immediate family, maintain physical distancing, wash their hands frequently, cut out all unnecessary outings and download the COVID Alert app. Let us do our part, because we are all in this together.

* * *

RECOGNITION OF BRAVERY

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize two of my constituents, Roy Helmer and Shelly Wood.

In the early hours of October 16, Shelly heard sounds that would bring any of us into a full state of panic. Upon investigation, she was shocked to see a bear attacking someone just outside her door. She tried to distract it, but then ran to get Roy, who grabbed what was readily available. He hit the bear with a small concrete statue, which gave him just a moment to quickly pull the injured girl into the house. Many Canadians live near wildlife, but we still do not expect this.

I would like to recognize and commend Shelly and Roy for their actions. Their quick-thinking response saved this girl from a much more severe outcome. I would also like to thank first responders, Hay River RCMP and the staff from Environment Canada and Natural Resources Canada for their assistance. I wish a speedy recovery to the young girl who was so unexpectedly attacked.

* * *

● (1410)

REESE MEYER

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about Reese Meyer.

Reese was kind of a big deal. His sister Avalon said that he was the strongest, bravest, smartest, kindest kid. They shared a special bond. He looked up to his dad, Glenn, and he adored his mother, Jennifer.

Reese played right defence with the Caledon Hawks. When he was diagnosed with cancer, the Canadian hockey community rallied around him. His short but incredibly meaningful life was marked by a unique joie de vivre.

When Reese was diagnosed with cancer, his courage and love of life was an inspiration. Whenever he wondered why he had cancer, he would think of this quote, “God gives his hardest battles to his strongest soldiers.” A strong soldier he was.

Reflecting on his life, Reese wrote, “I got cancer because God knew I could handle it better than anyone else on earth.” May Reese's legacy continue to inspire us and may we all strive to be a little more like Reese every day.

* * *

FLORENTINO ROSARIO

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Montreal Filipino-Canadian community and broader Mon-

Statements by Members

trepreneur community have lost a true humanitarian, gentleman and civic builder.

Dr. Florentino Rosario's life and career as a surgeon took him from the Philippines to the United States to Ottawa's Montfort Hospital and later to Montreal's Royal Victoria Hospital and Lachine General Hospital.

A gentle and humble man, his ethic of service extended beyond the professional realm to caring for the social and cultural well-being of his community. In 1976, noticing that more Filipino Canadians were moving to Montreal's West Island, Dr. Rosario founded the Filipino Canadian Association of West Island, which today continues to provide opportunities for West Islanders of Filipino heritage to celebrate their history and culture, and youth to socialize through sporting and other activities.

To Dr. Rosario's wife, Pat, we offer our deepest condolences on this tremendous loss that is shared by so many.

* * *

SUICIDE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prior to the COVID pandemic, it was estimated that 10 people on average died by suicide every day in Canada. However, we know the numbers are likely higher as many cases go unreported due to the stigma attached to suicide and mental health. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young adults, and males account for 75% of all suicides.

Since the pandemic began, the existing mental health crisis across Canada has only become worse. Crisis hotlines have experienced a 200% increase in calls, which has led to increased wait times. These statistics are alarming and we need to do better.

I recently tabled a motion in the House that would consolidate all existing suicide prevention services into one national suicide prevention hotline, with a simple to remember three-digit phone number, 988. When minutes count, a three-digit number could make the difference between a life saved or a life lost. The United States has taken real action on this and there is no reason why colleagues in the House cannot rally together and do the same.

My inbox is overwhelmed with messages from Canadians who have had experiences with suicide. I know that with the support of all colleagues in the House, we can do this. We have the opportunity to take real action right now. Let us work together and bring 988 to Canada.

*Statements by Members***CONSERVATIVE PARTY**

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this fall I celebrated my 12th year as a Conservative MP. I am thankful for the numerous individuals, men and women alike, who encouraged me to run, and the tremendous support I received from the Conservative Party once I made my decision.

When it comes to women in leadership, I am proud of our history, as ours truly is the party of firsts in the country: the first female cabinet minister and the first to serve as acting prime minister, Ellen Fairclough; the first woman to lead the official opposition, Deb Grey; Canada's first female foreign minister, Flora MacDonald; and, finally, Canada's first female prime minister, the Right Hon. Kim Campbell. They were all Conservatives.

As a mom to four beautiful, strong women and grandmother to seven granddaughters, I am grateful for these role models. I am proud to work alongside incredible women in our caucus today and I invite Canadian women all across the country to take another look at our Conservative Party.

* * *

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, we have the largest health care tribute mural in Canada in my riding. It was created by local artist David Derkatz and depicts a local nurse and doctor fighting COVID-19 on the front lines.

With the second wave upon us and the numbers of those infected and hospitalized exceeding levels seen this spring, we must reflect on what is next. Front-line health care workers, including those working at Windsor Regional Hospital, Hôtel-Dieu Grace Health-care, long-term health care facilities, those providing health care services in people's homes or those delivering services in the community, have been battling the pandemic daily for more than eight months now for all of us, with many more months to go before it is over.

We should take a moment to reflect on how their work life has been altered since the start of this pandemic and think about the emotional highs and lows they have endured as they fight COVID-19, sometimes being the final person someone sees before passing from this world.

For those who have not been wearing masks, it breaks public health orders and creates problems for those who are doing their jobs to protect us. We must all remain vigilant and do our part. If people love their families, friends, neighbours or even themselves, please wear a mask. Let this not all be in vain.

I thank our health care workers.

* * *

• (1415)

[*Translation*]

CHRISTMAS MIRACLE IN GRAND-MÈRE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for 12 years now, a group of jovial retirees, including my very friendly neighbour across the street, have been getting together

starting in early November to whip up sweet and savoury pies and other traditional Christmas comfort foods.

I will let members picture these men slaving over the stove under the stern yet amused gaze of their wives, who also lend a skillful hand to create these delights that taste as good as they smell.

In the basement of Saint-Paul church in Grand-Mère, a Christmas miracle happens over and over and over. Serge Leclerc and André Vanasse lead a team that proudly bakes around 14,000 pies and raises about \$46,000 a year for people in need in Grand-Mère and Shawinigan. This makes the local city councillor very proud, and me too, of course.

Way to go, guys. You are doing great work.

* * *

[*English*]

CHINA

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Canada's approach to China, the Liberal government has it drastically wrong and refuses to do anything about it. That is why Conservatives brought forward a motion to force the Liberals to change course, to make a decision on Huawei and to develop a plan to protect Canadians against China's aggressive foreign operations.

Canada is the only Five Eyes country that has not banned Huawei. With increased Chinese ownership of critical Canadian assets, widespread hacking and intellectual property theft and the intimidation of our citizens by Chinese agents right here at home, we are in urgent need of a plan.

However, only five Liberals put the security of Canadians first and all the others voted no, but they lost. Now they must provide a decision on Huawei and they must provide a plan within 30 days. Will they? Canada's economic and national security hangs in the balance. Canadians will be watching.

* * *

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today on Parliament Hill the advocacy group "Canadians for long-term care standards" led an emotional memorial called "Broken Hearts, Empty Shoes". They placed over 2,000 pairs of shoes in remembrance of those we had lost in long-term care homes this year and years past due to neglect. Many families in my community have been impacted.

Families like the Parkes family, who lost Paul Parkes when he sadly passed away at Orchard Villa last spring. Mr. Parkes' family could not be by his side in his final days and his family had to hear about the deplorable conditions he and other vulnerable seniors were left in. Mr. Parkes' daughter, Cathy, has been sharing his story like so many family members who have lost loved ones. They have been advocating for the necessity and urgency of establishing national standards in long-term care.

I am grateful to our Prime Minister for his leadership and commitment to establish national standards. We need to ensure that our most vulnerable seniors are cared for and these tragedies never happen again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the Liberal government voted against the state of Israel at the UN General Assembly for a second year in a row, contrary to our long-standing Canadian policy of opposing all resolutions that single out Israel. This is a policy that former prime minister Paul Martin had put in place. Even Ambassador Rae said he disagreed with the preamble of the resolution.

Why did the government break with long-standing Canadian policy and vote against the state of Israel at the UN General Assembly today?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Israel is a close and important friend of Canada, and Canada will always stand with Israel.

Let me also be very clear to Jewish Canadians in my riding and across the country. We stand with them, particularly today when we are seeing an appalling rise in anti-Semitism here and around the world.

• (1420)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year the Liberals broke with Canadian policy in pursuit of a UN Security Council seat. We all know how that ended. Canada lost the vote with six fewer votes than it had received in 2010, which is a damning indictment of the government's foreign policy. That is six fewer countries that see Canada as a leader on the world stage today.

When will the government restore Canada's long-standing opposition to these anti-Israel resolutions, which were upheld by previous Liberal and Conservative governments and put in place by former prime minister Paul Martin?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me speak to Canada's place in the world and to our foreign policy. Today we are living in a world where there is a worrying rise of authoritarian regimes and a worrying rise of anti-democratic populism. Our country, in that world, will always stand up for human rights and will always stand

Oral Questions

up for the rules-based international order. That may not always be popular, but that is the Canadian way.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have five names: Robert M. Dysant, Arthur T. Doyle, Charles LeBlond, Tracey K. DeWare and Marie-Claude Bélanger-Richard.

What these people have in common is that they were all appointed as judges in New Brunswick and they are all friends of the Liberal member for Beauséjour. It pays to be friends with a Liberal MP. They just have to buy him lunch, and they get a job for life.

What does the Minister of Justice consider most important in the selection process? Is it donating to the Liberal Party, or is it knowing the Liberal member for Beauséjour?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud of the process we introduced.

In 2016, we made essential reforms to the existing process, which included bringing back judicial advisory committees. This led to the appointment of 400 first-class legal experts to the bench by our government. It is a transparent and fair process that has contributed to diversity on the bench.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just recently, another lawyer, Philippe Bélanger, was appointed to the bench. The scoop is that he was not friends with the member for Beauséjour, but he was friends with the Minister of Justice and had donated close to \$10,000 to the Liberal Party. Should we be surprised? No.

In 2016, the former minister and current independent member for Vancouver Granville promised to review the judicial selection process to make it more transparent and merit-based.

Does the minister still intend to move forward with that reform?

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

Our Minister of Justice was a law professor at McGill. He is a lawyer with very strong ethics and principles. We are very proud of the judicial selection process introduced by our government. It is a transparent process, far more transparent than the one we had before.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the process is supposedly transparent and relies on a committee that includes important figures from the legal community.

That very committee suggested an experienced lawyer from Quebec. A judge even supported the candidate, and she met all the criteria, except for one: the Liberal criterion. The lawyer in question is the spouse of one of our key Conservative volunteers in the riding of Drummond.

Oral Questions

Why are the political views of candidates' spouses being taken into consideration when appointing judges?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not fully agree with the question.

The reality is that our judicial appointment process is a clear process, a transparent process, an open process, a process that has led to a more diverse judiciary. It has helped select highly qualified judges in Canada.

* * *

● (1425)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they want to defend French in Quebec, but they do not walk the talk.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister said that he supported Bill 101, but the federal government has been gutting it since 1977. This government has refused to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. The Liberals even said at the time that it was a disgrace.

Today, the Bloc is proposing a bill to make an adequate knowledge of French a condition for becoming a citizen in Quebec. The Liberals do not want that, and they will be voting against it.

At the end of the day, is the Liberal Party's real position on French in Quebec the same as the position of the member for Saint-Laurent?

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

I am obviously an anglophone, but I must say that I agree that the French language in Canada, in Quebec and in Montreal is in a very fragile position. I agree that all of us here in the House have an obligation to work to help and preserve the French language in Quebec and Montreal. This is very important to us.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it looks like the Liberals have finally agreed that they want to promote French.

They recognize that French is in decline in Quebec. We thought that if the Bloc introduced a bill in favour of French, they would support it. Instead, however, they are threatening to oppose requiring a minimum knowledge of French for citizenship in Quebec.

Their words are hard to follow, but their actions are much clearer: they are against it. Why do they have this discomfort with French?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, defending the French language and Quebec culture is a priority for our government.

I want to give an example. During the negotiations on the new NAFTA, which were very difficult, we held a very firm position, which was to not allow any changes to the cultural exemption that protects Quebec culture and the French language. We succeeded in protecting that. It was very important to us.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the COVID-19 crisis together, but the climate crisis is still going on. People are worried.

In 2007, Jack Layton introduced the first bill to combat climate change. Jack would not have been happy with the Liberal government's proposal to wait 10 years for results. People are worried now. They fear for the future, for the planet.

Is the Prime Minister committed to combatting climate change with the intention of winning?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. That is why I am very proud to say that the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act will require the federal government to meet its net-zero emissions target by 2050.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are all faced with the crisis of COVID-19, but the climate crisis is still here. People are worried about the future.

In 2007, years ago, Jack Layton proposed a bill to fight the climate crisis. It was the first of its kind. Jack would not be satisfied with the Liberal government's proposal to wait 10 years before seeing any results. People are worried right now, and they want to see a real commitment.

Will the Prime Minister commit to fighting the battle against the climate crisis as if he really wants to win it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course the Prime Minister will, and so will everyone on this side of the House.

I will ask, respectfully, the leader of the NDP, whether the NDP will commit to supporting the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act. This is landmark legislation. It sets Canada on the path to net-zero emissions by 2050. I am so proud of Canada for this legislation and I hope all members of the House will support it.

* * *

● (1430)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the crisis that is happening in Nova Scotia with the lobster fishery, if there is one file and decision that the Minister of Fisheries should have read by now, it is the Marshall decision. Shockingly, yesterday at the fisheries committee, the minister admitted she has never read it.

How is it that the Minister of Fisheries does not have the time or the interest to sit down, read and know the law on the most important file that she is dealing with?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify that.

Basically, what I was asked last night at the fisheries committee was if I had read it in its entirety. I have read the Marshall decision. I needed more context on it. I went to legal experts as well as the member for Sydney—Victoria, who is a treaty rights person, to give me more context on the decision. I have since finished reading that decision. It is an extremely important one, but what is really important is making sure we implement first nations treaty rights.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, she read it last night is basically what she is telling us.

Commercial fishermen were calling for the minister's resignation weeks ago, and now Chief Sack is also calling on her to resign. Why? She has not met with the Mi'kmaq fishers in a month. The fisheries minister does not have the time or interest to read the important legal decisions on her file, and now she cannot be bothered to meet with commercial or Mi'kmaq fishers.

Just exactly what is the fisheries minister doing to fix the crisis that is literally threatening the backbone of Nova Scotia's economy?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been actively meeting with both first nations leadership as well as commercial harvesters since the onset of this issue. I will continue to do that. I met with Chief Sack this morning, as a matter of fact. I will continue to have those very important conversations. We know that the only way forward, to make sure that we find a long-term solution to this issue, is through negotiations.

I will continue to have those conversations.

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[*Translation*]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we already know that the Liberals sent CERB cheques to prisoners. We also know that the Liberals told officials who suspected fraud to send the cheques anyway. Today, we learned that the government sent cheques to people who had not even filed income tax returns, even though they were supposed to have had an income of \$5,000 the year before.

What did the government do to ensure that every person who received money was entitled to it?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CERB has been critical from the beginning of this crisis. It has helped millions of Canadians pay their rent, clothe their children, buy school supplies and put food on the table.

There are clear rules. People who did not follow these rules will face consequences.

We have no regrets about implementing programs that were so important to all Canadians.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everybody believes that those who lost their jobs because of COVID shutdowns should have been helped with the CERB. Everyone should also believe that those hard-working people earning minimum wage bagging groceries or doing other essential work should not pay taxes to send CERB cheques to prisoners or suspected fraud cases. Now we find that the government sent out 800,000 CERB cheques to people who had not even filed taxes in the preceding year, failing to prove they were eligible for that money.

What did the government do to ensure that the money did not go to people who did not earn the right to receive it?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our income support programs have played a fundamental role in getting Canadians through the first wave of the COVID crisis, and they are going to get Canadians through the second wave.

When it comes to fraud, that is completely unacceptable. The hard-working public servants in the CRA are doing an outstanding job, and they are going to make sure that all claims are legitimate.

* * *

● (1435)

HEALTH

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the B.C. premier is set to announce province-wide travel restrictions. People live, work and look after family members between municipalities. I am hearing from constituents who are stressed out. The federal government's approving of an at-home test could help this, yet the Prime Minister says it is not his job. Actually, it is his job to ensure that Canadians have access to the best tools available to fight this virus as quickly as possible, just like other countries have.

When will at-home tests be available in British Columbia and across Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member opposite is interested in testing. In fact, we have delivered almost five million rapid tests to provinces and territories, 345,000 to B.C. We know that provinces and territories are looking at how they can best deploy these safely. We stand ready to assist them with that deployment as needed.

Oral Questions

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Ontario health minister announced the number of vaccine doses Ontario would be receiving in early 2021. However, before the day was over, the parliamentary secretary to the federal minister of health went on CTV and said the numbers were wrong. The Liberal government refuses to table a plan for vaccine distribution, leaving Canadians with mixed messages and doubt.

Why does the government not have one clear plan for Canadians when it comes to the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to thank the vaccine task force strategy, yet again, for its expert advice, which has placed Canada in an amazing position to be able to acquire effective vaccines. In fact, we have more vaccines per capita than any country in the world.

As I work with the provinces and territories to ensure we have an equitable, fair and logical distribution plan, we will be coming to Canadians with that plan. I want to thank all the provinces and territories for arranging sharing agreements to date on things like personal protective equipment and testing. That work will continue.

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[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that the Liberals vet judicial appointments using their pet partisan tool, the Liberalist, where they check political connections to find good Liberals. Today we learned that another good, generous Liberal was offered a seat on the bench. He is a long-time acquaintance of the Minister of Justice, an old acquaintance who made \$2,900 in political contributions to that very minister. As such, my question is for him.

Did this candidate receive preferential treatment?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government created an open, transparent and accountable process to identify and select highly qualified jurists.

With respect to this individual, the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner reviewed the situation and determined that there was no conflict of interest and that a recusal was not necessary.

I acted proactively. We are proud to have appointed over 400 jurists, men and women, to the bench. These are high-quality jurists.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's own actions prove that the process is partisan. No one questioned the judge's qualifications, but the minister was so afraid that the appointment would appear partisan that he delayed it for months to protect himself.

If the appointments were non-partisan, the minister would never have needed to go to the Ethics Commissioner beforehand. The problem is that the Liberals have made so many patronage appointments that even they now think it looks bad to appoint a Liberal.

The process needs to be non-partisan, non-partisan and non-partisan.

Does it need to be said in English in order to make sure that the Liberals understand?

• (1440)

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely believe that I am answering in French.

I have considered the recommendations of the judicial advisory committees, which are independent, as well as this appointment, and following consultation, it was determined that he is a serious and qualified candidate.

However, since he is a professional acquaintance—I do have some—who had made political contributions before I was appointed Minister of Justice, I consulted the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, who provided me with a response. I subsequently made the recommendation.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the G20 summit hosted by Saudi Arabia starts on Saturday. This is a unique opportunity to call for the release of Raif Badawi so that he can return to his wife and children in Quebec.

Historically, the Saudi Arabian kingdom has shown mercy by freeing prisoners during events of significant importance. Mr. Badawi has already served 80% of his sentence, and his health has suffered greatly as a result.

Does the government intend to use the G20 summit as an opportunity to call on Riyadh to make this magnanimous and humanitarian gesture?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his important question.

We in the House are all gravely concerned about Raif Badawi. I believe I can say that on behalf of all Canadians as well.

We have raised this issue privately and publicly on several occasions. We will continue to do so at every opportunity, because human rights are a cornerstone of Canada's foreign policy.

I want to thank the member for his question. We will continue to use every opportunity to bring attention to the case of Raif Badawi.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Saint-Laurent's comments and lack of sensitivity about the decline of French in Quebec are shocking.

However, we have not seen very many Liberal members stand up to condemn her comments and even fewer Liberal members from Quebec. Their silence is disturbing and it confirms more and more what everyone is thinking: Many Liberal caucus members think the same way as the member for Saint-Laurent.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and immediately take the member for Saint-Laurent off the Standing Committee on Official Languages, yes or no?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to say what I thought about her remarks.

The member apologized and, of course, as we stated in the throne speech, we will always be there to protect the French fact in Canada and recognize that French is a minority language that needs more support.

How strange it is to see the Conservative Party suddenly become a great champion of the French fact in Canada.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot even answer a simple question about removing the member for Saint-Laurent, who does not believe that French is in decline. That is what she thinks, and that is what the Quebec president of the Liberal Party thinks.

We will take no lessons from the minister of the two official languages or the Prime Minister when they claim to be defending francophones across the country, including in Quebec.

I would also like to hear the other members from Quebec stand up once and for all to defend francophones and Quebeckers. I am talking about members from Quebec like the members from Louis-Hébert, Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Compton—Stanstead, Sherbrooke, Brome—Missisquoi and Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

They need to stand up and they need to condemn the comments—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members from Quebec—and I see many here, including the member for Papineau and the member for Ahuntsic-Cartierville, basically from all over Quebec—are standing up every day and defending francophones, the French fact, our language and our culture.

We do not need any lectures from the Conservatives, who cut the CBC's funding, who took francophones to court and who let the provinces cut back on francophone services. We will not be lectured by them.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let's tone things down because it seems like the government House leader is about to blow his top.

Let's look at the facts. The Liberals have been in power for five years, and in that time, nothing has been done for official languages. Canadians and Quebeckers alike can all come up with

countless examples, such as WE Charity, labelling, and text alerts sent in English only.

If the Prime Minister is truly sincere and a man of his word, then why does he not introduce the bill on modernizing Canada's two official languages before Christmas, as requested by every organization advocating for Canada's two official languages?

• (1445)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that Halloween just passed, but I want to remind hon. members of the horrors of the Conservative Party when it comes to official languages.

The Montfort hospital, the Campus Saint-Jean, and the French-language university in Ontario are examples of Conservative cuts to French services. The ghosts of the court challenges program and Supreme Court justices haunt the Conservative Party.

When my colleague brings up our legacy on official languages, I have no problem telling him everything we have done, such as making an additional \$500-million investment in official languages, protecting Radio-Canada, appointing bilingual judges to the Supreme Court, ensuring that French is protected—

[English]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today Canadians learned that a lawyer who contributed thousands of dollars to the justice minister's political campaigns was appointed to be a judge by the Liberals.

People need to have trust in the justice system, which must be free from even the slightest perception of partisan considerations in the appointments process. Last month, the Liberals said that accessing their party database containing donor information when vetting judges had nothing to do with partisanship.

In light of today's news, how can the Liberals possibly defend those claims about merit-based judicial appointments?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want candidates from all backgrounds and political stripes to apply to the bench.

Political donations are neither an advantage nor a disadvantage when applying to the bench. In fact, the Ethics Commissioner said, "Making donations to a political party, or to a particular riding, does not indicate in itself a friendship. It is perfectly legal to make political donations."

Oral Questions

I proactively went to the Ethics Commissioner. In this case, this candidate went through the process and was recommended by the judicial appointments committee. I am proud of this appointment.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no one should have to face the impossible choice between paying rent or filling a prescription, but one in five Canadians is not taking the medicine they need because they cannot afford it.

The Liberals have been promising pharmacare for 23 years, but Canadians are still facing sky-high prescription costs. Liberals say the right things, but when it comes time to act, they put the profits of big pharmaceutical and insurance companies ahead of what Canadians need.

Will the Prime Minister finally back up his talk with action and support the NDP pharmacare bill to deliver universal, public pharmacare for all?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has, in fact, done more in a decade than any government before it to lower the costs of prescription pharmaceuticals in this country, and we are going to do more.

As members know, we have been proceeding to ensure that we do have a universal pharmacare program. Budget 2019 allotted monies for the Canada drug agency. We are working on that right now. We are taking the steps necessary to work with provinces and territories, which will deliver the pharmacare programs in their jurisdictions.

I agree with the member that nobody should have to make that choice.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding are deeply concerned about how we are going to address climate change and how we can retool our economy for the future. Leading environmental NGOs such as My Sea to Sky and businesses such as Carbon Engineering and Nexii know that this is not only a moral imperative but that it also presents tremendous economic opportunities. In the last campaign, we promised to introduce legislation that would ensure our government and all future governments will fight climate change and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change please update the House on this important work and how we are working with Canadians to build a better, cleaner future?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country for his efforts in addressing climate change.

Earlier today I was very pleased to introduce the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, which would establish a legally binding process for this government and future governments to set

and meet Canada's net-zero emissions goal between now and 2050, based on the best available science.

Over 120 countries, a thousand businesses, two thousand chambers of commerce, 452 cities and some of the largest investors in the world have committed to a net-zero future. We will work with members and parties in this House who are committed to achieving climate change goals and moving forward on this important step to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and protecting the future for future generations.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2015 the headlines read that the PM had pledged to eradicate all drinking water advisories in first nations communities by March 2021.

Fast-forward five years and the Prime Minister will not commit to keeping his promised timelines. This has huge implications for first nations such as Neskantaga, which has been evacuated because of the drinking water.

The government made a solemn promise to this community. Will it guarantee the people of Neskantaga will be home for Christmas with safe water?

● (1450)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak to chief and council yesterday. Currently, members should know that the timeline for getting back into the community would be early December.

Obviously, with COVID we are being extra careful to prevent contamination in vectors of the spread of COVID in the community. However, there is currently a cycle of 14 days in the new plant that Indigenous Services Canada built over the last two years. That cycle needs to be respected, and testing needs to come back in a good way.

If those tests are positive, and we are cautiously optimistic about them, the community will be back, we hope, by early December, but this is a decision that will be made by the community.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this water crisis drags on, the people and the children of Neskantaga have been moved 400 kilometres away to Thunder Bay, Ontario. They have been relegated to hotel rooms far away from home.

Their youth are going through a difficult time. Lyndon, a 12-year-old, said he feels invisible, stating, “We're not animals or things. We are humans, like you guys.”

Can members imagine someone feeling that way? Again, let me ask the minister, without weasel words, will the young people be home for Christmas?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said to the member, we are cautiously optimistic. This is a decision that will be taken in conjunction with the community and not dictated by Indigenous Services Canada.

I would ask the member what she would have said to that community, with the abhorrent investment the Conservative Party did of \$300,000 a year over 10 years. What situation would it be in today had we not invested \$16 million to build a new plant?

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying more for food, and it could get worse this winter. Last March, grocery sales were up \$2.5 billion over February. While grocery giants bank this windfall, they continue to gouge farmers and processors with fees that they say are because of the pandemic.

Will the Prime Minister tell his rich, grocery giant friends to stop gouging suppliers that are putting Canadian families' food security at risk?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand the frustration the member has raised and the impact this is having on grocers, food producers and processors. They have played a critical role during the pandemic and so have essential workers across the country.

We share these concerns. That is why we are going to continue to work with the provinces and territories to make sure we move forward in a manner to protect our workers and, more importantly, the supply chain when it comes to grocers.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what about protecting farmers and processors? Loblaws, Walmart and Metro want to gouge farmers and processors. Loblaws saw record third-quarter profits of about \$400 million. Metro's fourth-quarter profits were up 11.4%. However, they want farmers and processors to pay for store expansions while groceries for families from Streetsville, Pointe-au-Baril and across Canada get more expensive.

When will the Prime Minister tell his rich, grocery giant friends to pay for store improvements out of their own windfalls and stop putting Canadian food security and affordability at risk?

Mr. Neil Ellis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing to see grocery stores imposing these costly fees that fall on Canadian producers, who are working hard to feed Canadians. We are open to discussing the issue at the next meeting of the ministers of agriculture, which will take place shortly. However, contracts between suppliers and buyers are in the provincial and territorial juris-

dictions. We encourage our provincial and territorial counterparts to examine this matter.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government reiterated today that it wants to attain net-zero emissions by 2050, but there are no solutions in its bill to get us there.

The government has not set itself a greenhouse gas reduction target, and it is not requiring itself to do anything for 10 years, until 2030. There is nothing for 2025. It is even giving itself the right to change these future targets at any time if it does not reach them. It is not required to be accountable to an independent authority. There is no accountability.

Is that the Liberals' environmental strategy: no plan, no target, no oversight?

• (1455)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act will hold the federal government accountable for its commitment to attain net-zero emissions by 2050.

Many countries are accelerating their transition to a net-zero economy, and Canada cannot afford to fall behind. We must use climate action as an economic opportunity. That is why achieving net-zero emissions is not just a plan for a healthier environment, it is a plan for a cleaner and more competitive economy.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government needs to move beyond its fine words and take action.

The government is introducing its bill to fight climate change, but meanwhile, it is also promising to pressure Joe Biden to protect the dirty Keystone XL pipeline, and it is approving 100 offshore oil drilling initiatives without environmental impact assessments. That is the action the Liberals have been taking. They have had a year to put together a strong, binding plan to fight climate change.

My question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Can he look us in the eye and tell us that this plan will really enable us to meet our Paris targets by 2030?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we put a plan in place to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Oral Questions

It is a historic plan for Canada. We are going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 270 megatonnes by 2023. We promised to come up with a plan to accelerate progress in the fight against climate change. We will present a new plan in the coming weeks.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Bar Association has said that the use of the Liberal database to vet judicial applicants raises doubts about the independence of the judicial appointment process. We have now learned that the Minister of Justice appointed someone to the Quebec Superior Court who donated thousands of dollars to his nomination campaign and that of his riding association.

Why is being a Liberal as important as being a lawyer when it comes to federal judicial appointments?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only criteria to be appointed to the bench is quality and the only consideration is diversity. Each candidate passes through a judicial appointments committee that has no access to any partisan data. Then we vet those candidates very carefully to make sure they are of the highest quality.

I am proud of the judicial appointments we have made, the over 400 of them, in a transparent and responsible process. Over 55% of them are women and there is a high degree of diversity. It is unprecedented and I am proud of it.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, has the government used its own tools to get any kind of federal help?

I highly doubt it, because if it had, the government would realize how much paperwork is involved in doing so: one form here, another there, sorry, application denied because such and such form was forgotten, please start over.

For example, Richard Savoie of Sainte-Marie had to apply for his daughter's social insurance number three times because, for one thing, he forgot to include a copy of the back of a document.

Does the government not see the appeal of simplifying things?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that we will always work toward cutting excessive red tape and regulations.

We will work with my colleague to ensure that the people of his riding get good service. In the meantime, if they have more specific questions, they can always get in touch with the Canada Economic Development team in the beautiful region of Beauce, which is there to support business owners and sometimes help them navigate the intricacies of the federal government.

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government triggered Australia's World Trade Organization challenge to the federal excise exemption on 100% Canadian-made wines when it implemented an escalator tax in 2017. As a result, hundreds of wineries and thousands of Canadian jobs are now at risk. The Liberals caused this mess and it is now on them to fix it.

Will the Minister of Finance commit today to supporting our wine industry in budget 2020-21 with an industry-supported program that will protect our proud wineries, wine businesses and the great Canadian jobs they create?

● (1500)

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree that the wine industry in Canada is vibrant. It is full of incredible entrepreneurs and producers.

We are really pleased that we came to an arrangement with Australia on this very matter. We look forward to continuing to support Canadian wineries and producers in our country.

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COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Cape Bretoners have been very fortunate in keeping COVID cases low. The Atlantic bubble has been extremely successful, and I thank Maritimers for their vigilance and the commitment to keeping each other safe.

The federal government has been a partner with Nova Scotia from the very beginning, and it is great to see all levels of government working together to combat COVID-19. Can the minister update us on the supports that the Government of Canada has provided to Nova Scotia throughout the pandemic?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his hard work and advocacy for the people of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia and the Atlantic provinces have been an international leader in slowing community spread of COVID-19, and we have been there to support them from the start. We have sent Nova Scotia 70,992 rapid tests and almost 1.5 million items of personal protective equipment to date. Through the safe restart agreement, Nova Scotia received \$290 million to support testing, contact tracing, data gathering and vulnerable people in long-term care.

We have been there for Nova Scotia and we will continue to be there for Nova Scotia.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, the House voted to instruct the Canada Revenue Agency to postpone compliance audits on small businesses receiving the wage subsidy. Canadians expect their government to respect the will of the House and its democratically elected members.

My question is for the Minister of Small Business. Will she stand up for small businesses that are fighting for their very survival and instruct her government to respect the will of Parliament and postpone wage subsidy audits until next June?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government took quick, decisive action to support Canadian workers and the businesses that employ them. The Canada emergency wage subsidy has clear eligibility criteria as well as a verification process for extraordinary or unusual applications. The CRA administers the wage subsidy and conducts independent, impartial assessments according to the eligibility criteria. I thank my colleague for bringing this issue to my attention. However, I cannot comment on specific cases, so I encourage him to follow up with our offices.

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[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recent storms that ripped through my constituency especially ravaged the remote community of Pelee Island with high winds and waves. Isolated in the middle of Lake Erie 14 kilometres south of the mainland, Pelee Island has no fibre links and intermittent cellphone coverage when the power goes out. It does not even have 911 for any emergency services. For Pelee Island, reliable connectivity is not an Internet line; it is a lifeline.

When will the government be there for Pelee Island and deliver this desperately needed service?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely right. Too many Canadians at the moment do not have access to this essential lifeline.

I would encourage him to reach out to my team and me. We will work with him to see if the rapid response stream, the \$150 million we set aside for immediate connectivity projects, would be eligible for his community. If that does not work, we can see if the core UBF program of about \$1 billion, which includes cellphone access, would work for his community.

Every Canadian deserves access to this essential service. Our government is there for Canadians, and together we can connect every Canadian to the Internet.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have all witnessed COVID-19 tragedies, families torn apart,

Oral Questions

young people losing hope, stress over money troubles. There are long lists of phone numbers to call for help, but in times of crisis, every second counts. For people in distress, help must be easy to find and access. A 988 hotline can save lives. A 988 hotline must save lives.

Will the Prime Minister help us prevent suicide and support the creation of a 988 hotline?

• (1505)

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that the member opposite is raising the deep concern that we all have for the mental health of Canadians. In fact, suicide prevention is top of mind for us as well.

As the member opposite knows, we have been supporting provinces and territories with additional funding for mental health services on top of the [wellnesstogether.ca](https://www.wellnesstogether.ca) resources that are available to all Canadians free of charge. I have committed to his colleague that I will look into how we can accelerate work on a single-access point for suicide prevention.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is an important day. Our government kept a promise we made to Canadians and is taking measures to protect our environment. The science is clear: we need to achieve net-zero emissions to stave off the worst effects of climate change.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change explain to the House how this law will enable the current government and future governments to achieve net-zero emissions?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for her work on climate action.

The Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act will legally require the current government and future governments to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. It will set five-year emissions reduction targets and require plans for reaching those targets. It provides for a process based on accountability and transparency.

Business of the House

We are taking an important step toward net-zero emissions, and we fully support the direction that is already being taken by our businesses and innovative industry.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, thousands of shoes have been placed on Parliament Hill representing those who died of COVID-19 in long-term care homes across Canada.

For-profit, long-term care homes run by Revera Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of the Public Sector Pension Investment Board, are among the worst in the country for COVID deaths. The Public Service Alliance has called on PSP to end its investments in these appalling facilities.

The government can end the suffering that our seniors and people with disabilities are facing in homes owned by Revera Inc. now. Will the Prime Minister commit to ending the for-profit nature of long-term care homes in Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I can speak for all of us to say that we must do better to protect the lives of people who are living in long-term care and communal living settings. It is very important that we work together with provinces and territories to do so, which is why the safe restart agreement included \$740 million to provinces and territories to strengthen their processes to protect against infection from COVID-19.

We will do more. The Speech from the Throne committed to national standards on long-term care, and that is exactly what we intend to do with provinces and territories.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, travel agents worry that they will have to return thousands of dollars in commission under the new airline bailout plan. Independent travel agents who have already paid back thousands in earned commission from refunded airline tickets are worried that they will owe thousands more after the minister suggested that any kind of government bailout for the airline industry would hinge on companies issuing refunds to customers.

Can the minister please explain what protections the government has in place for travel agents under the new bailout plan?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I made very clear on November 8, an aid package to the air sector would require certain conditions with the airlines and one of those conditions was to reimburse ticket holders who had been given vouchers, and that is something that we are going to do. We are beginning those negotiations with the air sector. I cannot go into details about how those negotiations will proceed, but our initial position has been made very clear.

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here comes the traditional Thursday question about the business of the House.

We know that we are in the last stretch before the holidays, with have four consecutive weeks of parliamentary business here in Ottawa. I would like to know what the government has in store for parliamentary business for the next two weeks, and I would especially like to know if the government is going to respond to the proposal we made yesterday to hold a take-note debate about the quality of French in Montreal.

● (1510)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my kind colleague for—

[English]

The Speaker: Order. We would like to hear what is asked and what is replied. I want everyone, if they are going to talk, to please whisper or maybe go to the lobby.

The hon. government House leader.

[Translation]

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my kind colleague for the extremely important and very useful question he repeats every week on the status of parliamentary business.

This afternoon we will continue debate at second reading of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act. Tomorrow we will resume debate at third reading of Bill C-3, an act to amend the Judges Act. Monday of next week will be devoted to the study of Bill C-8, on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action number 94. On Tuesday, we will begin our study of Bill C-11, an act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act, which was introduced earlier this week by my colleague, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), I would like to designate Tuesday, November 24 for consideration in committee of the whole of the main estimates for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Thursday, November 26 for the Department of Health.

[Translation]

Lastly, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That a take-note debate on the status of the French language in Montreal be held, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, on Wednesday, November 25, 2020, and that, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House: (a) any member rising to speak during the debate may indicate to the Chair that he or she will be dividing his or her time with another member; and (b) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

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. minister moving the motion will please say nay.

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)

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a second point of order, but first I want to thank the government for making the right decision about holding the take-note debate on the quality of French, which, as we know, sometimes vigorously animates our question period. I congratulate the government on this.

My second point of order is on a somewhat more delicate topic.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that all rules must be respected in this House, even though this is a hybrid Parliament, with a virtual portion and a portion in the House. In this regard, I would like to point out that we should be very vigilant about parliamentarians in the House who, at times, may use their telephones. I remind you that, in the House, we cannot have conversations on the telephone. We can write, text and read, but we cannot speak directly to someone on the phone.

I want to bring this to your attention. I believe I have seen one particular member do this on several occasions. I urge respect for the rules, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I would like to thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent and remind all members that using a mobile or other phone is not allowed in the House.

I thank the hon. member for raising this point.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BROADCASTING ACT

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

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth and to the Minis-

Government Orders

ter of Canadian Heritage (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also applaud the minister's plan to instruct the CRTC to ensure that contributions from online broadcasting services flow to French-language and indigenous creators. I agree with his suggestion that the CRTC consider using incentive-based tools to encourage greater support for creators from equity seeking groups.

The bill would amend the Broadcasting Act to assert that the Canadian broadcasting system should, through its programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests of all Canadians, including Canadians from racialized communities and Canadians of diverse racialized backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, abilities and disabilities, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and ages, and reflect their circumstances and aspirations, including equal rights, the linguistic duality, the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society, and the special place of indigenous peoples within that society

• (1515)

[Translation]

This type of language sends a clear message. It underscores that diversity and inclusion are fundamental for our society and that this must be reflected in our broadcasting system.

[English]

This message is also filled with hopes and dreams that commit us to working together to strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada. This work cannot wait. That is why I am pleased to see that the bill also emphasizes that programming that reflects the indigenous cultures of Canada, programming that is accessible without barriers to people with disabilities and a range of broadcasting services in English and in French must be made available to Canadians regardless of resource availability.

[Translation]

Before wrapping up, I want to go back to my initial remarks and my recognition of the indigenous peoples who were here long before us. In my opinion, this bill is particularly important for indigenous peoples.

[English]

As highlighted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and in the calls for justice issued by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, broadcasting can play a key role in promoting and protecting indigenous languages, arts, cultures, traditions and perspectives.

Government Orders

The bill would support indigenous creators so that they can tell their own stories in their own words. It emphasizes the need for indigenous-run broadcasting services. The bill would contribute to fulfilling the commitments Canada made in committing to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I am hopeful it will move us further along the path toward reconciliation. We have much to learn and discover from deep, vast and rich indigenous cultures and voices. Hearing them, allowing us to live the stories they tell, will not only have us in awe. It will contribute to reconciliation and mutual understanding.

Broadcasting has the ability to remind us where we came from, to hold a mirror up to our current selves, showing us the good parts and the bad. It also has the ability to point the way to a better future for everyone. This bill points a way toward a Canada that embraces diversity and promotes inclusion. That is the reason I urge all hon. members in the House to support the bill.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question about the general application of the bill. I am from the Okanagan. The Okanagan Nation Alliance includes many indigenous first nation bands in my area, the Similkameen area and the Colville band in the United States. Much of their culture predates Canada and the United States.

How would this law then apply if a Colville band member or Okanagan band member were to film stories that predate Canada or the United States in Washington state or Colville tribal grounds? Would that count as Canadian content even though first nations see themselves as part of the Okanagan Nation Alliance? I would like some clarity from the member.

• (1520)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, that is a really good question. I assume that type of conversation will arise at committee when we talk about the bill in further detail.

I agree that indigenous history is not limited to the land that is currently Canada. Certainly indigenous nations and various different indigenous peoples walked across borders that did not exist then. It is really important that we recognize that. I am so grateful that we have so many incredible indigenous content creators across our country on new technologies, like Instagram. I follow so many and I learn so much. Earlier this month, my friend from Sydney—Victoria sent me a video so that I could learn a little more about treaty rights in Canada.

I am constantly learning, as we all are. This is certainly one of those things that we need to take into consideration. Canadian history, as we call it, includes the last 160 years or so, but the land that we are so fortunate to be on, to gather on and thank indigenous people for allowing us to share with them, its history is far greater than that.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member and I collaborated on a cross-partisan video talking about the need for Canadians, all of us, to come together to follow public health guidelines. I want to thank the member for his leadership on that.

We are in a public health crisis. Right now cultural workers and local media workers are scared about job losses, because of unfair

competition from web giants. They were expecting the government to take concrete action.

The Liberals must ensure that web giants like Netflix are contributing enough in the creation of French-language content, that they contribute as much as local broadcasters and that these funds are administered independently and transparently. However, the secret deal with Netflix and the federal government's refusal to subject Netflix to the same tax rules as our local companies show that the Liberals are still too close to the web giants.

Could the member comment on his party's close relationships with these web giants?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, of course, I always appreciate the opportunity to collaborate in a multipartisan and non-partisan way with members like my colleague from Victoria.

This is a good question. For the first time, the bill actually recognizes the French fact and the importance of investing in francophone stories and music. I hope that encourages people, including those who are learning French, like me and my colleague from Victoria, but also ensures that a portion of this funding is devoted to the creation, availability and discovery of francophone programming.

Broadcasting is absolutely an essential medium for sharing our experiences with each other, but at the same time this is about competition and the competitive nature of the media landscape around the world. As much as we need to work with producers and the platforms, we need to make sure they are paying their share. After looking at the bill, I am really confident that we are going to make sure the web giants pay their share and contribute in a real way, not just a performative way but a real way, to the viability and competitiveness of Canadian media from producers here in Canada.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here in the chamber this afternoon. I will be splitting my time with my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

[*Translation*]

It is an honour to rise to debate Bill C-10. I want to take this opportunity to discuss an important issue that was raised by several members, namely, the best way to support our creators, including francophone creators.

*Government Orders**[English]*

I want to first remind the House why the legislation is so important. Historically, under the Canadian broadcasting system, traditional broadcasting services, such as radio, TV and cable, were required to fund Canadian content, our stories and our songs. However, the emergence of online broadcasting services, such as Netflix, Crave, Spotify and QUB Musique, which are not subject to the same types of regulatory requirements as traditional services, has resulted in a regulatory imbalance that jeopardizes the future of Canadian content funding.

The bill seeks to ensure that traditional and online broadcasting services are appropriate for Canada's creative sector. Of course these contributions must benefit a wide range of Canadian creators and consumers, including francophones across the country, as I heard from my colleagues in the opposition.

- (1525)

[Translation]

I now want to speak about the issue of support for francophone creators and French-language content produced by francophone minority communities.

First, it is important to recognize that this is a key issue and that the concerns expressed by stakeholders are entirely legitimate. We must not forget about the minority status of francophones in North America, which is dominated by the English world.

Online broadcasting giants like Netflix and Spotify will not necessarily consider the needs of francophones in Canada, whether they live in Quebec or in a minority community in Canada. However, we know that television and radio are vitally important to language, culture and the identity of the francophone minority in North America.

It goes without saying that measures are needed to support and promote francophone history and music. We agree on that, especially now that online broadcasters have turned Canada's broadcasting sector upside down, and the French-language market is no exception.

Online broadcasters present unique challenges regarding the availability and promotion of online content in French, and especially content produced by our francophone minority communities. I want to point out that 47% of francophones watch primarily English content on Netflix. That is a departure from traditional television, where 92% of the francophone market tunes in to French-language programming.

Similarly, the appetite for English-language films and audiovisual productions has been increasing for years, as has funding from foreign investors, but the average budget of French-language productions has decreased, and these productions receive little funding from foreign investors.

On the music and digital platforms front, in 2017 there were just six French Canadians in the top 1,000 most popular streaming artists in Canada.

[English]

Obviously we must act, but how? Some have proposed to include quotas or mandatory investment thresholds for French-language content in the Broadcasting Act.

At first glance, this may seem like the best way to remedy the problem, but what is it really? The fact of including a mandatory investment threshold in the act fixes it permanently and, as the Minister of Canadian Heritage rightly pointed out, the minimum is likely to become the maximum.

There is no reason to cut funding for French-language content in this way. A better way to do this is to give instructions to the CRTC, telling it to ensure that an appropriate portion of the funding is devoted to the creation of French-language programming and to take into account the difficulties inherent in the creation and broadcasting of French-language programming, particularly in minority communities.

This is how our government suggests we proceed. Regulation is a flexible tool that allows action to be taken that is in tune with technological advances, the development of industry and the values of Canadian society. It should be noted that the CRTC has long overseen the application of a rigorous regulatory framework of traditional services to support and promote French-language content. The CRTC's record is unambiguous. It has demonstrated a firm commitment to the imposition of regulations that ensure support for francophone creators.

Thanks to the CRTC's efforts, for the past 10 years the volume of French-language television production has been stable and represents 25% of the total volume of Canadian television production. The efforts of the CRTC have also served to promote French-language music. French-language radio stations must devote at least 65% of their weekly programming to this purpose, from popular music to French-language music. The CRTC can be expected to put in place an equally stringent regulatory framework for online broadcasters. It will ensure that it provides fair and equitable support for Canadian content in both official languages and that it takes into account the specific needs of francophone creators across Canada.

We all agree that action must be taken to support francophone creators and French-language content across Canada, its primordial, and also all creators and content creators in Canada. Our bill and the instructions it gives will give the CRTC all the tools it needs to ensure that funding and regulations support Canadian content in both official languages, but also indigenous, multicultural, real Canadian content and just a window into Hollywood.

This is the best approach to ensure that Canada's creators can continue to create audio and audiovisual works that reflect who we are as a country. The creation of content in both official languages is an essential cultural objective. Regardless of technological or other advances in the broadcasting sector, this modern and equitable legislative and regulatory framework will provide unequivocal support to broadcasters, producers and creators across Canada.

Government Orders

I encourage all members of this honourable House to hastily send the bill to committee to be improved and to deliver real changes to the broadcasting sector, which it has been requesting for so long.

• (1530)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to pay all my respects to my colleague. I have a lot of fun with him and a lot of respect when we work together in the parliamentary committee. I also want to pay all my respect for the quality of his French. The member is working very hard on the quality of his French, like some of my colleagues from B.C. I deeply appreciate it when each and every member of Parliament tries the best to speak his or her second language. French is the second language for an anglophone and English is my second language because I am a francophone.

[*Translation*]

My question has to do with the two official languages and the bill being debated today. The member talked about a number of aspects of this bill, but there was one that he left out. The Liberals often boast about how there will be a lot of new online productions, but the bill does not contain any requirements relating to Canada's two official languages.

Why?

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for those very kind comments. I encourage all members of the House to have a vigorous debate at this stage of the legislative process. Let us get the bill to committee, where the committee members can put forward their amendments and ideas and the full committee can rigorously debate those. Let us always try to improve all legislation that comes forth from this honourable House.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec culture is at the heart of the Bloc Québécois's mission.

Broadcasting is no doubt the most effective tool to disseminate culture and help define the national identity. Obviously, the Bloc Québécois supports the modernization of the Broadcasting Act, given the astounding evolution of information and communication technologies.

However, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters is concerned. According to the CAB, 50 radio stations could shut down in the next four to six months and 150 others could follow suit in the next 18 months.

What does the government plan to do about those losses?

• (1535)

[*English*]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, a vibrant Canadian cultural sector in both official languages is very important to me. I am excited and proud to say that my children are enrolled in French immersion and are learning French.

With respect to the hon. member's questions and comments, we of course want a vigorous debate on how we can strengthen and

maintain all our services in both official languages and truly be the bilingual country we are and strive to be on a daily basis.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a person who represents a very rural and remote riding, one thing that concerns me greatly is how important our local Canadian content is. We know the Yale report outlined clearly that Google and Facebook were receiving nearly 75% of online advertising revenue in Canada, which really leaves local television and newspapers receiving only 8.5% of that Internet advertising.

When I think about the local papers in my riding and how important they are, I want to ensure they get the support they need. Could the member talk about why the government continues to push this further down the line when what we really need is for these web giants to pay their fair share so our local content can be saved?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, we all need to support our local newspapers.

When I was a young individual, I delivered the Prince Rupert Daily News door to door. That was great content for households in the hometown in which I grew up.

Today we need to modernize many aspects of our legislative framework in telecommunications and broadcasting. Bill C-10 is one part of that.

Let us get the bill to committee stage where there can be a vigorous debate. We know that with the world evolving as it is and with technological change, it is very important our legislative frameworks and structures correspond to that and that we continue to update them.

Canadian content is very important for me, for our government and for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the parliamentary secretary comment on why this is so important now? According to some statistics I have, 32% of streamers are between the ages of 25 and 35, and 22% are between the ages of 35 and 45. It seems that the older we get the less likely we are to listen to online content, but the younger generations in particular do.

Why is it so important to implement this now, given that it is the younger generations that are using online content for those experiences?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, we see the trends for content consumption and the platforms that are utilized. Currently, online undertakings that deliver audio and audiovisual content are exempt from licensing. We want to ensure the regulatory requirements that the traditional broadcasters and platforms have are extended to those online undertakings. We need to ensure a vigorous framework for broadcasters, which is what we are doing with Bill C-10.

I again encourage all my hon. colleagues to get the bill to committee stage so the learned committee members can have a vigorous debate and put forth even more ideas that could potentially improve the bill, and have the process to continue.

Government Orders

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge for sharing his time and for his willingness to work with other members of Parliament across the nation.

I am pleased to speak today in support of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act. It is sad that in the digital age in which we are living, the law is rarely able to keep up with technological advancements. This digital revolution, referred to as the fourth industrial revolution, is characterized by a pace of breakthroughs that we have never seen before. Every industry in every country around the world is being disrupted. As a result, it is impacting production, management and governance.

A 2016 paper from the World Economic Forum on the fourth industrial revolution makes one point very clear. The only way for governance and regulation to work in such a complicated environment is to operate with a clear foundation of values rather than playing regulatory catch-up. This is the essence of the bill.

With audio and audiovisual content being offered for mass consumption online over the past two decades, Canada has been exposed when it comes to fostering Canadian content, as has been done for decades through the CRTC. Supporting the telling of Canadian stories, giving a platform to Canadian voices and sharing Canadian perspectives for our population from coast to coast has always been a challenging issue with Canada being located next to the largest producer of content in the world; that being the United States.

The CRTC is unique in that it is not only a regulatory agency but, rather, a key component of our Canadian cultural landscape. It serves as the primary actor in facilitating Canadian content production to the broadcasting sector. It is our path toward preserving local culture as well as our national identity.

Since the Broadcasting Act was last updated in 1991, Canadians' consumption of content has changed dramatically. Millions of Canadians have cut the cable, so to speak, and are receiving their news and entertainment through online platforms. As an example, as of 2019, Netflix is present in 62% of Canadian households, with other streaming services continuing to grow year after year.

To give some context on how large digital content consumption has become in Canada, it is estimated that revenues for Canada's digital media market will hit over \$4.7 billion in 2020. This number is skyrocketing when compared to other forms of media consumption, such as television and radio. In other words, updating our Broadcasting Act is long overdue.

The streaming that we now consume in the comfort of our homes carries stories from across the globe as consumers have never had more choices and access to such a diversity of content. However, that also means that Canada's history of promoting and supporting Canadian content must be extended into the realm that so many of us rely upon daily.

● (1540)

We are lawmakers, and we have an obligation to not unduly disadvantage Canadian content creators in the digital era. We have an obligation to do everything in our power to ensure the diverse voices

that make up our country, including indigenous peoples, racialized communities and persons with disabilities, have the same ability to share their stories as the international content producers that are so readily available to us now.

This is where the intent of the Broadcasting Act becomes so apparent. As mentioned, our lives are filled with receiving and consuming online content. We might wake up in the morning and check the news headlines on our phones or other digital devices, which of course was a role filled in the past by news publications: independent media.

We might now stream music on our commute to work, as opposed to traditional radio that might have filled our vehicles or headphones. In the evening when we get home from work, we might then search through our favourite streaming service to find a show or movie we can relax to. This is just a very general snapshot of the types of activities and choices of content in 2020.

Of course, this is particularly heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, where social interaction is now regularly replaced by consumption of this content.

Ultimately, Bill C-10 is defined by the principles of equality, inclusivity and, most importantly, by Canadian content creators and sustainability. While this legislation would modernize the CRTC's enforcement powers and update the oversight and information-sharing provisions it has available, ultimately it is about creating opportunity through collaboration. It is about mandating the streaming services that want access to the Canadian marketplace to meet certain broadcasting obligations that provide financial support to allow for more Canadian content to be produced and consumed.

While members across the House might attempt to characterize this bill as an example of over-regulation or limiting free speech, the reality is far different. Simply put, this is an update to our Broadcasting Act that would allow Canadian stories to be produced. It would allow Canadian consumers to have ample access to such stories and, most importantly, it would allow our unique cultural identities to have ongoing security and opportunity in the rapidly evolving digital world.

In conclusion, I hope this bill is widely supported by all parties in the House as it is an update that goes beyond politics or ideology. For the most part, technology moves far faster than we do as legislators. This legislation is a tool that would ensure we are always ahead of the curve in preserving our diverse voices in the age of digitization. This is about ensuring Canadian content can thrive for generations to come, and ultimately, there should be no party or member in the House who can argue with this fundamental principle.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak on this important piece of legislation today.

● (1545)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite. He is from British Columbia, and I certainly understand many of his positions, but I do not agree with them, and I will say why.

Government Orders

First of all, many members today have said that they specifically support this because they want to see diversity, they want to hear indigenous voices, and they want to hear young people and have their voices magnified. However, Irene Berkowitz and her colleagues put out the “Watchtime Canada” report last year, which said that there are 160,000 Canadian YouTube creators who produce content, and 40,000 of them are monetizing: that is, they are actually drawing funds from YouTube's model, and they employ 28,000 Canadians.

The problem we have here is that the member and many in his caucus believe that Google, the owner of YouTube, is a broadcaster in the traditional sense. If this government forces this legislation onto the CRTC, then those YouTube creators, who actually create the content, may be forced to adhere to these rules. They may then elect to actually have their Canadian-drawn content pushed out to other parts of the world, and would not advertise, would not show up here in Canada, because they would not qualify under the rules.

Does the member understand that, by changing this, it is a misperception that YouTube would somehow respond by forcing all of these small ma-and-pa content creators to change their business model? I think the member is mistaken.

• (1550)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for having his own opinions, and he is welcome to have them.

Certainly, when it comes to this regulation, the broadcasting bill that we brought forward is long overdue to make sure that we are able to protect our Canadian identity, that we are able to protect our Canadian culture, that we are able to protect indigenous voices and racialized voices, and this will—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize the importance of local radio.

Local broadcasting is essential because local information cannot be covered in national news reports. Local radio stations are needed to cover municipal and school news. They also mean local journalists, local artists who can send in their productions, and local jobs.

These radio stations could be decimated over the next few months if we do not take action. In my riding, there are two radio stations that I love to listen to. They are Radio Acton and Boom FM. What will I tell those stations about targeted support and the more flexible regulations that they need in this time of crisis?

Why is there nothing about that in Bill C-10?

[*English*]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, in fact, on the issue the member raised, I met with a local media outlet just last week that produces the local paper, and it had a similar concern that the hon. member raised. Earlier, an NDP member from British Columbia raised the same issue.

I fully support the member's thought process, and this bill is a positive step moving forward. When it comes to local papers and local radio, I am fully supportive of that. Certainly, in the coming months we will have legislation, if we all work together, to help those local papers and radio stations in our communities.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to comment on the fact that the Liberals are promising to rebalance the market between the traditional TV platforms and the new digital platforms, but they are kicking those decisions off to the CRTC.

How can they live up to those promises?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in my speech, once this bill has gone through the House, the government is allotting more money and more resources to make sure that we are able to take care of those issues that the hon. member has mentioned.

* * *

• (1555)

POINTS OF ORDER

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The purpose of my intervention this afternoon is to address the House on the report tabled today by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. Throughout my 25-year career as a lawyer and my time as a member of Parliament, I have always taken my ethical and disclosure obligations seriously. I understand and accept the commissioner's report that finds that I filed my complete disclosure statement past the required deadline. My initial disclosure statement was filed in January of this year with additional information provided more recently, and I apologize for not fully completing all of my disclosure obligations when I filed in January. I assure the House that it was not my intention, nor did I withhold any information.

The Deputy Speaker: The House appreciates the information passed along by the hon. member.

We will now resume debate and the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

* * *

BROADCASTING ACT

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

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak to Bill C-10. It is an act to amend the Broadcasting Act. Updating this Broadcasting Act is crucially important. The statutes in the act provide the guidelines for everything in our media industry, from how our Canadian broadcasters operate to how we support Canadian content and production.

Government Orders

Updating it right now is particularly important because, as we know, the Broadcasting Act has not really been updated at all since 1991, a long time before Internet companies and online streaming services were competing with Canadian broadcasters.

It is deeply disappointing that the government's proposals are so incredibly lacking. I am going to focus in on four points today. First, the legislation does nothing to address social media companies, such as Facebook and Google, and their various properties, such as YouTube, to pay its fair share. Second, it does not bring digital platforms, such as Netflix and Spotify, into a system in which they are on a level playing field with the conventional Canadian broadcasters.

Third, it does not provide any details on Canadian content production and media fund contributions by digital broadcasters. Finally, it gives all of the power to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, commonly known as the CRTC, which is a body that is not only ineffective at regulating in its area, but that also often struggles to even enforce its own regulations.

Before I dive into the details of this bill, I want to give some background. A lot of people in the House know that prior to my election, I spent over 40 years as a radio and television broadcaster here in the province of Saskatchewan.

During my broadcasting career, I experienced first-hand the dramatic evolution of those industries and how Canadians interact with their media. When I first entered the industry back in the 1970s, radio and television were the dominant forces of entertainment here in this country.

Over time, as television became more and more accessible and mainstream, demand for radio really declined. More recently, we can look at music streaming services such as Spotify, Google Play Music and Apple Music, which have attracted many Canadians away from radio. This has resulted in many stations across the country being forced to either greatly downsize or shut down entirely. We have seen that here in Saskatchewan.

I will give some details on the radio industry. Right now, a lot of stations in Saskatchewan run for only 12 hours. They will come on at six in the morning and broadcast until six at night. They will then have repeat programming for the next 12 hours. This is disturbing. It is hard to find a live disc jockey or newscast at night because these stations only run 12 out of 24 hours.

It is disturbing because, as a young broadcaster back in the 1970s, that was how one learned the business, by working nights and late nights. That has been taken away from people in this province. It is hard to find a live announcer after 7 p.m. on any Saskatchewan radio station.

Major conglomerates have gobbled up some of the radio industries in Saskatchewan. Stations in places such as Prince Albert, North Battleford, and even the satellite feeder in Meadow Lake, are now part of the Pattison Group.

We have seen a sort of renaissance in the province with smaller radio stations trying to make it on the FM dial, such as Humboldt and recently Assiniboia. This past January, Nipawin got its licence for the first time in the north-east area of Saskatchewan. There was

an intervention by one of the big players in the country, but today Nipawin has its own FM radio station. It got approval from the CRTC in January.

I would be remiss to not mention MBC radio, of the Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation. It is Saskatchewan's only indigenous radio station, and it is located in La Ronge. For some 10 hours a week, it broadcasts in Dene, and for another 10 hours a week, it broadcasts in Cree.

● (1600)

With this bill, Bill C-10, this is where I would really like the CRTC to concentrate. We have seen that this station uses Cree along with Dene up in northern Saskatchewan. It is needed. In fact, during the election I caught a 30-second advertising spot by a candidate done in Dene, telling the people up there to vote for him or her. It was kind of interesting. It was really good.

I also had the fortunate opportunity to go to Nunavut just two years ago. I went to eight communities up there. They speak a lot of English. Inuit and Inuktitut are spoken as well. I went up there and saw the people up in Nunavut, including Chesterfield Inlet, Arviat, and so on. That is their way of communicating.

This is my concern today with the CRTC. How is it going to look after this whole Bill C-10, and the Broadcasting Act? It is big. We have a big country. I have just pointed out the needs in Nunavut and northern Saskatchewan. There are many other places in this country. This is a very, very big bill.

Similarly, streaming services such as Netflix, YouTube, and even Disney+, are increasingly becoming the default source of entertainment for many across the country. Many television studios are struggling and beginning to downsize and cut costs. We saw that today with the announcement from Rogers.

Much like their radio counterparts, television stations here in Saskatchewan have been forced to make cuts. Many local stations have either been shut down or have really reduced staff. I can tell the House that, as a former broadcaster in that province, I remember when Swift Current had its own television station.

Yorkton and Prince Albert are repeater stations now. Prince Albert rebroadcasts Saskatoon, and Yorkton rebroadcasts Regina. I remember at one time that CKBI, Prince Albert television, had over 80 staff. We do not have that anymore, so we can see that the industry is coming down. Swift Current no longer has a TV station. Yorkton basically has two or three people, and the same thing at CKBI Prince Albert.

For a long time, I think that sports was considered the bedrock of television. While television series could always be recorded, watching sports live had a particular importance. No one wanted to miss that big game or have the results spoiled.

Government Orders

However, today even sports, a sector that has long thrived based on live television, is moving away from the traditional broadcasts. Services such as NHL GameCenter, Dazn, Sportsnet NOW, and TSN Direct allow sports fans to watch their favourite teams from wherever they would like. They can flip between games and even watch multiple games at once.

I will make this point. I remember the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. The president of Bell Media was in line for the gold medal game, the women's hockey gold medal game. There was a big crowd in Vancouver. No one could get into the game on time, but at that time the game was streamed.

The president of Bell Canada went on his phone and watched the game. He turned to his assistant while he was in line and said that this was the future of broadcasting, and that Bell Canada had to buy it. That was in 2010. Lo and behold, a short time after, Bell reacquired the CTV television network.

The reality today is that the way most of us here in the House of Commons consumed entertainment growing up is no longer the norm. Many growing up today would consider it simply out of date or even obsolete.

Certainly, even though many of these changes have been revolutionary and have benefited consumers, they have created many problems for the Canadian broadcasting sector. Our laws and regulations need to be updated to match the changes of the last 30 years. That raises this question: What exactly needs to be fixed in a modernized broadcasting act?

• (1605)

The Internet giants such as Netflix and Spotify are simply not paying their fair share. These companies do not pay taxes. They are not required to pay into the Canada Media Fund, as conventional broadcasters are today. They are not required to meet the Canadian content requirements that conventional broadcasters are bound by.

As more and more attention is paid to major streaming giants, and they are taking up more and more of the market share, conventional Canadian broadcasters, both at the local and the national level, are being pinched out, and they know that.

The current circumstances not only create an uneven playing field, they also put Canadian broadcasters at a significant disadvantage in having to allocate their resources, when Internet giants simply do not have to do that. The Broadcasting Act clearly needs to be updated for the world that is dominated today by the Internet.

Unfortunately, the legislation that the government has put forward to us today is wholly inadequate in addressing the issues that I just laid out. Let us begin taking a look at what the government's main solution seems to be in Bill C-10. I think they are passing the buck solely to the CRTC. It is unfortunate the government is simply passing off the responsibility to the unelected body that has historically had many issues fulfilling its own mandate, particularly on this issue.

At the beginning of this year, the Canadian Broadcasting and Telecommunications Legislative Review panel tabled its report, known as the "Yale report". In fact, I attended that news conference in Ottawa in January when the panel released its 94 recommenda-

tions. That news conference lasted almost two hours. There were plenty of questions directed at the panel, and it was directed by conventional broadcasters.

Many of them expressed concerns about some of the 94 recommendations that were made that day. The objective of the panel was to review the current broadcasting and telecommunications framework and present possible paths forward for Canadian broadcasting.

While I have my own issues with some of the recommendations in this report, one thing that has been raised as a major concern in my meetings with industry stakeholders is that the Yale report makes it clear that the CRTC already has the power to regulate Internet giants like Netflix. That surprised a lot of people.

If the CRTC can already regulate Netflix and its online counterparts, why has it not done so? Let us be clear here. The CRTC, the Canadian broadcasters and the government have all known for years what the impact of the unregulated online market is. It is crushing Canadian broadcasters. The CRTC done absolutely nothing with the power that it has to regulate, despite having had years to act.

One cannot help but wonder if the Canadian media today would be in a much better state if it were not for the CRTC's lack of desire to actually take some action. This bill would not change that. It simply reiterates it. It restates a power that the CRTC already has and has opted not to use, so why would it use it now? There is absolutely no reason to believe that the CRTC is going to change now, when there is no compulsion to do so.

Even if the CRTC decided to finally take the steps that it has had the power to do for years and regulate the web giants, I am highly skeptical that they would bother to enforce them. Sure, the government claims that this legislation before us today would modernize the CRTC's enforcement powers to ensure compliance with hypothetical regulations that the CRTC is not bound to actually make, but we already know that the CRTC does not necessarily use the powers that it is given.

On the specific issue of enforcement, I remember during my time as a broadcaster that when the licence renewal would come up every five years, everyone would be on their best behaviour in the station. Station management would make sure that everything was perfect for its hearings with the CRTC. Once it gave us the licence renewal, we would not hear from the CRTC again until five years later. The CRTC did not follow up to make sure we were abiding by the terms of our licence at all.

I also think about a more recent example of the CRTC simply failing Canadians. Earlier this year, at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CBC decided to pull *Compass*, its 30-minute local news program in Prince Edward Island. It is the only local news for P.E.I., and CBC took it off the air.

• (1610)

At a time when islanders needed their local news the most, the CBC abandoned them. What did the CRTC do? Absolutely nothing. It was only through the outrage of viewers in that area that the CBC brought *Compass* and the newscasts back to the people of Prince Edward Island.

If the CRTC is not going to act when Canadians need it the most, how can we expect it to actually act in the best interests of Canadians when it comes to Internet giants?

I remember an instance when Global did something similar here in the city. In Saskatoon we had a newscast that actually came out of Toronto. The CRTC was unaware of that, but it has since been rectified in the city.

I think everyone here can understand my skepticism today of putting all of our eggs into one basket by dumping this onto the CRTC. However, for the sake of argument, let us pretend it is not an issue. Let us pretend that the regulator has absolutely no issues with fulfilling its mandate. Are there any other problems with the bill?

Let us start with social media. The legislation does nothing to ensure that online platforms, such as Facebook and Google, that have built their businesses by sharing other people's content are paying their fair share. In fact, the bill absolves those companies from responsibility for content posted on their platforms.

Then we need to consider what measures are being proposed to make sure that conventional broadcasters are on a level playing field with digital platforms. The reality is there is nothing. It gives no guidance or explanation of how the regulations or guidelines should be created or drawn.

Finally, this legislation provides no guidelines at all as to whether or not digital platforms will be forced to meet the same Canadian content production rules or be required to make payments into the Canada Media Fund. All of our conventional broadcasters must still meet these requirements. This sounds nothing like leveling the playing field.

However, we should not worry if this does not go well, because the government is here to save the day. It can settle issues with an order in council afterwards. Instead of being clear with broadcasters and Canadians, the government is going to wait a little longer and potentially implement policy later. That is simply not a plan. Broadcasters cannot prepare for the future while these discussions and regulations are created behind closed doors.

Who could blame Canadians if they begin to wonder what the government is planning to implement that it is not willing to put in today's legislation. What is it hiding? The government has not told us.

Let us review. There is no guarantee that the CRTC will actually fulfill its obligations and produce regulations. It could have before, and it did not. If it does, will it enforce them?

What about the rules for platforms and conventional broadcasters? What are they going to look like? The bill does not tell us. We do not know what the rules around the Canada Media Fund or even

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Canadian content will be. There is nothing new for dealing with social media platforms.

What do we know? Well, not a lot, actually. What we do have is a lot of uncertainty.

The government is leaving the whole process up in the air with regard to the CRTC. Industry cannot be sure what the government is going to do to regulate in this area because it has totally neglected this in the past. Even if it does, it is going to take months for Canadians to hear anything from the CRTC, and that means months of more uncertainty at a time when our media industry is already greatly struggling.

I want to reiterate my serious concern about the legislation before us today. Canadian broadcasters and creators are struggling mightily. We know that. The government needs to do something to remedy the situation.

The power to regulate companies like Netflix already exists under the CRTC, but it has chosen not to act and this legislation does not compel it to. What reason do Canadians have to believe that the CRTC will bring in new regulations or that they will be enforced?

• (1615)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague clearly knows a lot about the industry regarding how it has developed over the years, the challenges it has gone through, the challenges it is dealing with now and where he thinks things need to go.

He pointed out a total of four problematic areas that he saw with regard to the bill. I realize from his comments that he sees a genuine concern and need to make adjustments as we go forward.

I have a simple question for him. Will he support the bill at this stage so that it can go to committee and he can contribute the extremely meaningful input that will produce a better bill at the committee stage?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, this is a tough bill to support. I just gave a 20-minute speech about the reasons why I am hesitant to support it.

We all know that Canadian broadcasters are suffering, and the bill does little. It is disappointing because from 1991 to today, nearly 30 years, we have not touched this issue. In seeing the bill come out now, 28 years later, I ask the member this: What would a bill look like today if we went 28 years further, to 2048?

I am a little disappointed, and today I cannot support the bill going forward in the House.

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[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us, which we are currently discussing, purports to institute a degree of governance.

In other words, web and video giants, including streaming services like Disney+, Amazon Prime and Netflix, would be subject to the Broadcasting Act. One might say it is about time.

Does my colleague think it is okay that digital giants have been calling the shots in this country for so long?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the bill has been 28 years in the making. Industry is changing fast right now, with the Internet and the technology changes. I wanted to see more about the Internet giants in the bill. We did not get that. The way Netflix, Spotify and others are going, this should have been considered first and foremost.

I am a little disappointed in the Minister of Canadian Heritage for not pointing that out in the bill. I have heard many people say today that it can go to committee and we will work on it. Why did the Liberals not work on it here? They have known the problems with the CRTC not regulating the industry, which is why we have a meltdown right now with Canadian broadcasters, but they have not dealt with it.

I am a little skeptical, going forward, to trust the CRTC because it has not dealt with this, even though we know about the carnage taking place in the broadcasting industry each and every day.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I share a number of concerns that the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood raised, particularly about web giants being required to pay their fair share and about supporting Canadian content and Canadian content producers. I certainly share his skepticism with regard to the efficacy of the government when it comes to making good on the commitments that it makes.

I recall hearing some of the member's Conservative colleagues speak against Canadian content requirements, saying they just create market distortions. I have watched as Conservative governments of the past made deep cuts to the CBC. I have watched as Conservative governments of the past criticized others, like the NDP, for raising the idea of taxing web giants. They called it a Netflix tax at the time.

The member had criticisms for the government, and we heard a lot of them in his speech, which is fair enough. However, I would like to know what the Conservative Party is proposing as a way forward to ensure not only that web giants pay their fair share, but also that we are able to support Canadian content and Canadian content creators. What are some constructive ideas that the Conservatives can put on the table? So far I am not aware of any, and I did not pick up on any in the member's 20-minute speech.

• (1620)

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, I think foreign Internet broadcasters should be contributing to Canadian content. It is extremely tough for Canadian broadcasters to make 30% of their programming Canadian only and put it on during prime time, from 7:00 to

9:00 or 7:00 to 10:00 at night. The CFL and NHL are considered Canadian programming, but as we have seen with *Corner Gas*, *Murdoch Mysteries* and *Schitt's Creek*, we need a device to get more Canadian programming produced in this country so that we have avenues on CTV, Global, CBC and so on to put it on during prime time. We have seen the success of the three shows I mentioned.

As for the CBC, I think it needs to be modernized. Our leader, the member for Durham, mentioned this during the leadership race. He is exactly right that it does need to be modernized.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, some of the stories and anecdotes the member shared were familiar to me, as I am somebody who has worked in radio and television.

I agree that the CRTC should be regulating Internet giants and we should be getting them to pay their fair share of taxes in this country. This is Disney, Amazon, Netflix and so on. What the member missed is DZAN, which is taking all of the sports broadcasting revenue that really helps with CanCon in this country. Sports programming is a cash cow for broadcasters and this has all been soaked up by DZAN. It is another company that needs to be taxed properly.

Would the hon. member agree that YouTube and Facebook are indeed publishers rather than platforms and that the information published on their websites by users should be regulated in terms of its content? A lot of misogyny, racism and misinformation is put on these sites. Would the hon. member agree that we should be treating these companies as publishers rather than platforms?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, I have talked to stakeholders and industry people about this, and YouTube is completely unregulated in Bill C-10. It has been 28 years since we last updated the Broadcasting Act. Where do members think YouTube is going to be in the next 28 years? Should we be regulating YouTube? Sure we should be regulating it. That is my personal opinion. It is one thing we have talked to industry and stakeholders about. They are concerned that YouTube is not involved in this.

Only two provinces in Canada have a tax on Netflix. One is Saskatchewan and the other is Quebec. It is being taxed in only two jurisdictions, and I would say that it is getting away with murder in the rest of the provinces and territories.

• (1625)

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend and colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood touched on something that is dear to my heart and that I know is to his. We should understand *Corner Gas* and where it comes from. Small communities in Saskatchewan and all over Canada are dealing with trying to make certain they are able to get the information they need.

When we talk about those communities, we can talk about Dog River and Wullerton. These types of communities are all over the place, and they understand the lack of access they have, particularly community newspapers, which are trying to level the playing field by getting federal legislation requiring Facebook and Google to pay for the news content they use from local and national publications.

I am wondering if the member sees any similarities between that comment and the legislation.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, with the replays of *Corner Gas*, set in Rouleau, Saskatchewan, it is more popular today worldwide, because it is going worldwide, than it was when it was first produced. Just this week, two old vehicles from *Corner Gas* were auctioned off and \$1,800 was paid for a truck and \$800 for the other vehicle. Rouleau has been put on the map worldwide because of *Corner Gas*. The main star of the program is Brent Butt, who is from Tisdale, Saskatchewan. The bill really needs to do some tinkering with regard to rural Saskatchewan and rural Canada.

We have heard of the production houses in Winnipeg, Toronto and Vancouver, but at the end of the day, some of the best programming has come from rural Canada. The member is correct that we should look into this. What are the stories that can be told in northern Saskatchewan, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories?

Part of the bill deals with indigenous issues and others, and this is a great opportunity for Canadians. There is APTN, out of Winnipeg. When it was launched, everyone said it would not be successful, but I think today it is the voice of indigenous peoples in this country. It has done a fabulous job since it has been put on the board here in Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: I feel like the hon. member's producer down here, with this lifelong career radio personality. I am doing my best to manage his interventions this afternoon.

[*Translation*]

Before resuming debate, I wish to inform the House that there have been more than five hours of debate on this motion during this first round. Consequently, the maximum time allocated for all subsequent interventions shall be 10 minutes for speeches and five minutes for questions and comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I understand that broadcasting identified me as the member for Edmonton Manning. I am actually the member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

The Deputy Speaker: The House administration apologizes. That has occurred from time to time in broadcasts, but we will make sure it is corrected. Of course the Journals, the Debates, will reflect the proper riding name of the hon. member.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging this House sits on the ancestral lands of the Algonquin Anishinabe.

Canadians are enthusiastic early adopters of technology. Time and time again they have readily embraced the wide variety of

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broadcasting services available to them, foreign and domestic. These broadcasting services empower consumers with the ability to watch what they want whenever they want it and however they want it. The same goes for listening to music and hearing the news. Bill C-10 will not limit the ability of Canadians to access the programming platforms of their preference; rather, it will ensure the Canadian broadcasting system continues to meet the needs of Canadian consumers.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission is the independent regulator of Canada's broadcasting systems. It requires television and radio stations and cable and satellite distributors to support the creation and display of Canadian stories and Canadian music. These are requirements that have been in place for decades and have resulted in greater investment and promotion of Canadian content and talent, including high-quality journalism, groundbreaking musical artists and compelling and acclaimed programming.

However, in the current regulatory framework, online broadcasters are exempt from most broadcasting regulations. In other words, they are not required to contribute to the Canadian broadcasting system as is required of the traditional broadcasters. This is because the last time major changes were made to our Broadcasting Act was in 1991, before we experienced the new digital age and its challenges. We are well into the digital age now and it is time for our legislation to join us. It is time for online broadcasters to be treated the same as traditional broadcasters.

Bill C-10 would create a level playing field where all broadcasters have a fair chance to compete by ensuring that online broadcasters are subject to the same regulatory framework. Most importantly, it ensures that both traditional and online broadcasters contribute to a healthy and vibrant Canadian broadcasting system. For Canadian artists, this means securing sustainable funding that will allow them to continue telling stories and making music from a uniquely Canadian perspective. For most consumers this means the ability to access more content that will allow Canadians to see themselves, their communities and their stories reflected through different points of view. For Canada it means a stronger cultural unity, a shared national identity and a more inclusive society.

By presenting the content that is representative of different cultures, communities and languages from across Canada, broadcasting provides a window into the diverse experiences of Canadians. Made in Canada content is considered personally important to 78% of Canadians. It is clear that Canadians see value in seeing their stories on the screen and in hearing Canadian artists on the radio.

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I am proud to say that the interest in Canadian content exists far beyond our borders. The hit show *Schitt's Creek* recently brought home nine Emmys, the film *Indian Horse* won an award at the 2018 San Diego International Film Festival and Quebec native Céline Dion is one of the best worldwide selling artists of all time. The list goes on. Including online broadcasters in the broadcasting regulatory framework could result in online broadcasters being requested to invest more than \$800 million in our creators, music and stories by 2023. It could result in more Canadian successes being enjoyed and recognized abroad.

Whether getting traffic and weather updates or learning about the day's events from prime-time broadcasts, the broadcasting system is an important source of news for Canadians. Traditional broadcasters have long supported journalism and the delivery of local, regional and national news. By including a new policy objective that promotes the provision of news, including that produced by Canadians and reflecting Canadian perspectives from a variety of sources, we are strengthening the role of news in the broadcasting system.

• (1630)

Recognizing that a free and independent press is the cornerstone of our democracy, the bill would not contemplate the licensing of news organizations. However, the bill does create an equitable framework for broadcasting that will help safeguard news production. This way, traditional broadcasters who are important sources of news, and particularly local news, would be better able to compete with online broadcasting services.

The bill was also crafted to keep both online and traditional broadcasting services affordable for Canadians. We understand that, every day, Canadians are making difficult choices on how to spend their hard-earned dollars. This is especially true during these trying times.

Bill C-10 provides the CRTC with the ability to tailor regulatory requirements to specific business models. For example, the CRTC could impose mandatory Canadian programming expenditures on services that are already in the business of commissioning and producing content. Requiring services, such as Netflix and Crave, to spend a certain amount of money each year on Canadian content will help us move the needle on directing investments toward programming that is created and produced by Canadians, for Canadians. This will help the CRTC avoid imposing undue regulatory burdens on a particular service that would then result in raised prices for consumers.

These are just some of the ways that Bill C-10 would benefit Canadian consumers, creators and artists. The exemption for digital services was originally put in place to allow for the innovation and development of new online media services. In 2020, when Canadians mostly access programming online, these exemptions no longer make sense.

The inclusion of online broadcasters in the Canadian broadcasting system with regulatory clarity would promote the entrance of new players into the Canadian market. It supports a vibrant and healthy competition in the sector, creating additional pressures to keep costs down. For Canadian consumers, it leads to a wider variety of high-quality content, with a greater diversity of views in

which Canadians proudly see themselves and their stories. After nearly 30 years, it is time to modernize our broadcasting system and to safeguard it for the future.

• (1635)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers in the broadcasting industry and our Canadian cultural workers are struggling. For many, time is running out.

Why does the bill punt the problem to the CRTC, which means it could take almost a year before we see any real change? The government has a tendency of making promises and then kicking the can down the road. It has done this with some of the most pressing issues of our time. Today, the government tabled a climate accountability bill that does not have any real accountability measures for the next 10 years. It says it supports pharmacare, but when?

It is so important that we support our cultural workers and workers in the broadcasting industry. If the Liberals truly want to fix their disastrous Netflix deal, why not do it now?

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, first, I do not agree with the terminology of kicking the can down the road. The CRTC is an organization that was established to focus on the industry and to do what is important for the industry in the interests of Canadians. Having the bill directed toward the CRTC and having these corrections in the hands of the CRTC is the appropriate place for them to be. I would liken it to going to see a surgeon when surgery is required, as opposed to going to a general practitioner. We are relying on an organization that has the strength, intelligence and experience to deal with the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is a serious matter, and yet the government is not moving from words to action. What is the federal government waiting for? We still have questions, and I think they are worth asking.

We have been talking about medical assistance in dying since the beginning of this parliamentary session. Quebec is ahead on that front. Then there was the issue of conversion therapy. There again, Quebec is ahead. Since January 2018, web giants have been charging the QST, the Quebec sales tax. The federal government is watching the train leave the station. Meanwhile, the Liberals are able to build pipelines. Since January 2019, Amazon has had to charge QST, and even Facebook followed suit.

There is nothing in this wishy-washy bill to make the web giants collect taxes and make their contribution. There is nothing to ensure that there is Canadian content either. We know that culture is not very important to the Liberal Party.

Can my colleague tell us when the Liberals are going to require the web giants to charge tax?

Are they waiting for another pipeline or another train to go by?

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• (1640)

[English]

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is trying to move this bill forward. There is an opportunity, when this bill goes to committee, to listen to the suggestions that we have here. I am all for collaboration. I would like to see us have the benefit of the member's perspective, but let us do that in committee and let us implement that as we move the bill forward. We want to go ahead. All we need is to have the vote to take it to committee and start getting to work on this. Let us work together on it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague from Newmarket—Aurora's speech and I am very interested in Bill C-10 and seeing it get to committee.

The member made the point that this treats the livestreaming digital giants in the same way that we would treat other parts of our economy. I want to ask him if we do not need an amendment to direct that, in the case of outfits like Twitter and Facebook that are actually gutting our Canadian journalism, they be treated as publishers and not this fiction that they are platforms. Then, all the rules of libel and slander, etc. would apply to them.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Mr. Speaker, the member raised some really good points. That is why it is important for us to get into committee, to hear that type of input so that we can build a better bill. The minister has said that he would welcome the other perspectives, we would welcome amendments and we would welcome collaboration so that we can move forward into the 20th century.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Fredericton, Official Languages; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Lady-smith, Marine Transportation.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be here today to talk about Bill C-10, and more importantly, talk about the reality that we need to continue to protect Canadian content in our broadcasting systems, in all of our media. The other part of this conversation is about fairness and acknowledging web giants in this country have been getting off very easy. As they have been getting off very easy with very little content taxes, our people who fight for local Canadian content have been left behind.

I represent the beautiful riding of North Island—Powell River. It is the third-largest riding in British Columbia and it is part of Vancouver Island and is also on the Mainland. I am incredibly proud to represent these voices.

Recently, there was a huge storm in our riding. It was a mix of wind, thunder, lightning and snow, of all things. Snow is very rare in our part of the world. During that time, there were huge power outages and people were not sure what was going on. It was our local newspapers and radio stations that let people know what was happening, and if it was not for them, folks would have been isolated and alone. I can promise the House that none of the big web giants were concerned about what was happening in our riding.

I want to give a special shout-out to the local Port McNeill IGA. When people went without power for a long period of time, it had a beautiful BBQ to feed people. It said that if people had any money

to give to please give and it would donate it, but if people could not, to just go there and they could get fed. Those are the people I am so incredibly proud to represent and those are the stories we as Canadians need to hear.

There are local papers in my riding: the Campbell River Mirror, the Comox Valley Record, the Powell River Peak and the North Island Gazette. They are always making sure we know what is happening in our riding. I respect them immensely. They are very small, and they get out there and make sure we record what is happening and let other people within our communities and region know what is happening locally in our community. They remember all of those communities, the little ones like Sointula, Woss, Whaletown, Van Anda, Alert Bay and many more.

Something particularly unique and special about Canada is that we have a huge land base and a small population, and people are living all over the place living important lives. These papers connect us. They work hard to keep us informed on what is going on nationally, internationally, and most importantly, locally. They tell us what is happening.

I think about Remembrance Day this year. It was very different than the Remembrance Day we are used to. Usually people are out together across all the communities. This time, people were waiting for the newspapers to share their recordings on social media. They were waiting to see the pictures. These are important roles, and if they were not there watching, it would not be happening.

The reality is they are facing a huge challenge. They are having to fight every day for their survival. Their huge competition are significantly bigger corporations like Facebook and Google. They are fighting them and trying to survive. All of those local papers use Facebook, which is an important tool. However, more and more people are using things like Facebook and Google to advertise, which means they are not getting the same amount of money that really helped them build their businesses.

I want to say it again, Facebook is not dedicated to our region. It does not show up at all the local events and it does not make sure to keep the history of our community. If people want to know what happened in their community in the past, where do they go? They look at old newspapers. That is where we learn about what happened and get those pictures of our ancestors who did things in the communities. That is an important part of carrying on our history.

We know when COVID came the challenges for our local newspapers only increased. In the middle of a pandemic, our local culture and media folks were worried about keeping their jobs. According to the Yale report, Google and Facebook have received nearly 75% of online advertising revenue in Canada. That leaves our local TV and newspapers only gaining 8.5% of all Internet advertising.

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• (1645)

The CBC did a compilation that showed that in 2018-19, Ottawa spent \$52 million advertising on web giants. That was five times more than the local Canadian platforms. That is devastating, and it tells us something very important, that we are seeing a decrease of support for local content.

I said earlier that I represent a rural and remote riding, with lots of communities that really need these meaningful jobs. When we see that unfair competition, we see that they are not getting to keep those jobs. This is another thing that we have to start addressing in this country, that rural and remote communities are challenged. We need to have a better strategy so that those economies can grow and blossom. The more we centralize, the less those communities flourish. We have to take some leadership on that. I am waiting to see the government do that.

This bill really punts it down the line. I know the last member who spoke disagrees with that, but we are giving it to the CRTC and saying, "Figure something out." It has happened in other places. For example, in France, the cultural minister actually stood up and said that if they were going to go there and create content, they would have to pay taxes so that there could be local content.

If all of these web giants are going to be making money, they are going to have to pay their fair share so that our Canadian folks do not lose their jobs and we do not lose the history of our precious country.

Here we are again, discussing, and I did this in the last Parliament, the Liberal promise to make sure that web giants pay their fair share. However, again, this legislation has nothing around fair tax rules. That is what we need. Most people would remember when the Liberals made a big announcement that we were going to get money from Netflix, it would be great, it would be taxed a bit more. What did we all see across the country? Canadian rates for Netflix were raised to cover that cost.

We are talking about actually taking these guys on and making sure that they pay their fair share so that Canadians can remember their own content. We need to protect Canada's unique voice.

In my riding, I am so impressed with the Vancouver Island North Film Commission. Its leadership has been immense and has brought opportunities into our riding. It has really worked hard. I just want to say how much I respect the commission and how important that is. In fact, it locally connected with the North Island College not too long ago. It began training people.

What we are seeing is local people being trained in our local communities, and then working in the film industry in our region. This is so important.

In this country, we need to take leadership and say, "We have this immense country. We have rural and remote communities, and their economies are based largely on the resources. We do not want that to end, but we want to diversify so there is more stability."

This is a place where resources could go from these big web giants, and make sure that these folks get the support they need to build important content that is Canadian, but also to maintain a diversity of employment, of good-paying jobs, in our regions.

When we talk about addressing these big web giants and their paying their fair share, we know that organizations like Amazon, Apple and Netflix can pay. While the reality in this country is that they are not paying, and are in fact undercutting our local content providers, we are not doing the right thing.

When we work on this bill, and I see some good things and I hear from the government that we should get into committee and make it work, I wish the government would be a little more ambitious. I wish the government would not wait for the opposition parties to tell them what to do.

When we get down to it, we have to protect local content. We have to look at our systems and make sure there is a diversity, so that when we look at our economy, we see that diversification happening across the board so that everybody benefits from it.

In closing I will simply say this, I come from a riding that has built this country. That is what rural and remote communities do. They have their economies that are largely resource-based, and they have built Canada. I want to thank them. We want to see some accountability in this House to make sure that those communities stop suffering and start having a more diverse and stable economy. It is simply time. It is definitely time to make sure those web giants pay their fair share.

• (1650)

Ms. Lenore Zann (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a professional artist myself for 40 years, I am also a member of the Canadian actors' union, ACTRA, and colleagues like Ferne Downey, Theresa Tova and David Sparrow have been lobbying governments for the modernization of Canada's Broadcasting Act, which is now Bill C-10, for years. They say that these proposed changes will help strengthen the industry and lead to increased investment in Canadian content production and, by extension, increased work opportunities for Canadian performers.

My question for the member, therefore, is this. Will she and the NDP be supporting this important legislation? It is a first step in doing the right thing for Canadian performers.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I sit on committee with the member, and I enjoy our time together there.

I will simply say I think it is absolutely imperative that we take that next step and support this sector. We have seen the challenges it has faced and we need to see that support happen. What I am saying about this bill specifically is that I see some things that are strong in it, but what concerns me is the actual ability of the government to get out of the web giants' pockets and start holding them accountable, so that we can see that prosperity across the board.

Our sectors here have waited and waited for this, and we need to support them now. That needs to be our priority.

• (1655)

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must admit I was somewhat entertained by the previous question, and I am curious if my hon. colleague could speak to this legislation being important. As it is written right now, it seems like it is written for the sake of writing something on paper. It is going to need an awful lot more work, I would think, for it to actually be useful, important and viable.

I am curious if the member could comment on how much more work it actually needs.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that my biggest concern is the urgency that this sector, the cultural sector, requires. Especially with COVID, we have seen already-struggling areas struggle more. This has been a particularly vulnerable sector where even getting COVID resources has been a huge challenge.

When I look at this piece of legislation, my concern is that it is getting kicked down the way and it is getting downloaded onto someone else. I understand the role of the CRTC. What I am asking is for us to take some leadership in the House. We are asking the government to take some leadership and make sure these big web giants pay their fair share. We are not asking anything unreasonable. We are asking them to pay their fair share, so that we can see the people in this sector actually begin to flourish more profoundly in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague would agree that francophones in Quebec and across the country may not be getting their fair share of air time on the networks.

If new taxes were to be imposed on Amazon and its ilk, would my colleague agree that 40% of the royalties collected should be go towards the production of French-language content? This is one of the demands of the Bloc Québécois.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I have a very good-sized francophone community in my riding. I have spent time with them. They are very patient with me as I stumble along in my very poor French, and I want to thank them for that.

I think that it is absolutely imperative that we see a lot of francophone content in this country. This is a country that is built on two languages. This is so important. I also think it is important to see more investment happen in indigenous platforms as well. I know, for example, in my riding we have a radio station, The Raven, that is indigenous-led and is working toward having more language content on the radio station, as well. I think we need to see investments in that, just so that we remember the amazing diversity we have in our country.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to address the House today from my riding in Toronto on this important piece of legislation. Bill C-10 is a crucial initia-

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tive that will bring the radio, television and telecommunications sector into the 21st century.

As we have previously heard in the speeches from many of my colleagues, the last major reform of the Broadcasting Act occurred in 1991. All of us have witnessed an incredible shift in the radio, television and telecommunications sector since that time. Back then the Internet was not even in its infancy: It was the purview exclusively of the U.S. military. I did not even obtain my first email address until about 1994, if memory serves correctly, when I was in my last year at McGill. It is incredible to think that an act drafted around basic radio and television technology, circa 1991, is still regulating the sector today.

Today, as parliamentarians, we are taking an important step forward in modernizing broadcasting regulation in Canada. Nowadays, we know that this sector has remarkably flourished and represents a unique opportunity to access culture. Many platforms have emerged, including Netflix, Disney+, YouTube and Spotify. These provide opportunities to share Canadian culture and content all around the world, also while consuming cultural content here at home that comes from several different countries.

However, online broadcasting services are currently not subjected to the same regulations as traditional broadcasting services. This bill would fix that basic inequality. Canadians greatly benefit from accessing foreign productions, but it is also essential to support our Canadian producers and creators, especially now during a pandemic, when showcasing Canadian content and telling Canadian stories is so critical to the well-being of all of us. This is something that we as a government have always sought to do since coming to power in 2015, by funding our national broadcaster the CBC, and by increasing funding to the Canada Council for the Arts as well as to Telefilm Canada.

However, one issue has remained a stubborn obstacle. How do we support Canadian content in an era when the methods for broadcasting are shifting massively, from radio and TV to online? Bill C-10 would fill this void by providing the CRTC with modern regulatory tools.

[*Translation*]

Canadians are increasingly using online platforms to access cultural content. For instance, it is estimated that 62% of Canadian households currently use Netflix. This dramatic shift has resulted in an increase of approximately 90% in online video revenues per year for the past two years. Meanwhile, conventional broadcasters have experienced a steady revenue loss of 1.8% per year for the past five years. These alarming statistics clearly demonstrate that the CRTC's regulatory framework needs to be adapted immediately to better support Canadian content producers in order to level the playing field.

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[English]

Implementing the changes in Bill C-10 would quickly produce clear and concrete impacts. Let me give an example. By creating a new category of broadcasting under the online broadcasting category, Bill C-10 could lead to increasing contributions to Canadian music and stories by as much as \$830 million by 2023. This is excellent news for our Canadian cultural sector.

Let me speak about diversity. In addition to levelling the playing field between the traditional broadcasting services and the web giants, by ensuring that web giants contribute to the creation, production and distribution of Canadian stories and music, this bill would also reflect where Canadian society is in 2020. The new regulatory framework outlined in Bill C-10 is focused on building a more inclusive cultural sector as part of the larger goal of building a more inclusive Canada.

Supporting diversity and inclusion is essential, and that it is exactly what Bill C-10 would do. Anglophones, francophones, racialized Canadians and Canadians of diverse ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions all deserve to be represented in our cultural sector. I cannot stop myself from thinking about all the kids out there, including my own brown-skinned South Asian children, who are watching shows and dreaming of their future. They have to know that their dreams can come true and they can achieve everything that they want. Seeing people who look like them in the shows that they watch is undoubtedly important. I know this as a parent. I know this as a racialized parliamentarian.

We know that representation is a key step to reaching better inclusion of marginalized groups. The logic that applied when we decided to put Viola Desmond on the \$10 bill to ensure that all Canadians, including Black Canadians, could see themselves represented in our institutions, also applies here in the cultural sector. The more Canadians who can see themselves reflected in our cultural sector, be they religious or racial minorities or others, the better we are as a nation.

• (1700)

I want to also highlight the importance of improved support for indigenous cultures in our broadcasting sector. During the last Parliament, I was privileged to be asked by the Prime Minister to serve as the parliamentary secretary to the then minister of heritage. In that role at that time, I had the chance to work on co-developing with first nations, Inuit and Métis leaders Canada's first ever Indigenous Languages Act. The work I did on Bill C-91 in the last Parliament deeply shaped my own understanding of the need to protect indigenous cultures and languages in order to empower first nations, Inuit and Métis people on Turtle Island.

By including concrete measures in this bill to better reflect indigenous cultures in Canada, Bill C-10 will contribute to that work of the revitalization of indigenous languages by ensuring that indigenous children have access to cultural content in their languages. Let me emphasize that Bill C-10 would have a real impact on the preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages and cultures, which is fundamental to reconciliation.

I am also pleased to see that the broadcasting system will be adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities. There is a lot of work ahead of us in order to build a more inclusive Canada for people living with disabilities. Ensuring that programming on TV, radio and online is accessible without barriers to persons with disabilities is a step in the right direction.

When I speak about my riding of Parkdale—High Park, I know that promoting arts and culture is a very important issue not only for my riding, but indeed for all Canadians. I want to highlight, for example, that just last week Warren P. Sonoda was elected president of the Director's Guild of Canada. I had the opportunity to work with Warren on important roles when I was the parliamentary secretary to the minister of heritage. I am thrilled to see what he will accomplish while holding that position. I want to credit the work by outgoing former DGC president, Tim Southam.

My riding of Parkdale—High Park is known for many people like Warren and Tim. It is known for great artists, wonderful creators and important film and TV producers. I am speaking for example of Dave Forget, currently on the national executive team for the Director's Guild, having previously worked for 14 years at Telefilm. He has spent most of his life working in the film industry, and I am proud to call him a constituent.

Additionally, Professor Chris Romeike in my riding did the cinematography on the recent movie *The Inconvenient Indian*, which was based on Thomas King's bestseller. It explores the cultural colonization of indigenous peoples in North America and was deemed by the producers of TIFF as the one must-see film at TIFF this year.

I want to congratulate so many people: Paul Barkin, Mary Young Leckie, John Turner, David Makin, Alain Zweig, Jasmin Mozaffari and Ali Kazimi, for all of their important and award-winning work and contributions to the film and TV sectors. Ferne Downey, who was mentioned in the context of the previous speech, is my constituent. She was previously the head of ACTRA and is now the head of the International Federation of Actors.

I could keep going much longer, but I will mention one last person: Jeff Churchill, of Jitterbug Boy, an original footwear company in my riding whose shoes are being made for a variety of shows such as the upcoming Batman film. What is important about that last reference is that when we support the Canadian cultural centre, we are also supporting all of the derivative economic benefits that come from supporting film, TV and our content creators. That is what Bill C-10 will enable us to do by better funding the sector and levelling that playing field. This is a critical piece of legislation.

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We know that financial support for Canadian content will decline as the revenues of traditional radio and television broadcasters continue to decrease. Bill C-10 is the first step in aiming to fully modernize the broadcasting system in Canada to ensure that both traditional and online broadcasting contribute to the Canadian broadcasting system. Our Canadian producers deserve to be operating in a fair situation where the rules are equal for everyone. Allowing the CRTC more powers to modernize the regulatory framework is important, by imposing more regulations on online broadcasters, as is simultaneously ensuring the regulatory independence of the CRTC.

In conclusion, as I have outlined, Bill C-10 is about ensuring fair and equitable treatment between traditional and online broadcasters. It is about better representation of Canadian society in our cultural sector. I am incredibly proud of our Canadian cultural sector, and in particular the role it is playing in buoying Canadian spirits and easing Canadian anxieties during the COVID-19 pandemic. I know that with the right tools, our Canadian creators will continue to keep producing terrific Canadian content for years to come. Bill C-10 is one of the tools we need to maintain our support for Canadian creators. The work of passing it should not be a partisan issue, nor should it be delayed. We cannot afford to wait 30 more years before modernizing the act. The time to act is now.

• (1705)

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what happens if companies like Netflix cannot comply with the new regulations? An organization like Netflix would have to make a decision between cutting the service or complying with the new regulations. What does the member think Netflix should do? Take the company home and stay in the United States or actually offer Canada some decent service?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, the member's question is an important one. It deals with freedom of contract and the way economic activity operates.

At this stage, when we have Netflix with as much penetration as it has in the Canadian market and we see other nation states taking the exact same actions that we are taking, we are proceeding and leading in helping to level the playing field. We will get to the point where domestic content production is protected by various nation states. The notion of Netflix retreating from Canada and going to some other haven that does not have the same sort of content requirements will be far-fetched. That is not the future I envisage.

Is it time to be more strict and enforce rules against online giants? It is. We are doing something that other nations are doing, but we are also leading other nations where we need to get to, and that is ensuring that Canadian content, which was always supported by the radio and TV sector, is also supported by the online sector.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

He clearly pointed out that Canadians and communities that are racialized or diverse, have a certain economic status or have disabilities should also be included in Bill C-10.

Why does this bill not make more reference to the linguistic minority, in this case the francophones who live all across the country,

especially in Quebec, of course, but also in other parts of Canada? Does he believe that these groups should have greater prominence in this bill?

• (1710)

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question. I would also like to point out that I learned a great deal of French in Trois-Rivières in 1992.

The answer is yes, of course we must promote the cultural content of any sector here in Canada, such as linguistic minorities, especially francophones outside Quebec and also those living in Quebec.

I am thinking of the great filmmaker Denys Arcand, and also the first-rate Canadian content that men like Mr. Arcand have spread across Canada and around the world. That is why I pointed out that all minority groups, such as racialized people, indigenous people, people with disabilities, and also francophones outside Quebec, must have support. This bill will give them that support.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian cultural sector is a key driver of sovereignty and the development of a strong multicultural Canadian identity. The film and television industry in British Columbia is incredibly important to the economy of Vancouver, B.C. and, in fact, all of Canada. CBC and Radio-Canada are treasured public voices that bind our nation in ways that commercial broadcasters do not.

How does my hon. colleague see Bill C-10 contributing to these institutions and industries? What is the main value of this bill in his view?

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway for that insight. The most direct application for a place like B.C. and a city like Vancouver or the Lower Mainland is the fact that it already serves as a large centre for film and TV production work in particular.

By creating a bill like Bill C-10, which has the potential of raising almost a billion dollars for a Canadian content production, we can help shift some of that production to localities like Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver, for example. They could attract that work, not just work that is a shipped-over production element from Hollywood, for example, but, rather, producing good Canadian content that is Canadian stories and Canadian productions on Canadian soil. The potential of this bill is about that.

There certainly is a lot more work to be done, but I am very appreciative of the tremendous work that has always been done out of Vancouver in the film and TV sector, and we want to promote more of that through a bill like this.

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Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a tremendous number of speakers have spoken to this issue in the last two days. I could ditto what my colleague from Saskatoon had to say. He was fantastic. He knows the industry. There have been some great speeches and a lot of good questions.

Some people may remember when they had to turn the channel on the TV, but let us go back a little further. I can remember when there was one radio station we listened to. At Christmastime, we would gather around to listen to the Queen's message on Christmas day.

I remember radio shows where they started with somebody walking down a hallway, knocking on the door and saying, "Who's there? It's the happy gang". I go back a little ways on that one. We got to listen to *The Shadow*. If we were good in school, the teacher would turn on the World Series, because the games were not played at night. It was always a treat if a teacher would let us listen to the World Series on the radio.

Then, when we got our first TV, I wondered what all those numbers were around the dial. What was 1 and 13 and all those other numbers? We had one channel. When we turned the TV on, we saw a test pattern for half an hour in the afternoon before a program started. If people think they know about old-time TV, I do not think so.

Let us look at the 1950s in the sense of TV and what happened in September and October 1956 and January 1957. One of the highest rated shows in the U.S. in the 1950s was Elvis Presley on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. However, we saw censorship for the first time when, in that 1957 show, they were only allowed to broadcast him from the waist up. People did not want to be exposed to "Elvis the Pelvis". The cry of people was that the world had all gone to hell, because Elvis was on public TV. That was censorship back then, and I think that might be some of the concerns we have today.

Where were people during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962? We were all watching the TV. When we went home from school, we did not know if we were coming back the next day. In 1963, Walter Cronkite and Knowlton Nash covered the assassination of John F. Kennedy. In 1966, we got the first colour television. I remember watching *Bonanza* for the first time in colour. In 1969, people were glued to their TVs to watch the landing on the moon.

We had an interesting show called *This Hour Has Seven Days*, with Laurier LaPierre and Patrick Watson, which ran from 1964 to 1966. Why did that show disappear? A lot of people out there would suggest that the establishment could not take the rapid fire from Watson and LaPierre, so that program was cut.

When the Vietnam War came along, I was on both sides of the border, getting my university degrees. When I read the media from both sides of the border, it was like a different war. Which one was right? Was it censorship or was it fake news, depending on which country one was in? I did research for a political science professor who, as a research assistant, later testified in Senate hearings about information that was not in the news. It was interesting.

These kinds of things have been around for a while. We now have a bill that has been moved. Supposedly, it is a whole different era when we talk about all these things. We are just beginning to

learn about some of the things out there, such as Twitch and Reddit. I just learned about things like Facebook and Twitter, but now we have new ones like Twitch and Reddit. The younger generation knows them, but most of the people who are a little older or a little younger than me have no idea what they are.

One of the things from the Yale report, which is also in this bill, is talk about strengthening the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada. This is interesting because we have talked about rural broadband for years. The government is talking about getting something done by 2026. It has said that we will have a 50 download/10 upload. In the agricultural sector that is not quick enough. The government talks about it as at the last community, but we need it at the last farm gate.

If we want the economic fabric of Canada strengthened, we need much better than that. We have companies like Telus that are now buying up agricultural companies, which is fantastic. However, what our agriculture sector needs in downloads/uploads is much more than 50/10 if we are to strengthen the economic fabric of our country.

● (1715)

We need to deal with broadband. We need to see how that can be improved or we will not strengthen it, whether it is with broadcasting or not. However, it is part of the social media that needs to be developed in rural areas.

There are other things we need to do. One of the things proposed in the Yale report, and I do not see it in the bill, which is a good thing, was that anyone who sat on the CRTC board had to live in the capital region. What a divisive recommendation, that someone has to live in the capital region to be on the CRTC board. That one did not show up, which is good. A lot of things came out of that Yale report. I hope the CRTC does not pick that one up and implement it up under the regulations. It would not be good.

The Yale report also talked about news and current events being reported in the media. It talked about regional, local, national and international. What did not show up in this bill? It includes local, regional and international news, but not national news. National news and current events have been left out of the Bill C-10, which is very interesting because the Yale report included it.

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In recent times, many of my constituents have said that Global TV, CTV and CBC might as well be U.S. channels because they carry more U.S. news than Canadian news. With the appointment of the Supreme Court justice in the United States, we would have thought we were in the United States, given the amount of coverage it received. My constituents have asked me why our national broadcasters do not cover more Canadian news and why they are infatuated with the U.S. It is a good point. There is a lot of local stuff out there, but they are infatuated with what goes on below the 49th parallel apparently.

We can look at the things in the bill and ask can it be strengthened, can it get to the news stuff, will people who work in Canada be taxed. I do not know whether the bill covers this. I do know something about local content. I live in a community of about 15,000 people. Three documentaries have been done on this community in the last 15 years and a proposal for the fourth one is being developed.

The documentaries *24 Days in Brooks*, *Brooks: The City of 100 Hellos* and *From Sherbrooke to Brooks* have won a number of awards at film festivals. There are great local stories and great local content out there and we need to have those stories told.

As I said, many people have addressed Google and Facebook. The problem I have with this is the federal government is spending zillions of dollars on advertising on these foreign platforms. I only have weekly newspapers in my riding and they cover the real news in my communities. They cover the municipal governments, the school boards and minor hockey. They cover all the events in the communities and they talk about what is happening.

Major newspapers are not going to cover that. Where did the federal print advertising go for local weekly newspapers? It went to the international big guys. The local papers that actually produce the real stories on what goes on in communities has lost that advertising. That advertising has gone out of the country; Canadian taxpayer money has gone out of the country. That is not right. We need that print advertising to support our local papers, which produce the real stories in our communities.

I do not think amendments will fix this bill, but we can try in committee. I have been in a lot of committees where we have attempted amendments. The government, which writes the legislation, is not very friendly to amendments unless it is for itself. Therefore, it will be a challenge to amend this legislation. There are some big challenges with it. It will go to committee, but I do not think it will get fixed.

• (1720)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member about indigenous broadcasting, but first I want to thank him for his trip down memory lane. It was very fun.

I want to correct a couple inaccuracies about broadband and the great work that the broadband minister has been doing in connecting, already, over a million people. The member mentioned 2026 being the start of the action, but actually it is close to the end. By then, 98% of Canadians will be connected.

I want to give a big shout-out to Canadian indigenous broadcasters. Northern Native Broadcasting in the Yukon does a tremendous job. I hope it gets increased funding through the local content ramifications of the bill. I know the member is a big supporter of indigenous people and I am sure he is in support of the local indigenous production of their own stories that this bill would help.

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the comments from my colleague. I am glad to hear that some of us still remember some of those things down memory lane.

Yes, there are tremendous indigenous stories in my riding. I have an indigenous constituent who has been able to acquire two white buffalo. Those are the rarest buffalo in North America. The story of how he acquired those and what he is doing with the two white buffalo is fantastic. I spent about three hours at his place listening to the stories of the white buffalo and their significance.

On broadband, I have people who have very large farming operations. It is not going to work at 50/10. It is just not enough and will not work.

• (1725)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member drifted off topic there a bit and mentioned some of the rural newspapers, which are the lifeblood of my riding as well. I think I have 14 weekly newspapers, and I want to give a shout-out to *The Valley Voice*, a biweekly newspaper based in New Denver in the Slokan valley. They have talked to me many times about the lack of government support for their efforts, which are really widely read. They are an essential part of getting the news out in the rural parts of my riding.

Can the member expand on what other supports he could see the government giving those sorts of newspapers, either online or in print?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, it is really good to hear other people talk about their weekly and rural newspapers. They are incredible sources of information. They have real facts. There is no fake news in them. There is no sense of dispute on what they are talking about because they are printing those for the people in the local communities who would know better if they did something that was not accurate. They do a great job of covering the real events. During COVID, that is where people got a lot of real information about what was happening in their community. The major dailies are not going to cover what is going on in those small communities, but the rural ones do. It is phenomenal.

They are looking for advertising dollars. They do not want a handout. They want the advertising dollars that have gone to the international companies and media platforms. That is our taxpayer money going somewhere else.

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Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleague from South Okanagan—West Kootenay and point out that there are lots of newspapers in my area. However, where he would only mention one, I can say the Penticton Herald, The Daily Courier, the Kelowna Capital News, the Merritt Herald, the Peachland View, and they go on. Because all politics is local, I appreciate the work they are doing every day.

To this issue, government members today continue to play this game where they say they will be investing \$800 million in new Canadian content. The thing is that they seem to neglect to mention where the money is going to come from. They may pretend it is going to be the big companies who will pay for it, but at the end of the day, the big companies are not the ones who pay the subscription fees.

Could the member please electrify the House with who is actually going to be paying the bill?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, the member and I know that when they begin to change those, the companies are not going to leave, as may have been suggested earlier. Netflix is not going away. The new platforms that are out there that a lot of students were on during the last eight months, the social media, those platforms are not going away. If they are faced with increasing costs, it is going to be the subscribers who pay for it. The subscribers are going to be paying those costs. It will not be anybody else except the user at the bottom end.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this member offers a lot to the discussion today.

I have heard what he has had to say about this, but one of the concerns that I have, and I am continually hearing this from the Conservatives, is that they talk about the one or two problems they might see with the bill. This bill is at the first stage. If they are genuinely interested in seeing change, they would support the bill and send it to committee. This member said that the government members are the ones who run the amendments, but no, we are in a minority Parliament right now. All this member needs to do is get together with some other opposition members, and he can get his amendments into the bill.

Would he not at least support sending the bill to committee, so that he can bring forward his fine amendments he has been talking about so that they can be made part of the bill and make it a better piece of legislation?

• (1730)

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the member for Kingston and the Islands. He has a fine mind for history. He understands history, respects it and comes from a community that is deep in history. I really appreciate listening to him when he talks about the history of his community. We have worked on committees together.

He may be right. One never knows. We might be surprised if this is sent to committee, and I think it will probably be sent to committee. However, I am not sure what we will get for amendments to fix a bill that has a lot of challenges in it.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I have a brief note. I know we are attentive to the rules that we would normally have in the House. Slogans and the pronunciation of views on controversial topics in our everyday clothing are not within our rules. I so enjoyed the last speech that I did not want to interrupt, because I agreed with what the member had to say—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the member for bringing up that point of order. I did not quite hear the end of it. It was cut off.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, the rules of this place are clear. We cannot wear t-shirts that proclaim support for one view or another, nor can we wear buttons that have large declarations on controversial issues as a member of Parliament in this place.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the member very much. I would tend to think that was for the previous speaker. I would ask all members to make sure they respect the decorum of the House. Even though we are doing it virtually, it is still considered to be in the House.

I do appreciate the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands raising that. I am sorry. We just did a transition in the Chair and I did not notice that, so I thank the member very much.

[Translation]

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ) moved that Bill C-223, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (adequate knowledge of French in Quebec), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the first bill that I have introduced in the House. I introduced a very simple bill with a clear objective, and that is to enable newcomers who want to become citizens and reside in Quebec to integrate into their host society.

In order to integrate, newcomers must be able to communicate with members of their host society. In Quebec, the common language is French. The purpose of the Charter of the French Language is to make French the official and common language of Quebec. As a result, newcomers must learn French in order to integrate into Quebec society.

Anyone who wants to become a Canadian citizen at the end of their immigration process must demonstrate a sufficient knowledge of one of Canada's two official languages. Right now, a permanent resident who wants to become a citizen and reside in Quebec could do so without knowing a single word of French. Of course, this situation is not in keeping with the Charter of the French Language, the main objective of which is to make French the common language of all Quebecers.

That is why, during the last election campaign, the Bloc Québécois's platform included a promise to introduce a bill requiring that permanent residents residing in Quebec have knowledge of French in order to obtain citizenship. Promise kept: That is what we are debating today.

During the 42nd Parliament, the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île introduced Bill C-421, which would have made that change. Unfortunately, the bill was deemed non-votable following an extraordinary procedure that included all MPs voting secretly in spite of the opinion of the clerk who drafted the bill.

This time, the Bloc Québécois has a legal opinion. The other parties can no longer hide behind the so-called unconstitutionality of this proposal.

In March, the Bloc Québécois commissioned this legal opinion to ensure the constitutionality of the bill we are debating today. The study was carried out by Professor Patrick Taillon of the law faculty at Laval University and lawyer and Ph.D. in law candidate Amélie Binette.

After reading this opinion, it is quite reasonable to believe that Bill C-223 is entirely constitutional. Thus, the first question we must ask ourselves is this: What are the general principles that should guide our interpretation of language rights?

The response issued by Ms. Binette and Mr. Taillon, based, among other things, on the Beaulac decision, is clear: Language rights must be interpreted broadly and liberally, based on their objectives of maintaining and enhancing the vitality of official language communities in Canada.

Given its status as both a majority and a minority of the historic francophone community, which is recognized by the Supreme Court in the Solski decision, the intervention of political actors is necessary to ensure substantive equality between English and French in Quebec. What is this logic of substantive equality?

Substantive equality is not the same as formal equality when interpreting section 16 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which constitutionalizes the equality between the two official languages.

To sum up, it is a matter of looking at the linguistic situation in each province so that measures can be taken that take into account the specific needs of the minority community. Thus, there is nothing that precludes Parliament or provincial legislatures from taking action to promote the use of English or French in specific contexts, since the linguistic demography and pluralist reality of Canada requires an asymmetrical approach.

In Andrews, Justice McIntyre noted that a law will not necessarily be bad because it makes distinctions when having to implement measures for two people in similar circumstances. Therefore, Bill C-223 is not unconstitutional because it creates a distinction between residents of Quebec and those of other provinces. True equality requires consideration of the demographic, geographic and social context of a community when interpreting language rights.

If immigration is a shared responsibility of the provinces and the federal government under section 95 of the Constitution Act, 1867,

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the granting of citizenship is the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government under subsection 91(25).

● (1735)

As our legal opinion on immigration shows, the courts have encouraged a type of co-operative federalism over the past few years. Passage of Bill C-233 would promote real equality between English and French through an asymmetrical approach and collaboration between both levels of government.

The citizenship test does not constitute a service since it seeks only to assess the linguistic skills of permanent residents and their knowledge of French. The bill does not infringe on the public's right to receive services in both languages, as stipulated in section 20 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms since nothing in its content prevents a permanent resident of Quebec from applying for citizenship in English, providing information in English, communicating with the government in English and swearing their oath of citizenship in English if they so desire even if they have to prove an adequate knowledge of French to obtain citizenship. That would be a curious path to take, but nothing in Bill C-223 would prevent that.

As pointed out in our legal opinion, even if the courts deemed that the citizenship test was a type of service, section 1 of the Constitution Act, 1982, clearly states that the rights it guarantees are "subject...to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society."

Jurisprudence clearly shows that specific arrangements to guarantee substantive equality between the two official languages constitute a reasonable limit in a free and democratic society.

In our legal opinion, Professor Taillon explained that the Supreme Court developed a two-part test to interpret section 1 of the Constitution Act, 1982. The first part is to prove that the measure serves a pressing and substantial objective. The second part is to prove that the means are reasonable and demonstrably justified. The French language in Quebec is in such an alarming position, so the intent and content of Bill C-223 clearly serve a pressing and substantial objective.

As to whether this is a reasonable and justifiable measure, it is important to remember that the Citizenship Act already provides for language testing. In *Forget v. Quebec*, the Supreme Court ruled that the requirement that non-francophones pass a French test was not an arbitrary ground when it came to joining the nursing profession. The same reasoning could be applied to citizenship.

Bill C-223 contains a single provision that makes three important amendments to paragraphs 5(1)(d) and 5(1)(e) of the Citizenship Act.

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First, Bill C-223 increases, from 55 to 65, the maximum age up until which a permanent resident who applies for Canadian citizenship is required to demonstrate a knowledge of one of the official languages and to pass a test demonstrating that they have an adequate knowledge of Canada and of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship.

Second, the bill ensures that, if a permanent resident resides in Quebec, they will not be able to choose between demonstrating their knowledge of an official language in English or in French as is currently the case. Instead, they will have to demonstrate an adequate knowledge of French. Permanent residents residing in other provinces will be able to continue to choose between the two languages.

Third, consistent with the language requirement, under Bill C-223 the citizenship test must be administered in French in Quebec, not in one or the other official language. The bill does not impinge on that choice in other provinces.

The central element of this bill is citizenship. The question we must ask ourselves, and which we will attempt to answer, is as follows: Do individuals require an adequate knowledge of French to exercise their citizenship in Quebec? The Bloc Québécois believes they do.

This bill recognizes the primacy of French in Quebec, it is consistent with recognition of the Quebec nation, it contributes to sustaining French in Quebec, it restores the status of French in Quebec, it acknowledges the importance of understanding the language to exercise all the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship in Quebec, and it is an additional means to slow the decline of French in Quebec.

As we are seeing in the news, Quebecers are more and more concerned about the decline of the French language.

● (1740)

According to a recent Leger poll, 63% of respondents said they were very concerned or somewhat concerned about the status of French in Quebec. Among francophones, that figure rises to 71%, an increase of 17% compared to a similar Leger poll conducted in 2018.

Nearly six in 10 Quebecers think that the situation has gotten worse over the past decade. Six in 10 Quebecers also think that the status of French will continue to decline over the next decade.

In a report from April 2019 on the evolution of the linguistic situation in Quebec, the Office québécois de la langue française found that the use of French greetings in stores on the Island of Montreal had dropped from 84% to 75% compared to 2010.

It is important that we do everything we possibly can at the federal level to reverse this trend. Major changes will be proposed shortly by the Government of Quebec, and the federal government must also do its part. It is only by passing Bill C-223 and making changes like these that we can stop this trend.

We cannot rely on the Liberal government to take leadership on this file, and that is why the Bloc Québécois is taking charge. I hope that the Liberals will vote in favour of my bill.

The Prime Minister once said, "The Liberal Party of Canada will always be there to protect the French language." This would be a good opportunity to prove it.

All the same, there are a few factors that make me doubt the Liberals' goodwill on this issue, such as the comments made by the Liberal member at the Standing Committee on Official Languages. She did, however, walk back those comments today.

While questioning the Commissioner of Official Languages, she expressed doubts about the decline of French in Quebec. She needed proof. Well, all the evidence is there. She has only to look at the statistics and read reports like the one published in 2017 by the Auditor General of Quebec, who found that the campaign to teach French to immigrants in Quebec had failed, or simply take a walk in her riding or anywhere else in Quebec.

A Journal de Montréal reporter did just that. She walked into some shops in downtown Montreal. Of the 31 establishments she visited, 16 offered a unilingual English greeting, and in almost a third of the businesses she visited, staff were simply unable to respond in Quebec's official language.

If members of the House of Commons vote against the very principle of Bill C-223, they will be proving two things. First, they will be proving that Canada's bilingual nature is not important to them, by rejecting a minimum requirement for ensuring the vitality of French in North America. Second, they will be proving that Canada's constitutional framework cannot ensure the full vitality of the Quebec nation.

The elected members of the House of Commons will have to decide whether they agree with the spirit of the Laurendeau-Dunton commission or that of the more grievous Durham commission. Quebec deserves to see where it stands.

In conclusion, the entire history of Quebec and, by extension, the history of French-speaking Canada can be summed up as a fierce battle for self-preservation and the survival of French. After more than 400 years, we continue to fight for the right to exist, and the debate we have brought to the House of Commons today, with Bill C-223, is but one more episode in this never-ending story.

In 2006, the House of Commons recognized the Quebec nation. What does that mean?

So far, from both a legal and a political perspective, Canada's recognition of the Quebec nation has yet to translate into any tangible action. It was simply a political and symbolic gesture, and it does not address Quebec's historical constitutional demands.

Furthermore, as long as members of Parliament refuse to pass laws and implement government measures that allow Quebec to pursue its own cultural and linguistic development, as Bill C-223 would do, the recognition of the Quebec nation will be meaningless. Passing Bill C-223 would be consistent with the motion passed by the House of Commons.

• (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am from the riding of Nepean, in Ottawa. In Ottawa, there is no need officially for bilingual language services or their promotion. However, in considering Franco-Ontarians, the national capital region and the two official languages of Canada, Ottawa uses both official languages on its own in almost all of its operations.

I would like to ask the member whether language and cultural heritage can grow through imposition. In my view, language and cultural heritage can only grow through promotion, not imposition.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Bill C-223 is for the province of Quebec. If we look back on our history and remember what happened, we are all immigrants from New England or France.

Now, 400 years later, we are still debating the French language, even though Quebec is francophone. This bill is truly essential, since we want newcomers to at least be able to speak and live in French, not just in Montreal, but all across Quebec. There are more and more newcomers all across Quebec, even in my riding.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

Two weeks ago, Radio-Canada reported that asylum seekers hoping to take French lessons in Quebec were prevented from doing so as a result of new rules implemented by the Quebec minister of education that prohibit asylum seekers and newcomers from taking French lessons.

Would she agree that it makes no sense for Quebec's ministry of education to prevent newcomers to Quebec from taking French lessons?

• (1750)

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

That is a matter that falls under Quebec's jurisdiction. The member can ask the Quebec minister of education about what is happening in Quebec.

However, today, I am talking about Bill C-223, which the House should support because it seeks to give newcomers to Quebec an opportunity to speak French.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

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Unfortunately, news reports are reminding us that the French language is in decline in Quebec right now. We often tend to be too quick to blame young people, but I would like to remind members that the young people of my generation care a lot about French and that we will do everything in our power to ensure that it is protected in Quebec.

I would like to know whether my colleague thinks that the Liberals should vote in favour of this bill if they seriously want to protect the French language in Quebec.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, that is a good question, and I thank my colleague.

Young people are indeed the future. In Quebec, young people are also the future of the French language.

The current government must support this bill because it is very important for the French language. For days now, the Liberals and Conservatives have been saying how important French in Quebec is. They must prove it today by voting in favour of Bill C-223.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her presentation and for this bill, which I will be very pleased to vote in favour of.

Some time ago, Quebec adopted an excellent law to protect the French language called the Charter of the French Language. The charter ended up being gutted by the Supreme Court, which is Canada's real government and which literally put it through the wringer.

In other words, it seems that standing up for French means nothing more than empty, purely symbolic motions and lip service. This bill, which makes sense in the same way that a distinct nation requiring the use of its own language within its borders makes sense, might not pass.

Does Quebec have to be independent so it can defend the French language?

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Madam Speaker, that is a good question.

Indeed, we are here today to defend Bill C-223, which is about making knowledge of French a requirement for newcomers to Quebec. We need the support of all MPs to pass this bill. Otherwise, we will have to take other measures to finally achieve Quebec independence.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-223, which proposes changes to the current process for permanent residents of Canada to become Canadian citizens.

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Before I address the bill specifically, I would like to take a moment to talk about myself and my family. I came to Quebec as a political refugee in the early years of Bill 101. I am a child of the very first reception classes and francization classes in Quebec. My single mother and my grandparents, who were over 60 years old, took francization classes at the infamous Centres d'orientation et de formation des immigrants, commonly known as COFIs.

My aunt Marcela arrived in 1978 at the age of 17. She also learned French upon arrival and worked for more than 20 years as a nurse in Quebec health care. She is now a francophone doctor in her field and a professor in the nursing program at the Université du Québec en Outaouais.

We all received our citizenship before we could speak French. Today, my children and my cousins are all young Quebec francophones who work and study in French. That was possible in 1980, and I think it is still possible today.

The Government of Canada encourages all immigrants to commit to taking part in every aspect of Canadian and Quebec society. Getting Canadian citizenship is one of the best foundations for successful integration in life. Immigrants make a considerable contribution on a cultural, economic, social and political level. They volunteer, join community organizations and share their points of view on so many important issues in our society.

Anyone who has had the chance to attend or take part in a citizenship ceremony knows that it is a very moving experience. It is a very touching celebration. It is an official step in a process for gaining Canadian citizenship. For most immigrants, this step signifies that they have demonstrated their knowledge of Canada, their host country, of its history and the rights and responsibilities that come with citizenship. They were also able to demonstrate that they can speak French or English and that they commit to living and working in this country.

The government of Canada is determined to help all newcomers acquire the French or English language skills they need to integrate into their host community and to contribute to the country's economy.

As we know, the pandemic has had significant repercussions for almost all sectors of society. We are now striving to adapt to the new realities and to make as many positive changes as possible. In March, in response to the constantly evolving COVID-19 situation, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada decided to cancel all citizenship ceremonies, tests, retests and in-person interviews. Through innovation and the use of existing platforms, we were fortunately able to continue welcoming new Canadian citizens at virtual citizenship ceremonies.

Recently, in mid-October 2020, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada held almost 8,800 ceremonies at which more than 43,000 new Canadian citizens took the oath of citizenship. We are currently planning the resumption of citizenship tests using technology that will let candidates take online tests. While waiting for the online testing solution to be ready and accessible, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is using a virtual platform to process urgent citizenship applications and administer a small number of citizenship tests and interviews.

Citizenship officers began contacting clients who reported an urgent need to obtain citizenship. The implementation of such measures shows our commitment to reducing the obstacles to citizenship during this very unusual time. It is important to point out that the government places a high value on Canada's two official languages. As a result, we remain determined to welcome more francophone newcomers. We believe that all newcomers to Canada and Quebec enrich our communities.

Most members know that Quebec is the only province that has an immigration agreement with the federal government.

• (1755)

Quebec selects its immigrants from the economic class. Most immigrants who live in Quebec speak French. Census data show that, 10 years after they arrive in Canada, 90.5% of economic immigrants, 71.1% of immigrants under the family reunification program and 84.3% of refugees speak French. Under this agreement, Quebec is also responsible for French-language and integration programs.

We must continue to be welcoming and open to the world. We must ensure that we promote francophone immigration and French-language training for all immigrants and refugees who settle in Quebec.

The Government of Canada knows that immigration positively contributes to our country's economy and society. We also know that newcomers contribute to the vitality of communities, particularly francophone minority communities outside Quebec, but also communities within Quebec. We need to maintain the demographic weight of francophones in North America, which is why francophone immigration is so important. That is why we are taking numerous measures to increase francophone immigration, promote the integration and retention of French-speaking newcomers and build capacity in francophone communities.

As part of the government's official languages action plan, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada will invest more than \$40 million over five years to support a consolidated francophone integration pathway. In 2019, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada launched new language training services to support the francophone integration pathway, which helps French-speaking newcomers who settle in francophone minority communities and improves their language skills.

Although progress toward achieving these targets depends on lifting pandemic-related travel restrictions, I think we will get there eventually and increase the number of francophone newcomers across the country.

Taken together, these measures will help French-speaking newcomers build new lives in Canada and signal the government's support for linguistic duality in this country. The government's focus on French and francophone immigration will also strengthen the demographic weight of francophones in Quebec.

• (1800)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to deliver this speech in Canada's two official languages.

[*English*]

The proposed Bloc Québécois amendment to the Citizenship Act is something the Conservatives have given much thought and consideration. Our response is guided by two core principles of the Conservative Party.

[*Translation*]

The first principle is recognition of the Quebec nation by former prime minister Stephen Harper and our commitment to protecting its language and culture.

[*English*]

In my remarks, I will first address the proposed change to the maximum age at which knowledge of either English or French is necessary to obtain citizenship. I will then address the proposed change to require knowledge of French for applicants who wish to live in the province of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

We support the principle behind the French language requirement since it corresponds to our values and the commitment of our leader to Quebecers. However, the Conservatives have concerns about the proposed change to the maximum age for which linguistic knowledge is mandatory, which would increase from 55 to 65.

Accordingly, we support the bill at first reading, while ensuring that the perspectives of older new Canadians are heard and their concerns reviewed in committee and addressed in amendments if necessary.

[*English*]

The Conservatives believe in compassionate measures to assist in family reunification and to uphold Canada's humanitarian tradition as a safe haven for refugees. We recognize that raising the maximum age may present challenges for families seeking to obtain citizenship for their older parents and grandparents, who may experience greater difficulties becoming fully bilingual. We want to ensure that parents and grandparents are treated with dignity.

Many families already face tremendous difficulties at the hands of the Liberal government, which never seems to get family reunification right, as we have seen across this country with heartbreaking stories of family separation due to the government's inability to recognize the desperate need to prioritize family reunification. It even brought back a failed grandparents and parents lottery system that is unfair, uncompassionate and ineffective. Immigrants and new Canadians deserve better.

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[*Translation*]

This bill would make knowledge of French mandatory instead of French or English for permanent residents who live in Quebec and wish to obtain Canadian citizenship.

We support the principle behind this measure and we recognize the urgency of doing more than sharing French in Quebec. The situation of French in Quebec is getting worse. Outside of the Liberal caucus, there is a broad consensus on this. It is especially true in Montreal.

[*English*]

Montreal is one of the great metropolises in Canada and indeed in all of North America. Having lived and worked there for four years as a university student, I had the privilege of experiencing first-hand the richness of its history, diversity and culture. Part of what makes Montreal so unique is that it was founded in French, and French has been the main language spoken there for nearly all of its 378 years of existence. Francophone Quebecers understandably wish to preserve its distinct character in the face of the pressures of globalization and assimilation into a North American standard that is uniformly English.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Unfortunately, the historical character of Montreal is being increasingly called into question.

In its April 2019 report, the Office québécois de la langue française found that nearly half of all francophone clients surveyed in the Montreal area were addressed in languages other than French.

A survey published last week in *Le journal de Montréal* showed that the staff of several retail chains in downtown Montreal addressed their customers in English only. Furthermore, they could not even communicate important information about public health guidelines that applied in the store and the possibility that their products might contain ingredients to which a customer might be allergic.

The Liberals, much like the member for Saint-Laurent in Montreal, have blatantly and inappropriately chosen to ignore and downplay this reality. As Conservatives, we choose instead to act.

That is why our leader has committed to allowing the application of Bill 101, which makes French the official language of work in Quebec, in federally regulated businesses in Quebec and to giving Quebec more powers in immigration matters. He reiterated his commitments when he met with Premier Legault on September 14.

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I have to point out that there is a significant difference between the Conservative approach and that of the Bloc Québécois. Rather than amending the federal Citizenship Act, the Conservative government would work with Quebec to enhance the powers and autonomy of Quebec's government with respect to immigration based on the immigration agreement that was put in place by Canada and Quebec in 1991. The Canada-Quebec accord was a great success and the Conservatives would strengthen this approach, which has already proven itself.

I must also point out another major difference between our approach and that of the Bloc. There will never be a Bloc Québécois government and its leader will never be the prime minister of Canada. Only the Conservative Party can beat the Liberals in the next election and elect a prime minister who could act on Quebecers' priorities, defend their interests and protect their language.

[*English*]

Some might suggest that the French language requirement in this bill represents radical change. We disagree. The reality is that Quebec already controls most of its immigration, and French-language requirements have long played an important and critical role in Quebec's determination of eligibility for permanent residency.

Immigration to Quebec is a shared jurisdiction, governed by the terms of the Canada-Quebec accord relating to immigration and temporary admission of aliens, agreed to in partnership between the Quebec and Canadian governments in 1991. One of the agreement's objectives is, "the preservation of Quebec's demographic importance within Canada and the integration of immigrants to that province in a manner that respects the distinct identity of Quebec." The accord gives Quebec sole responsibility for the selection of economic immigrants and skilled workers, as well as most immigrants in the humanitarian and refugee categories. For the majority of these immigrants, knowledge of French is either a requirement for successful selection or part of the criteria in a points-based system for determining eligibility.

The Quebec government has signalled its intention to both strengthen its requirements for knowledge of French in these categories and provide greater resources for French-language teaching and integration services. Some exceptions to this framework include immigrants in the family reunification category, as well as those who make refugee claims within Canadian territory. Our approach would allow the Quebec government to extend the same rules and criteria to those additional immigrant categories with respect to obtaining Canadian citizenship. This bill, though different from our approach, goes in the same direction, which is why we have chosen to support it on that basis at first reading.

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, our leader and our party have great respect for the Quebec nation and understand the cultural importance of protecting the French language. The Conservatives are offering Quebecers a serious alternative to the Liberals. We are the only ones who can beat them in the next election and form the next government.

Only a Conservative government will be able to work with the Legault government to obtain real results for Quebecers.

• (1810)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):
Madam Speaker, I would like to speak to this bill.

I used to be a Quebecker, having lived in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, in the city formerly known as Chicoutimi and now known as Saguenay; in the Eastern Townships, in the city of Sherbrooke; in Montreal, in Plateau Mont-Royal; and in the Outaouais, in Hull, now known as Gatineau. I have some perspectives to share about this bill and about the use of French in Quebec.

There certainly are concerns about wanting to increase the use of French in Quebec. Having lived in Quebec for more than 10 years and having always insisted on being served in French, even with my accent, I never experienced the problems that are often raised about downtown Montreal. Although I was never denied service in French, I believe the concerns that have been raised and I think we need to do more to protect and promote the French fact in Quebec and across Canada.

This is why I am proud of my party's history. As members know, the NDP was the first party to recognize Quebec's right to self-determination and to push for legislation on Canada's official languages.

When the NDP was in power in provinces where it previously formed a government, the French fact thrived. In my home province of British Columbia, the NDP is the one that implemented the existing francophone school system with dozens and dozens of schools following that curriculum. There are French schools for francophones all across British Columbia.

It was the same thing in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In Alberta, Léo Piquette, a former NDP member, really helped to advance the French fact and the rights of Franco-Albertans. In Ontario, the NDP government established the francophone college network and increased services for francophones.

In New Brunswick, there was Elizabeth Weir, the former leader of our party in that province. There was also Yvon Godin, who was a member here in the House for a long time and who was recognized everywhere for his strong and passionate promotion of the French language and the Official Languages Act. We miss Yvon Godin. I know that Madam Speaker is also sorry that he is no longer a member of the House of Commons. We wish him a happy retirement. His voice was always extremely strong here in the House of Commons.

I am telling all these stories to illustrate the NDP approach to strengthening the French fact in Quebec and across Canada. Naturally, it starts with extending Bill 101 to federal institutions. People who work in Quebec must have the right to work in French. The systematic refusal, first by the Conservatives and then by the Liberals, to ensure that francophone workers can work in French in federal workplaces is a strange thing I have never understood. It is important to put these measures in place.

The NDP also strongly believes that Quebec's immigration-related rights need to be strengthened. We need increasing numbers of French-speaking immigrants. As everyone knows, the French fact is growing in importance internationally, and it is forecast that there will be a billion French speakers around the world within the next 20 years.

• (1815)

These statistics, which come from the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*, also indicate that the French fact is expanding pretty much everywhere, especially in places like Africa. It is important to know this in order to understand how the French fact could be strengthened in Quebec and Canada.

This aspect is extremely important if we want to plan for francophone immigration. We have an inclusive immigration model in Canada, which makes this bill all the more interesting.

As I mentioned earlier in the House, I get a little concerned when I see the actions of the Government of Quebec around funding French courses and giving immigrants the right to take francization courses in Quebec. Two weeks ago, *Radio-Canada* published an article on this subject, which stated, "Many asylum seekers who were planning to attend francization courses in Quebec this fall are unable to do so. *Radio-Canada* has learned that new rules from the ministry of education are delaying their arrival at school or preventing them from being admitted altogether."

The Government of Quebec is making cuts to French courses. However, these newcomers are hungry to learn French, like I was when I was in my 20s. My accent makes it easy to see that I am not a francophone. I started learning French in Chicoutimi when I was 24. I had this ideal and I thought it was extremely important to learn French, just like millions of anglophones across Canada.

In my neck of the woods, back home in New Westminster, parents line up every year to register their children in immersion schools. That does not happen so much in Quebec, but back home it is important. If people speak French well, that increases the consumption of francophone cultural products from Quebec and New Brunswick and the French language can take root, be promoted and flourish.

The *Radio-Canada* article talks about Christian and Ivonne, a young couple in their 30s, saying, "They left their native Colombia with their daughter to claim refugee protection in Canada in early 2020. They settled in Quebec and tried to take French language courses in the spring at a training centre for adults, but COVID-19 put everything on hold."

They tried to register again at Centre du Phénix, but unfortunately they were informed of new rules established by Quebec's educa-

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tion ministry, which requires that they provide documents that are almost impossible to find to take a French course.

The Government of Quebec claims that it wants more people who speak French, but these new rules prevent newcomers from taking French courses. With all these delays, they will not have access to these courses, and that will have considerable consequences.

The NDP thinks it is clear that instead of punishing and dividing immigrants, it is important to offer them French language courses so they can learn French, as I did. Unfortunately, this bill does not facilitate an approach that would let everyone, including immigrants and refugees, take French courses. The NDP wants to promote the right of immigrants to learn French and to have access to these courses.

• (1820)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, for the first time since the implementation of the Official Languages Act 51 years ago, the federal government admitted in a throne speech that the situation of French is unique. Quebec is part of the minority of eight million francophones surrounded by 360 million anglophones. The federal government is committed to strengthening the Official Languages Act to protect and promote the French language in Quebec.

We cannot forget that before the Official Languages Act, the British North America Act, 1867, set out some fairly weak provisions for official bilingualism in the federal government. Quebec was the only province to have official bilingual status, in which English was favoured. The act allowed all of the provinces, which are now predominantly English-speaking, to create assimilationist and openly ethnocidal legislation. I am sure that many members here are not aware of this rarely mentioned part of history.

For example, in a previous life, I debated the head of the *Suburban*, a newspaper from the West Island, where I grew up. When I mentioned these laws that banned French even for francophones, he hit the roof and said that it was completely untrue. It is easy to prove, however, because the legislation is very clear.

For example, in Ontario, teaching French was banned in 1880 and again in 1885. Later, in 1912, it happened yet again with the infamous Regulation 17. It was not until 1968 that Franco-Ontarians were able to attend French public high schools. That was not that long ago. People my age were the first to attend French public high schools in Ontario.

In 1890, Manitoba passed a law that made English the sole official language of laws and the only language of instruction. Teaching French was prohibited, even for francophones.

When Alberta and Saskatchewan became provinces, they repealed section 110 of the Northwest Territories Act, which officially recognized the use of French and English in Parliament and in the courts.

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Despite their Herculean efforts, francophone and Acadian communities were largely anglicized. In the last report issued by Statistics Canada in this regard, the cumulative assimilation rate was found to be approximately 75%. It is certainly even higher today.

People started to wake up and galvanize in the 1960s. There were the Estates General of French Canada. The independence movement was on the rise in Quebec, and the Laurendeau-Dunton commission was established on the heels of these events. The commission came to a damning conclusion on the state of the French language and the economic discrimination that francophones experienced across Canada and Quebec.

For example, francophones ranked 12th in terms of average salary of the 14 linguistic groups in Quebec. People say that a lot of progress has been made since then, but there is still a considerable gap.

The commissioners developed different models of language management, including models based on the principle of territoriality and collective rights, which are recognized in order to protect minority languages. These are the only models that are effective.

Among countries with several national languages, the only ones where there is no assimilation of one language by the others are those where there is a territorial model based on collective rights, such as Belgium and Switzerland, for example. In the Flemish region in Belgium, all government services are provided in Dutch. Even though Dutch is not a widely spoken language in Europe, it survives very well and is the common language there. This does not stop anyone from learning four or five other languages very effectively.

The idea behind this model is that where there is a critical mass of speakers of a certain language, it becomes the official language and all services are provided in that language.

• (1825)

The Laurendeau-Dunton commission, called the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, believed that Canadians would not accept this, and instead proposed a mixed model with bilingual territories.

The model chosen by Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the Liberal government of the day was that of institutional bilingualism based on a principle that has proven that it always leads to the covert assimilation of minority languages. Everywhere in the world where such a model of institutional bilingualism exists, we see the assimilation of minority languages. That is what we have seen here since the adoption of the Official Languages Act. With every census, we see that linguistic transfers from allophones to English are increasing.

The Official Languages Act of 1969 was designed to ensure that services are provided in French in federal institutions, where numbers warrant, in provinces other than Quebec. In Quebec, of course, it ensures that services are provided in French in federal institutions as well. However, its main goal is to ensure services in English everywhere, as though there was not enough of that already.

Bill 101, enacted in 1977, was founded on the principle of territoriality and collective rights. Securing the future of French and being able to help newcomers learn French and integrate is a question

of math: French must be the language used by francophones, but we must ensure that it is the common language of all Quebecers. Of course anglophones will speak English amongst themselves and italophones will speak Italian, but when people who speak different languages converse, French should be the language that brings them together. French is the mortar of Quebec society. That was the goal of Bill 101.

The Official Languages Act promotes the opposite in Quebec. Newcomers and all Quebecers are told that there is not one but two official languages and that they can use the language of their choice, which is English. It makes sense that newcomers, who are in no way to blame, would tend to lean toward the majority when establishing themselves in a new country. Quebec is still part of Canada, and the country's majority is anglophone. The North American majority is even more strongly anglophone.

The Official Languages Act does not acknowledge that anglophones are part of the English-Canadian majority. It considers anglophones to be minorities in the same way as francophones outside Quebec. Even the UN Commission on Human Rights declared that anglophones in Quebec are not part of a minority, but part of the English-Canadian majority. It is a bit like if Quebec were independent, the federal government was not elected by the English-Canadian majority and did not interfere in Quebec.

In 1982, Ottawa imposed a Constitution on Quebec against its will and the judges it appointed in Quebec have continued to dismantle Bill 101 by virtue of this illegitimate Constitution. To Quebec, all the money from the official languages program, roughly \$80 million a year, is used to defend and promote English.

The federal government funds anglophone lobbyists, organizations and institutions that are already over-funded by the Government of Quebec. Every measure for English in Quebec has taken a toll and the decline of French is so bad that Quebec is against the wall and has to mobilize yet again.

The federal government can hardly deny this decline. If the federal government wants to help, it has to stop harming.

The comments by the member for Saint-Laurent were simply a reflection of the comments made by Quebec Community Groups Network, which told the Standing Committee on Official Languages that Bill 101 was a violation of civil rights and that the French language in Quebec is doing well.

If a small measure like knowledge of French for citizenship is once again rejected by the government of the English Canadian majority, it will be a sign to Quebecers that living in French is not possible in Canada. They will have yet more proof that the only solution for the future of Quebec is independence.

• (1830)

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in my opinion, the bill is short-sighted. Any language, culture or heritage can prosper, grow and progress only through promotion, not through imposition.

In my riding of Nepean, 120 languages are spoken. There is a very small number of francophones in my riding, from Cameroon, Burundi and Haiti. Though 120 languages are being spoken in my riding, the number of French schools is increasing. The demand for French schools is so big that it is exceeding capacity. This is not because French is being imposed. It is because the federal government promotes both official languages.

Most parents of children who go to French-speaking schools do not speak French. Like many newcomers to Canada, many new Canadians are multilingual. They are not very well versed in both official languages, but they have the desire for their children to learn both English and French. That is a fact of life here.

In Ottawa, the capital, there are no regulations or legislation that mandate bilingualism. However, because Canada has both English and French as official languages, we promote both languages in Ottawa.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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.

• (1835)

[English]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, I am raising an issue today in our adjournment proceedings that I originally raised on November 2 during question period. I am thankful for the opportunity to address something I know Canadians take great pride in, which is the fact that we are a *terre d'accueil*, and that immigration is a Canadian tradition.

Let us not forget that most of us are immigrants on this land, and that through the years, multiculturalism has become one of our shared values as a nation. It contributes directly to the enrichment and growth of our communities from coast to coast to coast.

Throughout all of human history, people have been on the move. Many migrate out of necessity to escape persecution or devastation. Others migrate out of choice in search of economic opportunities in the hope of a better future for them and their families.

Last month, the minister announced the ambitious immigration levels plan for 2021-23, envisioning the highest levels of immigration in Canada's history. This plan focuses on welcoming the majority of immigrants under economic class programs.

Adjournment Proceedings

Of course, the emphasis on economic migration is nothing new. Economic growth, demographic considerations and labour market needs have defined Canada's immigration policies for many decades now. However, is this approach working?

The intense focus on economic class immigration pathways implicitly ignores and undervalues the economic contribution made by newcomers to Canada from other immigration classes and ignores the many other ways these individuals bring value to our communities.

Canadians take pride in our hospitality and support immigration for its positive economic benefits and for the benefits of multiculturalism. Newcomers make numerous cultural, social and interpersonal contributions, in addition to or in lieu of economic ones.

I asked the minister whether he felt that a 4.4% target for francophone immigration outside Quebec was adequate to have an impact on the vitality of official languages, because I suspect that it is not. When we talk about the vitality of something other than the economy when it comes to immigration, why do we always make such insignificant commitments?

During the last months, as our borders were closed for the first time in generations, we were forced to realize how dependent we are on the contributions of newcomers to Canada from all around the world to make our communities work. "Essential workers" became a household term, referring largely to the marginalized, underpaid caregiving and food production workers.

Immigrants and newcomers are at the core of these sectors and they face many hardships and barriers. Temporary migrant workers, essential to maintain our food security, lack services, legal protections and easy pathways to immigration. The immigrant women who work in the long-term care sector put their own health at risk to provide care to elders while waiting interminably for their immigration applications to be processed. As months go by, more and more of them are living on implied status waiting for a work visa renewal, exempting them from receiving provincial medicare coverage in a pandemic.

The nurses in my home province were deliberately recruited for their skills and are still not able to have their expertise recognized. We promised them a bright future only to abandon them once they were here to face underemployment or unemployment.

Today, I want to ask the parliamentary secretary if we care whether or not a newcomer will be able to contribute to our society at a human level. Do we care if they will have the community support necessary to ensure their personal success and well-being? Are we trading our humanity in the name of economic growth?

Adjournment Proceedings

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that if they want to have conversations, they should leave the chamber because there are proceedings happening right now. It does interfere in the interpretation and in the hon. member's ability to proceed correctly.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, allow me to answer the hon. member for Fredericton's question.

As members may know, November 1 to 7, 2020, was National Francophone Immigration Week, an opportunity to recognize the contributions of francophone newcomers and draw attention to the vitality of francophone communities outside Quebec.

The government firmly believes that all newcomers, including francophone immigrants, contribute to Canada's vitality. As a result, we must create welcoming and inclusive communities for francophone newcomers and provide them with customized support in a timely manner so that they integrate into and build ties with these communities.

To demonstrate the government's commitment to attracting francophone newcomers to Canada, on October 27, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced that francophone and bilingual candidates would receive extra points in Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada's express entry program, the department's online system for managing the applications of qualified workers who want to become permanent residents.

Applicants to the express entry program receive points for various factors, and this change will increase the number of points awarded from 15 to 25 for francophone candidates and from 30 to 50 for bilingual candidates. We believe that awarding additional points to francophone and bilingual candidates in the express entry program will increase the admission of francophones. I am also convinced that this will help the government reach its target of 4.4% French-speaking immigrant admissions outside Quebec by 2023.

Progress towards meeting this target will also depend on travel restrictions during the pandemic. However, I think this is something we can do in the long term to increase the admission of francophones and support francophone minority communities. I am not alone in thinking that this measure is a concrete means of achieving that.

Last Friday, when we announced our 2021-23 immigration levels plan, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, or FCFA, called our initiative "a tangible step forward for francophone immigration". Following this announcement, its president also stated, "What is clear is that the minister takes francophone immigration seriously and is taking concrete action." This change is in addition to other initiatives and priorities of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Government of Canada to promote inclusion and bolster the diversity of Canada's communities.

For example, as part of the official languages action plan, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is investing more than \$40 million over five years to support a consolidated francophone integration pathway and the development of coordinated policies. This approach is part of our francophone immigration strategy, which includes initiatives to boost francophone immigration, support the integration and retention of francophone newcomers and enhance the vitality of francophone communities.

Alongside the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada pandemic response initiatives, some organizations that provide settlement and integration services in Canada have adapted their services to the realities of COVID-19. For example, the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité is working with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to organize a virtual fair this December to educate employers about recruiting francophone immigrants and how they can help businesses grow.

I am proud of the measures that Canada has been taking to attract francophone immigrants, and despite the pandemic, I remain confident that francophone minority communities in Canada will continue to attract and welcome newcomers and help them integrate.

● (1840)

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, Canada's preoccupation with the pursuit of economic growth is happening at the expense of the well-being of newcomers and their families, and the vitality of our communities. Immigrant-serving agencies across New Brunswick are currently working with over 1,800 immigrants who are either underemployed or unemployed as a result of the pandemic. However, the agencies lack the necessary resources and personnel to support these individuals to resume employment and regain the security that we all need to feel at home.

New Brunswick also has a retention problem. Newcomers arrive through the Atlantic immigration pilot project, do their time and then head to larger cities where they can connect with people from their home countries. We are wasting an opportunity to help them create a sense of home in New Brunswick. All communities are built on the interweaving of the lives of their residents. If those people are healthy, happy and connected, the community will thrive.

When we measure people exclusively in dollars and cents, we are not seeing them for the full value they can provide and we are not setting them up for personal success. What if, instead of spinning our wheels on economic immigration, we enable the newcomers already in Canada to bring their families here more easily? What if we made progress on recognizing the foreign credentials of their spouses? What if we streamlined our processes so that it did not take immigrants years to become recognized as a permanent resident, with the security that provides?

If we gave people those tools, perhaps we would have greater success in retaining them.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, the government believes that all newcomers, including francophone immigrants, contribute to Canada's vitality. To attract francophone newcomers, the minister announced on October 27 that French-speaking and bilingual candidates will receive additional points under the express entry system. The change will see the current number of points increase from 15 to 25 for French-speaking candidates and from 30 to 50 for bilingual candidates. This change will help deliver on the government's commitment to reach the target of 4.4% French-speaking immigrant admissions outside Quebec by 2023. It complements other initiatives to promote francophone immigration outside Quebec and enhance the diversity of communities in Canada.

[English]

MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, since being elected to this House a year and a half ago, I have repeatedly asked the transport minister and Transport Canada to address the pollution, noise and environmental damage caused by the interim protocol freighter anchorages in the Southern Gulf Islands.

The minister knows what the problem is. I want to talk about solutions to solve the inefficiencies at the Port of Vancouver. Container shipments from that port are highly efficient. Bulk freighters should be as well. There are busy ports in other countries where this problem is non-existent.

For years, the Port of Newcastle in Australia had the same problem. In 2007, on some days, there were reports of as many as 70 freighters anchored outside the port waiting to load. In June of that year, a ship dragged anchor and ran aground on a popular beach. The public outcry following that incident led to a review of the situation, and the Port of Newcastle no longer has a freighter anchorage problem.

It implemented a vessel arrival system. Ships must contact the port 14 days before they arrive. They can be instructed to slow down in order to match their arrival to their loading time at the port. The Port of Newcastle went from ships being at anchor for an average of 11 days to 64% of ships not anchoring at all. The remaining 36% averaged just three days at anchor.

Rotterdam, the biggest port in Europe, does not have an anchorage problem. It has a just-in-time system. Ships are contacted in advance and instructed to travel at slower speeds to arrive when there is space for them to port. Slower transit times not only reduce greenhouse emissions because the ships burn less bunker fuel, they also lower pollution near the port and populated areas.

Currently, the Port of Vancouver does not mandate contact from ships until they are two days away from the port. By that time, it is too late to change their arrival time. Once a ship with a contract to load goods arrives in Canadian waters, anchorages must be provided.

● (1845)

One piece of the freighter traffic problem is the increase in shipments of U.S. thermal coal through the Port of Vancouver. Wash-

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ington, Oregon and California refused to expand their coal ports, so U.S. coal companies are shipping through Canada. This needs to end.

Thermal coal is burned to produce electricity. Here in Canada, we are shutting down coal-fired power plants. We recognize they have no place in our energy future. If the government is serious about climate action, it should ban the export of both Canadian and U.S. thermal coal.

Canadian grain shipments from the Port of Vancouver have grown by 6% per year. Inefficiencies in the grain supply and the inability to load grain in rainy weather are resulting in ships sitting at anchor for extended periods. It should interest many members of the House that costs associated with these delays at the Port of Vancouver are partially passed on to Canadian grain farmers. Farmers pay for these inefficiencies through the shipping component of their contracts, which is subtracted from the price of their grain. I hope this will motivate cross-party and cross-country collaboration to lobby the government to mandate improvements at the Port of Vancouver.

The creation of good regulations and policy will drive innovation, as it has in Australia and Europe. There is no legitimate reason why the Port of Vancouver should be so far behind in efficient management of its bulk shipping.

● (1850)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for the opportunity to further discuss this issue. As a trading nation, the marine transportation system is key to Canada's continued economic and social well-being, and anchorages are an integral part of safe navigation.

Transport Canada recognizes that anchorage use at the Port of Vancouver, Canada's largest port, and in the southern Gulf Islands has been steadily increasing over the past decade. The general trend in anchoring time in southern British Columbia has been increasing by about 4% each year since 2011. This is largely due to trade growth through Canada's Asia-Pacific gateway and to record export volumes of Canadian natural resources.

With this steady growth and vessel activity, there has been a rise in concerns and frustrations from indigenous groups and coastal communities in the region. Transport Canada has heard concerns about noise and lights from vessels at anchor, as well as broader socio-environmental concerns and implications for indigenous fish harvesting and cultural activities.

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Transport Canada is aware that the incidents cited by the hon. member, involving freighters dragging anchor, are very real examples that demonstrate the need for action and greater efficiencies in the marine transportation system. This is why Transport Canada is examining the anchorage issue under the oceans protection plan. It is a complex issue.

As part of the ongoing work, Transport Canada has conducted analysis on anchorage congestion and usage, and the results clearly indicate multiple factors are contributing to the dynamic we observe in southern British Columbia. These factors include supply chain disruptions, weather and operations, as well as the growing demand in Asia I cited earlier, which has led to an increase in exports of commodities through the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority.

Factors such as these can have cascading effects on supply chain performance, which lead to coordination challenges and ultimately result in vessel congestion and increased anchorage use and transits. Under the oceans protection plan, Canada is taking a multi-pronged approach aimed at mitigating the impacts of vessels at anchor. It is doing so by exploring ways to reduce anchorage use and transit by commercial vessels, as well as to change the behaviour of vessels while they are at anchor.

Supporting active traffic management measures to promote gateway fluidity includes collaborative supply chain visibility efforts and taking indigenous and socio-environmental considerations into account, with a view to reducing the impacts of anchorages on local communities.

As Transport Canada works to develop solutions to anchorage management in the southern Gulf Islands, a range of information from indigenous and local communities, industry and supply chain actors is being considered carefully. In addition, Transport Canada is examining the legal, operational and commercial considerations that bear on anchorage practices and management.

At present, Transport Canada's goal is to not only address anchorage congestion but also look toward new effective efficiencies to promote greater fluidity while maintaining navigational safety. As work continues on this complex issue, concrete actions are being taken today to address the situation.

Examples include the interim protocol that serves to promote a more balanced approach to anchorage in the southern Gulf Islands,

as well as joint efforts with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority under the supply chain visibility project. This project is working to improve the efficiency of the multimodal transportation network, enhance transportation infrastructure safety and approve and optimize the connectivity of intermodal efficiencies.

Mr. Paul Manly: Madam Speaker, the oceans protection plan's national anchorage strategy has been in place for three years and the problem has only gotten worse. Environmental and cost considerations should be enough motivation to fix this situation. It is not acceptable to wait for another collision, the beaching of a vessel or a fuel spill to take action.

The solutions exist and will improve environmental conditions, reduce disruptions to communities and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Implementing solutions will also result in more money in the pockets of prairie grain farmers. It is time for Transport Canada to mandate efficiencies at the Port of Vancouver.

Strong regulations that ensure peak coordination between exporters and shipping companies are the solution required to address the root causes of the freighter anchorage problem in the southern Gulf Islands.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, Canada's strong marine safety system has improved significantly over the last 25 years and continues to improve through the oceans protection plan. We are committed to the continuous improvement of this system.

To respond to community concerns about anchorages, an interim protocol on the use of southern British Columbia anchorage was introduced in 2018. The protocol puts in place measures to reduce the impacts of large vessels at anchor outside port authorities and remains in effect. Thanks to this work, residents can now contact the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority operations centre when they have concerns about noise and lights from vessels at anchor and provide details by completing an online form. Transport Canada officials continue to work closely with the port on this matter to help ensure concerns are addressed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:52 p.m.)

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