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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 10, 2021

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

FISHERIES ACT

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC) moved that Bill C-269, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (prohibition — deposit of raw sewage), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to introduce my third private member's bill as the member of Parliament for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

The environment, like so many issues, is a subject on which the Liberals are all talk and no real substance. This Prime Minister has become world famous for this. In 2015, he ran on a very thin environmental platform. It was just a few paragraphs long with very few details and no modelling or costing, and was, of course, centred around a carbon tax. We now know that the carbon tax is not revenue neutral and is not actually working. Emissions pre-pandemic went up every year the government was in office.

It is not just on greenhouse gas emissions that the government has failed. The environment goes far beyond climate change. That is why in the last election, the Conservatives ran on a platform that included real action on a whole host of issues, including a very important plank that focused on cleaning up our lakes and rivers.

What do I mean by that? When it comes to the environment, the very first thing the Prime Minister did after taking office was to grant permission to the City of Montreal to dump billions of litres of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence River. The hypocrisy was astounding. The Prime Minister was very successful at portraying himself as someone who was serious about the environment. However, at the very first opportunity, he literally flushed that down the toilet by allowing Montreal, instead of treating that waste water and protecting our precious natural environment, to dump it, untreated and full of all the dangerous substances that were contained within it, into a vital water artery. The current infrastructure minister was the environment minister at the time, and she was directly involved

in granting that permission as well. While she was trying to create the illusion that she was some kind of real-life captain planet, she was signing off on one of the biggest dumps of raw sewage in Canadian history.

That is a bit of background on why I have brought forward this bill today. This is a very simple bill, and I probably do not even need my full 15 minutes today to explain it and to talk about the details of it.

Under current legislation, there are various regulatory frameworks and laws that protect our water systems and fish habitat. My bill would amend the Fisheries Act to define raw sewage as what is called, under the act, a deleterious substance. Basically, any kind of substance that would harm fish habitats is prohibited from being emitted into our waterways. Given the background I have just gone over, that legislation also empowers the government to grant exemptions to authorize or issue permits, so to speak, to municipalities that need to emit those types of substances into our rivers, lakes and oceans.

My bill does things. First, it defines raw sewage as a certain type of deleterious substance. Second, it would amend the section that authorizes the government to issue these kinds of permissions and would exclude raw sewage from the list of exemptions. In essence, that means future governments would not be allowed to grant that permission. The bill is basically saying that of all the substances that one municipality or another may seek approval for, untreated waste water would not be allowed to be emitted.

It is a very simple fix. It is a very short bill, and it is very straightforward. I am hoping I can get all parties to support it, especially members of the Liberal Party in the back benches, who are probably frustrated at their own party's record on the environment.

We just have to look at a few examples where the Prime Minister has been all talk and no action. Do they remember the famous billion trees promise in the last election? Here we are, over a year and a half from the 2019 election, and not a single tree has been planted. I know that members of Parliament who come from municipalities where towns and cities have been forced, or feel like they have no choice, to emit these types of substances into the waterways are frustrated not only that municipalities are being allowed to do it but that the federal government has not been responding to the infrastructure needs of those communities. That is something else I would like to talk about for a few moments here.

Private Members' Business

• (1105)

I recognize that many towns and cities are dealing with an incredible challenge when it comes to their existing infrastructure needs. This new bill would obviously impose a requirement that municipalities have the capacity to deal with unexpected events, whether it is a weather event that adds a tremendous amount of unexpected water flowing through the system or aging and decaying infrastructure that needs to be replaced. This bill, by preventing future dumps of untreated waste water into our water systems, would impose a burden on municipalities.

We have done two things with the bill: One thing is in the bill and one is a future commitment. I have written in a five-year coming-into-force date. That means once the bill receives royal assent, towns and cities across the country would have five years to plan, invest and upgrade their water systems. This timeline is long enough that they would have time to do the necessary work, and is short enough that we can take real action on protecting the environment in the here and now, not just punt the ball years and years down the field.

There is a recent media report indicating that the current environment minister has given a 20-year timeline to municipalities before they even start talking about ending this practice. Of course, a lot of damage can be done to our natural environment in 20 years. That is why the five-year timeline that I have suggested in this bill is much more realistic and effective.

I probably do not need to go into a tremendous amount of detail as to why this bill is necessary and why it is necessary that we stop the practice of dumping untreated water into our water systems. I could cite numerous studies in which scientists and researchers have studied the impact on fish habitat, the depletion of stocks and the types of dangerous trace elements that have been discovered in fish whose habitat is near where the water is emitted.

This happens all across Canada; it is not just unique to the city of Montreal. There was a study done in Toronto in 2018 by an advocacy group called Swim Drink Fish. It had this to say about the state of Toronto waste water back in 2018: Regardless of rainfall, "there isn't a day that we've gone to the harbour that we haven't been able to find some evidence of sewage contamination." Also, there were instances in Vancouver in 2016 where over 45 million cubic metres of raw sewage was leaked or otherwise dumped into nearby waterways.

We can all appreciate the importance of protecting our fish habitat. Canadians love our natural environment. It is part of our culture, part of our history and part of our social fabric. Taking all my kids fishing whenever I get the chance is something we really enjoy as a family. My daughters are probably better than I am and my two boys are asking for fishing gear for Christmas and birthdays.

I am very fortunate to represent the Qu'Appelle lakes in my riding, a wonderful area in the Qu'Appelle Valley, but unfortunately in recent years, incidents in Regina have led to the emission of waste water into the Qu'Appelle system. That has had a negative effect on the water quality in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Some of the best moments I have had with my family have been from taking them to the Qu'Appelle lakes and going out for the day fishing.

I do not need to tell members who represent coastal communities how important the fishing industry is economically and culturally for indigenous populations as well. I missed out on having the benefits of being taken salmon fishing in British Columbia. The timing just did not work out, but of course my British Columbia colleagues in the Conservative caucus are passionate advocates for doing more to protect fish habitat and helping the stocks throughout British Columbia grow again. We all know the importance that the salmon fishing industry has recreationally, for tourism and of course commercially.

• (1110)

The same is true in literally every corner of the country. The ability to fish for fun, for sport, for food or for our livelihoods is incredibly important for all Canadians in every single province and every single community. It is something the government promised to take action on, but like so many promises during the last election, it has completely failed to do it. That is why this private member's bill is necessary.

I am proud to have the support of my Conservative colleagues. This is one more concrete example of where Conservatives take real, tangible and achievable action on the environment. If members look back throughout the history of our party, they will see John Diefenbaker's work on establishing parks and the amount of work the previous Conservative government put into the Clean Air Act, which is legislation that put in meaningful reduction targets. We can also look at the Conservative government in the 1980s, under former prime minister Mulroney, and its work on the acid rain issues. In all the work that Conservative governments have done, we take real, practical action on the environment.

The Liberals say a lot of things during elections, but when they have the opportunity to act, they never seem to do so. That is why this bill is necessary, and I am hoping that all parties will give it quick passage so that it can get to committee and we can take real action on protecting our rivers, lakes and oceans.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the former leader of the Conservative Party has any regrets over Stephen Harper's investments in infrastructure for cleaning up the waterways. This government has done more in five years to invest in infrastructure for cleaner water than Harper did in twice that period of time. Maybe the member could provide some thoughts on that.

Also, as the member criticizes the Liberals on the environment, maybe the former leader of the Conservative Party can explain why he campaigned, literally and adamantly, against the price on pollution when today we see the new leader with a new position. Can he provide his thoughts on the new leader of the Conservative Party's position on the price on pollution?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, on the first point, the parliamentary secretary could not be more wrong. We have had testimony on this at committee, with the Auditor General just slamming the government's record on infrastructure. The infrastructure department under the Prime Minister has absolutely no ability to track the effectiveness of its own programs. We have heard from mayors across this country that they are being told their projects are not eligible for funding because they do not fit into the narrow boxes that the government has defined. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been extremely critical as well.

The most important thing, perhaps, is the fact that the government has lapsed more than \$8 billion in infrastructure programs. This means there are municipalities out there that have put in applications and are being told no, or their applications have been sitting on a desk and the money does not get spent.

A Conservative government would deliver real action on infrastructure and take the important step to ban the—

• (1115)

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, everyone knows that water is important, that water is life. However, the bill does not prohibit the dumping of pesticides, petroleum products, chemicals or insecticides.

How can my colleague tell me that, in order to improve the health of our waterways, we should continue to allow the dumping of these products but prevent the dumping of untreated waste water?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Obviously, there are other things in the law that the government could do something about. I decided to focus on one specific issue in this bill.

[*English*]

It makes sense to focus on one specific issue, and the government can do things hand in hand. We can ban the practice of dumping untreated waste water, but at the same time, a Conservative government would commit to making the necessary upgrades for municipalities, focusing on the important infrastructure.

The current government categorizes many things as infrastructure that have never been categorized that way before. Money is not flowing to the much-needed improvements in these types of water systems, and that is why I focused on one particular issue.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think we can all agree that every community across the country

wants to have state-of-the-art waste-water treatment systems. However, they desperately need a federal partner to help them get there.

The bill has a lot of implications for municipalities, commercial fishers and boaters. What would the member say to the small, rural and remote communities, from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland, that simply cannot afford new waste-water systems, or the commercial fishers who could be punished under the terms of the bill? Can the member commit that the Conservative Party would support filling all the gaps for communities that cannot afford to implement waste-water treatment systems and would support the timing of that?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question. Obviously, this will require partnership, but it is important to do. We cannot use the different excuses of the lack of coordination between different governments as an excuse to continue this harmful environmental practice. I would say that absolutely a Conservative government will commit to being that partner at the table.

We can look at where this government has lapsed money: \$8 billion lapsed in the first year of the government's infrastructure program alone; \$35 billion to an infrastructure bank that has completed nothing; \$250 million to the Asian Infrastructure Bank. The government has put a lot of money out there into infrastructure that is not going to address the needs of Canadians and Canadian municipalities.

That is what a Conservative government will do. We will be that partner.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin with a few questions, especially about Conservatives taking real, practical actions.

First of all, why now? Why did the Conservatives not propose this in, say, 2012, when they were drafting and gazetting the waste-water systems effluent regulations? Were they guilty of an oversight at that time? Second, why did the member not introduce his private member's bill in 2015, after he was no longer the Speaker? Third, why four years later, when the member was the leader of his party, did he not include this proposal in the 2019—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The member for Trois-Rivières on a point of order.

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau: Madam Speaker, there is no French interpretation.

Private Members' Business

• (1120)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Just a moment, I have another point of order.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I am just very worried that the way this is working out, the member for Lac-Saint-Louis will have his list of enumerated questions and there will be no time for the member to respond. That would be unfair, so I ask you to exercise a bit of discretion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): This is just a speech, with no responses.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, I would like to begin with a few questions, especially about Conservatives taking real, practical actions.

First of all, why now? Why did the Conservatives not propose this in, say, 2012, when they were drafting and gazetting the waste-water systems effluent regulations? Were they guilty of an oversight at that time? Second, why did the member not introduce his private member's bill in 2015, after he was no longer Speaker. Third, why, four years later, when the member was leader of his party, did he not include this proposal in the 2019 Conservative election platform?

The Fisheries Act already prohibits the deposit of deleterious substances, including sewage, into fish-bearing waters, unless expressly allowed by regulation. The fact is that the Harper government's waste-water regulations gave a de facto exemption to municipalities under the Fisheries Act to deposit a deleterious substance, namely waste water, into fish-bearing waters. This exemption was not *carte blanche*, however. It came with limits on how much of a regulated substance can be released into the environment. The waste-water regulations also impose deadlines on municipalities for building and upgrading their systems to meet the standards of secondary treatment, a biological process that can remove up to 95% of contaminants.

By way of background, six billion cubic metres of waste water are discharged into marine and freshwater ecosystems in Canada every year. Of this amount, approximately 72% is treated to the level of at least secondary treatment, 25% is under-treated and the remaining 3% is untreated, coming from continuous discharges in communities without a waste-water plant, from releases from combined sewer systems where waste water and storm water flow together in the same pipe and can overflow during heavy rainfalls, from spills due to equipment failure and negligence, and finally, from occasional planned releases deemed necessary to allow for system construction or maintenance.

I would be remiss if I did not point out the Harper government's bungling of the 2015 waste-water release in Montreal, which caught the government off guard in the middle of an election campaign. The planned release was needed to allow maintenance on a key interceptor in the city's waste-water system. It should be noted that Montreal has a single massive waste-water plant, the largest in North America and the third largest in the world, providing primary

and secondary waste-water treatment. The city is introducing ozonation, which will allow it to achieve tertiary treatment by 2023, at which time the city will have the largest ozone waste-water plant in the world.

A belt of sewers runs around the island. The whole system is on a slope from west to east, with the treatment plant located at the eastern tip of the island. Gravity draws sewage from all around the island to the plant, reducing the need for energy-consuming pumping stations along the route. There are no alternative waste-water plants on the island, no safety valves, as it were. If the plant gets damaged, that's a huge problem for the city and communities downstream.

In 2015, the city applied to the province for a permit for a planned release and obtained Quebec's authorization to do so. The city also contacted Environment Canada twice, in September 2014 and September 2015, but, as I understand it, was met with radio silence. The Conservative government only realized there was an issue when the story hit the headlines, in Canada and internationally, at which point it cleverly punted the matter until after the election.

On November 9, 2015, the new Liberal government issued a ministerial order under section 37 of the Fisheries Act to require Montreal to make adjustments to its initial release plan. These adjustments were based on the recommendations of an expert panel. It should be noted that the Liberal government did not authorize the release, even though the province had. Section 37 of the act, while not giving the federal government the power to authorize a release like Montreal's, allows the minister to "require any modifications or additions to the work, undertaking or activity or any modifications to any plans, specifications, procedures or schedules relating to it that the Minister considers necessary in the circumstances". That is what the new minister, the member for Ottawa Centre, did. She ordered changes to the plan to minimize impacts based on the recommendations of an expert panel.

Environment and Climate Change Canada is holding consultations with a view to making improvements to the temporary bypass provisions in sections 43 to 49 of the waste-water systems effluent regulations. Currently under the regulations, a bypass authorization for a release of untreated waste water can only be given for maintenance work that is being done at a waste-water plant, that is, at a final point of discharge, not at other points along the system.

• (1125)

The objective of upcoming amendments to the regulations is to allow the government to provide bypass authorizations for work being done beyond the plant itself, thereby creating a regulatory framework that would encourage better planning of emergency releases such as the one that occurred in Montreal.

Enter Bill C-269, which seeks to make it an offence to proceed with any releases of raw sewage into fish-bearing waters. It sounds great, but as is often the case with private members' bills, they are not drafted with the benefit of appropriate expertise and are often designed more for political effect than to achieve a constructive objective.

If passed, Bill C-269 could have serious unintended consequences for the environment.

First, the proposed prohibition would apply to waste water that is already treated to a high standard. This is because even effluents that are subject to advanced levels of treatment still contain contaminants from raw sewage that have not been separated and removed, as required by the bill. Therefore, all communities across Canada would be in potential violation of the proposed law, notwithstanding their high degree of waste-water treatment in most cases. In effect, they would have to shut down their waste-water plants.

Second, the definition of raw sewage in Bill C-269 is ambiguous and likely to include more than just effluent from human or domestic sources. The bill's definition could include industrial, commercial and institutional effluents that contain low or manageable levels of such sewage. The bill could therefore interfere with the development and implementation of regulations to control industrial effluents. For example, the bill could impede the ongoing process of updating the pulp and paper regulations, a process aimed at, among other things, capturing facilities producing non-traditional products from wood and other plant material, and also aimed at lowering current effluent limits as well as adding limits for additional substances.

Third, the bill would exempt the north, where, to all intents and purposes, the Fisheries Act prohibition against depositing deleterious substances into fish-bearing waters applies wholesale, absent the existence of a bilateral agreement with the federal government for creating an equivalent regulatory framework to the waste-water systems effluent regulations. This means that whatever pollution safeguards and monitoring mechanisms exist today in the north by virtue of a bilateral agreement with the federal government would be thrown into question if this bill passes.

There are many examples of how proposed measures like those in Bill C-269 that are intuitively appealing at first glance are, upon deeper reflection, clearly not the best way forward for either the environment or human health. As a case in point, I would like to refer to the late Dr. David Schindler's work at the Experimental Lakes Area, a real-life freshwater laboratory that garnered a great deal of national attention a few years back when the Harper government tried to close it down.

The conventional wisdom at one point was that nitrogen from waste water was likely causing algal blooms in lakes, suggesting the need for multi-billion dollar investments to alter waste-water treatment plants. However, a 37-year real-time, real-life experiment at the Experimental Lakes Area found that this was not the case and that the culprit was rather phosphorous. This subsequently led to the elimination of phosphates in detergents and avoided massively expensive yet futile investments to upgrade waste-water treatment plants across the country to deal with nitrogen.

Private Members' Business

In the end, I regret to say that, in reality, this bill may well be more a public relations exercise on a subject that deserves much more serious and well-informed attention.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish everyone a happy Monday.

I think that we all agree that water is life. Although we commend the member for his attempt to initiate a debate on water quality and the pollution of our rivers, which is an important subject, the Bloc Québécois cannot support the principle of Bill C-269 because it does not offer any real solutions to sewage dumping.

Yes, effective regulations may be part of the solution to this problem, but what is really needed is major investments in waste water infrastructure.

What is more, the bill is inconsistent. It would allow the regulated dumping of hazardous materials and prohibit the dumping of fetid waste water from urban areas. I will come back to that. Also, clause 2 of the bill, which would add two new subsections, would make it so that the prohibition would not apply in Nunavut, Newfoundland and north of the 54th parallel in Quebec. I am wondering what the rationale for that is, because it does not make any sense.

Basically, Bill C-269 is a bad idea masquerading as a good one. In 2012, the Conservative government established the Wastewater Systems Effluent Regulations, Canada's first waste water treatment standard. At the time, the federal government estimated that 75% of existing waste water treatment facilities complied with the new standard, and it committed to providing funding to help the remaining 25% achieve compliance.

It created three categories of facilities. The first included the highest-risk facilities, which had to comply with the new standard before 2020. The second and third categories included lower-risk facilities, which had until 2030 and 2040 to comply with the new standard.

The infrastructure minister at the time provided no details about the funding formula that would be introduced to support the new regulations. The Union des municipalités du Québec estimated that it would take \$9 billion to upgrade existing municipal facilities and bring them into compliance with the new regulations.

Around that time, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and McGill University conducted a study. According to estimates, the municipal infrastructure deficit, which is what it would cost to upgrade existing infrastructure to meet current standards, was about \$31 billion. That was 10 years ago.

Let us fast-forward to today.

Private Members' Business

According to an article published in the daily *Le Devoir* in March, 80 Quebec municipalities still do not have waste water treatment plants. According to a Réseau Environnement report cited in the same article, at least \$17 billion is needed just to upgrade the existing treatment facilities that are suffering the effects of aging. That amount does not include the investments required to ensure that waste water treatment plants comply with the 2012 regulations and to build treatment plants where they are needed. That being the case, what should the government do? If regulations exist, we must comply, but no one should be expected to do the impossible.

Waste water spills happen frequently in Quebec, so much so that Fondation Rivières has created a rather impressive interactive map using a data set. Furthermore, it identified 60,660 spills in 2019, which lasted a total of 471,300 hours. While the Conservatives brought up Montreal's "flushgate"—when eight billion litres of sewage were dumped into the St. Lawrence River—every chance they got during the 2019 election campaign, people should not assume that the issue of dumping is any less serious anywhere else.

The 2019 campaign also highlighted the fact that Canadian municipalities had dumped 218 billion litres of sewage into waterways without any political party proposing solutions to the problem. Toronto confirmed that, in 2018, more than 7.1 billion litres of waste water leaked into Lake Ontario and other waterways because the combined sewer and stormwater system could not handle the volume of rainstorms.

● (1130)

Furthermore, last year, Canada's National Observer presented Environment Canada data indicating that 900 billion litres of waste water and runoff were discharged in 2018. That figure was for the rest of Canada and did not include Quebec. The 900 billion litres most likely was a conservative figure given the inconsistent monitoring among different municipalities.

In short, this is a significant problem for which we must find real solutions and it has been a concern for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for many years now. I will say from the outset that the \$1.5 billion allocated for the waste water file by the government between 2015 and 2019 is peanuts compared to the real need. It is just a drop in the bucket.

I do not wish to downplay the fact that human waste and runoff are a significant problem, but I must also speak about other worrisome substances. The most recent research has brought to light the health problems caused by endocrine disruptors and the constantly rising presence of microplastics in our waterways. I have mentioned the worrisome presence of these two substances to make the contradiction in Bill C-269 very clear to everyone. In fact, it would continue to allow the discharge into our waterways of all manner of substances as long as it is done in accordance with the 2012 Wastewater Systems Effluent Regulations.

I will read a short but incomplete list of the deleterious substances that could still be discharged into our waterways even if Bill C-269 is passed: petroleum products, including oil, gas, diesel and grease; chemical products, pesticides, heavy metals; industrial effluents; cleaning products, such as bleach and detergents; wood preservative products; paint; chlorinated water.

All of the substances I just mentioned could be discharged, but not urban waste water. I have a hard time believing that continuing to allow these substances to be discharged is less harmful to the environment and less detrimental to the health of our waterways than discharging urban waste water.

Any proposed regulations to bring infrastructure in compliance and to deploy 21st-century technology in existing facilities will require a rigorous and integrated approach. Bill C-269 does not meet these criteria, however.

Money is the lifeblood of all infrastructure projects. Nothing happens without money. Just take a close look at the tax system to see how much each level of government collects and how much their fair share should be. The federal government takes 50%, Quebec gets 42% and the municipalities get 8%. Municipalities' share of responsibility for infrastructure went from 30.9% in 1961 to 52.4% in 2002, while the federal government's went from 23.9% down to 6.8% for that same period. This is why I am saying it is impossible for municipalities to keep up.

Now, 20 years later, there is a good chance that the figures are even more telling. There is no doubt that infrastructure spending is required and that making arbitrary and unenforceable prohibitions is not the solution. This is the real way to help municipalities fulfill their waste water treatment responsibilities.

I do want to say that there is some potential for progress on this issue. However, every level of government will have to do its share. We must not only prevent overlapping jurisdictions and confusion, but we must also provide stability for municipalities so that they are in a position to build the best infrastructure to comply with sanitation standards.

No municipality derives pleasure from waste water spills. They want to comply with the standards but simply do not have the means to do so.

● (1135)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wish you and all the mothers right across Canada a belated happy Mother's Day. It is an honour today to rise on Bill C-269, tabled by the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and I am joining you today from the home of the Nuu-chah-nulth people on the unceded traditional territory of the Hupacasath and Tseshaht people, who have a long history as protectors of coastal communities in my riding, which guides my decisions as a member of Parliament every day while I sit in the House of Commons.

We in the New Democratic Party strongly support stopping the flow of raw sewage into our oceans and waterways. We all want to see an end to the dumping of raw sewage and as I stated, we are strong supporters of initiatives that would stop this practice.

However, the bill penalizes those communities that cannot afford to upgrade their systems. We absolutely support the intent of the bill, but it is deeply flawed in its approach. We cannot abandon communities like the Harper government did for a decade and the Liberal government is falling far short.

We know, according to the FCM, that it would cost over \$18 billion for communities right across Canada to improve their waste-water systems to stop raw sewage dumping, but the bill does not do anything positive to help get them there. It is in this spirit that I rise to speak to Bill C-269 and express my deep reservations about supporting this legislation. It is not simply a matter of banning raw sewage dumping, but rather how we as communities and as a country support one another in keeping our oceans clean for this generation and for generations to come.

I think about the implications in my riding, because people across my riding are rightfully concerned about our coastal waters and want to take measures to support them. It goes without saying that whether they are environmentalists or people who care about the health of fish or the health of coastal ecosystems, they want to make sure that there are no dangers to the water that surrounds their communities and our communities.

The water in Courtenay—Alberni is not just a source of food, whether it be wild salmon or other fish, but also a refuge for swimmers, boaters and recreation. Ensuring it is clean is critical and crucial to our local economy, our way of life and our food security. It attracts recreation fishers and boaters who invest their money into our restaurants and shops, so it is part of tourism. It draws tourists to stay in our hotels and bed and breakfasts. It grounds us every day and reminds us as residents that we are part of an ecosystem that depends on us to make the decisions that we need to protect our families, the species and the biodiversity where we live and that surround us.

I think about the bill's impacts not only on the cleanliness of the water, but also on the communities that will be affected. I think about the municipalities that need to have clean water systems, but do not have the resources to build them as well. I think about the boaters and their families who would be impacted by its sweeping generalizations. I think about the decision-making processes we have in place when enforcing environmental regulations and some of the better options we have to make real impacts on the health and safety of our waterways.

I sat in local government in Tofino, British Columbia, so I am very familiar with the challenges in dealing with waste water. The bill literally pits the federal government against these small communities and it shows again that the Conservatives are out of touch with municipalities. I wonder how much consultation the member and the Conservatives have done with these communities that are lacking support to get their waste-water infrastructure in place. Everyone wants that.

Private Members' Business

We know costs are soaring. We need mechanics, electronics and specialized crews to build waste-water treatment. Obviously we have to pay for work camps in rural or remote communities and inflation is skyrocketing. We know that there is new risk in pricing due to COVID. Again, modern waste-water treatment depends on very modern producers and these producers are highly specialized and they are very expensive.

I talked to the former mayor of Tofino, who is now the minister of municipal affairs in British Columbia. She sat as the mayor for seven years and her number one priority each year in council was getting waste-water treatment in place. They still have not broken ground. It was a deep commitment by their local government.

• (1140)

In fact, in the early 2000s, it was projected that it would be a \$12-million cost to build waste-water treatment. When I sat on council in 2008, it was \$18 million. When the City applied for funding, it was for \$40 million. It rejigged that plan and the figure came back at \$57 million. The City put it out for tender and the bids came back at \$82 million. It would take a tax increase of \$1,000 a household every year for literally over a decade to pay for that.

I think about a small community of 500 people in Newfoundland that has really good staff but is very unlikely to have the capacity to develop an \$18-million or \$20-million waste-water treatment centre. I know the member who just spoke said the lack of coordination cannot be the problem, but it actually is the problem. We need the government and all parties, not just the Conservative Party because it has tabled this bill, to coordinate and commit to filling the gaps so these communities can get there.

We have heard that people are considering not even running for office in Newfoundland and small communities because they are concerned about the liability around the legislation that is in place currently. We know that in big cities such as Toronto and Montreal, a lot of the infrastructure is old. They would literally need to rip up a lot of their infrastructure to meet the goal of this bill, because the sewer and stormwater systems are integrated. Without understanding the costs and obstacles to meet the goals set out in this bill and the way they are going to meet them, it is actually a big gap and a big problem.

We talked about municipalities. This legislation would immediately punish those communities that have no choice but to dump raw sewage right now. Instead of helping to build the water treatment systems they need, this bill directs sparse municipal resources away from water treatment toward paying the inevitable fines it would create.

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We know that between 2013 and 2017, approximately 96% of municipal waste water underwent some form of treatment before it was discharged. This means that around 4% of municipal waste water was discharged untreated, which is still significant, but it is worth examining the reasons this amount of money is dumped into our water waste, such as leaks or dumps of water, which occur for a number of reasons.

For example, in Toronto, more than 7.1 billion litres of raw sewage leaked into Lake Ontario because of the capacity of the city's waste-water system. Much of this occurred because of rain-water amounts, something that even big cities like Toronto are not capable of controlling right now. The systems need serious investments. It would be almost impossible, the cities have cited, even if funding came from the federal and provincial governments, to get facilities up and running by 2030 and to complete those upgrades.

This bill comes into effect within five years of its passing. It is unreasonable to expect communities such as these, which have said they cannot meet its targets, to get there. Small communities that do not have the same resources as bigger cities would incur fines that would be absolutely devastating, and would seriously hamper the work they are doing.

I think about the concerns we have talked about around recreational boaters and commercial boaters. There is a huge concern with this bill's impact on these vessels and the economy. My colleague, the member for St. John's East, is a lawyer. He looked over this legislation and pointed out that every single commercial and recreational vessel that has a waste-disposal system built in would be impacted by this bill. The way it is written, this bill leaves open the possibility of imposing fines on commercial and recreational vessels that dump waste while they are on the water doing any form of business.

At best, this bill conflicts with regulations under the Canada Shipping Act. At worst, it would severely hurt these vessels and the economy. This really has not been looked at closely. We have serious reservations about this regarding the hundreds of thousands of commercial and recreational fishers who would all have to update their vessels, buy new boats or significantly change their operations in order to comply with this bill.

I will touch again on what we want. My friend and former colleague, Tracey Ramsey, introduced a private member's bill to develop a national freshwater strategy. Her bill would have ensured that the federal government consulted and worked with the provinces, municipalities, indigenous peoples and stakeholders. This is what we are asking for. I hope the member takes into consideration what we are offering today. Again, the member missed out on banning toxic substances, which are going into waste-water stream catchment areas, capturing plastics as I have talked about in the past, and ensuring that these systems are upgraded.

● (1145)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a real honour to speak to this private member's bill, Bill C-269, which was presented by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. I think it is a fantastic bill and I am going to tell the House why.

Nine hundred billion litres of raw sewage were dumped into Canada's waterways over a five-year period. It is a number that is nearly impossible to wrap one's head around, but a CTV article helpfully described this amount in more visual terms: It is "enough to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool more than 355,000 times". That is a lot of raw sewage. That particular figure is actually a couple of years old, so we know that it has probably climbed even higher than that. We also know that this data does not necessarily capture the full picture, and that the amount of raw sewage being vented increases each year. Regardless of what that final figure looks like, we clearly have a problem on our hands.

This represents one of the largest sources of pollution in Canada's rivers and oceans. Dumping raw sewage into waterways is putting the biodiversity value of our land, waterways and marine environments at risk. Raw sewage from Canada's largest city ends up in Lake Ontario so often that Toronto city officials advise people to stay away from the city's beaches for at least two days after it rains. In my province of Manitoba, folks who go out on the Assiniboine River regularly see more debris and smell an odour after rainstorms. These are realities that have too often been ignored. It is something we cannot afford to do any longer.

Canada is a big country, and with our sizable land mass come a great number of water resources. We have around 20% of the world's freshwater here within our borders, flowing through some two million lakes and rivers. For some Canadians, the Great Lakes will come to mind, while others will think of the 1,200-kilometre St. Lawrence River. Many folks in my province of Manitoba will think of Lake Winnipeg, which holds some 284 cubic kilometres of water. That is a lot of water.

Whatever body of water or waterway comes to mind, each one is invaluable for the well-being of the communities that rely on it. Each one represents a remarkable natural inheritance and is worth protecting. This is where Bill C-269 comes in. This bill, which proposes to prohibit the dumping of raw sewage in Canadian waterways, will help all Canadians preserve and protect the rich natural heritage that we enjoy. It is a meaningful, common-sense way to protect the environment and waterways that are such big parts of our lives.

As with most of the matters we consider in the House, protecting Canada's waterways is a complex, multi-faceted matter, so much so that it could perhaps be overwhelming for the average person wanting to make a difference by protecting our oceans, lakes and rivers. I really appreciate the simplicity of Bill C-269. It is not flashy. It is not showy. It offers us a tangible, achievable solution. It is a good first step, but let us step back for a moment and talk about the problem. Why is Canada dumping so much raw sewage into our waterways?

Much of the problem can be attributed to Canada's antiquated city and municipal sewer systems. In some communities, older water systems carry both household water and stormwater through the same pipes. When rain or melting snow overwhelms these systems, they tend to be designed to vent the diluted sewage into the nearest waterway. Some cities dump raw sewage into our waterways just to undertake repairs.

Whatever the reason, billions of litres of raw sewage end up in Canadian waterways because municipalities do not have adequate infrastructure or the support to deal with it. No one likes to talk about it. It is sewage that we are discussing, after all, but we need to recognize that the water and waste water produced by residential and commercial establishments, including both human and industrial waste, will continue to find their way into our waterways untreated unless we push for a change to the status quo.

Bill C-269 changes the status quo. Some have argued this morning that it is not comprehensive enough and that it does not include everything it should. It is a great first step. Our previous Conservative government was an early challenger of the status quo. In 2012, Conservatives set new standards for treating waste water. We introduced the Wastewater Systems Effluent Regulations to address the largest point source of pollution in Canadian waters. The goal was to reduce the threats to fish and fish habitats, and also to protect human health by making sure the fish we eat had not been exposed to toxins.

• (1150)

By decreasing the levels of potentially harmful substances vented into Canada's waterways, we were able to move in the right direction to improve water quality, protect fish ecosystems and ensure Canadians could enjoy freshly caught fish without concern for their health.

While this remains an important policy adjustment, with the passage of time it has become clear that more needs to be done. The Liberals' 2015 platform told Canadians their party would "treat our freshwater as a precious resource that deserves protection and careful stewardship," yet when the Liberals formed government in 2015, one of their first decisions was to authorize the City of Montreal to dump eight billion litres of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence. An online petition at the time saw more than 95,000 people express their objections to this plan, but the Liberal environment minister gave the City the green light. The Liberals abandoned that platform commitment in record time, but it would be the start of a pattern of the government talking big while refusing to do the hard thing and fix the problem.

By choosing to support this bill, the Liberals could demonstrate to Canadians that they would honour their commitments respecting Canada's water. With the Montreal sewage dump top of mind, maybe it is time we removed the power of federal ministers to give permits to municipalities to dump raw sewage into Canada's waterways. Bill C-269 would have this effect. This would go a long way toward restoring Canadians' confidence in how this and any future government would manage our waterways.

I want to take a moment to advocate for our municipalities. Municipalities have rightly noted that sewer systems need to be updated to ensure they can better protect Canadian waterways. As we

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discussed in Bill C-269 today, we recognize that partnerships with municipalities would be vital to achieving lasting change: one that would see the end of raw sewage being dumped into waterways. Federal support for local infrastructure priorities is paramount to that end. Unfortunately, we have seen the current government struggle to get the critical infrastructure support that municipalities need out the door.

Just recently, the Auditor General said that the Liberal infrastructure plan has been beset by setbacks, leaving billions unspent or delayed until later this decade. I find it frustrating, and I think many Canadians would agree, that although once again the Liberals are so quick to talk about the importance of caring for our environment, they are so focused on talk that they fail to do the work.

Of course, we know that not every infrastructure dollar will end up constructing water and wastewater infrastructure: Roads, bridges and other projects must be built too, but when the Liberals fail to properly manage billions in infrastructure spending, there will be valuable projects that simply are not built, including those helping to protect Canada's water and waterways. Recognizing the Liberal government's failures in this area, Bill C-269 takes into consideration that municipalities need time to upgrade their wastewater systems. The coming-into-force component of this bill would give municipalities that may not have the capacity to fully treat the water they expel the time to do so. Passing this bill is part of the equation, but Canadians also need the Liberals to get their act together on infrastructure to support the improvements needed to make this happen.

Sometimes, other parties accuse the Conservatives of being stuck in the past, but there is nothing wrong with looking to the past to better understand who we are and how we should move forward. When we look at Canada's past, we see the enormous role of our waterways in the development of our nation. For indigenous peoples they were highways connecting their communities. They brought people together for religious, cultural and economic events. The waterways guided the paths of early European explorers, and helped them out of a vast territory. For fur traders, waterways were trade routes, fostering economic activity. All of our forebears recognized and respected our waterways, and we have benefited from the healthy waterways they left for us.

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As we look back, we see that Canadians have relied on our waterways over generations for many things, including transportation, commerce, food, resources and recreation. The past reminds us of the ways in which our waterways have served us, and is a reminder that we must serve as stewards of them as well. I want to encourage all my colleagues to support Bill C-269, so that we too can leave a rich natural inheritance to future generations.

I have heard previous members discuss at length how the previous Harper government did not do something, or how the municipalities do not have enough money. This is a partnership that looks forward to protecting—

• (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

• (1200)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-269. Ultimately, the government opposes the bill for multiple reasons, including because it would actually reduce environmental protection. The bill would negatively impact current federal, provincial and territorial collaborations on waste water, it would impose significant financial and practical challenges on all levels of government and it would be redundant and could actually weaken existing federal pollution prevention powers.

Our government is committed to protecting and managing water quality in our rivers, lakes and oceans. We recognize the critical importance of removing raw sewage from our waterways to keep our environment clean and healthy. That is why our government is already implementing a robust and effective approach for addressing waste-water pollution, an approach that is achieving results.

This approach implements the national waste-water strategy that was developed after 10 years of extensive negotiation, co-operation and agreement with provincial and territorial partners. Under this strategy, municipalities and indigenous communities are working hard to build and upgrade important public infrastructure that can safely address significant sources of pollution and protect the environment using predictable and achievable timelines.

In contrast, the bill would impose an arbitrary and unachievable five-year timeline for communities to conduct additional work, while incurring significant new costs, only to address the least significant source of pollution, such as maintenance or storm-water releases. The bill would jeopardize the current national strategy by unilaterally imposing unanticipated requirements upon our provincial and territorial partners, risking a decade of close collaboration and negotiation.

At a time when we are focused on critical national issues such as dealing with COVID, economic recovery, charting a path forward toward a net-zero future, this bill would put significant pressures on federal-provincial—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary will have eight minutes to conclude his speech when this private member's bill comes up again.

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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

BILL C-19—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (COVID-19 response), not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

[Translation]

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

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or to use the raise hand function so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in the question period.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

• (1205)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, what a sad day for parliamentary democracy. A time allocation motion is unpleasant at any time, even if sometimes it is a necessary evil, but a time allocation motion on a bill dealing with Canadians' right to vote is rubbing salt in the wound.

What we are debating today is the way Canadians will vote in the next election if it is held during the current pandemic, which could very well be the case. In moving this time allocation motion to restrict parliamentarians' right to speak, the government is launching a direct attack on the heart of democracy. That is completely unacceptable.

We are hearing the government say that the opposition parties are doing everything they can to delay the work of Parliament, but that is completely false. The best way to delay the work of Parliament is to prorogue Parliament, like the Liberals did last August. Why is the government not assuming its responsibilities? Why is it not allowing proper and thorough debate on a bill that directly relates to Canadian democracy?

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Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his intervention and his question.

I understand that he is fully playing his role of leader of the official opposition in the House. However, when I was in the opposition and his party was in power during the Harper years, his government did not hesitate to use time allocation motions regularly, even daily on some occasions. I understand that my colleague has a role to play by expressing a certain degree of indignation, which I freely accept.

However, on the substance of the issue, we believe the time has come for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to study Bill C-19 and make amendments if necessary. For the hours of debate that have been held so far, the members of the opposition have already made several suggestions for improving this bill, which, let us be clear, will only be in effect for the next election. I think therefore it is time for the House to refer the bill to the committee to be studied.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague must be joking when he says it is time to send the bill to committee.

This act demands consensus. This is about the Canada Elections Act and the right to vote, as my colleague astutely pointed out earlier. There has to be consensus. Over four months of debate, only one Bloc Québécois member has spoken to this bill.

The Liberals introduced Bill C-19 on December 10, 2020, while the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs was already looking into the issue. Instead of waiting for the committee to finish its work, the Liberals decided to introduce a bill, utterly disregarding democratic institutions, such as the committee. Now they are forcing closure with help from the NDP, their usual accomplice for this kind of tactic. They say there has been enough debate and this bill must go to committee. I am not making this up.

The Liberals have trouble managing a legislative calendar. They are a bunch of amateurs. Here is my question. Are they not ashamed to invoke closure on a bill that requires consensus?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from La Prairie.

No, we are not at all ashamed to give Parliament the opportunity to pass a bill that will temporarily amend the Canada Elections Act for the next election only in response to an official request submitted to the House by the Chief Electoral Officer.

My hon. colleague from La Prairie spends his time expressing his lack of confidence in the government by voting against it. It is therefore clear that he wants an election because, otherwise, why would he spend his time doing that?

We think it is a good idea to give Elections Canada a lot more flexibility to protect residents of Quebec's long-term care facilities, for example. The proposed amendments to the Canada Elections Act were introduced in Parliament a few months ago. I would invite my colleague to recognize that, last Friday, when Bill C-19 was debated in the House of Commons, the four Conservative members

who spoke about it once again insisted on delaying the vote to send this bill to committee.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by recognizing what a frustrating situation we find ourselves in as a Parliament. The election in Newfoundland and Labrador showed very clearly that even if an election during the pandemic did not precipitate a public health crisis on its own, it could have really damaging effects for democracy and for the outcomes of an election.

The government has proposed some temporary changes to the Elections Act. It has not called the bill very often, which has been a point of frustration for New Democrats, but when it has, the official opposition has often found ways to delay and stall.

We have an important bill that really needs to be passed, given that the Prime Minister repeatedly refuses to put everybody at ease and say that he will not unilaterally call an election during the pandemic. Our view is that the responsible response to that is to try to get rules in place exactly because we do not trust the Prime Minister to do the right thing.

Perhaps the government today could allay those concerns and let us know when the Prime Minister intends to commit that he will not call an election during the pandemic. When is that announcement coming?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the member for Elmwood—Transcona, for his constructive conversation with respect to this legislation. We have taken note, obviously, of his comments in the House during the debate at second reading.

The New Democratic Party has constructively and thoughtfully suggested, for example, some improvements around ensuring that campus voting can take place and potentially using Canada Post locations in small rural communities like those in my riding. The Canada Post office may offer an additional place where people, for example, could apply to receive a special ballot.

Those are precisely the kinds of discussions that we are hoping the procedure and House affairs committee can have around Bill C-19.

We would welcome working with all colleagues around amendments that would improve the legislation. However, we think the time has come for Parliament to take its responsibilities, study the bill in committee and offer Elections Canada the tools necessary should there be an election during the pandemic, and to do so safely and prudently in the interest of protecting everybody who works in elections.

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard some comments today from members of the official opposition and the Bloc that seem to suggest that they are not too familiar with the bill or the parliamentary process.

First, the leader in the House for the official opposition said that this would change the way Canadians would vote in the next election, which is not true. It would only change if an election happened during a pandemic; there are sunset clauses on this. Could the minister confirm that these are only temporary measures during the pandemic?

Second, the Bloc suggests that this is a done deal after today, but there is still a lot of parliamentary work to go on from this point. Indeed, the bill would go to committee for rounds of discussion there and then it would come back to the House for another debate.

Could the minister comment on those two points?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague friend, the member for Kingston and the Islands, is absolutely right. He is an experienced parliamentarian and understands the parliamentary process.

A vote today would simply allow the procedure and House affairs committee to study the legislation and to look at it clause-by-clause. We would hope that the committee would want to hear from important witnesses, such as the Chief Electoral Officer. At the root of this conversation is a report sent to the House of Commons in October of last year from the Chief Electoral Officer, asking Parliament to make, as my hon. colleague noted, temporary changes to the Elections Act that would apply only to the next general election and would sunset once the pandemic circumstance was over.

We think it is time for Parliament to have a look at this legislation in committee and ensure that the people who work delivering safe and fair elections for all Canadians, and there are hundreds of thousands of these people, can do so safely.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister is probably one of the smoothest speakers I have ever heard in Parliament. Let us be honest. We have been speaking about the bill for about four and a half hours. On Friday, yes, there were Conservative speakers, because at 12:06 p.m., we found out that no Liberals would be speaking.

I recognize all these things. However, we talk about a sunset clause, but it is mentioned only the preamble of the bill. Therefore, a lot of work needs to be done.

Most of all, why did the minister put forward legislation before he got the excellent report that came out of the Standing Committee on Procedures and House Affairs? Why did he go forward with this legislation before taking any of the information that we had provided to him?

• (1215)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I suppose I should thank my hon. colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London for what was surely intended as a compliment.

I share her view that the procedure and House affairs committee did excellent work in studying the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. We obviously followed the work of the committee

very closely. I would note that the legislation largely follows the recommendations made by the Chief Electoral Officer. We just disagreed and thought we should have more potential voting days than simply those on the weekend before what had traditionally been a polling day on Monday.

We introduced this legislation before Christmas because we thought it was important for Parliament to have a chance to consider it over the Christmas break. I talked to a number of colleagues in the House of Commons during that period. When it came back, we called it for debate.

My hon. colleague said that last Friday at 12:06 p.m. she found out there would be no Liberals speaking. That was precisely because we wanted the debate to conclude so Parliament could vote and the committee could begin studying the bill. The Conservatives obviously used that as a chance to filibuster it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to reassure our colleagues opposite. The Bloc Québécois carefully examined the bill and we are starting to become very familiar with parliamentary procedure, so there is no need to worry. We have experience. However, that is not the issue here. What we are talking about here is respect for the work of parliamentarians.

There has been very little debate on this very important issue, and many things are still up in the air, including the number of days. As the previous speaker mentioned, the government wants to ram through this legislation without any respect for the work of committees.

My question is critically important. Why will the government not give us the time to hold a proper debate? Is it because the government members are worried that the window of time in which they think they can win a majority is closing too quickly and they want to ram this through so they can be ready just in case?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé for his comment and, especially, for his belief that if there were an election right away, the government would win a majority of seats in the House of Commons. I never doubted it myself, but I am really pleased to hear my colleague share this belief.

However, as he knows very well, we are not trying to call an election. It is not the Liberal Party that has a lack of confidence in the government. On the other hand, the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives cannot deny they have never had confidence in the government. I acknowledge my colleague, but he should know very well from the parliamentary experience he cited that a vote of non-confidence in the government increases the likelihood of an election.

We believe it would be appropriate for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to study the bill in detail to amend and improve it. We want to work with our parliamentary colleagues, especially in committee. That is why we are pleased to hold a vote today to send the bill to committee.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am very disappointed to find that we are having time allocation on a bill as essential as this one. Clearly, all parties in this place have said publicly that they do not want a federal election in a pandemic, but we want the best possible legislation in case that happens by accident. Pushing this through with such limited time for debate does not meet the standards that I expect of the government. As the hon. member and the hon. minister said, back in the day we saw practically daily use of time allocation by the Harper administration. We are seeing it far too often under this administration.

I ask the hon. President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada to please reconsider and give us adequate time for debate.

• (1220)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I salute my friend, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for her work in Canada's Parliament.

I do not think we disagree in the sense that amendments to the Canada Elections Act properly require parliamentary scrutiny, as they would with any piece of legislation. However, these are modest amendments that would apply only, as my friend from Kingston and the Islands noted, to the next general election.

We are in a minority Parliament, so the idea that the government, on its own, is in a position to ram legislation through is simply not the case. When the legislation gets to the procedure and House affairs committee, and we hope it gets there soon, members from all parties will have an opportunity to debate and discuss it, and amend it as they see fit. Then, we look forward to another discussion at third reading and report stage in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the speech given by my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona. He raised some important points. We need Bill C-19, there is no doubt about it. We are in the midst of a pandemic, and there is always the possibility of an election.

Last Friday, the NDP offered all parties a way to discuss Bill C-19 every night this week. Unfortunately, the other opposition parties rejected our proposal. Once again, as the only helpful party in the House of Commons, the NDP is proposing a solution to break this impasse and put the debate where it belongs, which is in committee.

Meanwhile, the government has not been responsible. The Prime Minister and the Liberals seem like they are on a pre-election tour, bragging about having an election before the third wave came to Canada.

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My question is simple. Can the Liberals say clearly here today that they will not call an early election?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I salute and thank my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby, the NDP House leader. I had the privilege of working with him in previous Parliaments, and I appreciate his constructive contributions to these debates very much.

I agree with him that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is where all our colleagues from every party would be able to discuss Bill C-19 and improve it. I presume they could hear from witnesses as important as the Chief Electoral Officer.

As far as an early election is concerned, I can assure my hon. colleague that the government is focusing on providing Canadians with the essential help they need during a pandemic.

There is an important budget implementation bill before Parliament. We understand the importance of these measures for Canadians, and we will remain focused on this issue. I can assure my colleague of that.

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, this bill has only been up for debate three times and has only been debated for about three hours and 45 minutes. The minister saying the government is looking forward to getting it to committee does not leave the opposition with a lot of hope, because quite a few bills have gone to committee and come back worse. I think about Bill C-10 and the MAID bill. There are a few bills like this, and we do not have confidence that after they go to committee, they will be better bills. That is why we are in favour of having more debate on the floor for this piece of legislation, so that we can get our comments on the record and ensure that it moves forward.

The minister says the government does not want a pandemic election, so what is the big desire to rush this bill through now and call for a concurrence motion?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, if my colleague from Regina—Lewvan is worried about people rushing an election, he should ask himself the same question, as he and the Conservatives constantly stand in the House of Commons and vote no confidence in the government over and over again.

I remember the estimates votes some weeks ago. In one evening, the Conservatives voted no confidence in the government eight times. If anybody is rushing to an election, it would certainly appear the Conservatives are willing to play chicken, all the time hoping somebody else swerves. We do not think that is a very responsible way to proceed.

My colleague is worried about the bill coming back from committee in worse shape, but I certainly do not share his view. It is a rather pessimistic view of democracy. In a minority Parliament, the government needs to achieve consensus at committees for legislation to come out. We look forward to working with all members, including members of the Conservative Party, to make sure the legislation is not worse but better.

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• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, there are times in parliamentary life when we are offended.

Personally, I take offence at this closure motion to limit important debates for democracy. It is the ultimate exercise in democracy for our constituents.

Today we are being asked to shorten essential debates in the House to just three and a half hours.

You cite the need to go the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, but it had already started to discuss the matter with the Chief Electoral Officer. You decided to rush things and introduce a bill that did not take into account—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Need I remind the member that I personally made no decision?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Madam Speaker, that is true and I apologize. I am supposed to address the Chair. You remind me quite often, and yet I still have difficulty with that.

Why not give the House the time it needs? Why use time allocation yet again?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I am reassured that you were not the one who decided to expedite the bill before Christmas. I am pleased that our colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville clearly explained that.

I have had the privilege of sitting in the House of Commons for 20 years, and I can state that the members of the Bloc Québécois are experts at taking offence. We are not surprised that our colleague is taking offence this morning at closure. The members of the opposition and the Bloc Québécois are always opposed to government bills and never want to move them forward.

However, this bill was introduced in December, following the tabling of a report by the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the measures required to protect Canadians who vote in a possible election held during a pandemic. We must realize that the average age of the people who work for Elections Canada during a general election is 65-plus. We believe it would be helpful to provide temporary tools to the Chief Electoral Officer to keep those people safe.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a total surprise and unbelievable that after four hours of debate the government would be rushing this legislation, which is about our tried and true democratic process. We have heard others say that the Liberals tabled the legislation before waiting for their own recommendations from the PROC committee, and now, after four hours, they are shutting down debate so they can get the bill to committee, the same committee that has been filibustered by the Liberals for 40 hours or more to hide the fact that the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament to cover up his involvement in the WE Charity scandal. It is unbelievable that they are doing this.

I wonder if the minister could explain why they are in such a rush when Canadians have been clear that they do not want an election in a pandemic.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I would hardly call this a rush. The Chief Electoral Officer presented a report to Parliament on October 5. The government thought it would be important for parliamentarians to consider the legislation over the Christmas recess. That is why we introduced Bill C-19. We have called it for debate, and once again, as is always the case, the Conservatives show no desire to allow the debate to conclude, allow a vote to happen and allow the committee to begin its work on studying the bill.

Our colleague from Sarnia—Lambton seems to think that there is a rush to an election. Once again, it is her party that continually votes no confidence in the House of Commons. I think the Conservatives are the ones rushing to an election.

• (1230)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I cannot believe that the member for Regina—Lewvan actually said in the House that he does not want the bill to go to committee because he is afraid of the result. Unfortunately for him, the democratic process is not decided based on the preferences the opposition has before a bill goes to committee or when it comes back. Democracy does not work like that.

More importantly, it does not seem to matter how long this bill has been on the table. The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London apparently has not even read the bill, even though it has been on the table since December. The sunset clause is not just in the preamble. It is also mentioned in the coming-into-force clause.

Can the minister confirm that the sunset clause is in the bill?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, my friend from Kingston and the Islands is absolutely right. In fact, it is in clause 11 of the legislation.

I too was surprised at the pessimism of our Conservative colleague from Regina—Lewvan, who imagines that committees make legislation worse. We have more faith in the work of committees of the House. That is why we are very anxious to work with the committee to ensure that the legislation reflects the will of Parliament before it comes back for a third reading debate.

We think it is time for the House of Commons to take up its responsibilities and look at what temporary measures can be put in place, should an election happen during the pandemic, to ensure the safety of all Canadians who participate.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is extremely disappointing that a government could mismanage the parliamentary calendar so poorly. Of course, everybody has their role in this and I certainly do not put it past the hon. opposition to acknowledge the role it is also playing.

The New Democrats believe that, while all this gamesmanship is difficult at best, ultimately the Prime Minister is the only one responsible or able to call an election at any time. That role and responsibility sits with him.

I do not understand. I would like the hon. minister to explain, because despite the many questions he has not explained yet, why the Prime Minister and his government refuse to take that responsibility and say outright that they will not call an election during a pandemic.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I thank our colleague from London—Fanshawe. The government and I share her view that Canadians expect the government, and I would argue all parliamentarians, at a time of a pandemic when there is a difficult third wave wreaking very difficult consequences on a number of regions of our country, to remain solely focused on what we as a parliament and certainly what we as a government can do to protect Canadians and support them during COVID. That has been the focus of our government.

As I said earlier, we do not vote no confidence in our own government. I appreciate there is a double negative there, but I think Parliament can understand. Some NDP members voted no confidence when they supported a Bloc subamendment on a budget vote. I think there has to be some consequential thinking and Parliament needs to accept its responsibility to improve the election—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): One last question, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the clever wordplay by my colleagues from the Liberal Party. What I said was this. When bills go to committee, sometimes, like with Bill C-10, they come back in worse shape because of terrible amendments put forward by the government. I would hate for that to happen to something as critical as this democratic bill, Bill C-19. When I say we should have more debate in the House of Commons, that means this bill deserves more than three hours and 45 minutes of debate.

• (1235)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hypocrisy of the Conservatives objecting to time allocation. I sat in the House of Commons many times and watch them vote the exact opposite of what they are now claiming.

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

The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

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

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

Government Orders

• (1320)

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

(Division No. 109)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Amos
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Bachrach	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bessette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boulerice	Bratina
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duval
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Harris
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miller
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Ng

Government Orders

O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saini
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
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Vaughan
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Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh
Spengemann
Tassi
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Yip
Zahid

Manly
Martel
Mazier
McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Michaud
Morantz
Motz
Normandin
Patzner
Pauzé
Plamondon
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Ruff
Sangha
Savard-Tremblay
Schmale
Shields
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May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
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Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Gamer
Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Saroya
Scheer
Seeback
Shin
Simard
Soroka
Steinley
Strahl
Sweet
Therrien
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Vignola
Warkentin
Williamson
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Allison
Atwin
Barlow
Barsalou-Duval
Benzen
Bergeron
Bérubé
Blanchet
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boudrias
Brassard
Calkins
Chabot
Charbonneau
Chong
Cumming
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Desilets
Doherty
Dreeshen
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock)
Fortin
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gladau
Gourde
Hallan
Hoback
Jeneroux
Kent
Kmiec
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lemire
Liepert
Lobb
MacKenzie

Aitchison
Alleslev
Arnold
Baldinelli
Barrett
Beaulieu
Bergen
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Block
Bragdon
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carrie
Champoux
Chiu
Cooper
Dalton
Davidson
Deltell
Desbiens
Diotte
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Gallant
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Gray
Harder
Jansen
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kusie
Larouche
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
Lukiwski
Maguire

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, Government Orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

RESUMING DEBATE ON THE CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from May 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (COVID-19 response), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lethbridge has one minute remaining in her debate time.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Thornhill.

As I was saying during my last opportunity to speak to this bill, the pandemic has really exposed the true colours of the current government and where its focus lies. What I am talking about, of course, is the crafting of this legislation, Bill C-19. The Liberals have done this at a rapid pace and have done it without clear consultation, or I should say attention given to consultation.

It is undeniable that this bill was unilaterally constructed on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada and that it is being pushed forward to the Liberals' benefit and not at all to the benefit of Canadians, which is very concerning to me. Our focus as parliamentarians should be on the Canadian people, on their health, their safety and their well-being. This bill does not take those things into account.

Government Orders

We need to see an economic recovery plan, not a Liberal election plan, which again is exactly what—

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

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what we are really debating here is a piece of legislation that will be used in the event that an election happens during this global pandemic. Despite the fact that all parties have said that they are not interested in having an election happen any time soon, we have to respect the fact that this is a minority Parliament and one could happen at any time.

I am very perplexed when trying to understand why the Conservatives do not just want to be prepared. Can the member comment on what she has against being prepared in the event that an election might happen?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I have no problem with our being prepared. To be prepared for an election during the pandemic would mean that the Liberals put a sunset clause in place. After all, if this legislation is truly just for the time being during a pandemic, then there is no reason why that should not be the case, and that this actually would expire once the pandemic is over. That seems like a reasonable amendment, does it not?

The other thing is that at the end of the day this legislation should take into account what experts have said. Experts are certainly not encouraging that we would go into long-term care facilities and run the election for 13 days.

• (1325)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is good to enter the discussion on this important subject. We are seeing a debacle of epic proportions on Bill C-10, a bill that the minister obviously does not even understand. There are a lot of questions that Canadians have around Bill C-19 and its effect on what is one of the key things that the House is required to do, and that is to be the custodian of Canada's democracy.

Are there any parallels between the debacle that is currently unfolding with Bill C-10 and what is possible with Bill C-19, especially if the bill goes to committee, and now that the Liberals have limited debate and discussion on Bill C-19?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, the hon. member points out something really important, and that is, first, that we need to acknowledge the fact that the Liberals just moved time allocation, which means they are trying to rush this legislation through without fulsome debate. That is very problematic because it is chipping away at democracy.

The second point the member raises is with regard to Bill C-10, which has to do with government censorship of the information that we post on our social media platforms. This is a huge overreach on behalf of the government and something that is not properly researched.

Interestingly enough, Bill C-19 is one and the same, where, again, I believe it goes too far and ignores the voices of witnesses and those who have expertise in this area. It is shameful.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge my colleague from Lethbridge's comments a few minutes ago. She thought that it would be a good amendment at committee to have a sunset clause. The good news is that we do not need to amend it at committee to include a sunset clause, because I would draw her attention to clause 11, which provides exactly what she was suggesting the committee look at.

I am wondering if the member for Lethbridge could tell us how many times in the last two months she has stood in her place and voted no confidence in the government, obviously seeking an election during the pandemic. How many times did she stand and vote no confidence looking for an election?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I fail to see the relevance.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question is for my Conservative colleague.

We just started debating Bill C-19, and the government has allocated just three hours and 38 minutes for debate. We can only assume that the government's poor management of its legislative agenda is at fault here.

What does my colleague think is the true reason we are debating time allocation on Bill C-19 today, with the connivance of the NDP?

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I am sorry, but I do not know that I fully understand the member's question.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to finally have the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill C-19, if in the shadow of time allocation. I will get to aspects of the bill that I consider worthy and a number of provisions that I believe should be amended in committee, in a moment, but first I will address a number of the underlying issues that have affected the way this bill was mismanaged in its creation, as so many other pieces of legislation have been similarly in this Parliament.

Government Orders

The crux of the problem is not the COVID pandemic. The crux of the problem is the arrogance of the current government to approach virtually every practice and procedure as though it won a majority in 2019. The Liberals refuse to recognize the range of realities, most importantly the pragmatic humility a minority government must practise to govern effectively. The current Liberal government, as in the last Parliament, has ignored committee studies, reports and recommendations in the creation of legislation dealing with critically important issues, such as privacy, foreign affairs, the digital charter, regulating the Internet, medical assistance in dying, and now Bill C-19, an amendment to the Canada Elections Act, provisionally, for a possible general election in this pandemic, a pandemic that will last much longer because of the government's inability to properly procure vaccines and to accept Conservative advice when the pandemic first struck and at every stage since.

The Liberals, with selfish impatience, introduced Bill C-19 last December, not waiting for the completion of a long and thorough study on essential amendments to the Canada Elections Act to protect public health and democracy during a possible pandemic election. An interim report by the committee was, at the time, within days of being presented to the government. That report was preempted by Bill C-19, ignoring the suggestions of the exhaustive study and disrespecting not only opposition members on the committee and the many expert witnesses who testified during the study, but the Liberal chair and Liberal committee members, who had worked collegially with the opposition to develop comprehensive recommendations for such an important study.

The Liberals clearly intended then to rush the legislation through Parliament, as they have done with so many other flawed pieces of legislation from the beginning of the pandemic, but in this case the rush was not to help Canadians still in the grips of the pandemic, and it was not to prepare a plan for economic recovery to get Canadians back to work; it was in the political self-interest of preparing for the snap election they were thinking they might get away with. In doing so, they not only disregarded the work of parliamentarians, but wasted the valuable time of health officials and elections experts who appeared during the thorough procedure and House affairs committee study.

In doing so, they ignored the reality that an overwhelming majority of Canadians did not want then, and do not want now, a general election in a deepening pandemic crisis. If the Liberals had any doubts, that was surely driven home in the subsequent cycle of spiking infections and death across the country and the provincial elections conducted under pandemic conditions, most notably the profoundly disrupted Newfoundland and Labrador election.

The interim report of the committee contained extensive, reasoned advice based on the testimony of expert witnesses that would have improved Bill C-19 before it was tabled, but the final report of our committee, submitted to the government in February of this year, provided even more important advice. Most important, the committee advised the government and recommended unanimously, every Liberal member on the committee as well, that the federal government commit to not calling a federal election during the pandemic, unless defeated on a vote of confidence.

Further, Conservative members of the committee wrote a supplementary report, which reiterated the recommendation against hold-

ing a pandemic election and elaborated, noting that Bill C-19 was uninformed by the extensive content of the committee report and stating very clearly that the government has a moral obligation to refrain from triggering an election or orchestrating its own downfall, as the Prime Minister has already tried to do a number of times.

• (1330)

Because of the government's inability to manage its own legislative agenda, the bill before us has had precious few hours of debate.

A key element of Bill C-19 involves the change of the usual designation of an election day to be an election period of Saturday, Sunday and Monday, rather than just Monday, to provide more time for voting, social distancing and the precautions necessary to provide safe voting places. The bill also provides for the extension of voting hours of polls, if necessary to midnight, on any polling day, but not to exceed 28 hours for the three-day election period.

The bill also changes the maximum writ period to 53 days because of the many challenges anticipated for in-person voting or involving mail-in ballots. With regard to mail-in ballots, the bill allows electronic applications to be made with proper security protocols, of course, for mail-in ballots. They are very detailed provisions, which I believe would secure the safety of those ballots. There are also provisions for the safe casting of votes in institutions, in facilities where seniors and persons with disabilities reside.

I will support all of those provisions in the bill, on the condition that they expire automatically, completely and absolutely six months after the pandemic period is considered to have ended.

However, there are a number of elements in this legislation that I strongly oppose and believe should be amended. I believe they must be amended at committee, our procedure and House affairs committee, which was so ignored and so disrespected by the original tabling of this legislation in December.

First and foremost, there is a provision for counting mail-in ballots after the end of the official three-day election period. Given the new powers granted the Chief Electoral Officer for early mail-in ballots and extended poll hours, there is absolutely no reason, no excuse, for any ballots received after polls close on election day to be counted. Election day must be decision day.

As well, while I accept the extension of pandemic powers to the Chief Electoral Officer, I oppose the provision that would expand his determination of “satisfactory proof of the elector's identity and residence”. Pandemic protocols should not enable greater voter fraud than already exists in non-pandemic elections.

In conclusion, I want to remind all members of this House of the unanimous recommendation of the procedure and House affairs committee, each and every Liberal member included, that the federal government must commit to not calling a federal election during this continuing pandemic, unless it is defeated on a vote of confidence.

• (1335)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not think it would matter if this had been tabled three years ago. The reality is that the Conservatives do not even appear to have read the bill. The member for Lethbridge was just talking about wishing that there would be a sunset clause in this, which is mentioned in the preamble, and then again later in clause 11 of the bill. The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, who is a member of the PROC committee, did not even know that there was a sunset clause in this bill, and this bill falls under the committee that she sits on. I do not think this narrative of “We haven't had enough time” is warranted. We have had the bill for six months and clearly they have not even read it.

This member is also a member of the PROC committee, which I have a ton of respect for. I thank him for mentioning the fact that there is a sunset clause in the bill, acknowledging that and, to his credit, advocating so vehemently to make sure that this sunset clause is honoured.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his somewhat disingenuous questions. I would like to address the matter of timing.

The bill was rushed to introduction in December, again, preempting the interim report of the PROC committee. This committee has been filibustered by the Liberal minority on the committee for more than two months, because the Liberals do not want to recognize the will of all the opposition parties to call a relevant witness to appear for one meeting. For the last month, the Liberals have filibustered their own amendment.

I am wondering if the rush now, as the bill is eventually forwarded to the PROC committee, is to allow—

• (1340)

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, on top of all the partisan speeches, the government members are showing disrespect towards the opposition members by repeatedly asking whether they have read the bill. It would be nice if they stopped doing that. Members have a duty to do their jobs well, and they have read the bill. I would appreciate some real answers on the actual substance.

Government Orders

My colleague raised some very interesting points in his speech. He—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, ironically enough, the people I am talking about right now are not listening.

My colleague raised some very interesting points in his speech. He spoke about voter identification and the lengthy writ period for seniors' homes. We are all very concerned about safety.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, the provision for a particularly lengthy writ period is tremendously important both for the safe conduct of polling residents in long-term care and seniors residences, but also to prepare Elections Canada officials and the polling stations for those Canadians who choose to vote in place. I attended and observed the two by-elections last year, and it is very complicated and difficult, and safety must prevail.

It will also take that period of time to distribute the mail-in ballots and to get them—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Time for one last question, the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands has said, somewhat disingenuously, that there is a sunset clause in the bill, in section 11.

What section 11(2) actually says is that when the Chief Electoral Officer consults with the Chief Public Health Officer, currently Dr. Tam, and the Chief Electoral Officer as a result “Is of the opinion that the temporary rules in Part 22 of the Canada Elections Act are no longer required to ensure the safe administration of an election in the context of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.” At that point, six months after that, the bill expires. That is not a sunset clause. In my opinion, that is a way of transferring the responsibility for going back to a series of bureaucrats.

Does the hon. member agree with me?

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Saint-Laurent.

Government Orders

It is an absolute honour for me to rise today on behalf of my residents of the riding of Davenport to speak in favour of Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, COVID-19 response. It would provide a temporary new part to the Canada Elections Act that would ensure the safe administration of an election should one happen during the COVID-19 pandemic. It would also provide for the repeal of this temporary new part, the six months, as was just mentioned, as determined by the Chief Electoral Officer once it is indicated the measures are no longer necessary in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The notice would be issued only following consultation with the Chief Public Health Officer.

As my colleagues know, in a minority Parliament, an election could actually happen at any time. We have seen elections at the provincial level take place during the COVID pandemic. We have also seen elections take place in other countries, including the United States. We have seen the major challenges that these types of elections bring.

In the United States we saw that huge numbers of voters chose to send in a mail-in ballot, which made counting ballots slower in a number of states.

In British Columbia and in Newfoundland and Labrador, we saw historic numbers of voters going to advance polls or using mail-in ballots. We also saw, in these provinces, historic low voter turnout. It was probably because many people decided it was much safer to stay at home and were not quite sure about whether it was safe enough to go out and vote. We could expect if we were to hold a federal election in Canada, especially without passing Bill C-19, voters would face many of the similar challenges we have seen across our country over the last year and a bit since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some Canadians would probably choose not to vote rather than go to a public place to cast their ballot.

• (1345)

During this devastating third wave, the last thing our government wants is an election. I, for one, always say that the only election date I want to talk about is the one in October 2023, which is four years after the last one. I know many would see an election during a COVID pandemic as a public health risk and would limit Canadians' access to their democratic right to cast a vote. As such, in my opinion, it is really important for us to advance this bill swiftly so that in the unlikely event of an election, we can improve the conditions and opportunities for Canadians to safely vote as well as protect our democratic process.

Why have we introduced the legislation? Elections Canada realized there could be an election during this pandemic, as we did as the national government, and after much consultation has proposed some temporary rules in the unlikely event an election should occur.

Elections Canada has been following the provincial elections in our country and the various different elections that have taken place around the world. It has monitored contingency planning that has been developed both by international and various electoral management bodies. It has engaged with Canadian public officials, heard about best practices from various bodies and learned from recent elections held during COVID. Elections Canada has also estab-

lished an internal working group to determine how it can be as prepared as possible for an election held during COVID-19.

Out of this work, on October 5, the Chief Electoral Officer suggested the study and adoption of a new temporary law.

Some of the key changes the Chief Electoral Officer proposed was making Saturday and Sunday voting days, increasing voting hours from 12 hours on one day to 16 hours over two days; granting authorization for the Chief Electoral Officer to determine how and when voting could occur in long-term care facilities and other similar settings; and adding more flexibility to adapt the act to emergency situations to make it easier to respond to the pandemic. Bill C-19 builds on these recommendations and adds other special measures to ensure Canadians can vote safely.

What are some of the additional measures we have proposed in the bill?

First, we would give the Chief Electoral Officer more flexibility to adapt the act to ensure the safety of election officers and voters. It would also give the Chief Electoral Officer the power to set days and hours for polling divisions established in long-term care homes.

Our government recognizes that vulnerable populations like seniors have very specific needs in this pandemic. We also know we need to protect their right to participate in the Canadian democracy and ensure Elections Canada has a way to safely collect votes from them. This bill would provide a 13-day window to safely deliver the vote to long-term care facilities and similar institutions. This period would give election staff enough time to engage with those facilities and to determine a safe time for them to deliver the vote.

Bill C-19 would also extend voting hours, giving Canadians more opportunity to vote in a safe way that works for them. It would create a three-day polling period which, to me, is awesome. People could vote Saturday, Sunday or Monday. It would help spread the voters out, reducing crowds in voting places, and would give people who might not be able to vote on the weekend, maybe because of a religious observance on Saturday or Sunday, the option to vote on Monday. It would also add more advanced polling days, four days of 12 hours each, for voting since we would anticipate more Canadians to vote early in a pandemic election.

Bill C-19 would grant the Chief Electoral Officer the authority to respond to emergency situations like local unexpected outbreaks of COVID-19. It would allow the Chief Electoral Officer to modify the day on which certain things would be authorized or required to be done before the polling period. The Chief Electoral Officer would also be able to move a deadline a day backward or a day forward by up to two days, or the Chief Electoral Officer could also move the starting date or the ending date of a period in which certain things would be authorized or required to be done by up to two days.

• (1350)

Finally, the bill would make mail-in voting even more accessible. If Canadians did go to the polls in the pandemic, we anticipate that many more would want to vote by mail. Of course, we know that this would be a whole new way of voting in Canada, other than in the provinces that have already seen such elections. We know this is an option that many Canadians would want to see.

With Bill C-19 passed, Canadians will also be able to apply online to register to vote by mail and cast a ballot from the comfort and safety of their home. It will also allow for secure drop boxes at polling stations so that those who do not have time to send their ballots through the mail can instead drop them off. It makes voting more accessible by allowing voters to register to vote by mail using an ID number, like a driver's licence number, rather than a full copy of their identification. Finally, it gives voters the flexibility to choose to vote in person instead if they have already registered to vote by mail. If they do, they would have to return their mail-in kit or sign a declaration at the in-person voting location that they have not yet voted.

There is a clear need for the bill as indicated by the Chief Electoral Officer, but it is important to note that there are some limitations of the bill. The primary one is the need for a preparation period for Elections Canada. This means that Parliament needs to move swiftly to get the bill to committee. I have heard a number of amendments and recommendations that my colleagues would like to propose, and they should be genuinely considered. Then it still needs to come back to the House for a third reading. Elections Canada then needs 90 days to implement the bill after royal assent. The longer we wait, the greater the risk of a possible election during a pandemic with no safety measures for Canadians.

I want to reiterate that the special legislative measures that are being proposed would cease to be in effect six months, or at an earlier date determined by the CEO, after a notice is given by the Chief Electoral Officer that indicates the measures are no longer necessary in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notice would only be issued following the consultation with the Chief Public Health Officer.

With such a limited scope, I see no reason for disagreement or delay on the bill. All parties should be able to unite to quickly get these common-sense protections for voters into place.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to the importance of Bill C-19 and why it should be passed quickly.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, certainly we want to do everything we can to protect workers and voters in this election should it occur during a pandemic.

One thing we know is that we would likely see more mail-in ballots, and the members correctly have pointed out there are some provisions in the bill. Having ballot boxes at the polling stations to collect mail-in ballots will be a very good thing in case the capacity is higher. One thing I have heard concerns about is that if the Monday is a holiday, they would consider counting ballots after election day. We have never done that federally, and I think Canadians have confidence in our tried and true process.

Government Orders

Would the member agree that with the provision to allow mail-in ballots to be dropped off at polling stations if they were left too late that we really do not need that other provision?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure I understood the question. I believe the member is saying that the provision of us being able to count the ballots after the election date and that the bill would allow for that to happen is not necessarily needed.

I really trust that the Chief Electoral Officer has done some consultations and that he has talked to a number of groups, both nationally and internationally, about some of the best practices and provisions that should be contained in this bill. I have a lot of confidence in the recommendations that have been made and are now included in Bill C-19.

This is why I am anxious to get this bill to committee. If there are some things that we might want to modify, they should be considered at committee. I know I would be open to any provisions that might make this bill clearer and ensure the safety of any—

• (1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, my understanding is that my colleague supports this bill as written and is in a hurry. I am not saying anyone is dismissing the safety issues that we all agree on, but it feels like haste is becoming the norm. We cannot help but wonder why she seems so keen for the government to use time allocation.

I have a question for my colleague. Bill C-19 is your government's initiative. It did not come about because of the findings in a committee report or the Chief Electoral Officer's initial recommendations. How do you plan to deal with the committee members' opinion?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the hon. member that I am not part of this discussion, so I will pass the question on to the hon. member for Davenport.

The hon. member for Davenport.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I will respond this way. There is a lot of very important business that Parliament needs to consider between now and when we rise for the summer, at the end of June. It is absolutely important for us to pass legislation that has had some careful consideration by the Chief Electoral Officer and our government. I have a lot of confidence in the bill and in the measures we have in place. It would be responsible for us to move the bill as quickly as possible to committee to ensure that if there is anything we need to add to it, we do so there. If not, we should pass this bill as swiftly as possible.

Statements by Members

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate working with my colleague for Davenport on the finance committee. We certainly agree that there are provisions that absolutely need to be put in place given the pandemic we are all living through. She made some good points in her speech, but she left out the key part that has made this bill much more controversial than it normally would be. That is the fact that when the Liberals brought the bill forward, they also started their pre-election campaign. The Prime Minister and Liberals were campaigning openly. The third wave has pushed that back, but Liberals have not come clean with the Canadian public.

Can my colleague for Davenport now say very clearly, in a way that all Canadians will understand, that the Prime Minister will not call an election during this pandemic?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I will say what I said during my speech. The only election date that is in my mind is an election date four years after the last election, which is October 2023. Canadians want us to govern and that is what we are trying to do. This bill is the responsible thing to do in the unlikely event that an election is called during a pandemic.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday was Mother's Day. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women of all ages, be it our front-line workers, PSWs, caregivers and, in particular, those who have young children. Brave women, mothers and grandmothers, have not stopped working throughout this pandemic. Here is a sincere, heartfelt thanks on our collective behalf.

My mother has played an important role in my life. Immigrating to Canada, our family saw first-hand how my mother had to juggle work and home, taking care of two young children: my sister and myself. When my twins were born, I witnessed the same with my loving wife, who is a working mother.

This past year has been a challenging one. The least we can do for our mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers is to be supportive of them, to appreciate them for everything they do, to tell them that it is okay not to be okay, and to be there when they need us most, in person or virtually. We will get through this together.

I thank every mom who is watching this today.

● (1400)

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, our farmers are the backbone of our community and the engine of our economy. They are the hard-working men and women who go out in the searing heat and bitter cold to put food on our tables and clothes on our backs.

Canadians have not had to worry about their food supply during the pandemic, or at any time in recent history. Canadians benefit from some of the highest quality, least expensive and safest food in the world, because of our wonderful, hard-working farmers. While we were all battling the pandemic, our farmers did not pause their work and they did not take a break. They kept planting their fields, feeding their livestock and getting their products to market.

Today, I would like to recognize the tremendous and continuous efforts of our agricultural workers.

BASHEER NASIR AHMED

Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to recognize the life of Basheer Nasir Ahmed, a caring husband, father and son.

Nasir immigrated to Canada from India with his family in 2002. Upon arriving, he continued a long and successful professional career in telecommunications, most recently serving as the head of Business Development and Cybersecurity at Nokia.

A founding member and secretary general of the Islamic Centre of Markham, Masjid Darul Iman, Nasir had a passion for serving the community. He was dedicated to educating and empowering youth in Markham and was a leader who mobilized the community during times of humanitarian concern. One of the kindest people I have met, Nasir was always a gracious host when I visited the mosque.

I, along with so many, was saddened to hear of his recent passing. Nasir was just 49. I send my sincere condolences to Nasir's family and loved ones during this extremely difficult time.

[Translation]

ROBERVAL COURTHOUSE

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, my community was shaken by the loss of one of its most precious heritage buildings, the Roberval courthouse.

Built on the shores of our majestic Lac Saint-Jean in a style inspired in part by the National Assembly of Quebec, the courthouse was a source of pride to the people of Roberval for over 110 years. The blaze was so fierce that dozens of firefighters from the Roberval, Saint-Félicien, Chambord, Sainte-Hedwidge and Mashteuatsh stations responded. These men and women worked bravely to quell the flames and protect all the neighbouring buildings.

I want to thank them for being true heroes. Their sense of duty and their efforts should inspire us all.

I also welcome the Government of Quebec's intention to rebuild the courthouse as soon as possible. I want the citizens of Roberval and everyone working in the justice system to know that I stand with them through this difficult time.

* * *

MOTHER'S DAY

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, on Mother's Day, I surprised some of the mothers in my riding of Bourassa.

We ordered cakes, candies and flowers to be delivered to over 1,000 seniors in retirement homes and golden age clubs.

These cakes were created by students at the École hôtelière de Montréal Calixa-Lavallée, in my riding. They recently won an international prize at the Academy of Chocolate Awards 2020, in London.

The special get-togethers for wonderful mothers were organized in strict adherence to public health measures. They allowed seniors to break their isolation and gave us a chance to celebrate all the ladies who raised us.

Happy Mother's Day to all mothers.

* * *

DONALD BROCHU

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remember a builder of Beauce who recently passed away. Donald Brochu, founder of Agri-Marché, passed away on April 29 at the age of 83.

He joined the Brochu group with his brothers in the 1960s and grew the business into one of the biggest players in the Canadian agri-food sector. The company is now being run by the third generation of Brochus, Jean-Pierre, Guylaine and Patrice.

Having known him since 1981, I remember him as a man who was very approachable and who was always concerned about others. He always took the time to see how everyone around him was doing. Throughout his career, he was also involved in social, sports and educational activities with various organizations.

I also remember that in 1982, when the Bassin de la Chaudière agricultural expo was created, it gave him an idea: bringing Canadians closer to the agri-food sector.

I would like to offer my sincerest condolences to his family and friends. We will miss this extraordinary philanthropist, leader and businessman very much.

Rest in peace, Mr. Brochu. Thank you for everything.

* * *

● (1405)
[English]

BELARUS

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Polish Canadians across the country are watching with

Statements by Members

alarm the mistreatment of the Polish minority in Belarus by the authoritarian regime of President Alexander Lukashenko. The arbitrary detention of Angelika Borys, chairwoman of the Union of Poles in Belarus, is but one example of the widespread human rights violations being perpetrated.

In response to mass protests after the fraudulent presidential elections last August, thousands of demonstrators, human rights activists and journalists have been arrested. Canada was the first country to impose sanctions against Belarus and provide over \$3 million in support to pro-democratic organizations.

Canada stands in solidarity with the Belarusian people. We reaffirm our unequivocal condemnation of the gross human rights violations in Belarus. We will continue to hold Belarusian authorities to account, call for an end to the systematic persecution of minorities and peaceful democratic movements, and call for an immediate cessation of all violence, including the use of torture.

* * *

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an extremely challenging time for everyone, but arguably no one has experienced more challenges and been more personally impacted than those on the front lines of our health care system. The tireless efforts of health care workers to keep our community members safe, cared for and healthy is what has given many Canadians hope as we navigate through this pandemic. Without their service and being there for us each and every day, we would not be where we are or be able to finish the fight against COVID-19.

This week is National Nursing Week. I want to send a big thanks to our nurses in Whitby, throughout Durham region and all across Canada for the incredible work they do. We know they must be physically and emotionally exhausted at this point, and hope that as they dig deeper to continue to care for our loved ones they know how much we believe in and appreciate them for their truly courageous efforts.

I hope all members of the House will join me in thanking our nurses.

* * *

ABBOTSFORD

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Lights. Camera. Abbotsford. Mr. Speaker, let me set the scene.

Statements by Members

I am blessed to live in beautiful Abbotsford, British Columbia. Now it appears the film industry has taken notice of our city. Nestled between majestic Mount Baker and the mighty Fraser River, our city in the country has become one of the premier film destinations in Canada. Hallmark and Netflix have taken notice and profiled our community on movie screens around the world. Last year, 63 productions were safely filmed in venues such as Clayburn Village, Mount Lehman, Matsqui Village, Mill Lake and historic downtown Abbotsford. The economic impact has been in the millions. These spinoffs are thanks to a community effort to expand our economic base beyond agriculture and manufacturing.

The people of Abbotsford are resilient, and in the midst of a pandemic we have adapted. Our future looks bright, including our place in the movies.

That is a wrap.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of National Nursing Week, which recognizes the outstanding contributions and hard work of nursing staff.

Hôpital de la Cité-de-la-Santé in Laval is full of superstars who work tirelessly to provide care to members of our community who need it.

Staff members were already performing daily miracles before the pandemic, but they have ramped up their efforts since the crisis began, often to the detriment of their own health. They were on the front lines in responding to the emergency, and they continue to be guardian angels as vaccination continues in Laval.

I thank all the nursing staff in Laval for their daily dedication to our community and the essential work they do every day. I thank them for continuing to care for those who are ill.

* * *

• (1410)

U18 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday night, Canada won its first gold medal since 2013 at the under-18 world hockey championship in the United States, in Texas to be precise. I want to highlight the Canadian team's strong performance, as it did not lose any of the seven games it played throughout the tournament. This is a testament to both its strong offence and its seasoned defence.

This team included only one Quebecker, a young hockey player from Cap-Santé, a village in my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. I would like to congratulate Guillaume Richard on his outstanding contribution. This young defenceman's remarkable talent and potential were showcased throughout the tournament. Finishing the tournament with a plus-14, Guillaume was a defensive pillar for his team.

Guillaume is a role model for young athletes in our region and is doing a great job of representing Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier and

Quebec as a whole on our national team. I hope he is as proud of himself as we all are. Congratulations, Guillaume.

* * *

[English]

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this month of May marks Jewish Heritage Month. Jews throughout Canada's history have made extraordinary contributions to the fabric of our nation and have helped make it the greatest country in the world.

Whether it be the Bronfman family and their contributions in business and philanthropy; in politics and government with former minister of finance Joe Oliver; in the entertainment world with the likes of none other than Captain James T. Kirk, captain of the Starship Enterprise, William Shatner; or, for the younger crowd out there, Canada's own superstar, Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter Drake, the Canadian Jewish community has made significant contributions to the growth and prosperity of Canada while overcoming tremendous obstacles.

This month, let us remember to celebrate and educate future generations about the inspirational role that Jewish Canadians have played and continue to play in communities across the country. On behalf of our entire Conservative team, I want to wish a happy Jewish Heritage Month to my fellow Jewish Canadians across the country.

* * *

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to Parliament's attention an unconscionable attack on workers, occurring in British Columbia.

Two weeks ago, an employer group representing the hospitality industry served lockout notice on some 1,200 workers in 14 communities around the province. This has been accompanied by mass firings of hundreds of workers at the Hilton Metrotown and Pacific Gateway Hotel, two-thirds of whom are women. These employers are cynically using the pandemic to eliminate loyal employees with decades of service and to roll back wages and workplace conditions. This despicable tactic also constitutes an assault on racialized Canadians, as many of these workers are people of colour.

The Prime Minister promised Canadians a feminist recovery, but his government continues to operate quarantine services at a hotel, behind picket lines, which is attacking women. I call on the government to cease operations immediately at facilities affected by job action and suspend all federal funds to these employers until they reverse their disgraceful behaviour.

[Translation]

SCOTLAND'S ELECTION RESULT

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I am pleased to congratulate the Scottish National Party and the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, for their resounding victory in Thursday's election.

The majority of the people of Scotland voted very clearly in favour of holding another referendum on their future with the United Kingdom. Considering that the Scots voted strongly against Brexit in 2016, a referendum on Scottish independence seems most appropriate and could end in victory.

It is my sincere wish that the will of the people of Scotland is heard and that democracy is not impeded by the government of Boris Johnson, who is refusing to let their nation simply express itself.

I want to reiterate that a people's right to self-determination is a fundamental principle to which any democracy worthy of the name must adhere. I therefore invite every party in the House of Commons to reiterate their unconditional support for this principle to assure Scotland that its friend Canada will stand behind its values and support Scotland's choice either way.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a riding that has been decided by fewer than 50 votes in recent years, the member for Winnipeg North was found guilty of breaking elections law for running illegal ads on election day, influencing the vote of some 35,000 people on their way to the polls. It is completely inappropriate for this same member to be the parliamentary secretary in charge of changing Canada's election laws for all candidates in 338 ridings across the country, when he cannot be bothered to follow our existing laws.

Canadians expect our elections to be the global standard for unquestionable integrity. How can the government be trusted to ensure the integrity of our elections and have the best interests for Canadians at the front of mind when they will recklessly break current laws for their own benefit?

Canadians deserve better. The Liberals break the law whenever they think they can get away with it because they believe they are above the rules that the rest of us follow. A Conservative government would bring back ethics and good governance to Parliament Hill and restore Canadians' confidence in their public institutions.

* * *

2020 JOSHUA GLOVER PUBLIC ART COMPETITION

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I recognize Quentin VerCetty, an award-winning Black artist, storyteller and educator who was born and raised in Etobicoke North. His work addresses issues of decolonization, immigration

Oral Questions

and representation and has been featured in countries including Australia, Germany, Haiti, Mexico and Peru.

Quentin recently won the 2020 Joshua Glover Public Art Competition. His sculpture commemorates Joshua Glover who arrived in Canada via the Underground Railway and who helped propel the abolitionist movement.

In Quentin's words, his memorial “marks a moment of allyship, advocacy and activism to improve the treatment of human beings that we can all continue to strive for”.

I ask members of the House to join me in recognizing Quentin VerCetty, who works hard to inspire hearts and minds and pave the way for up-and-coming Black artists.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “I think it's going too far to say we didn't know it was a MeToo complaint. Between PMO and PCO, we knew it was of a sexual nature.” That is what a Liberal senior government official told the Toronto Star this weekend. The Prime Minister's Office is telling Parliament something very different from what this person told the Toronto Star.

Why did Katie Telford mislead the committee about knowing whether she was dealing with a sexual misconduct complaint against General Vance?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear that we did not know the nature of the specifics of the case when the information was brought forward, but we are absolutely committed to making sure that we create the culture change that is needed in the Canadian Armed Forces and making sure we have an absolutely inclusive work environment that is harassment free for all women in the Canadian Armed Forces. That is a goal we will continue to work toward.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just not believable. For weeks, the Minister of National Defence has refused to answer about whether he knew the complaint was sexual misconduct. The former ombudsman has said repeatedly that he told the minister it was. The committee has correspondence from the minister's chief of staff saying it was sexual harassment and correspondence on which the minister is copied saying it was sexual harassment.

Can the minister stop this shameful denial and just admit that he knowingly sat on sexual misconduct complaints against General Vance for three years?

Oral Questions

• (1420)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear that the nature of the specific details were not provided, but we acted immediately on this information. In fact, the very next day public officials, who are non-partisan, contacted Mr. Walbourne to take the appropriate action. We know that we have a lot more work to do, but we will get it done.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one trusts that minister, and no one is trusting the government or believing a word it says. Telford told committee that the Prime Minister signed off on extending Vance's term and giving him a pay raise, yet she said she did not tell him about the allegations all that time. The defence minister knew, the chief of staff knew and the Clerk of the Privy Council knew, yet somehow Vance spent three more years as Canada's top soldier.

My question is actually for the Deputy Prime Minister. How did this so-called “feminist government” allow that to happen?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we said, we have a lot more work to do, when it comes to supporting the women in the Canadian Armed Forces. There is work that we have done, when it comes to passing Bill C-77, and with the sexual misconduct response centre. We have been taking important steps, but clearly we have a lot more work to do to make sure we have an absolutely harassment-free workplace in the Canadian Armed Forces. That is the work Madam Arbour is doing. The work, when it comes to military justice reforms, will also be presented. We have a lot more work to do. We are going to get this done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Prime Minister's chief of staff testified in committee. We expected her to provide compelling evidence. She did not. No one believes Katie Telford.

A source close to the government told the Toronto Star that it was going too far to say that they did not know that it was a #MeToo complaint. Someone close to the government told the Toronto Star this. In addition, I remind members that an email received on March 2, 2018, proves without a doubt that the chief of staff knew that the complaint was about sexual harassment.

How can the Deputy Prime Minister defend the indefensible?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no specific details were provided, but we acted immediately on this information, and non-partisan public officials contacted Mr. Walbourne to take the appropriate action. We know that we have a lot more work to do in making sure we create the confidence for women to be able to come forward, and that is the work that is currently ongoing to get this done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how can we believe the government? It changed its story three times.

On Friday, the chief of staff had a golden opportunity to tell Canadians the truth and provide tangible evidence. She was not able to do so. I will repeat my question to the Deputy Prime Minister of this self-proclaimed feminist government.

How can the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada defend the indefensible?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we stated before, no specific details were provided on this case, but action was immediately taken. A process was followed, the exact same process the former government had followed when information was brought to it. We know there is a lot more work to do. This is the reason we have appointed Madam Arbour to give us recommendations on the way forward, when it comes to the independence of the complaints process, so that women can feel confident to come forward. Harassment-free workplaces that have zero tolerance for any type of misconduct is our goal and something that we are committed to.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ELECTIONS CANADA

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that the government is imposing a gag order to amend election rules in the middle of a pandemic.

The government introduced Bill C-19 four months ago. We have had four months to debate it, but the bill has suddenly become important today. The government is waking up. All of a sudden, there is no time to debate or even reflect. The government quite simply wants to use a gag order so that it can impose its election rules.

This bill sat around for four months, so why is it suddenly so urgent to use a gag order now? Is it because the government wants to call an election in the middle of a pandemic?

• (1425)

The Speaker: We have a problem with the interpretation.

The problem now seems to be fixed. I would ask the hon. member to repeat his question.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, it is very worrisome to see the government impose closure to change election rules in the middle of a pandemic.

The government introduced Bill C-19 four months ago. We could have been debating it these past four months. It was only today that it became important to the government. Suddenly, the government has no more time to debate or, frankly, to even think about it. It wants to use closure, of all things, to impose its election rules.

If it was not an urgent matter for four months, why are they suddenly imposing closure? Do the Liberals want to call an election in the midst of the pandemic?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from La Prairie for his question.

My Bloc Québécois colleague is well aware that the government is fully focused on providing the assistance required to protect Canadians during the pandemic. That is why, throughout this pandemic, we have taken the time in the House of Commons to implement measures that provide direct support to Canadians. We also believe that when the Chief Electoral Officer asked Parliament in October—

The Speaker: Order. I must interrupt the hon. minister because it seems that the members who are attending virtually cannot hear the interpretation.

We will try again. I would ask the minister to repeat his answer.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I promise that this answer will be just as good as the first one, just like it was a good question.

My Bloc Québécois colleague is well aware that the government is fully focused on providing the assistance required to protect Canadians during the pandemic. However, we also thought it was a good idea to respond to the report of the Chief Electoral Officer, who asked Parliament in October to introduce temporary amendments to the Canada Elections Act to ensure that an election could be held during the pandemic. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the best way to manage an election during a pandemic is to not hold an election.

By imposing a gag order on Bill C-19, the government is announcing that it not only wants an election but that it wants one as soon as possible. No one, except the government, thinks it is a good idea to have an election during a pandemic. More importantly, no one wants the rules of a pandemic election to be imposed by a government without any discussion. The Liberals are attacking the very heart of our democracy.

Does the government realize that voters' health is at risk?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do realize that. That is why we are asking parliamentarians to consider Bill C-19 in committee. With regard to the idea that a minority government could impose legislation on Parliament, I think that my colleague, who has quite a bit of experience, knows that we would need the consent of the other parties to move forward with such a bill.

My colleague is the one who is about to trigger an election by continually voting no confidence in the government. That is something we have not done until now.

Oral Questions

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Prime Minister's chief of staff asked what more she could have done to help the victims of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. What more could the Liberals have done? Is she serious?

The Deschamps report, which describes the unhealthy, toxic culture in the military, has been available since 2015. What have the Liberals done since 2015? They have done nothing. In fact, they just ordered another study.

Why did the Liberals choose to shelve the Deschamps report and abandon the victims in the military?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes the allegations of sexual misconduct very seriously. No one should feel unsafe at work. That is why we passed Bill C-77, the declaration of victims rights. It puts victims at the core of the military justice system, which reviews unfounded cases. We created the sexual misconduct response centre, which provides confidential 24-7 support to CAF members anywhere in the world.

We know that we have a lot more work to do, and that is the work that we are going to get done. We are going to listen to survivors, and we are going to make sure that a zero-tolerance policy is enforced and that we give confidence to women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, women are still waiting for the Liberals to take action to address the devastating issue of the sexualized culture within the armed forces. The government sat on the Deschamps report for six years. It could have implemented the recommendations and enforced meaningful actions, improving the ability of women and men to serve equally. However, it continues to take no responsibility on this issue, and now has proposed another report because it is forced to do so by public and political pressure.

Will the government finally take real action and immediate action to help service women and men rather than announcing yet another report?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been taking action since we formed government. As I stated, we passed Bill C-77, the declaration of victims rights, which puts victims first, at the core of the military justice system. We created the sexual misconduct response centre and "The Path to Dignity and Respect". We also put in place a response and support coordination program for CAF members who experience sexual misconduct.

Oral Questions

A lot of work has been done, but at the end of day, more work needs to move forward to make sure that women in the Canadian Armed Forces have the confidence to come forward when misconduct is done. Our goal at the end of the day is to prevent this from happening in the first place, and we will get this done.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the heritage minister first started coming under fire for Bill C-10, he insisted that YouTube content would not be censored. However, just yesterday the truth slipped out. Uh-oh. In an interview he said, “at some point the CRTC will be asked to put a threshold.” Wait a minute. With one breath the minister says YouTube users have nothing to worry about, but in his next breath he says that at some point they will be censored.

Why does the minister want to dictate to individual YouTubers what they can and cannot post?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was clear from the beginning that we wanted to focus on two things: one, for social media platforms to financially contribute to our cultural industry; and two, making our Canadian artists discoverable on platforms such as YouTube. Today I was relieved to see that the Conservatives are finally listening to the cultural sector and have stopped their unnecessary two-week-long filibuster.

We continue to stand with our artists and creators. We look forward to the resumption of the committee's work very soon. The cultural sector is behind us and in support of this bill.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good that the minister is sticking to his talking points instead of trying to go on his own. That results in blunders.

Yesterday the minister admitted that if successful YouTubers with a lot of viewers make revenue from their content—oh my gosh, heaven forbid—the eye of the government will be on them. There are so many incredible entrepreneurs, artists and creators who have found a way to connect with other individuals and generate a bit of income from it. Why is the minister launching an attack on them?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. The bill is not about what Canadians can or cannot post online. It is very explicit in this regard. Helping Canadian artists and creators is at the heart of what Bill C-10 does. It actually gives them more opportunities to meet their own artists and creators. It does so by making sure that big streaming companies pay their fair share to our culture. It also ensures that Canadian artists are discoverable on these platforms. Our creators cannot afford to wait any longer.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me interpret that. What he is saying is that information will be censored, that certain videos will be moved to the top and others to the bottom, and that the government will dictate which is which.

Over the weekend, the minister had yet another blunder. Every time he goes out to “clarify” the intent of Bill C-10, he makes

things worse. Within 24 hours, he had to issue two clarifications and an apology. It is obvious the minister does not know what is in his very own bill. It is so bad that just moments ago, the parliamentary secretary had to do the press conference instead of the minister.

Why does the government continue to try to defend the indefensible?

• (1435)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservative members truly care about freedom of speech, they will let our democracy continue its work freely. This bill would not regulate the Internet, or what people choose to post online or even view online, not at all. Individual activities are explicitly exempt from all three requirements above.

Freedom of speech is not negotiable for our government. It is explicitly protected under this act and in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We will continue to abide by it. We will let the committee pursue its work, and if that means a charter review needs to go on, we will be happy to do it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is crazy. In an interview on the weekend, the Minister of Canadian Heritage cited the wrong provision of his own bill and confirmed that the government's regulations could apply to social media accounts with a large following.

He said that the CRTC, not the government, would be in charge of the regulation. The minister confirmed that the Liberals want to attack freedom of expression and every time he opens his mouth he makes his bill more confusing and incomprehensible. Canadians are not buying it.

How does the minister explain the comments he made this weekend?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for giving me the opportunity to remind him of all the people and organizations across the country who support Bill C-10.

Among others, there is Pierre Trudel, professor at Université de Montréal's Faculty of Law and first chair holder of the L.R. Wilson chair in information technology and e-commerce law. There is also the Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the National Alliance of the Music Industry, the Association des distributeurs exclusifs de livres en langue française, the Société civile des auteurs multimédia, the Société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques, Copibec, the Association—

The Speaker: Order. The member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are all fed up with hearing the minister say that because we want to protect freedom of expression, we Conservatives are against culture.

The minister has been playing petty politics since the beginning. If we are in this mess, he is the one solely responsible, since he did a complete about-face on the protection of social media users.

Can the minister show a modicum of honesty and admit to cultural stakeholders that were it not for his failure to protect freedom of expression, we would not be where we are today?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to paraphrase Jérôme Payette, the executive director of the Professional Music Publishers' Association. According to him, Conservatives are using misinformation, fear and filibustering to prevent the passage of a bill at the expense of our cultural future. He considers that to be loathsome. He says that the Conservative Party of Canada is against culture and he feels that we need Bill C-10. I would remind my hon. colleague that this does not come from me, but from people in the cultural sector.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps quoting all kinds of people, but I would like to quote him. He said that this law should apply to people who are broadcasters or who act like broadcasters. He said that, if someone has a YouTube channel that garners millions of views and earns them money, the government will ask the CRTC to put a threshold. The next day, the minister said the opposite.

The fact is that, under this bill, which the minister and the Liberals themselves amended, any influencer, artist, politician or social media user can be regulated by the CRTC. The minister is attacking freedom of expression, period. Why?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share another quote from Jérôme Payette, who wrote the following to the member for Richmond—Arthabaska: “It is very disappointing that you and the [Conservative Party] have opted for partisanship at the expense of Quebec and Canadian culture. The C-10 study isn't even over yet. Yours is the only party threatening freedom of expression.”

It is purely political.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Office has known since 2018 that allegations were circulating about the former chief of the defence staff, General Vance. As we know, these were allegations of sexual misconduct, but the Prime Minister's chief of staff claims that she did not know the nature of the accusations. With respect, I do not believe her.

Let us pretend for a moment that we do believe her. Assuming the Prime Minister's top advisor has known since 2018 that a major complaint of an unknown nature was circulating against the general, what did the Prime Minister do in those three years to shed light on this complaint?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, we did not know the nature of the specifics or the details of the information that was brought forward, but action was taken immediately and given to non-partisan public

officials to take the appropriate action. No politician should ever be involved in an investigation.

We take incidents like this very seriously, and this is why we are working extremely hard to make culture changes not only inside the Canadian Armed Forces, but widely throughout government as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's chief of staff said she treated the complaint with the utmost seriousness even though she did not know the nature of it.

Basically, she knew that there were serious allegations against General Vance, but she did not tell the Prime Minister and she did not tell the Minister of National Defence, even though this was not the first time there had been allegations of sexual misconduct against Mr. Vance and even in the midst of Operation Honour, meant to address misconduct of this nature.

In short, the chief of staff did nothing to protect the victims. She basically protected the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence. Is that it?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to any type of allegations that are brought forward, no politician or political staff should ever be involved in any investigation. The information was sent forward immediately to the Privy Council officials, who are non-partisan, to look at the complaint.

We know that we have a lot more work to do, and we are going to get it done.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Office was aware of serious allegations against the highest-ranking military officer and it ignored them.

What is worse, the Minister of National Defence knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the allegations involved sexual misconduct. He also ignored these allegations, which is inexcusable.

Since the Prime Minister did not take the allegations seriously, claiming he was unaware of the nature of these allegations, will he take them seriously now and fire the Minister of National Defence?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, the nature of the specifics and the details was not provided, but action was taken immediately. Advice was given to make sure that Mr. Walbourne was contacted by the Privy Council Office. In this case, the very next day we made sure that non-partisan public officials from the Privy Council Office contacted Mr. Walbourne. Action was taken immediately. Politicians, or political staff, should never be involved in any type of investigation.

We know we have a lot more work to do to rebuild the confidence with the survivors who are coming forward, and we will get it done.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to be clear, we know that there was never an investigation even started. Katie Telford was complicit in the Vance cover-up when she decided not to tell the Prime Minister about the serious allegations against the former chief of the defence staff. She confirmed at the defence committee that she allowed the Prime Minister to personally sign off on General Vance's pay bonuses and extended his contract without properly briefing him on the sexual misconduct allegations against the very man entrusted with Operation Honour. Katie Telford wilfully withheld critical information and by doing so, she failed to protect the women and men of the armed forces from sexual misconduct.

It is clear the Prime Minister can no longer trust her. Why has he not fired her?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when information was brought forward, it was immediately acted upon. It was given to non-partisan public officials at the Privy Council to take appropriate action. No political staff or politician should ever be involved with an investigation. It is the exact same process that the member opposite's government also followed when allegations were brought forward.

We know that we have a lot more work to do. I ask the member opposite for us to be able to work together to find the right solutions so we can rebuild the confidence for our survivors. We have a lot more work to do. We know that by working together we can get this done.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we investigated, and they turned a blind eye.

On Friday, Katie Telford claimed she knew the Vance allegations did not pose a safety risk, while at the same time denying that she knew anything about the nature of the allegations. If she did not know the nature of the allegations, there is no way she could have been confident that there were no safety concerns. In fact, Gary Walbourne, the former military ombudsman, only told the Minister of National Defence that he had a complaint of inappropriate sexual behaviour against Vance.

Who assured Katie Telford not to worry about the safety of the complainant? Was it Michael Wernick, Janine Sherman or was it the Minister of National Defence himself?

• (1445)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite stated that they investigated, but they also still appointed General Vance at that time for chief of the defence staff.

When it came to the specifics of the case, we did not receive the details. We immediately forwarded it to non-partisan, public officials at the Privy Council Office to take the appropriate action. Action was taken, but clearly more work needs to happen.

We are currently working to regain the confidence of the survivors. We have been listening to the survivors. The work that Lieutenant-General Carignan will be doing will be absolutely instrumental in this case.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, calling oneself a feminist has to mean something.

The Prime Minister told everyone that he is the greatest feminist in the world, but that is clearly not true. A feminist would take action when a woman in the Canadian Armed Forces files a complaint with the ombudsman.

The ombudsman went to the Minister of National Defence, who covered his eyes and plugged his ears so that he did not hear anything. The following day, an email from the Privy Council Office dated March 2, 2018, at 5:09 p.m. confirmed that the allegations in question involved sexual harassment.

What other details did the Prime Minister need to take action and be a true feminist?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, any time, if ever, information is brought forward, immediate action is taken.

As I stated before a number of times, when the information was brought forward, immediate action was taken. It was provided to the non-partisan, public officials at the Privy Council Office to take the appropriate action. No politician or political staff should ever be involved in any type of investigation. The previous government also followed the same process.

Nonetheless, we know that we have a lot more work to do. We can get this done. I look forward to hearing the recommendations from the NDDN committee on this matter. As parliamentarians, by working together, we can rebuild the confidence for the women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

LABOUR

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers at the Pacific Gateway Hotel in British Columbia are on strike after management fired 100 long-service employees. Most of these union members are women, many people of colour. This hotel and others are cynically using the pandemic to gain economic advantage.

Instead of standing up for workers, the federal government is using this hotel for quarantine while its management is assaulting its staff. This is not the action of a government that is truly feminist, committed to working people or fighting discrimination.

Will the Liberals stop giving money to an employer who is attacking workers, women and marginalized communities?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that workers everywhere need to be protected, especially as they face the front lines with such determination and courage.

Protecting the health and safety of Canadians is our top priority. Keeping travellers and staff at designated quarantine facilities safe requires training in infection prevention and control practices. I understand that the employer is having conversations with the workers. As this process is under way in a provincial workplace, I cannot comment further.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was no answer at all.

Here is yet another case of the Liberal free ride for the ultrarich. We learned last weekend that billions of dollars in public funds through the wage subsidy that should have gone to protecting jobs and workers, instead went to dividend payments, stock buybacks and big executive bonuses.

The Liberals have gone after regular Canadians, the victims of CERB fraud, demanding the victims pay for the criminals. It is shameful. Will the Liberals make the ultrarich, those companies and CEOs who misused these funds, pay the money back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his concern for working Canadians.

Let me take this opportunity to point out to him that the wage subsidy has protected the jobs of 621,000 workers in his province of British Columbia. Across Canada, more than 5.3 million jobs have been supported by the wage subsidy.

The CRA website makes clear that the wage subsidy can only be claimed for employee remuneration. It cannot be used for other purposes.

Oral Questions

● (1450)

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recently tabled the most small business-friendly budget in Canadian history.

Last Friday, our government made an announcement to significantly increase rapid testing for businesses and their workers across Canada. Could the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade please tell us how this would both protect the health and safety of Canadians, and benefit our small businesses?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an important question. As we continue to fight COVID-19, rapid screening is an important tool to protect Canadians' health and safety and to help our businesses of all sizes operate safely and reopen quickly.

Last Friday, we announced that we are making rapid screening even more accessible, building on the stay safe initiative, working collaboratively with local chambers and SMEs in order to protect Canadians and support workers and businesses to operate safely and to recover strongly from this pandemic.

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[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Lévis and Montreal refineries depend on Line 5 to supply Canadians with 50% of their oil and gas. Thousands of jobs depend on Line 5 continuing to operate. However, the Governor of Michigan has said she wants to shut it down in two days, and the government has done nothing to protect it.

What will the government do in the next 48 hours to protect these jobs?

[English]

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Line 5 is a critical piece of energy infrastructure, vital to North American energy security. We are working on the diplomatic level, we are working on the political level and we are working on the legal level to defend it.

Last week, the House had an emergency debate; there was no daylight between parties. The members for Banff—Airdrie and Sarnia—Lambton suggested that the Leader of the Opposition actually spoke with the Governor of Michigan on this issue. In the spirit of a team Canada approach to this, and this is important, will the hon. member perhaps share with this House what the governor said?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that the minister and the Prime Minister cannot get the governor on the phone themselves, because, of course, they have done nothing but fail in Canada-U.S. relations for the last five years.

Oral Questions

They failed to get a buy America exemption, as Harper did under Obama. They failed to resolve the softwood lumber dispute, as Harper did under George W. Bush. They have had three presidents to work with, and yet no concessions whatsoever. The U.S. President will not even intervene right now to help save this vital energy link on which thousands of jobs and our entire energy system in central Canada depend.

Why should we have any confidence that they will do better this time, after their failures the last times?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take that as a non-answer.

At a time when producers and workers in western Canada are concerned about getting their products to market, when consumers are worried about the price of gas and how that will affect the heat in their homes, what have the Conservatives been doing? They have been fundraising off threats to shut down Line 5, fundraising for their election campaign. It is insulting to oil and gas workers and insulting to Canadians who just want to heat their homes.

While Conservatives are focused on improving their bank account, we are standing up for Line 5 with a full team Canada.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is May 10. In two days, on May 12, the government will fail if the Governor of Michigan closes down Line 5. When is the government going to actually recognize that this is something serious it has to deal with? When is the government going to talk to the Governor of Michigan, and also with the President of the United States, and get this problem solved?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Line 5 is not just an issue for producers in Alberta or consumers in Ontario. It supports the entire country. Thousands of jobs depend on it, and thousands of homes depend on it for heating.

We are working closely with Minister Savage in Alberta, with whom I was just on the phone, and with Minister Eyre in Saskatchewan as well. We have been talking with Minister Rickford in Ontario, with Sarnia mayor Mike Bradley, and I have been speaking with Minister Julien in Quebec. This is a full-court press by team Canada.

While the Conservatives are more focused on using this to fundraise, we are standing up for oil and gas workers and defending Line 5.

• (1455)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources is leaving no stone unturned, he says, and he is looking at all options. That is what he tells us. However, there are 48 hours left before 30,000 jobs and millions of people who depend on them are affected. Fuel shortages, food distribution impacts, essential goods and personal protective equipment not being manufactured are what awaits us if the government does not have a contingency plan in place.

Where is the Prime Minister while his minister is turning over stones and not getting it done?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that we are looking at all our

options. We will leave no stone unturned in defending Canada's energy security. We will work at the political level, at the diplomatic level and at the legal level. We are ready to intervene at precisely the right moment.

We are standing up for energy workers, we are standing up for energy consumers and we are standing up for energy security. People will not be left out in the cold.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, ever since we began our study of Bill C-10, the government has insisted that only social media platforms would be affected by the government's amendments, not their users.

On the weekend, the minister stated that users with lots of followers could be affected. No matter how many followers a user has, a user is a user. There is no reason the government should subject people to regulations based on how many likes they have on their page.

Can the minister be clear for once? Does he intend to subject people to regulations or to protect social media users' freedom of expression no matter the cost? I would appreciate it if he did not quote someone else this time.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that what we want to do is focus on two things.

First, we want social media platforms to contribute financially to our cultural industry. Second, we want to make our Canadian artists discoverable on platforms such as YouTube.

Today I was relieved to see that the Conservative Party is finally listening to the cultural sector. I would be very disappointed if the Bloc Québécois were to stop listening to Quebec's cultural sector. I hope the committee responsible for studying Bill C-10 will resume its work so that this bill, which is very important to all our artists and creators, can be passed as soon as possible.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would not be afraid to compare my record on the study of Bill C-10 and the defence of the Quebec cultural industry with that of the minister at any time.

This bill is vital to Quebec culture and to our artists and artisans. The work on Bill C-10 will be able to continue as soon as the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Canadian Heritage have testified to reassure Quebecers who are concerned about freedom of expression.

Will the minister commit to doing his part to unblock Bill C-10 once and for all by ensuring that he and his colleague, the Minister of Justice, accept the request of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to appear as early as Friday to reassure Quebeckers about the critical issue of freedom of expression on social media?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to respond to the requests of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. I have appeared before that committee every time it has asked me to do so.

As my hon. colleague is well aware, clause 2(3) of the bill specifies that Bill C-10 must be consistent with freedom of expression and journalistic and creative independence. Since my colleague examined the bill so closely, I would be surprised if he forgot about that.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Les Viandes du Breton, a business in my riding with more than 600 employees, is in danger of having to cut back its operations or even having to move to the United States if Canada cannot bring in enough temporary foreign workers.

There are over 8,000 job vacancies in the food processing industry in Quebec. Under paragraph 205(a) of the regulations, the Minister of Immigration could temporarily exempt these essential businesses from the 10% maximum threshold or labour market impact assessments if it were in the national interest.

Will he do that?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that very constructive question.

Temporary foreign workers are critical to our businesses, which is why we have facilitated the arrival of essential temporary foreign workers throughout the pandemic. Last year, we welcomed more than 85% of the agricultural workers we were expecting, and even more will arrive this year.

I will continue to work with my colleague.

* * *

● (1500)

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two days, that is all the time that is left before the Line 5 pipeline is set to shut down. My constituents in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and farmers across southwestern Ontario are worried. Farmers depend upon propane supplied by Line 5. Where and how will they get their propane to heat their barns and greenhouses, and dry their grain?

Will the Prime Minister get on the phone with President Biden and stress the urgency and importance of keeping Line 5 open? There is less than 48 hours left.

Oral Questions

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House and the hon. member we are looking at all our options. We will leave no stone unturned in defending Canada's energy security. We are working at the political level, we are working at the diplomatic level, we are working at the legal level and we will be ready to intervene at precisely the right moment. We will stand up for energy workers and for energy consumers in the country. We are standing up for Canada's energy security. People will not be left out in the cold.

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CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for weeks, the Liberals have continued their attack on freedom of speech online. As it currently stands, Bill C-10 would grant the CRTC the ability to regulate content that is posted online by individuals who are not even considered broadcasters. This is not disinformation; these are serious concerns that have been raised by former CRTC chairs and highly respected academics.

Will the minister agree to stringent and in-depth protections for user-generated content in Bill C-10?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote members of the Coalition for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, who state, "Bill C-10 in no way infringes on the freedom of expression, nor does it represent censorship of the Internet."

The cultural sector is very clear. It wants this bill. Hundreds of millions of dollars for art creators, artists and art musicians are at stake. We are asking the committee to accelerate the completion of its work on Bill C-10 so it can be brought back to the House.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the vaccine rollout is in full swing, with millions of vaccines arriving in Canada every week.

Starting Friday, residents of Quebec aged 18 and up can receive their first dose. As more and more Canadians become eligible to receive a vaccine, it is important that we continue to encourage them to get vaccinated when it is their turn.

Would the hon. Minister of Health tell the House what the government is doing—

The Speaker: Order. I must interrupt the hon. member as we have a problem with interpretation again. It only seems to be working in the House.

The interpretation now seems to be working for everyone. I would ask the hon. member to repeat her question.

The hon. member for Vimy.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Mr. Speaker, the vaccine rollout is in full swing, with millions of vaccines arriving in Canada every week.

Oral Questions

Starting Friday, residents of Quebec aged 18 and up can receive their first dose. As more and more Canadians become eligible to receive a vaccine, it is important that we continue to encourage them to get vaccinated when it is their turn.

Would the hon. Minister of Health tell the House what the government is doing to combat vaccine hesitancy?

• (1505)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. The vaccines are an important tool in the fight against COVID-19.

In February, we announced \$64 million to help Canadians get reliable information about vaccines. All of the vaccines are approved by Health Canada as safe and effective against COVID-19.

I encourage all Canadians to get vaccinated because the vaccine protects them and their loved ones.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, media reports state that Canadian Armed Forces members saw video evidence of war crimes committed by the very Iraqi soldiers they were ordered to train in Operation Impact. Our troops, my constituents, immediately reported seeing videos of prisoners being tortured, raped and murdered to their superiors. They first reported what they saw in September of 2018, yet there is no proof these reports were ever acted upon despite follow-ups as recently as last year.

Did the minister know about this video evidence of war crimes?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is contributing to the greater peace and security in the world and remains a strong partner in the fight against Daesh. We are committed to meeting our obligations under international and domestic law.

Our government takes allegations of this nature extremely seriously, and we are actively looking into this troubling allegation, which we just heard of now.

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TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government announced the highly affected sectors credit availability program in late November and waited two months to open applications. According to the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, only 4% of its members have taken up HASCAP. Businesses have told us increased debt loads, higher interest rates and continued issues with the criteria are the reasons for the program's failure.

With an unemployment rate of 13% in the tourism sector in March, why is the government failing those hardest-hit businesses and workers who desperately need support to survive through this pandemic?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, we understand

that the tourism sector is undergoing great difficulties, and that is exactly why we have been there. We have been there to support people through the wage subsidy, the rent relief program, the CE-BA, all the different support we got through the regional development agencies and also through the HASCAP.

At the same time, we know that we have to do more, and that is exactly why we are doing more. In the budget that the Minister of Finance tabled a couple of weeks ago, we have \$1 billion more to support our tourism operators, hoteliers and the great workers who make sure that this sector will be able to be relaunched in the couple—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the vaccine injury support program was first announced in December, yet it is still not up and running. In fact, a simple search shows a call for applications for a third-party administrator remains open. The minister's own office has confirmed the program is not ready. They know the support would eventually be needed, which is why it was announced back in December.

I already have constituents contacting my office about the program who need help. Why is it not up and running?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have provided for Canadians, including with the launch of a vaccine injury support program. I would encourage the member opposite, if he does have constituents who are looking for answers about the program, to ensure he communicates with my office and we will make sure that they get the information they need. Also, any claims will be retroactive to the beginning of our immunization program.

We will continue to be there for Canadians in the extremely rare event of a serious side effect.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the pandemic has affected all Canadians, many Black, indigenous and racialized groups have been at the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, filling roles in health care, personal support work and other essential services. These groups have disproportionately faced the impacts of COVID-19 and may be facing worsening mental health outcomes as a result.

As last week was Mental Health Awareness Week, could the Minister of Health update us on how the government is working to improve access to mental health services, particularly for racialized and vulnerable Canadians?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his ongoing and consistent advocacy for people who struggle with mental health issues and for excellent care no matter where people live.

Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$100 million to support projects for innovative mental health interventions for populations that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, including health care workers, front-line workers, youth, seniors, indigenous, racialized and Black Canadians.

In the conversations I had with stakeholders from coast to coast to coast last week, they expressed great gratitude to our finance minister and our government for including mental health so profoundly in the budget. We look forward to working with them all to ensure every Canadian gets—

• (1510)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, cross-border vaccination deals have been made by Manitoba with North Dakota, Alberta with Montana and Ontario is negotiating with Michigan. The federal government has completely failed to help on this, like it did with delivering vaccines in time to avoid a third wave.

For months, I have been requesting the establishment of a border task force to ensure businesses and families are part of developing a safe border plan. Now the U.S. Senate majority leader has engaged Congress in demanding a border plan.

When will the Prime Minister finally do his job and establish a safe border task force instead of him and a select few making it up on the fly?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every step of the way we have worked very closely with our United States counterparts to protect the health and safety of Canadians and indeed of our American cousins and neighbours.

I want to speak a little about vaccines though. It is a great day. Over 18.4 million vaccines have been shipped to provinces and territories to date. As of May 7, 16 million had been administered across the country. We can see the finish line, and I want to thank all Canadians for stepping up to get vaccinated when their turn arrives. This is great news for Canada, and this is great news for the United States. We will continue to work closely with our American cousins and neighbours.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, when we use GDP as the measure of our economy, the emergency response to an oil tanker spill or a major car accident counts as economic growth. When we use GDP as the measure of our economy, an old-growth forest sequestering carbon and supporting biodiversity has no value until it is converted to lumber.

Instead of measuring the accumulation of wealth, a well-being economy measures success through the health of people and the planet.

Will the government stop using GDP and measure our success by well-being?

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning, we have been focusing on Canadians' quality of life because we know it is the right thing to do for Canadians. Going beyond GDP is also an approach adopted by other major economies including Scotland and New Zealand.

As a recent OECD survey on Canada observed, policy-makers should consider how policy development and implementation can be improved to help Canada achieve a resilient and healthy post-COVID economy and society. Specifically, the approach should more explicitly incorporate aspects such as work-life balance, job quality, social capital, trust and resources for future well-being as well as for distributional considerations.

That is great advice from the OECD. We are putting, and will continue to put, Canadians' quality of life at the centre of our decisions.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 31 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

BOOKS OF REMEMBRANCE

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more than 118,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders have given their lives in service to Canada. We have lost them in the muddy trenches of Flanders, on the shores of the Normandy coast, along the streets of Kandahar and while training right here in Canada. Some were senior officers and others were kids who never even shaved. They are more than 118,000 fathers, mothers, sons and daughters.

With numbers like that, the fallen can become a mere statistic as time moves on. The Books of Remembrance are one of the ways we prevent that from happening. With the turning of a page each morning, we see the names of those lost to history. With the turning of the page, we can remember them.

Routine Proceedings

There are eight Books of Remembrance. These commemorate those who fell during the War of 1812 and the South African War/Nile Expedition. There are four books to commemorate Canadians and Newfoundlanders who gave their lives during the First World War and the Second World War, and to remember the members of the Merchant Navy who served and died alongside them. There is a book for the 516 Canadians killed in Korea. Finally, there is the *In the Service of Canada* book, which contains the names of members of the Canadian Armed Forces lost at home and abroad since October 1947.

Volume II of that book was recently returned to the House, and this morning it turned to a new page that bears the names of nine Canadians we lost last year: Leading Seaman Eric Keen, Master Corporal Matthew Cousins, Sub-Lieutenant Abbigail Cowbrough, Captain Kevin Hagen, Captain Brenden MacDonald, Captain Maxime Miron-Morin, Sub-Lieutenant Matthew Pyke, Captain Jennifer Casey and Master Sailor James McCourt.

These nine names are a reminder of the risk those in uniform take every day, even in times of peace. They step forward to wear our flag on their shoulders with the understanding that the cost of doing so might be the ultimate one. They represent the very best of us. We mourn with their families and friends and we remember them today. On the morning when the page turns to the one that bears their names, we know we will remember them for generations to come.

• (1515)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Canadians and all Conservatives, I would offer the following additional details about the Books of Remembrance. There are a total of 512 names on display today, May 10, and 16 specific entries for those Canadian heroes who are known to have passed away on May 10. They are Private Francis George William Floyd, Flying Officer Reginald James Dew, Private Joseph Clough, Corporal Patrick Duffy, Private Clayton Morningstar, Lieutenant Charles Casimir Von Straubenzee, Private Duncan McKinnon, Private Arthur Murphy, Private Stephen Payne, Private William Roberts, Private John Vaughan, Master Warrant Officer Loran Stuart Bessey, Gunner Rex Elms, Captain Paul Rackham, Carpenter Erich Karo and Second Lieutenant Ivan Arthur Thomas.

I would like to share some personal connections I have to the Books of Remembrance. On September 18, 2006, I was in Afghanistan for the very first time on a tactical reconnaissance in preparation for my subsequent deployment to Afghanistan in 2007. Unfortunately, on that sad day I was there when we lost Corporal Glenn Harold Arnold, Private David Robert James Byers, Corporal Shane Patrick Keating and Corporal Keith Ian Morley to a bicycle improvised explosive device. I then witnessed the absolute resolve and resolution within that combat team that they were members of, and the phenomenal leadership from then major Mike Wright. I had the honour to participate in three ramp ceremonies for those four fallen heroes in Afghanistan, in the U.A.E. and then back in Trenton.

Needless to say, I was really well prepared to understand what I was getting into, in order to prepare my own soldiers for the subsequent mission when we deployed four months later. Unfortunately, even before then on October 3, 2006, in my own riding of Bruce—

Grey—Owen Sound, we lost Corporal Robert Thomas James Mitchell. I have the honour of knowing the Mitchell family now quite well. To say the least, the pain is palpable every day with them, because I know they will never forget their fallen son.

Unfortunately, in 2007, a couple of months after I was deployed in the Maiwand desert on April 8, 2007, Easter Sunday, I lost six of my own soldiers: Private David Robert Greenslade, Private Kevin Vincent Kennedy, Sergeant Donald Jason Lucas, Corporal Brent Donald Poland, Master Corporal Christopher Paul Stannix and Corporal Aaron Edward Williams. This was the worst day of my life. There are no other words for it. The only day that was harder for me personally was when I got back to Canada a number of months later and I had the honour and privilege of meeting a number of the family members and close friends of those fallen heroes. There is nothing one can say to them. That pain is there. Those families will never forget and that is why these Books of Remembrance are so important.

I still wear my dog tags from my service in the Canadian Armed Forces, but on those dog tags I have a washer. It is the washer I found on the ground when we cleaned up the site where those six soldiers were killed. I wear that every day, because I will never forget those six fallen heroes.

Now the Books of Remembrance have seen the addition of nine more names from this past year, and a new page has been turned. As the minister stated, we now have Leading Seaman Eric Keen, Master Corporal Matthew Cousins, Sub-Lieutenant Abbigail Cowbrough, Captain Kevin Hagen, Captain Brenden MacDonald, Captain Maxime Miron-Morin, Sub-Lieutenant Matthew Pyke, Captain Jennifer Casey and Master Sailor James McCourt.

On a bit more of a positive note, I just found out this past week during a conversation with some constituents that back in my riding, at the Owen Sound Billy Bishop Regional Airport, the Price family, which knew Captain Casey personally, are now in the process of opening the new and future Captain Jenn Casey's Cafe and Grill in tribute to Jenn and the other fallen heroes. I am sure all members of the House, and for the most part all Canadians, have their own personal connections to family members or friends who have made this supreme sacrifice.

The Books of Remembrance are of vital importance to ensure that these Canadian heroes are never forgotten. We owe this to them and to their families. Lest we forget. We will remember them.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are here today to pay tribute to nine members of the Canadian Armed Forces who made the ultimate sacrifice last year in the line of duty. Today, Monday, May 10, 2021, their names were officially recorded in the *In the Service of Canada Book of Remembrance*. This noble publication commemorates all the Quebec and Canadian soldiers who have died in service since 1947, with the exception of the Korean War, where my uncle Georges Desilets lost his life.

This and seven other Books of Remembrance lie in the West Block or in the Peace Tower. Together, they commemorate the heavy toll paid during the most important moments of our military history. It is fitting that these Books of Remembrance are displayed here on Parliament Hill because it was us, as parliamentarians, who sanctioned the deployment of the vast majority of the soldiers whose names are inscribed in them. We therefore have a double duty to pay tribute to them, as citizens and as legislators.

I salute the memory of Leading Seaman Eric Anthony Keen, who died on January 19, 2020, and of Master Sailor James Richard McCourt, who died on October 9, 2020.

I salute the memory of Captain Jennifer Rose Casey of the Royal Canadian Air Force, who died tragically on May 17, 2020, in an accident involving one of the Snowbird jets in British Columbia.

I salute the memory of the six members of the Royal Canadian Navy who died tragically on April 29, 2020, in a Cyclone helicopter crash off the coast of Greece: Master Corporal Matthew Alexander Cousins, Sub-Lieutenant Abigail Cowbrough, Sub-Lieutenant Matthew Pyke, Captain Kevin Hagen, Captain Brenden Ian MacDonald, and Captain Maxime Miron-Morin.

Today their names will be added to the names of 118,000 Quebec and Canadian soldiers, whose memory I also salute.

They all gave their lives to defend our lives and the lives of their fellow soldiers. No matter the circumstances of their deaths, the oath of allegiance they swore alone deserves the utmost respect.

Rest in peace, soldiers. Your sacrifices will never be forgotten.

• (1525)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also rise today in the House to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. The Books of Remembrance contain more than 118,000 names of Canadians who paid the ultimate price.

[Translation]

We remember those we have lost in the line of duty. We must remember the members of the Canadian Armed Forces who served our country in peacetime and in war.

[English]

That is what the eight Books of Remembrance are really about. We must never forget.

Today, nine Canadian Armed Forces personnel killed in 2020 will be added for the first time to the Book of Remembrance for service. I want to state the names because I think it is important for us all to continue to remember them: Leading Seaman Eric Anthony Keen, Master Corporal Matthew Alexander Cousins, Sub-Lieutenant Abigail Lillian Cowbrough, Captain Kevin Matthew Hagen, Captain Brenden Ian MacDonald, Captain Maxime Miron-Morin, Sub-Lieutenant Matthew Kendall Pyke, Captain Jennifer Rose Casey and Master Sailor James Richard McCourt.

I pay my respects and offer my condolences to their families and friends. I assure them that they will never be forgotten.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Canadian Armed Forces members have always been there to help Canadians.

[English]

The most recent example of service was during the COVID-19 pandemic under Operation Laser, when the armed forces rushed to help our loved ones in long-term care. They were there to support northern and remote communities, including first nations. They were there to help with contact tracing efforts in Ontario and on first nations reserves during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Translation]

They were there to ensure that the teams of nurses, medical technicians and long-term care staff in Ontario and Quebec had access to personal protective equipment in order to stay safe.

[English]

We honour those who served us and continue to do so. Canadian veterans have made untold sacrifices for our country.

Today we recognize those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for us. We must offer them the best care and services possible when they come home. Veterans tell us that they appreciate commemorative events, but they need supports that reflect that recognition from their government. We must listen and we must deliver, as they did for our country and as they did for us.

Veterans need reliable services that meet their needs. Veterans need one person they can call who knows them, their history and their story. Instead, they are forced to repeat themselves every time they seek support from the government. This can be traumatic, as it triggers veterans to retell stories about their injuries. It is wrong to make them relive their pain and suffering. We must be better equipped to support them.

All members of the House receive calls from veterans for help navigating Veterans Affairs Canada. We must do better for our veterans. They deserve what they are entitled to.

The New Democrats will keep fighting to ensure that the government offers the best services possible to our veterans. We will keep fighting for their rights, as we have done for a long time, since the CSC fought for pensions for veterans. They deserve no less.

[Translation]

On behalf of all New Democrats, we want to express our gratitude to those who have served and continue to serve our country and people all around the world during tough times.

Routine Proceedings

● (1530)

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am seeking the consent of the House to deliver a reply on behalf of the Green Party of Canada.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay. Hearing none, it is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay. It is carried.

The hon. member for Fredericton.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart and the greatest humility that I stand today in honour of the bravest among us. Today we add nine names to the Book of Remembrance, where they will be honoured and remembered alongside the 118,000 other Canadians who have given their lives in service to this country.

I have the privilege to be the member of Parliament for Fredericton, home of CFB Gagetown. I live alongside citizens who are serving this country as members of the armed forces, many who have retired from service and many more who are the spouses, parents and children supporting loved ones who serve. They are all a critical part of the fabric of my community.

Military service is not glamorous. Those who have made the decision to serve have done so selflessly and acknowledge that they are putting their lives on the line to defend our nation. Today we think of these nine service members, some of them in the spring of their lives, others nearing the end of a long career. In various positions and serving in various ranks, they are united in their love for this country and for their bravery. We will never forget them.

We must also never forget that beyond their uniform, they lived rich, full lives. They were loved by parents, spouses, children, neighbours and friends. Their family members have also made an unthinkable sacrifice for our country, and with one foot in front of the other, they will learn to continue living without a piece of their heart. The motto of Base Gagetown is “diligence”. Those we have lost have demonstrated diligence in their service.

Today we demonstrate diligence in our memory of the nine Canadian Armed Forces members we lost last year: Leading Seaman Eric Keen, Master Corporal Matthew Cousins, Sub-Lieutenant Abbigail Cowbrough, Captain Kevin Hagen, Captain Brenden MacDonald, Captain Maxime Miron-Morin, Sub-Lieutenant Matthew Pyke, Captain Jennifer Casey and Master Sailor James McCourt. *Pro patria*. Lest we forget.

[Translation]

The Speaker: When Centre Block closed for renovations in February 2019, members escorted the Books of Remembrance from the Memorial Chamber to their temporary home in West Block.

[English]

There, parliamentarians and visitors can continue to see them and read the names of those who died in the service of Canada. Every day, in a simple but solemn ceremony, the pages of the books are turned, displaying the names of the fallen so that all may recognize and honour them for their specific sacrifice on our behalf.

While the Room of Remembrance remains closed to visitors during the pandemic, I encourage all parliamentarians to visit this solemn space created so that we might acknowledge and honour our past while building our future.

I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by 19 minutes, for a total of 49 minutes.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC) moved that Bill S-204, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (trafficking in human organs), be read the first time.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Bill S-204 would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad to receive an organ taken without consent. The bill would fight organ harvesting and trafficking by reducing demand, and it would save lives.

I want to salute the work of Senator Salma Atallahjan, as well as former MPs Borys Wrzesnewskyj and Irwin Cotler, who have put forward versions of this bill in the past. It has been close to 15 years since Mr. Wrzesnewskyj first put this concept on the table. This bill passed in both Houses unanimously in the last Parliament, although we ran out of time to complete the reconciliation process. As of this point, the Senate has unanimously adopted the same version of the bill that was adopted in the last Parliament, so an identical version of the bill has been adopted unanimously by both chambers, though in different Parliaments.

Clearly, everyone agrees that this is important and that lives hang in the balance. Let us do all we can to clear the barriers and get this done this Parliament.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

● (1535)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES**

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the first report of the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States, presented on Thursday, April 15, be concurred in.

I will be splitting my time today with the member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Routine Proceedings

Today is May 10. In two days, on May 12, the Governor of the State of Michigan has stated that she will shut down Enbridge Line 5, which provides 540,000 barrels of oil per day to Canadian refineries in Sarnia in southern Ontario, and further feeds facilities in Quebec. It is estimated that 30,000 jobs depend on this important international infrastructure in southern Ontario alone. Today, we are debating concurrence of the report of the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States, which was presented to this House on April 15. That was 25 days ago and still there are no signs that the Prime Minister is engaged on this file.

How much of Canada's petroleum needs will be disrupted? In fact, 540,000 barrels per day equates to about 25% of Canada's daily consumption of oil. That shortage will fall on the backs of two provinces, Ontario and Quebec, as it will represent approximately half of the supply of this vital energy feedstock to its economic output as the products refine into inputs for petrochemicals, plastics and textiles, and much more that is at the heart of Canada's manufacturing sector, to heating homes, driving cars and getting goods like food and supplies to markets efficiently and quickly.

In short, cutting off this infrastructure will result in a disastrous outcome for Canada. Tens of thousands of jobs in the supply chain that feeds our economy and a manufacturing sector that has been built on and depends on this critical infrastructure, all waiting, with their fingers crossed, for the outcome. It is safe to say that the closure of this energy infrastructure represents a national energy security emergency. Two days away, yet Line 5 has been threatened with closure since November 13, 2020. Six months have passed. I spoke about this matter needing resolution quickly at that time, but the government frittered its time away.

Enbridge, one of Canada's great companies, has actively engaged with the governor's office, and moved the matter to the U.S. federal court where it seems to belong, yet the governor wants the matter heard in a state court. Nevertheless, the federal court did instruct the parties to enter into mediation discussions, which have been ongoing. It should be noted that the governor would not even return calls from Enbridge on the matter prior to the federal court judge's instructions. Although seemingly a productive exercise, the governor has insisted during mediation talks that she would be shutting down Line 5 on May 12, whatever the process, timing or outcome of mediation discussions. This is hardly a productive or a mediatory stance.

Why is the Governor of Michigan taking on this posture, as unreasonable as it seems to a friendly trading partner, international security partner, energy security partner and environmental progress partner for a line that is an energy lifeblood for her state and other neighbouring states, as well as Canada? Ostensibly, for the safety of water in the Great Lakes Basin, they will shut down a pipeline that has never leaked, in which the company operating it is actively going through state regulatory processes to make it even more secure with an underground concrete tunnel.

The outcome of this misguided approach will move that product to trucks, railcars and barges on the Great Lakes. All of those outcomes have larger environmental footprints and greater environmental risks, even to the Great Lakes, than the intrinsically safe pipeline option. By clear analysis, there are other reasons. The gov-

ernor is a politician, so it must be politics. For whose benefit, we can speculate, but at whose cost it is clear: Those parties dependent upon this energy infrastructure for their livelihood, their jobs, their farms, the goods they produce, and the heat for homes and barns, so that our food supply is safe; and an international trade relationship between two of the world's most friendly trading nations. This is the fallout of what is really at stake.

The economies of our two countries, Canada and the U.S., have prospered over decades, better than economies elsewhere in the developed world because of our strong trade links and the rule of law that governs our institutions, including our trading relationships. The backbone of this mutually beneficial trade relationship is our infrastructure and the fundamentally most important part of that infrastructure is our energy infrastructure. Previous governments, of all stripes in Canada and the U.S., have recognized this importance.

• (1540)

In 1977, our two governments signed the Transit Pipelines Treaty to ensure that the energy transportation and trade between our two nations did not suffer because of political whims or short-term self-interest at the expense of our joint long-term prosperity and security and, yet, here we are. A state government is acting unilaterally, seemingly in direct contravention of our international treaty. It begs the question as to whether there is any meaning behind the words in that treaty or we have a trade partner that recognizes a Canadian government that either does not want to stand up for Canada's energy security or perhaps does not know how. Surely it cannot be because the Government of Canada does not recognize the importance of the infrastructure and the associated energy security.

It follows on our country's disastrous showing in renegotiating the new NAFTA, CUSMA, and a negotiating strategy where Canada did not show up with the real issues to be discussed for our benefit until too late. At one point, we were excluded from the trade discussions because the other parties did not take us seriously. No one was there to solve the emerging issues between our countries. In the end, we ended up with far less in the trade agreement than we had in the previous agreement, and our elected officials were relieved to sign it because it could have been so much worse. A victory is now defined by the current government as doing worse, but not losing completely. The bar is being lowered.

Routine Proceedings

Since then, the U.S. has continued to ignore the trade treaty's terms on steel and aluminum and now is pursuing a buy America policy in which Canada is an outsider. So much for preferential access to our markets. So much for free trade. So much for trade treaties. So much for Canada's standing up for the terms it negotiates in these agreements. The current government will roll over on any trade issue. We need to get serious.

Canada's standing in the world, economically and diplomatically, has declined precipitously in the past six years. We are viewed as a non-serious world player more concerned with virtuous statements than fulfilling any objectives or standing for any principles. The ranking of our competitiveness has fallen from fifth in the world to 13th, between 2015 and 2019. In foreign affairs, we have moved to a status where trade disputes are handled by our trade partners with hostage diplomacy.

It is as if we can foresee the headlines for 2030: When did Canada lose its relevance in the world? The world will point to this period, a period when an aimless, disinterested, non-serious government spoke virtuous words of all it stood for and then delivered no tangible results. It failed to recognize Canada's strengths, its role in the world and its ability to add value to world events. It lost sight of getting things done. It could not build domestic pipelines after cancelling some of its most promising ones, delaying others and making the process for approving infrastructure opaque, adding years to regulatory process. Accountability and oversight disappeared and Canadians were not paying attention to the incompetence. Canada was, is, led by a government intent on staying in power at all costs, including the future of the country itself. Then a foreign government, our most important trading partner and ally, ignored a treaty between our two countries and allowed the shutdown of a key piece of infrastructure on which Canada's energy security depends. Why did the Government of Canada not engage adequately with the U.S. government? Perhaps it was because the interest groups that supported the Governor of Michigan were the same ones on which the Government of Canada relied for its own virtue signalling; or, perhaps it was just an incompetent Prime Minister who did not know that international engagement meant getting involved in personal diplomacy with his U.S. counterpart when Canada's interests were at grave risk.

Line 5 is recognized as a critical piece of international infrastructure, and its regulation is overseen by PHMSA in the United States. The Canadian equivalent would be the Department of Transport. Other critical departments that should be actively involved in this file include foreign affairs, international trade and energy. This issue requires a whole-of-government approach and the leader of that effort should be the Prime Minister. Delegating this matter to the Minister of Natural Resources does not accord it the importance it requires. We need to do better. The Prime Minister needs—

• (1545)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the hon. member's time is up. He will have time to add, during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservative opposition party continues its shameful, destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons. It is simply amazing. Canadians are concerned about the pandemic, among other things, and the Conservatives still want to play political partisan games in the House. There was an emergency debate on the issue, yet the Conservatives have not seen fit to put it as one of the opposition days. When will the Conservatives start recognizing what Canadians want, get serious and allow government legislation to move forward. Why the constructive moves coming from the Conservative Party day in and day out?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague on the other side of the House for that Freudian slip.

This is very constructive. This is about Canadian jobs. This is about one of the most important issues for the future of Canada and a pattern we see happening. We are speaking up loudly at this point in time for the interests of Canadians and asking the Prime Minister to meet with the U.S. President and get this matter resolved along the terms of the transit pipelines treaty today or tomorrow. The deadline set by the Governor of Michigan is at our door. When will the Prime Minister act?

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, listening to the member for Calgary Centre and his speech when opening this debate, I think pretty much everybody in this House wants this dispute settled and settled quickly. It is undoubtedly going before the courts, and part of that is based on the transit pipelines treaty, which he mentioned a couple of times. The treaty also states that it is "subject to regulations by the appropriate governmental authorities". I am not a lawyer, but I would assume that might include state authorities, so this could go on and on.

I wondered, beyond what we did in the emergency debate last Thursday, what the member thinks we could be doing here to move this forward. We all care about those thousands of jobs in Ontario and Quebec and I just do not see the point of this debate here today.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, we are talking about accepting a parliamentary report, the Enbridge Line 5 interim report, from a parliamentary committee. This is a concurrence motion today to get this on the table two days before this line shuts down. We have been calling on the Prime Minister to get actively engaged in this file for several months now. It is not happening without his engagement. I appreciate that the member on the other side does not understand the difference between federal primacy and international treaties versus state regulation, but it is a transit pipeline treaty for the security of two nations, which was designed that way and is meant to overrule all the other regulations, except for of course safety. We are looking at a very important international treaty here that is at risk.

• (1550)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, very quickly I would add that we did canvass the issue in an emergency debate. It is a legitimate concern of the State of Michigan to protect the waters of the Great Lakes, but we all agree a solution must be found. This is an existing route and it should be maintained by one means or another.

I would say this very quickly to the hon. member. He mentioned in debate the other night that losing the energy chapter of NAFTA in the new CUSMA somehow hurt Canada's energy security. I actually believe it is the opposite since that section only served to ensure that whatever quantity of fossil fuels or any product Canada was exporting to the U.S. would have to be maintained in perpetuity for those energy products. For instance, even if we were running out of our supplies of natural gas we would be required to continue to sell whatever share the U.S. got at its highest level. Would he not agree this is an improvement to have autonomy?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, that is a good question. The actual terms of the energy agreement in the former NAFTA was a proportional sharing agreement. It was not an absolute sharing agreement to the highest levels that we provide to the U.S.; it was a proportional sharing agreement so that if in some emergency or international incident we had to cut back one-quarter to the U.S. we would be incumbent to cut back one-quarter of our own supplies, as would the U.S. if we think about the way this product goes across the borders in both its raw and finished states. It is called a treaty for a reason, so that we can get some solidity on our energy security as an economy going forward.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to share time with the member for Calgary Centre, who did an excellent job laying out the Conservative Party's frustration with this situation.

The potential shutdown of Line 5 has been on our radar since November of 2020 and, once again, the government has ignored a deadline or failed to manage to a deadline. We are now two days away from that deadline and we have not heard much from the government.

I find it quite interesting that the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has declared a discussion on Line 5 and the tens of thousands of jobs that will be lost in Sarnia and other places, where workers are anxious, quite frankly, as to what is going to happen with Line 5, a waste of time. For him to declare that as a waste of time and for him to declare that the House should not

consider this issue at every possible opportunity just shows the entire government's approach on this issue. The Liberals do not want to talk about it and they have not talked about it. As a result of their ignoring the issue and not pursuing it as a priority, we have a situation where we are two days away from a deadline imposed by the Governor of Michigan and we still do not have a resolution to this matter.

I am the vice-chair of the special committee, the committee that was created because of an initiative by the Conservative opposition. We saw Line 5 as a priority, we saw buy America as a potential threat to our country, so we took action and proposed that this committee be created to specifically hear from witnesses on this issue. We did, and every witness we heard from agreed that the pipeline should continue to operate and that the only way this would be resolved outside of a lengthy and drawn out court process was for the Prime Minister of Canada to get directly involved and elevate this to the level of President Biden. We have not seen that happen. We have not seen the Prime Minister take this up directly with the President. We have not seen this become a priority. We have not seen him making any noise on it, so we will make noise on it.

As the official opposition, we will continue to draw attention to the fact that the government is failing the workers in Sarnia and elsewhere along this route. This is an unacceptable dereliction of duty for the Prime Minister to have simply allowed this to go on. This is exactly the same approach we saw with the Keystone XL pipeline. The Prime Minister made some token efforts and said some token words about support for the Keystone XL pipeline, but when President Biden cancelled it and cancelled the tens of thousands of high-paying union jobs, the Prime Minister simply said that President made campaign promise so what could they do about it.

If only the Prime Minister of Canada placed the same weight on his own campaign promises, but he does not seem to care much for those. However, when President Biden says he will shut down a pipeline and kill thousands of jobs, the Prime Minister of Canada just simply walks away from the fight and the tens and thousands of jobs that have been lost.

That is, quite frankly, what our concern is. The Prime Minister has some token words. He said that he would like it to keep running, but no one believes that if he were in the position of the Governor of Michigan, that he would not have the same approach. The Prime Minister has shut down and cancelled approved pipeline projects on the flimsiest of evidence. He cancelled the northern gateway pipeline, which had gone through a massive approvals process, had met all the environmental reviews, had buy-in, a \$2 billion stake for indigenous communities along the way. They would all be a key part of that pipeline and he killed it because he said, "the Great Bear Rainforest is no place for a pipeline."

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That is the level of engagement, that is the level of scientific rigour that the Prime Minister will put on cancelling a pipeline. It is no wonder that he sits idly by while the Governor of Michigan threatens the pipeline. It supposedly threatens the Great Lakes even though, as my colleague from Calgary Centre has said, this thing has operated for decades without threatening the Great Lakes. The biggest threat to the Great Lakes would be additional rail, truck and barge traffic carrying that same 550,000 barrels a day from a safe pipeline onto those less safe, more emission intensive modes of transportation

I want to take a moment to thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for standing up for her constituents. Today, the NDP have declared this debate to be a waste of time. The Liberals have declared this debate is a waste of time. The member for Sarnia—Lambton has been standing up for her community and the tens of thousands of jobs that are at risk.

• (1555)

We have heard from union leaders for whom supposedly the Prime Minister stands up. I guess he does not care too much for their jobs, but he likes their votes. They were very upset that the Keystone XL pipeline had been cancelled along with the jobs. They issued a direct request to the Prime Minister, a challenge.

Scott Archer from UA Local 663 in Sarnia said, “I’d like to issue a challenge to...[the Prime Minister] and the federal government. This is a call to action. [As Canadians, this] is non-negotiable. You need to take a stand to protect Canadian families, businesses and industry.”

I would submit that the Prime Minister has absolutely failed to take up that challenge. He has failed to make this issue a priority. He likes to go to the summits. He likes to give speeches with Selena Gomez. He likes to do all the high-profile stuff that brings him positive headlines. However, when it comes to actually getting down to business and standing up for Canadian workers who will be impacted not only in Sarnia but also in Alberta, we know exactly what the Prime Minister thinks about that industry.

He has said before that he wants to phase out the oil sands. He has said before that he is opposed to these types of pipelines. Albertans and Western Canadians know exactly what kind of advocate they have in the Prime Minister for their jobs, which is none. He has shown before that for political gain he is willing to sacrifice them and the industry they represent.

One would hope that the Prime Minister would take this up more effectively and more publicly, quite frankly, with President Biden instead of simply saying now that the bad man President Trump is gone everything is back to normal. There are still immediate threats on the horizon.

However, we hear nothing from the Prime Minister on those. He seems content to let President Biden do whatever he wants when it comes to the relationship with Canada. It does not matter how many well-paying union jobs will be killed. It does not matter how our energy sovereignty is threatened. It does not matter that tens of thousands of jobs in Sarnia alone will be impacted or that tens of thousands more trucks will come across places like Windsor and Essex, jamming up those crucial crossings and bringing petrochem-

icals onto our highways. It does not matter. The Prime Minister cannot be bothered to pick up the phone and make this into a matter that President Biden will take seriously.

We know Governor Whitmer was on the short list for vice-president. She has a strong relationship with President Biden and it is time for the Prime Minister to take advantage of that. It is time he take advantage of the supposed new-found friendship and relationship with President Biden and escalate this matter. All we have heard so far are pretty words and good intentions, but we have seen no action and no results.

The people who depend on this pipeline for their family supporting jobs cannot rely on the Prime Minister saying he has it under control when he has shown time and time again that he will fail to stand up for energy sector workers, that he will fail to stand up for Canadian pipelines, the safest way to transport petroleum products in the world. He will not stand up for those jobs. He will not stand up for that industry. He has failed them time and time before, and he is failing them right now.

The official opposition does not think that talking about Line 5 and the jobs it supports is a waste of time. We say shame on those in the other parties who have said this is a waste of time and shame on the Prime Minister for his failure to get this matter resolved diplomatically.

• (1600)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could my colleague comment on why the Conservatives, in the emergency debate last Thursday, did not come up with any tangible ideas outside of criticizing the government by saying we needed to talk more to U.S. officials?

Could the member indicate what the Conservative Party would do differently? Could the member also tell the House why the Conservatives have not used an opposition day, but rather choose to do a concurrence motion? On an opposition day, they would be able to ensure there is a vote on the issue.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, we did bring forward an opposition day motion on Line 5. It created the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States, which was specifically tasked with hearing from witnesses and delivering the report we are discussing today.

I am sorry the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has not been able to follow the parliamentary process along to see that exactly what we are talking about today is a direct result of an opposition motion to discuss Line 5.

We heard witness after witness say that this needed to be a priority for the Prime Minister himself. This cannot be delegated to bureaucrats or ministers. It cannot be delegated down the line. The Prime Minister has to raise this with President Biden and so far, the Prime Minister has absolutely failed to meet that challenge. He has failed the workers not only in the oil sands, but he has failed them in the refineries in Sarnia as well.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not know whether I should thank my colleague, since no one asked for the debate we are having today. I remind members that we held an emergency debate last week on the same topic. We do not have any choice in the matter, though, so here we are.

I have a simple question for my hon. colleague. Is he worried about the safety of Line 5? I ask this because a problem with this pipeline could compromise the drinking water supply of millions of people.

When someone says that Line 5 has never had a problem, I cannot help but think of the people of Pompeii. They would have said that Vesuvius had never been a problem, but we know what unfortunately happened next with that volcano.

Does my colleague not think there are safety issues with Enbridge's Line 5?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, the proof is in the pudding. Line 5 has operated safely without major incident for 68 years. Enbridge has proposed additional safety measures to improve the safety of an already safe pipeline. Yes, there are constant measures, world-leading measures. Any time there is a Canadian pipeline, we know it will be the safest in the world, built to the highest standard and have the highest levels of monitoring.

However, I have a question for my colleague. This pipeline provides 50% of the propane that goes to Quebec. Is he really saying that we should not be concerned about this pipeline continuing and providing the energy and materials on which his province relies?

Of course, we want to see it done safely. Line 5 is proven to be safe and it should continue to operate. The Prime Minister should get on the phone and demand President Biden intervene to ensure it continues to operate, as it has, safely, for the last 68 years.

• (1605)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to reiterate that we are having a different pipeline debate than the Trans Mountain Keystone XL debates, which were about expansion projects. This is about a business-as-usual project, not expanding the oil sands in Alberta. In the NDP, we do care about those thousands of jobs, and I hope the member for Windsor West, my colleague, will have an opportunity to speak about that later in the debate.

The member says that this is a safe pipeline. It reminds me of its sister pipeline, Line 6B, that spilled into the Kalamazoo River and destroyed 50 kilometres of river. Does he see why Michigan might be interested in the environmental aspects?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, everyone is interested in the safety of pipelines. Everyone is interested in the environmental protection of waters. It is why pipelines undergo the most rigorous environmental testing and constant monitoring. Everyone wants to see the environment protected and the safest way, the most environmentally friendly way, to transport petroleum products is through pipelines. It always has been; it always will be. That is why we will support Line 5 and the tens of thousands of jobs this pipeline sup-

ports in Sarnia and the tens of thousands more it supports in Alberta.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to say whether I am surprised or disappointed, the short answer would be no. I am not surprised that the Conservatives would move a motion of concurrence on a particular report. They have demonstrated in the recent months that they have really lost focus on the pandemic. I am trying to be nice in my criticism here, but I do believe at times that I need to be bold and to say what I believe the Conservatives are actually doing, which is not focusing at all or giving the attention that should be there from the official opposition in dealing with what is a very important issue to all Canadians.

The Conservatives continue to want to play partisan politics, and that is why I am not surprised, because they have been doing this for a while now. I am disappointed. I am disappointed again, and ongoing, because as the Conservatives insist on playing games on the floor of the House of Commons, they are filibustering whenever they can in an attempt to encourage a dysfunctional House of Commons and discourage important legislation from being debated so they can ultimately say that the government cannot even get its legislation through. If we look at the behaviour of the Conservative Party, it does not take a genius in a group of 12 to cause a lot of frustration on the floor of the House of Commons, and we get the official opposition choosing to do that.

Today is an excellent example. Earlier today, I was on a Zoom call with the Prime Minister, my Manitoba colleagues and a hundred nurses in the province of Manitoba. We were listening to what nurses in Manitoba had to say. That is the priority, and has been the priority, of this government from day one. I contrast that to what we have witnessed day in and day out over the last number of months coming from the Conservative Party of Canada. They should be ashamed of themselves.

The member for Chilliwack—Hope tries to give the impression that I do not care about Line 5 or the jobs and the other indirect and direct things related to Line 5 and that is why I do not support having us debate this motion we are debating today, the concurrence on the report. That is balderdash. It is just not true. Like all Liberals in the House of Commons, I am very much concerned about Line 5 and the impact it is having, not only on Canada, but also on the U.S. We understand and appreciate the importance of the issue. The Minister of Natural Resources, whether in question period or other debates, including the emergency debate, has been very clear on the issue.

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The Conservative Party, surely to goodness, would recognize that we just had an emergency debate on the issue, just last Thursday. Members should listen and read in terms of what was actually said then. It started off with Conservatives just bashing Ottawa and saying how bad we are in regard to Alberta, to try to perpetuate more misinformation, as if this Prime Minister and this government do not care about the province of Alberta. Members can look and see what kind of ideas came from the Conservative Party in the emergency debate. There was not one Liberal who said “no” to having an emergency debate.

• (1610)

I had a chance to speak during that debate, and I am going to share some of the comments I made on Thursday night, but even with the emergency debate that took place, the Conservatives came up with this concurrence motion on a report that has absolutely nothing to do with Line 5 or a relationship between Canada and the U.S. For those who are listening or participating, or who care about what is taking place in the House, that is not the real motivation here. The Conservatives can say whatever they want and try to come across as meaningful as they want, but at the end of the day, it has more to do with frustrating the government's legislative agenda, the things we want to accomplish in the House of Commons.

They continue to push, saying that the House of Commons is dysfunctional. The Conservatives try to do two things. The first is character assassinations, and I understand I was one of them earlier today in an S.O. 31. The second is the ongoing filibustering taking place in the House of Commons so that important legislation cannot get through.

We should look at some of the debates and frustrations that have been sensed on the floor of the House of Commons because of the irresponsible official opposition. Those who might be sympathetic to their terrible behaviour should look at Bill C-3, as an example, and the hours and hours of debate on the education and training of judges in the future on sexual assault and so forth. It was a Conservative bill. It passed everything and is coming back. We introduced it as a government bill so we could put it in place. Everyone agreed to it, even in the Senate. It got royal assent very recently. The Conservatives debated that for hours and hours on the floor of the House of Commons. Was that really necessary? No.

What about Bill C-14? The economic statement was released in November, and the legislation was brought forward in December. No matter when we called it up, the Conservatives attempted to filibuster that through concurrence motions, too. In that legislation, there were important things to subsidize and support Canadians, individuals, families and small businesses. One would think the Conservative Party would have cared, but it had no problem filibustering that one, too.

We just had to bring in time allocation on Bill C-19. It is a minority government. We have to ensure, as much as possible, that Elections Canada is best prepared, enabling it to do a little more on a temporary basis. However, the political spinners within the Conservative Party do not want to go that way. They say they want to remain focused. Being focused to them is to push for a dysfunctional chamber and character assassination. That is what they are all about. It is—

• (1615)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Abbotsford has a point of order.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I want to speak to relevance. The member has been going off on a tangent that is nowhere near the concurrence report we are debating. He is talking about Bill C-3, Bill C-14, Bill C-19, all except the matter before the House right now. This is a concurrence report. We are supposed to be debating about Line 5. This is important.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the hon. member raising the point of order. I would remind the hon. member that whenever there is a debate in the House, there is some latitude, but hon. members have to keep the relevance to that debate in their speeches. I am sure the hon. member will come back to that if he has been wavering from that debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, of course, these are just my preliminary remarks to try to explain the behaviour. If I were a Conservative MP, I would be embarrassed, too, and would want to get right to the motion on Line 5.

We debated Line 5 extensively in an emergency debate. If the member had listened to his colleague who introduced this report, he would have heard his colleague also make reference to the trade agreement. I fully understand the embarrassment of the Conservatives when the truth of the reality, in terms of their destructive force, is being pointed out. Maybe they disagree with the House leadership of the Conservative caucus, and I would encourage them to have that discussion.

However, when it comes to Line 5, let me provide some specific quotes. This is how the minister has responded. The Conservative Party of Canada is saying that the government is not doing anything on Line 5 and that it does not appreciate the importance of Line 5. Nothing could be further from the truth. From day one, the government has been following the issue and, more importantly, taking action on the issue.

On the day the emergency debate was introduced, a question was put to the minister. I specifically quoted it during the emergency debate. Let me quote the answer that the Minister of Natural Resources gave last Thursday:

Mr. Speaker, people will not be left out in the cold. The heating of Canadian homes or the flying of Canadian jets or the operation of Canadian refineries are non-negotiable.

Line 5 is not just vital to Canada, it is also vital to the United States. Therefore, it is vital to all of North America. Shutting it down would have profound consequences. There are 5,000 direct jobs in Sarnia, 23,000 indirect jobs in the region, thousands of jobs at refineries in Montreal and Lévis, but also in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan, and that is the case we are making. Line 5 is essential for North American energy security.

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The minister has provided answers on many different occasions, all providing assurances that the government understands the importance of it. The other day, when I was talking about the issue of longevity, at one time I pointed out that it was oil tankers that actually shipped the oil products, and then it went to pipelines. Ever since then, and I believe it was in the 1950s, it has been delivered through the pipeline. I believe it has met the expectations of people on both sides of the border.

I understand the economics of it. It is not just about the gasoline that is being shipped, or the final product. It is about all forms of commodities, including gasoline, propane, clothes and all sorts of things. Is there any wonder why the Government of Canada is seized with the issue?

We saw the Conservatives throughout that emergency debate and during question period. I do not believe there is going to be anything that comes out of today other than the Conservatives saying, “We did some more filibustering during Government Business.” We will not see anything further come out of this than what we heard last Thursday night. The Conservatives will continue to say that the government is not doing enough and that it should be talking to so and so.

Let me give another quote from the Minister of Natural Resources that I quoted last Thursday night. This is in response to my Conservative friends who continue to try to spread misinformation to Canadians and try to give a false impression that the Government of Canada is not active on this file.

• (1620)

During the emergency debate last Thursday night, he said:

We have been clear from the start. We would leave no stone unturned in defending Canada's energy security. We have been looking at all of our options. We are working at the political level. We are working at the diplomatic level. We are working at the legal level. It is a full-court press.

We raised Line 5 directly with the President of the United States and members of his cabinet during the virtual Canada-U.S. summit in February. The Prime Minister also raised the critical importance of North American energy security in conversation with Vice President Harris.

I raised the issue with U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm in our very first call. I was frank and unequivocal in expressing how significant this issue was for Canada. The Minister of Transport raised Line 5 with his counterpart, Transport Secretary Buttigieg, whose department oversees the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, the U.S. federal regulator for pipelines, which has consistently stated that Line 5 is safe. The Minister of Foreign Affairs raised this issue with his counterpart, Secretary of State Blinken. Ambassador Hillman has been making the case directly to Governor Whitmer. Meanwhile, in Detroit and in Lansing, Consul General Joe Comartin has been making the case to state lawmakers and members of the Whitmer administration.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Governor Whitmer, Consul General Joe Comartin in Detroit, the team at the Canadian embassy in Washington and all of our diplomats who have been engaging on this issue in Washington, Detroit and Lansing who defend Canada's interests there every day.

It begs the question: What is the Conservative Party talking about? Do the Conservatives just believe they can click their heels and voila, or they can pull something out of a hat and the issue is resolved overnight? Do they believe that three days from now there will not be any gas coming through the pipeline? That is the impression they are trying to give when they portray this issue.

It is a very serious issue, and I do not want to do anything to marginalize the importance of it. However, I will criticize the Con-

servative Party for its attitude and its ongoing desire to give misinformation on what is such an important issue. Some provinces that are likely more affected than other provinces include Alberta, Ontario and Quebec. However, this affects all of us in Canada, if not directly then indirectly.

As the minister, the Prime Minister and the government as a whole have recognized the importance of this issue, there have been many discussions taking place. I wonder if the Conservatives' national caucus can share with the House specifically what it has done. Better yet, why do the Conservatives not provide a real, tangible idea, as opposed to being concentrated on trying to promote western alienation or giving misinformation to people of Ontario and outside of that area?

• (1625)

The Government of Canada understands the issue. We continue to have dialogue on all fronts at the political and diplomatic levels and are using many other mechanisms to make Canada's case as strong as it is. We all know that is the case.

We all know that the emergency debate would have sufficed, and that the real reason the Conservative Party is bringing the report forward on a concurrence motion has nothing to do with the report. It has everything to do with wanting to be a destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary wanted to know what the Conservatives have done. I have done an email and letter-writing campaign to Governor Whitmer with all the stakeholders; brought petitions to the House; and participated in the lobby. However, despite all the government's words about how it will do everything politically, legally and diplomatically possible, here is the crux of the matter: Within less than 24 hours, the legal brief of support for the court case on Line 5 will be due. Enbridge has requested that the government do the amicus curiae brief. The Canada-U.S. committee unanimously said that the government should do the brief.

The government has waited until the eleventh hour. Where is the brief of support for Line 5?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the government, its ministries, the diplomats and our professional civil servants all know what their responsibility is. They understand the importance of this issue to Canadians and North America, and will, in fact, ultimately be prepared to defend Canada's interests, as they have been doing for the last number of months and beyond.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was appalled when my hon. colleague said during his speech that the Conservatives are blocking the work of the House. The Liberals are the ones who walked away and shut Parliament down. It is unbelievable. The Liberals shut Parliament down, yet they dare to accuse others of blocking the work of the House. That takes a lot of nerve.

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The Liberals shut the House down for a month and a half under the pretext of preparing a new throne speech, when they could have shut it down for only 24 hours. We all know that they did it to try to cover up scandals. My family is all too familiar with hairnets, so my question for my hon. colleague is this: would he not agree that there is not a hair's breadth between the Liberals and the Conservatives?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is true that the government prorogued and we lost two days, but for the first time in 30-plus years, the House of Commons sat during the summer, albeit as a committee. However, for all intents and purposes it was like question period, and literally hundreds if not thousands of questions were asked. This provided opposition parties a great opportunity to hold the government accountable on a wide variety of issues.

I make no apologies in this area, as we provided more transparency and accountability than the previous administration. The member can take a look at the number of questions that were put forward. I would have loved, as an opposition member, a five-minute time slot to ask three-second or three-minute questions or to give a five-minute speech. We did that last summer.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, in his speech, the hon. member talked about the 23,000 indirect jobs in the region that are impacted by the loss of Line 5. Those are jobs in my region. Those are jobs in the regions of many of my colleagues. He said that no stone would be unturned, yet as the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton said, we are in the final moments, in the final stretch. People are desperately worried about feeding their children and paying for rent and mortgages. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that they are taken care of.

What is the government's plan to ensure that these workers will have jobs or some security if Line 5 is lost?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member raises the importance of this from a human side. It does not matter whether people are directly employed or indirectly employed, there will be a tremendous human cost if Line 5 is not allowed to continue. I choose to believe it will continue and that we have the necessary people in the background. Line 5 has a history of being there for many decades and providing. I am very much concerned, as I know the government is, about the human cost, but I am confident that Line 5 will continue into the future.

• (1635)

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask a question of my hon. colleague about how focused our government has been on the issue of Line 5, because it is close to London and there are jobs at stake.

Like my hon. colleague, I was listening to the emergency debate on Thursday and I was very happy to hear our Minister of Natural Resources underscore very passionately how much we are seized with this issue. He has spoken to me about it over the last couple of months, and I know he has done so much work.

Would my hon. colleague not agree that the Conservatives are taking advantage of this? Instead of agreeing to a team Canada approach, they are using this as an opportunity to try to make it seem

as if the government is ignoring the issue when we are doing quite the opposite.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member has been a very strong and convincing advocate for her community for years now. I respect the question she poses because she understands how critically important Line 5 is to her community and beyond it.

She is right that we should listen to what the minister has been saying. We can read about this for ourselves from last Thursday's emergency debate. We can hear it through the answers that are being provided. Members can rest assured that whether they are politicians in Ottawa and Washington or diplomats, there are a lot of people at play here to ensure that Line 5 continues to serve Canadians and, I would suggest, Americans too.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, a lot of speakers have outlined the importance of this pipeline to our economy. Enbridge has proven itself to be grossly incompetent in a number of areas, and Michigan's governor has serious reasons to be concerned. In a 15-year period, Enbridge has had more than a thousand spills, with 7.4 million gallons of oil spilled into the environment, including the 843,000 gallons that were dumped into the Kalamazoo River. People have a reason to be concerned.

Should we not be holding this company to more account when our economy is so dependent on this one pipeline?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would like to address this in two ways.

One, there is the accountability of Enbridge itself. There is no doubt that, whether it is on this side or the U.S. side of the border, there is an obligation for governments to work with private companies at times. This could be a very good example of that.

Then there is the other very important issue and the reason we are debating this motion today: Line 5 itself. We should not be playing any games with Line 5 given its importance to North America. I encourage our American counterparts to set their targets on Enbridge if the case suggested by my colleague from the Green Party is true.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to join in on this debate. What we just heard was basically a 20-minute, anti-Conservative diatribe from the member for Winnipeg North. What would he bring forward for concrete answers? We heard today in question period from the Minister of Natural Resources that the Liberals are going to wait. They have a plan and they are going to be there at the last second to jump in. Maybe the Prime Minister will don his Superman cape and try to save Line 5.

Why have they not been working hard on this for the past year instead of the past two days?

• (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would put it this way: Why would the Conservatives not bring forward an opposition day in which they could highlight a few examples of what the Government of Canada could be doing? Ultimately, that resolution would have been voted on. They could have played a more proactive, constructive role on the issue, as opposed to continuing to play a disruptive role on the floor of the House of Commons by filibustering the government on important legislation and important agenda issues.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. 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 Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, National Defence; the hon. member for Fredericton, Health; the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am participating in today's debate as the Bloc Québécois's representative on the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States, where I am one of the vice-chairs.

Just a few weeks ago, the committee spent a few meetings studying concerns about Line 5 and the potential impact if it were to close. I would venture to say that unanimity ruled. Every single one of the witnesses said the same thing: closure would be catastrophic. However, none of the witnesses were able to put any figures on anything related to jobs at risk in Quebec.

I asked every witness the same question. Have any studies shown that we have reason to fear? None of them had any such studies handy, nor could any of them clarify anything about Michigan's claims. The witnesses' verdict was clear: The governor of the U.S. state was simply wrong. Nobody even suggested or raised the merest hint of even the slightest possibility that everything was perhaps not entirely unfounded.

I want to inform the House that the Bloc Québécois is well aware that a shutdown of Line 5 would have consequences for jobs in Quebec. There is a chance that Line 5, an Enbridge pipeline that supplies a good number of the refineries in Quebec, could be shut down, which raises legitimate concerns that require informed responses.

I want to stress that our position may sound ideological, but it is not. We recognize that Line 5 is not as bad as tanker trucks, for example, which come with their own dangers. We recognize that it is not as bad as shipping oil by rail, and we experienced the hazards of this mode of transportation with the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic, caused by deregulation in the sector by successive federal governments.

I remind members that in 2013, a train filled with oil exploded in the middle of a small town called Lac-Mégantic, killing 47 people and destroying some 40 buildings in a massive fire. Inadequate regulation of the transportation of oil by rail is part and parcel of

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Canada's economic vision. Ottawa has cut the number of inspectors for rail cars and the railways themselves.

This issue speaks to my constituents because a few years ago, members of an activist group in my riding known as Convoi citoyen, ventured onto the tracks not far from the Saint-Hyacinthe station and took several photos of uncovered wires and tracks that were sitting on wet earth instead of cement. We are not stupid. We know that Line 5 is better and less dangerous than rail transportation.

It is also clear that Line 5 is better than using tanker ships to transport oil. Quebec, and specifically the St. Lawrence, has become a key part of the geopolitics of Canadian oil. Quebec unfortunately has no jurisdiction over the waterways, seaways, railways or airways that cross our territory, other than the ones that exist exclusively in Quebec. Canada is entitled to act as it sees fit, in spite of protests from local communities.

In 2014, the riverside municipalities of Sorel-Tracy and L'Isle-aux-Coudres complained about the fact that the width of the super-tankers had increased from 32 to 44 metres, but the municipalities that received them had not been consulted, nor had the emergency plans been adapted. We know that just 5% to 20% of oil spilled in the river can be recovered.

The case of Lac Saint-Pierre, designated an UNESCO world biosphere reserve in 2000, is striking. Pressure to ban the transportation of bitumen on that part of the river has been totally ineffective despite the publication of a study showing that an oil spill would traverse the entire lake in just eight hours.

Again, we are no fools. If we look a little more closely—on paper, to be sure—line 5 is a lesser evil in comparison to trucks, trains and ships.

Unfortunately, we would have liked to hear a more critical point of view on pipelines. The witnesses at committee were unanimous, as were our colleagues. All the federal parties kept referring to “team Canada”. Today I am talking on behalf of “team Quebec”.

• (1645)

The Bloc Québécois is focused on the 21st century economy, or the energy transition.

We applauded the U.S. President's intention to revoke the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline, whose only objective is to create new markets for oil from the oil sands.

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Citizens are sharing their concerns with us about the environmental safety of pipelines, particularly with regard to waterways, but also about the potential economic impact of shutting down those pipelines. We are not stupid. We want to keep jobs but not at any price, because we do not want to put our waterways at risk. We also understand the concerns many people have about the gas prices at the pump because the cost of energy and transportation is taking a toll on the wallets of Quebec families, who are already struggling because of everything that has been going on this past year.

It is important to make the distinction between the Keystone XL pipeline and Enbridge Line 5. While Keystone XL seeks to further develop the oil sands, Line 5 was built in 1953 and essentially carries light crude oil and natural gas liquids to refineries in Quebec. It passes through the United States, mainly the much-talked-about State of Michigan.

Line 5 was approved under U.S. State Department regulations and not by presidential permit as was Keystone XL. Line 5 is protected by the 1977 Agreement between the Government Of Canada and the Government of the United States Of America Concerning Transit Pipelines. Therefore, there are still legal avenues to be explored.

We should also ask ourselves whether the repercussions of a potential shutdown would be as catastrophic as we are hearing for the price of gas at the pumps for Quebecers. We know that Quebec refineries also have other possible market supply sources and that the shutdown would be problematic primarily for Ontario. We are aware of that.

However, we should remember that Newfoundland and Labrador is Canada's third-largest producer. If Enbridge's Line 5 is shut down, it would still be possible to consider Canadian supply from that region. For example, if people wanted a nearby source, one inside Canada's border, Newfoundland and Labrador could be a source of supply.

Let us move on to environmental safety. As I mentioned earlier, during our study, each and every witness we heard told us that the State of Michigan was way off base every step of the way. No one was willing to consider that the concerns were legitimate, and yet, we know there was a leak in 2010 that resulted in an oil spill in the Kalamazoo River, in southern Michigan. It seems to me that we can also understand that Michigan is worried about the risk pipelines pose to waterways. At the time, the people from Enbridge said not to worry, that they would really strengthen their safety measures. That is fine. In that case, the burden of proof lies with them to show that real measures were taken.

I think everyone agrees that every accident is one too many, and each is a collective failure to protect ecosystems. Because Line 5 has had leaks, perhaps the idea of retrofitting it should not be excluded. Perhaps the status quo is untenable. Unfortunately, we are not hearing anyone in this place speak about this possibility.

We must now come at the oil issue another way because Canada, as we know, has the third-biggest oil reserve in the world. According to official statistics, it has 172 billion barrels of extractable oil, of which 166 billion are in the Alberta oil sands. Canada is ranked fourth in global production and fourth in global oil exports.

• (1650)

I certainly recognize that, when we talk about transition, it does not mean that we should celebrate and hope to wake up tomorrow morning with no more oil. It is not that simple. That is the very definition of transition. However, we need to have a plan.

Let us agree, however, as scientists do, that 80% of oil must stay in the ground if we want to take an environmentally responsible approach. Furthermore, 96% of Canada's oil comes from the oil sands, which means that only a very small amount does not come from that source. Oil from the oil sands is among the most polluting in the world. The Natural Resources Canada website touts the technological advances that are leading to less greenhouse gases per barrel. That is also the argument put forward by the Montreal Economic Institute.

It is true that the oil industry has been rapidly evolving. Just 50 years ago, offshore drilling was done by humans. Today, robots are doing the job. Nevertheless, from an environmental standpoint, between 1990 and 2018, greenhouse gas emissions from tar sands development have increased by 456%.

Exclusive dependence on this one source of energy is also a major economic problem. Historically, this phenomenon has been referred to as Dutch disease, which is the structural dismantling of the manufacturing sector and possible ensuing deindustrialization resulting from a strong commodities export sector. The development of natural resources is therefore closely related to the decline in the manufacturing industry of the country in question. Does that remind my colleagues of anything? It makes me think about the loss of over 100,000 jobs related to the increase in the Canadian dollar as a result of the increase in oil exports.

The term "Dutch disease" was coined in the 1960s when the Netherlands had a major increase in revenue following the discovery of natural gas deposits. The country's currency appreciated, which made the export of non-gas products less competitive. Dutch disease serves as a necessary reminder that a country must not depend solely on its commodities sector.

Canada's economic development centres on the extraction of raw materials. That is a paradigm that has existed since the beginning of the Canadian experience, when the Canadian colony specialized in bulk commodities, agricultural products and extractable materials for export. These products do not require a lot of processing and their market is mainly centred around international trade.

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Canada's history has been shaped by the search for products that already have a market, by the state, and by capital to extract those products. Basically, it was the easy way to pay Canadian workers and import the goods consumers needed. Canada's economic growth was therefore closely linked to demand in the industrialized countries with which it did business.

Political life in Canada has been heavily influenced by our reliance on exports because political power and wealth are concentrated in the hands of the elite who, historically, combined the two. Geographical realities also explain all this, of course. The state has had to supply capital that the business world did not have the means to provide.

However, focusing on exporting raw materials has a significant influence on public policy. To keep the country competitive, politicians have had to provide infrastructure and adjust their environmental and health regulations.

Exploiting these resources did not require particularly sophisticated technological expertise if they were not being processed in any significant way, though. Essentially, Canada was just an out-post used to supply raw materials for use in processing industries in ways that supported the economic development of the industrialized nations and Canadian companies involved.

The expectation was that the supply of resources dedicated to supporting these exports would continue expanding forever. It was an infinite growth model. The railway, which is what led to the creation of Canada in the first place, had to be paid for by transporting resources, and that helped stall the exploration of new technological opportunities. Ultimately, the system ended up reinforcing our reliance on unprocessed materials. It was a vicious cycle. Increased reliance on raw material exports created a need for greater investment in transportation infrastructure, and that meant less money available for other economic sectors.

• (1655)

This system underpinned colonial history, but the Canadian economy has diversified and become more complex since then. It cannot be summed up as Quebec's forests, Saskatchewan's farms, Ontario's mines or Alberta's oil, of course. Markets have changed, new opportunities have been found, and people have flocked to the cities. However, it is clear that Canada is staying true to that spirit by consistently opting to specialize in natural resources in order to compete worldwide.

Western Canada has focused all its efforts on oil extraction, neglecting the necessary diversification of its economy. To get back to Dutch disease, the consequences could be even greater if the oil sector also goes through some difficulties, like the depletion of its reserves or fluctuations in the price per barrel.

The impact on Canada's economic future is considerable. We are paying for it today with the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the oil crisis, the price of the unwavering support that Ottawa, the banks and the pension funds provide to the oil sector. Pension funds like the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec have increased their investments in the sector. Canadians' and Quebecers' pensions have therefore been jeopardized by being dependent on oil fluctuations. However, oil investments by foreign companies have declined

steadily over the last four years, meaning there are very few royalties to be had.

Shale oil, for example, is a very bad development opportunity, and yet Canada cannot seem to escape it. One of Canada's biggest disappointments is that in the global marketplace, in the midst of this great geopolitical struggle, Canada is ultimately a minor player with basically no influence. It is easy to see the problems that could arise from stubbornly putting all the eggs in one basket, especially when that basket refers to a deregulated and fluctuating energy sector.

It is really tough to get out of oil, though. When the price is high, investments pour in. The renewable energy sector is looking to grow, but the money is just not going there because investments continue to pour in for oil. Conversely, when the price is low, investments will be minimal, almost non-existent, but consumers, whether individuals or companies, will rush to the pump, so there is no money left for renewable energy. I could say it is a lose-lose situation for anyone thinking about a real transition. This is where political will is needed. It is imperative and urgent that we make the transition. Crises come with serious repercussions, but they can also bring great opportunity.

The energy transition that many have been calling for and talking about for quite some time needs to begin with decisive action. We must put an end to Canada's oil dependency. In the meantime, demanding a safe supply of oil can no longer be a luxury. In other words, Line 5 is the lesser evil compared to other modes of transportation that are more dangerous. However, we must not depend on it. We also need to look very closely at the real environmental considerations that can be linked to safety and that are entirely legitimate. They must not be dismissed out of hand, as Canada's federal politicians seem to be doing.

• (1700)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to hear what my colleague from the Bloc Québécois thinks about what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said. He said that my party is taking time away from the House, when his party or the government wants to continue having a House that sits as little as possible, since it prorogued Parliament.

Does he think that the government is making an effort and working with the other parties in Parliament as part of a true team Canada approach, not just in words, as they are doing, but in actions?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

This is a case of the pot calling the kettle black. To hear the Liberal government accuse the opposition parties of stalling when it prorogued Parliament is laughable. On that I completely agree with my colleague, although we do not share the same fundamental positions on this issue. Nonetheless, we live in a democracy and that is just part of it.

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I would say that we must not engage in such childish games. They are not productive.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot for his speech.

Unfortunately, I will be speaking in English because these are technical issues.

[*English*]

I may be the only member of Parliament who read the entire report of the United States transport safety inquiry into the Kalamazoo spill of 2010 in which it detailed gross negligence. Yes, modern pipeline companies have all sorts of alarms, bells and whistles, which we keep hearing about, that will alert control room staff when there is any possibility of a leak. One alarm from that spill rang for five full minutes, while Enbridge employees went around the control room shutting off the noise. The next shift came in and it was not warned there had been signs of a leak. That is when they pumped over 800,000 gallons of bitumen and diluent into the Kalamazoo River, which could never be cleaned up.

I wonder if my colleague has any further points to add on how this reputation of negligence has undermined Canada's case.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, apparently that incident has not changed Canada's official position. Still today, we see that Michigan has concerns. It was traumatized by this event, there are no two ways about it. All we are doing is unambiguously dismissing the fears expressed by Michigan.

Again, it is highly likely that these fears are not entirely justified, but they are legitimate and deserve some consideration, some thought and some close attention. That is my response to my hon. colleague.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate and thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for his excellent speech. He raised some great points and shared several interesting perspectives, including the idea of rethinking our dependence on fossil fuels.

I want to point out that an increasing number of studies have confirmed that places with regulations for zero-emission vehicles see a significant increase in sales of these types of vehicles. Meanwhile, places that do not have regulations or programs to promote buying zero-emission vehicles, which includes the majority of Canadian provinces, are seeing a resurgence in purchases of larger, higher-emitting vehicles, thanks to the billions spent on advertising by auto manufacturers.

Could my colleague share his thoughts on this?

• (1705)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, of course we want zero-emission legislation to be passed that would force automakers to sell a larger proportion of electric vehicles. I am talking about automakers and not dealers, which is a very important distinction to make.

It is the right thing to do. Quebec implemented this kind of legislation a few years ago, and California has had such a law for a very long time. Such legislation should be passed here too.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech.

At its last convention, the Conservative Party put in place a national commission on energy security, with a component on energy transportation of all kinds. What does my colleague think of that initiative?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is unfortunate that the delegates rejected a proposal recognizing climate change at this same convention. The idea of establishing commissions to study all these issues is a good one, even though scientists have already examined the energy issue many times and from many perspectives.

That said, I salute the interest of all political parties in the energy issue, which is crucial and probably the geopolitical issue of the 21st century.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, last year, we saw what happened with rail blockades. There was a shortage of propane in Quebec because of it. If this pipeline is shut down, there is an obvious risk of that happening, once again, where there will be a massive shortage.

If this pipeline shuts down, what is going to happen in the short term and medium term to the supplies and critical needs of people in Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I asked almost all the witnesses and experts we heard from during this study about the impact on Quebec.

Unfortunately, no one seemed to have studied or researched the issue. Obviously, there could be shortages, even though we know that there are sources of supply.

In the short term, as we wait for the energy transition, the Bloc Québécois hopes that the line will remain open, but not just under any condition. We must ensure that the line is safe. If it is not, we must ensure that the necessary upgrades are made. The right to safety is not a luxury.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

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I am pleased to respond to this report. It is important to recognize the good work done on it, but there is no doubt we are here not by accident but by design. The design has been to ignore the environment, to ignore the concerns of the people of the state of Michigan, to ignore the realities of aging infrastructure and to not be up front about the true cost of it in our economic business model.

I represent Windsor West. I was a member of council starting in 1997, representing the Detroit River, and have been a member federally since 2002. I can say that our relationship with the United States is one that is always complex and always involved. What is clear is that it is moving faster—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière on a point of order.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Madam Speaker, could you please ask my colleague to turn down his microphone? There is no interpretation.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There seems to be an issue with the hon. member's microphone, if he could lower his boom a bit more.

The hon. member for Windsor West can continue.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I will repeat that we are here for a reason. It is by design. It is designed for us not to take our aging infrastructure, in the oil and gas industry in particular, for granted while we focus on the new economy and sustainable energy.

As the vice-chair of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary association, and as the NDP critic for industry and the Great Lakes, I have seen that the United States has decided to move farther than Canada has on the environment. Often through the Democratic movement, but even under the Republicans, the U.S. has certainly had more strenuous environmental practices than our side has had over here.

We are faced now with a crisis that has come about over the last number of months not by accident, but by ignoring what has been taking place. We have not even learned anything during this process. Regarding Line 5 and its connection to the Great Lakes, Governor Whitmer has been clear on this for a long time, as she has on her concern about the Great Lakes and the environmental effects. There is no doubt that Enbridge, with its previous indiscretion at Kalamazoo, has broken trust in many respects. It was not just that one incident. There were many other places.

The pinnacle of the debate happening at the moment is that the budget that was just tabled and discussed did not even include the words "Great Lakes". The United States are putting billions of dollars into protecting the Great Lakes, with a governor expressing concerns about a refurbished pipeline. The pipeline is something we believe is important and needs to be refurbished because of our connection to it and our dependency on it, as well as because of our lack of a commitment to develop alternatives to it. However, the government did not even mention the Great Lakes in the budget once. How is that possible, when members of Congress and the Senate have specifically written to the government asking about putting money together to work on the Great Lakes' environmental sustainability? The U.S. is putting billions of dollars into it.

The International Joint Commission of the Great Lakes binational treaty is one of the best in the world. It deals with water and the environment. It needs stronger legislation to allow it to do even better work. It is a part of the international agreements that we have and is something to be proud of, regarding our sharing some of the most important freshwater in the world, yet there is no mention of it in the budget. No one cared enough to throw a bone, so to speak, to the Governor of Michigan or to the other environmental concerns being expressed here. With all those billions of dollars being spent, there was no specific commitment to, or even a mention of, the Great Lakes.

Given that I am on the front lines of the Detroit River here, I can tell colleagues that there is incredible interest and opportunity to improve the environment, the ecosystem and energy alternatives. Detroit, Michigan, has spent over \$10 billion on electric vehicles, other types of energy efficiencies and a new age of automotive production. Meanwhile, throughout Canada over the last four or five years, we have seen a paltry \$6 billion spent not on greenfield sites, but on the refurbishment of plants. These refurbishments have come about because of collective bargaining opportunities from Unifor. We can thank Jerry Dias and the rest of the bargaining committee for opening the door for those types of investments. At the same time, in Detroit, Ohio and Indiana they have been receiving billions of dollars for their electrification and manufacturing industries.

The Prime Minister famously said in London, Ontario, that we had to transition out of manufacturing. We did that, and have seen how that served us through COVID in vaccine production, innovation and a response for alternatives. We are behind, and we are behind for a reason. We have decided to basically skate for many, many years. I have seen this in the House of Commons. In terms of signed agreements, whether the Kyoto agreement or others, Canada continually misses its targets. However, right in our lap, across the lake, a series of environmental movements are taking place for the citizens of Michigan. All we had to do was to engage our councils and trade offices. We have the connections and the people on the ground here who understand what is taking place. They understand that the governor and the commitment to shut down Line 5 have been front and centre, in many respects, for a long time. What did we do in response? We are just going to try to lobby what we can. We did not even offer something back in return.

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• (1710)

We are now going to have to rely upon using tactics like invoking an international treaty on pipelines versus being a co-operative partner to improve the environment we share. We always talk about offsets. Why would the government not, at the very least, do an offset for the state of Michigan to show some support for, and the importance of, the Great Lakes system that we share, whether it be its fisheries or ecosystems? I am still fighting for a national urban park on a piece of property the Windsor port owns. The port is staffed by the citizens of our country. It wants millions of taxpayer dollars or it is going to bulldoze it.

I had an event in Windsor before COVID on building a national urban park. Members of the Michigan Department of Environment came in full regalia to be part of it. Representatives of the federal department came to a public meeting in the city of Windsor. They crossed the border because our ecosystems are tied together: the wildlife, the fish, the fauna and 110 different endangered species. For eight years, I have been fighting for the protection of that property. For the last number of years, I have been fighting the federal government to transfer this piece of property to the Ministry of the Environment instead of it having bulldozed, and there has still been no commitment for that.

In all of this, we do not even throw a bone to Michigan's concerns. We do not give the State any recognition that its concerns are valid, and they are. Let us look at Kalamazoo. How can we have a serious debate about this issue but not look at the consequences of what took place in Kalamazoo and at least give a nod that this has some serious issues?

Having said that, the government is back on the particular position that we are going to have to rely upon an international agreement or some arm-twisting from Washington on the State of Michigan, with us offering it nothing. It is a terrible proposition. There is no offset from us. There is nothing other than us trying to put ourselves in a strong position because of international agreements and obligations. As opposed to this, we could have gotten in front of this with some improvements and suggestions. Who is going to pay for this at the end of the day, if Line 5 closes? It will be the working people: The people doing the heavy lifting and hard work that is necessary every day to run our economy as we try to transition. We should transition, but we still need Line 5 for farms, the auto sector, manufacturing, gas for our cars, airports and all of those things.

One of the first things I did when I came to Parliament was table a motion for a petroleum monitoring agency to ensure consumer accountability. It was something that was put in place once before, but was never funded. What is the backup plan right now to protect consumers from being hosed by the industry if there is speculation or a potential reduction of service products such as oil, gas, propane and so forth? There will be no protection for them because the Competition Bureau does not have the capability to provide it.

Individuals across Ontario, and in other places eventually as well, will be completely vulnerable to the oil and gas industry and some of the pricing issues we have seen in the past. They have had to be dragged front and centre, but it has taken a long time. It has been expensive for a lot of people, and we still do not even have the

basic supports or decency to provide reporting mechanisms that will protect consumers. We have no plan for that either.

Our plan going forward is not going to be anything significant or anything that will grant faith or some type of good gesture to the State of Michigan about this. That is what is backwards about this debate we have been having. It has been total neglect from the government. Let us look at infrastructure in the Windsor-Detroit region. I started working on a new border crossing and my first public meeting was in 1998. The Gordie Howe International Bridge is finally being built, but the infrastructure that supports this, and 38% of the Canadian economy, is about 100 years old. There is a tunnel for cars and trucks, a bridge and another tunnel for trains.

We are here for a reason. We have been on borrowed time, and if we do not do anything about it and address the issues from the State of Michigan, then all we can do is rely on arm-twisting. That is not being a good neighbour.

• (1715)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is on point about the realities of the economic and environmental perspectives of this particular project, but I cannot help but be slightly cynical to think that the reason we are having this discussion right now is because the Conservatives are adamant about not talking about Bill C-19.

Can the member comment on how important he thinks it would be to have a discussion about a piece of legislation that is required to be in place in the event there is an election during a pandemic?

• (1720)

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, we are here to speak about Line 5. Of course, preparation for an election and a debate about it is important, but where is the member and his government with regard to recognizing and providing some supports to Michigan.

I spent a lot of my time talking about it. Why are the Great Lakes not mentioned in the budget? How atrocious is that. How disrespectful is it to the state of Michigan and to the environmental movement there. Where are some of the extra supports against the political leverage taking place by respecting some of their concerns and partnering where they have asked for that?

Why has the government not even responded to the senators and Congress. They have asked the Canadian government for support, to at least put in our percentage of rehabilitation of the Great Lakes. This is a missed opportunity. We still do not see the government doing that. The government could do it tomorrow. It could come forward and say it made mistake by leaving the Great Lakes out of some of its economic formula. Maybe that would alleviate some of the tension.

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Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, first, I want to tell the member very clearly that I agree with him 100% that what has happened here is total neglect of the file by the government, which is why we are raising it in the House of Commons today, two days before the deadline is going to be imposed by the Governor of Michigan. She stated that publicly. I am straight on point with the hon. member.

I do want to ask about some of things he raised, including ignoring aging infrastructure. This is a pipeline company that has committed over \$600 million to build a tunnel under this very strait, yet it has been thwarted. It cannot even get a phone call returned from the Governor of Michigan about how to mitigate it. As well, all kinds of processes are being added into it to build that pipeline.

Is this really recognized? It seems to me that it is actually doing something to mitigate the environmental concerns of the state of Michigan, but they are getting no ears on the other side.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, quite simply, it is so late in the day. I have seen the program and what has been offered, and its abysmal record with Kalamazoo flies in the face of everything.

It should have been on bended knee to the State of Michigan about Kalamazoo, and it was not. All we have to do is talk to the NGOs of different organizations about the irreparable harm it did to the environment. It has zero credibility. It needed partners to actually bolster its credibility with guarantees that go beyond just the immediacy.

That is the problem. The pattern of behaviour has just been atrocious. It is no wonder we are in the situation we are right now.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, earlier today, I asked the hon. member for Winnipeg North about jobs, job losses and about the preparations the Liberals were making for people if Line 5 was lost. He said that, on faith, it would all work out.

Could the hon. member comment on that as well as on the NDP's plans in regard to a national manufacturing strategy and what that could do for southwestern Ontario and the jobs impacted by the loss of Line 5?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I worry, because right now we have the Province of Ontario finally negotiating with Michigan. That was after I had been asking for months for the federal government to step in and do similar programs as were done for COVID assistance for our travellers. The federal government is absent from that. It could have played a central role. We have seen Manitoba, North Dakota, Alberta and Montana. I asked the government a question in the House of Commons today and it was totally ignored. There was nothing near an answer to what I asked. I am concerned.

We do need a manufacturing strategy. We never should have abandoned manufacturing. It is a point of national security. It is a point of pride. With the innovation taking place, it is a missed opportunity.

I am a little worried right now because Ontario is negotiating with Michigan to get people vaccinated. Every vaccine we get over there means somebody over here gets a vaccine sooner. At the same

time, our federal government is doing this, and it will not even throw them a bone.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would really like to thank the member for Windsor West for sharing his time with me. He is such a strong voice for the people of southwestern Ontario and he knows the effects that shutting down Line 5 will have on the thousands of workers in that part of Canada. He knows how serious this is for the environment of the Great Lakes. He knows Michigan because it is just across the river from his home.

Today, we are talking about Enbridge Line 5 again, this time through a concurrence debate on a report from the Special Committee on the Economic Relationship between Canada and the United States. While almost everyone in the House is concerned about Michigan's threat to shut down the pipeline, and I am happy to talk about why the NDP is concerned about the Line 5 situation, we did just have an emergency debate on Line 5 only four days ago, on Thursday night. I will reiterate today a lot of the points I made on Thursday.

I will start by saying, again, that this is a very different debate to the ones around expansion pipelines such as Keystone XL and the Trans Mountain expansion. These pipelines are expansion projects designed solely to increase the amount of raw bitumen exported from Canada at a time when world demand has flatlined and the climate crisis requires that it decline steeply in the future. Even the Canada Energy Regulator, the former National Energy Board, has reported that Keystone XL and the Trans Mountain expansion are not needed and that the Alberta oil sector will never be producing enough oil to need them.

Line 5 is a different story. This is a debate about the impending closure of a pipeline that brings western Canadian oil to eastern Canada, creating Canadian jobs. This is about maintaining the status quo and maintaining those jobs in the industrial heartland of Canada. The one similarity between this and the other pipeline debates is that at the heart of it, there is credible environmental concern.

Line 5 is an Enbridge pipeline that transports crude oil and natural gas liquids from Alberta through Michigan to refineries and other facilities in Ontario and Quebec. It is capable of carrying 540,000 barrels of oil per day. A similar pipeline, a sort of sister pipeline in the Enbridge system, Line 6B, also serves these markets with 667,000 barrels of oil per day.

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Line 5 was built 68 years ago, and the Michigan section operates under an easement granted by that state. In November, the Governor of Michigan announced that she was revoking the easement for the pipeline through Michigan effective May 12, this Wednesday, two days from now. The governor cited permit violations and environmental concerns, especially regarding the section that travels through the Straits of Mackinac between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. For its part, Enbridge has proposed to enclose the underwater section in a tunnel to protect it from future accidents and has obtained some of the permits necessary to carry out that work.

What will the impact be if the pipeline is shut down? About 4,900 jobs in Sarnia directly rely on the supply of crude oil that Line 5 now supplies. One of the products those plants in Sarnia produces is jet fuel that supplies large airports such as Toronto Pearson Airport. The oil not diverted in Sarnia is carried onto refineries in Quebec. Therefore, the impact could be huge.

There is some debate on how alternate supplies could mitigate these impacts. Pearson airport has stated in a recent article in the National Post that it is not too worried about a shutdown of Line 5 as it has diversified its sources of jet fuel. The Suncor refinery in Quebec said it made arrangements to get its crude oil from another pipeline. Industries in Sarnia may be able to get some crude oil from increased flow in Line 6B, since it managed that way when Line 6B was ruptured in 2010. Then it got alternate supplies through Line 5.

It is clear that the petrochemical sector in Sarnia could be facing significant shortages that would have to be made up through transport by rail and truck. That is not an ideal situation and one that could result in direct loss of jobs in the Sarnia industrial complex and indirect job losses throughout the region. Therefore, we need to have a strategy to keep Line 5 going and protect those jobs. That strategy goes through convincing Michigan that it is in all our interests to keep Line 5 operating.

What are the environmental risks that Michigan is citing in its decision to cancel this easement? One of the largest inland oil spills in U.S. history happened with the other Enbridge pipeline in Michigan, Line 6B, which also goes to Sarnia via Michigan, but goes around the south end of Lake Michigan instead of crossing under the Straits of Mackinac.

• (1725)

In 2010, Line 6B ruptured and sent about 20,000 barrels of bitumen into the Kalamazoo River just east of Battle Creek, Michigan. The spill contaminated over 50 kilometres of the river, took five years to clean up, and admittedly it probably never will be fully cleaned up. Line 5 itself has suffered a number of leaks over the years. Therefore, the people of Michigan are very well aware of what could happen.

The minister has always said that this is a demonstrably safe pipeline. I think the people of Michigan would tend to disagree. They have pointed out numerous violations of the original easement agreement, including the design of the support systems and the pipeline at the bottom of the Straits of Mackinac. Recent assessments show that the underwater part of the pipeline is suffering from thinning walls and other stressors. A 2017 risk assessment

found that a leak of Line 5 in the straits would contaminate about 1,000 kilometres of shoreline of the Great Lakes.

We need to protect the Great Lakes ecosystem and the thousands of jobs in Ontario and Quebec. The federal government needs to have a plan that would do both.

The Governor of Michigan made an election promise to shut down Line 5, so it should be no surprise that she is doubling down on this threat. If we are to solve the problem through diplomatic means, and everyone agrees this would be best, we will have to prove to the State of Michigan and everyone else who cares about the environment that Line 5 will not have a history similar to Line 6B.

We must point out the economic impacts this closure would have on Michigan itself. Michigan and the neighbouring states of Ohio and Pennsylvania also receive some of the fuels carried through Line 5, including over half of Michigan's propane supplies. Enbridge is counting on the 1977 transit pipelines treaty if talks fail, and right now it does seem that both sides are very far apart. We may see this stuck in the courts for a long time.

This pipeline dispute is very different from the others we have debated in Canada over the past decade or more. It is an existing pipeline that supplies oil to Canadian industry and maintains good jobs. It is an integral part of the economies of Ontario and Quebec.

We will be using oil and gas over the next three decades, albeit in declining amounts, as we transition to zero emissions by 2050. We will be using crude oil as a feedstock in our manufacturing sectors for years to come. Line 5 is an important delivery mechanism for those purposes.

This dispute has been a wake-up call. The public, both in Canada and the United States, is increasingly unwilling to accept the environmental risks associated with pipelines and the climate impacts of burning fossil fuels.

We in the NDP, and I think everyone in the House, are concerned about workers in the oil and gas sector, whether they work in Alberta or the industrial cities of Ontario and Quebec. We need a plan, not just empty promises, to provide good jobs for these workers over the coming decades. We need programs that will allow these workers to move on to jobs in building retrofits, electrification, electric vehicle manufacture, renewable electricity, battery technology and the myriad of other sectors that will provide good employment for decades to come. We need government programs to provide those jobs to prove to workers we are serious about helping them.

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Getting this done will require strong public sector leadership that the Liberals and Conservatives have so far been unwilling to even discuss. While this transition takes place, we need to protect the thousands of jobs that Line 5 provides and we need to protect the ecosystem of the Great Lakes. The federal government must have a clear and effective plan to do both.

• (1730)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to ask a question of the hon. member. I listened intently to his speech and I would note one thing he said, which is that Line 5 is different because it sends western oil to eastern refineries to make fuel and help heat homes. However, he does not agree with building capacity or the expansion of pipelines in western Canada to export oil.

Does he not think those two could exist in the same reality? The more prosperous western Canada is the more clean and environmentally friendly oil we can produce to ship to our allies and export around the world with lower emissions. Canada has the most environmentally friendly oil in the world. I would like to have the member's comments on this. I enjoyed listening to his speech when he said that Line 5 was important, but is it not equally as important to create prosperity in western Canada?

• (1735)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I agree. The oil and gas sector has created prosperity over the past decades, and I think all Canadians appreciate that. The fact is that there are more than 20 oil sands projects on the books now that have all the permits ready to go but are not moving ahead. They are not moving ahead because they do not have the investment behind them. The world investment banks are moving away from the oil sector. They do not want to get involved in new projects that will take decades to amortize. They are interested in other opportunities in the energy sector, but not in new oil projects. That is why it would be difficult to—

The Deputy Speaker: We will go to the next question.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to reflections, since we have been talking about this for some time now. We are, as a society, incredibly negligent when it comes to fossil fuel products and understanding what is in a pipeline or what is on a train. I will ask my colleague this, because I know he is rigorous.

The Kalamazoo, Michigan spill was the first time that anyone realized that diluted bitumen would separate at a spill, that the diluent would float. That was what alerted people that there was a spill: people in the neighbourhoods began to get sick from the smell of the diluent, while the bitumen sank. In the case of Lac-Mégantic, we did not know that Bakken shale would blow up and should never be on a train, and yet simplistically minded folks say that oil is safer in the pipeline because a train once blew up.

I would just ask my hon. colleague for any comments on understanding the products we are talking about.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands that people do not talk about the

difference between these products and how they react in an accident, whether it is a train wreck or an oil spill, and whether the oil spill is on land versus water. I remember that when I first got to Parliament, we were still debating in Parliament whether bitumen sank or not. It obviously sank in Kalamazoo, and that is why it took so long to even get the basic cleanup that it got.

A colleague of mine has recently completed some studies in the experimental lakes program in northwestern Ontario, which actually took bitumen and saw what it did. Yes, these things do different things. Again, I hear constantly the Liberals and the Conservatives—

The Deputy Speaker: We will try to get one more quick question in there.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, was it not odd, in terms of negotiating, that Canada did not deal anything to the State of Michigan during the budget? We did not even mention the Great Lakes. If we were really concerned about the political position the governor was in and the concerns and priorities she had, how could we not have followed through by the request of Congress and the Senate to actually do something for the Great Lakes?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been saying for the past six years that the environment and the economy go hand in hand, yet, time and again, I have seen quite the opposite. The economy always comes first with them, and the environment has always taken a back seat. People have to realize very quickly that we cannot have a strong economy without a clean environment and without a real plan for that, and that means making those investments into environmental protection and environmental cleanup.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to enter into debate on this concurrence motion.

However, before I go any further, I want to recognize the fact that this is National Nurses Week throughout our country, and we have so much to be grateful for, for the nurses out there on the front lines right now, particularly over the last 15 months or so. The incredible work they do is truly remarkable. We have asked so much of them during regular times, and more recently the demands that are being put on nurses throughout the country are truly remarkable, but they rise to the challenge and they are there to take care of Canadians.

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This morning I got my first shot of the AstraZeneca vaccine at a clinic not too far from here, which was so well run. I walked in, went through the check-in and got to a gentleman by the name of Renault, who was administering the shot. He told me that he had worked at that clinic for 30 years and came out of retirement in order to help with administering vaccine shots. Nothing, in my opinion, is more patriotic than somebody who rises to the call of that profession once in retirement in order to come back and take care of Canadians. Indeed, I want to extend a huge thanks to all the nurses and frontline workers out there who are taking care of us and keeping us safe.

We are here today to talk about this concurrence motion. I find it very interesting that we are having this discussion in light of the fact that the Conservatives knew that what we wanted to talk about today was Bill C-19, which is proposed legislation on how we would deal with an election during a pandemic. It is a piece of legislation that was crafted in response to the Chief Electoral Officer, who pointed out that, as we are in a minority Parliament, there is always a chance of an election coming up at any moment and maybe it is a good idea to have some plans in place in the event that it does happen. Despite the fact that nobody might want an election, we do know that in minority governments elections can happen, and it is really not controlled by any one particular party, because there is no majority.

One of the fascinating things about what the Conservatives have done today is that they have taken a really interesting route in bringing forward this concurrence motion. We had an emergency debate on this issue last week. We stayed here until midnight debating the issue. The Conservatives did not offer anything, did not offer any solutions and did not talk about the recommendations that came from the committee, which I will talk about. All they did was sit on the other side of the House and criticize the government.

The role of the opposition, believe it or not, is not just to criticize, but to actually try to improve upon policy and push the government to do better. Now, I do not know how much experience Conservative members have in trying to encourage people to do things, but I can tell members that there are different approaches that one might take. For example, when I want my four-year-old to do something for me and to work with me on something, if he takes the approach of yelling and screaming at me and telling me how horrible of a parent I am, it might not be the best approach if he is genuinely trying to get something out of me. Likewise, I can say that the opposition members, if their strategy to encourage the government to do better is just to yell and scream at it all day long, they are certainly delivering on their—

• (1740)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot on a point of order.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, as much as I appreciate the diatribe coming from the member opposite, I fail to see the relevance, which is a point he often brings up in the House. I fail to see the relevance and how this relates to the report that is being discussed in the House currently. Certainly, he is talking at length about how Conservatives somehow are not contributing to the conversation. I find it ironic that he would speak at length about that,

which has very little relevance to the report before the House that is to be discussed at this moment.

I think it would be a fitting reminder to the member for Kingston and the Islands that when rising to speak on a subject, it should be related to the point at hand.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, I think it is important to reflect on the fact that what we are debating right now is to concur in a report from a committee. I am speaking right now as to why I think the Conservatives feel the need to concur in that committee report, so I am actually extremely relevant to the subject, because I am speaking to the concurrence motion, which is before us right now.

• (1745)

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the hon. members weighing in on this. Members know that the topics of their discussions at hand need to be relevant to the motion or the question that is before the House. I have been listening to the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, and I noted that the start of his discussion around the essence of the debate we are having on the concurrence motion was related to today's projected order of business, so I do think it is relevant.

We will let the hon. member carry on.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I do have the recommendations here with me. I would wager a guess that the Conservative members who are participating today do not even know how many recommendations there are in here, let alone what they say.

I will get back to what I was saying. Here is the interesting thing about the scenario we are in right now in concurring in this report. I do not know if the Conservatives just did not plan this out properly in moving concurrence in this report. I think this is extremely germane, especially to those who are watching this and might not quite understand how we got to this point. During our routine proceedings, there is an opportunity for members to move a concurrence in a report. We can do only one of those per sitting, and it will take up to three hours of debate. Quite often, what the Conservatives do, and they have done it a number of times in this session, is move to concur in a report because it burns three hours of the day, usually on stuff they do not want to talk about.

However, I do not know if those who were deciding that filibuster strategy had really thought out exactly what they were doing, because the time allocation motion that came in this morning said the debate on Bill C-19 will adjourn after one more day, so they are not filibustering anything, because they are not preventing that legislation from actually being voted on tomorrow. All they are doing is literally replacing discussion on Bill C-19 with this motion to concur in an issue that I would remind members we spoke about in an emergency debate only two or three days ago.

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Yes, it is extremely germane to this discussion. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council indicated earlier, this is just a tactic by the Conservatives, but the irony is that we are still going to be voting on the bill tomorrow. If we do the math and factor in that they will burn through the whole 15 minutes of petitions when we finally get to that part of orders of the day, we will literally talk about Bill C-19 for about 20 minutes, and then we will be forced to vote on it.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

My colleague just raised another point of order about the relevance of this member's speech, and now he has spent the last five minutes talking about procedure rather than the matter at hand, which is a concurrence motion on Line 5, so I would ask you to gently correct him and move him in the right direction, so we can actually have a debate about energy security for Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Abbotsford for weighing in on the subject again. As I said earlier, quite often these debates do tip into matters of the process involved, and generally those are accepted as being relevant to the debate at hand. As I listen to the hon. member, I know he is only seven minutes into his remarks for his allowed time, and I am certain that he will, in the time that is at hand, get around to matters specific to the motion.

Honestly, his remarks are relevant to the topic, and if he wants to talk about the process involved here as it relates to the motion, then that is relevant as well.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I know they do not want to hear it, because what I am saying is clearly getting under their skin. They do not like the truth, and the truth hurts sometimes.

Conservative members have now been told not once but twice by the Speaker that what I am saying is in order. If they are not going to listen to me, perhaps they will at least respect the Speaker's ruling, which has been given not once but twice.

In any event, I find it perplexing that we are having this discussion instead of talking about Bill C-19. However, I am not surprised that the Conservatives would rather talk about pipelines than about proper measures to bring into place during an election. I mean, that is par for the course, and it is indeed exactly right up their alley.

This committee, as we debated a few nights ago, brought in this issue that centres on the fact that there is such a close and strong relationship between the United States and Canada. We have the largest trading partnership in the world, with billions of dollars moving back and forth. We have infrastructure that moves from one country to the other and back, moving along the supply chain when it comes to end products.

This particular issue, as I mentioned a few nights ago, is so important not just to Canada but indeed to our neighbours to the south, in particular those northern states affected by this issue. I have full confidence, despite the fact the committee made seven recommendations, that most of the committee's recommendations are already being undertaken by the government.

Of course we heard from members like the member for Chilliwack—Hope say they want to know exactly what the government

is doing and want it all to be public. As we know, and as I am sure the Conservatives would know from way, way back when they were in government, from time to time we have to allow those processes to take place and recognize that not all these discussions happen in public. Quite often they happen in individual phone calls and behind the scenes. We heard the Minister of Natural Resources say on a number of occasions that he has been engaged with all stakeholders and his counterparts. This issue has been brought up with the President of the United States directly. People are talking about this situation to try to come to some resolution.

I have confidence that a meaningful resolution will come, if out of nothing else than from the fact that there are so many people on both sides of the border who are affected. This is indeed a reciprocal issue that is going to affect a lot of people on both sides of the border.

Yes, Enbridge is being forced to deal with some of the issues pointed out by members in the debate today. It is being forced to deal with some of the issues it has had, and rightly so, especially when it comes to impacts on our environment.

However, I do not believe there will not be a solution that will be in our best interest, especially when it means so much economically speaking and from a stability perspective to make sure that this product continues to move back and forth. I have no doubt that there will be a successful outcome to this. I have no doubt, and I have great faith that when the Minister of Natural Resources says to us that this is a top priority, that he is engaging at every level and making sure these discussions are moving along at every level, that it is actually happening.

If we look at these seven recommendations from the committee, we see that the first one is basically that the Government of Canada encourage Enbridge and the State of Michigan to resolve their dispute. I think it is safe to say just about all of us would agree we want them to resolve their dispute, so I appreciate the committee putting it into a full-fledged recommendation.

The next recommendation is that the Government of Canada continue to engage with the relevant stakeholders on both sides of the border. This is something, as I indicated, that the Minister of Natural Resources said he is doing. He is continuing to have those discussions in order to find a resolution that will be to the benefit of both the State of Michigan and to the ability to continue to deliver this product back and forth to the various locations on both sides of the border.

● (1750)

The recommendations continue to go on basically in the same vein. I am not going to read all seven of them. They are basically in the same vein of continuing those discussions. I find that the recommendations, although they would have set a perfect template for what the Conservatives could have come in here and discussed, have served absolutely no purpose to the Conservatives, because all they have done in here is berate the government for the work they perceive the government has not done. The Conservatives have no way of knowing what has actually been accomplished, other than taking the word of the Minister of Natural Resources, which they apparently refuse to do.

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What we do have is Conservatives coming in here and not referencing any of these recommendations, not talking about ways to make this better. We have them coming in here and just going on and on about where they perceive the problems to be but not offering any constructive solutions, not trying to compromise and not coming forward with a substantive plan. Whenever they were asked in the emergency debate a few days ago “What would you do differently? Tell us what your plan would be to resolve this,” the Conservatives did not have an answer. They are not interested in an answer, because it does not serve their political objective.

I hate to say this because I do not think any member in this House would actually not like to see a good resolution come out of this, but quite often, from time to time, I am left wondering if the Conservatives really even want us to resolve this.

It is similar to the vaccine issue. Quite often I sit here and wonder if the Conservatives even really want us to be successful in dealing with this pandemic. Part of me thinks that maybe they do not, because the Conservatives are more interested in the politics that come out of this than in actually taking care of Canadians.

• (1755)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, it is certainly incredibly troubling to hear the member opposite suggest that somehow Conservatives would like Canada to fail in procuring vaccines when that means that somehow he is suggesting that Conservatives would want to see more Canadians die.

That is absolutely absurd reasoning that the member opposite—

The Deputy Speaker: I am not hearing a point of order in there, but there will be time for questions and comments, and perhaps the hon. member will get an opportunity to pose that comment when the time comes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, somehow the member across the way is offended by that comment. I clearly said that I do not want to believe it, but I am often left wondering.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Sure, I did put it out there, because I am often left wondering that. I find it incredibly amazing how the member finds that offensive, but not half the stuff that comes from that side of the House during question period.

The reality here is that I think I have hit a nerve, because I am getting a lot of heckling right now. I have successfully pointed out some of the realities of the situation.

When I stand here and I look back on the way that this day has unfolded, I cannot help but think that Conservatives have absolutely no interest in helping Canadians. There are many scenarios in which this House could go into an election tomorrow. The Conservatives, for example, routinely vote against confidence in this House, whenever a budget bill or something like that comes up. They are always voting against the government. All Conservatives need is for the other two political parties in here, the Bloc and the NDP, to agree with them just one time, and then we would be into an election.

All we are trying to say is that we should have a discussion and talk about Bill C-19, but instead the Conservatives used this tactic

today to bring in this concurrence motion to burn time. They all know that is exactly what they did. Conservatives are burning time on this motion so that we do not talk about Bill C-19. Then they are going to say that they had only four hours in total to debate the bill, and so on and so forth, and that the government had all this time.

However, the Conservatives do not even understand the bill, as we saw. That is probably actually why, now that I think about it. I cannot believe I did not think of this earlier. That is probably why they insisted on this concurrence motion. We saw the massive misunderstanding from members like the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London and the member for Lethbridge. We heard what they had to say about this during the 30-minute questions and comments with the minister. They had no idea what Bill C-19 is really about. They missed huge parts of the bill that were in there. They did not even realize they were in there.

As I come a conclusion, it makes so much more sense now as to why Conservatives are insisting on talking about this, why they are insisting on heckling me to try to shut me down from bringing forward the truth to this floor. Nonetheless, Conservatives will do what they do. They do it every single time, and at the end of the day, we will have 19 minutes to discuss Bill C-19 before it is put to a vote in the House.

• (1800)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to simply give the opportunity to the member for Kingston and the Islands to actually talk about the recommendations, which he referenced at length but did not actually talk about.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the member just said I referenced them at length but did not talk about them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am once again appalled by what I just heard. Whenever I hear the Liberals, I start feeling sick to my stomach.

Once again, a Liberal member is saying that the Conservatives are filibustering, that it is ridiculous and that they are playing politics.

The member belongs to a party that filibustered at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics and at the Standing Committee on National Defence. His party is also the one that prorogued Parliament for a month and a half. Now he would have me believe that he is not playing politics. I hope my colleagues will forgive me for laughing.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. Did I leave out the Bloc? Are they feeling a little disappointed that I did not mention them enough? They are just as complicit in what is going today as the Conservatives.

Routine Proceedings

The member stood on a number of occasions today talking about how the Prime Minister shut down the House. It was for three sitting days, and in addition to that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There are only 15 members in the House, but there is far too much noise.

I will allow the member for Kingston and the Islands to finish his intervention, and then we will move on to the next question.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it was three days. To the member for Abbotsford, it was two days and one day for a throne speech. Before that, throughout the summer we had a special committee, which I had never even heard of happening in Parliament, that met regularly throughout the summer. If I look at the number of questions that have been asked by the opposition, there is no doubt in my mind that it is going to outweigh previous Parliaments based on that alone.

The member for Lac-Saint-Jean keeps going back to shutting down the House. It was for three days

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Kingston and the Islands about Michigan's concern about the environment.

The governor made it an election promise that she was going to shut down Line 5, just like President Biden promised to shut down Keystone XL when he was running for president, and the Liberals and Conservatives seem surprised by this.

I am wondering what the government has been doing to allay those concerns. I am thinking, for instance, that we have a new energy secretary in Washington who is also a former governor of Michigan, someone with very close Canadian ties. I am wondering if the federal government has been speaking directly with the energy secretary and what her thoughts are on this matter.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, as indicated by the Minister of Natural Resources, he has been engaged in discussions with various stakeholders on both sides of the border and his counterparts on the other side of the border. I do not have the list of everybody who has spoken, so I cannot clearly answer with regard to that one specific person, but I will say to the member's first point, yes, I believe that the governor raised a very good point. When I hear some of the stuff that has been said by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands and other members of the House, including this NDP member, I see that there are some environmental concerns and I certainly want to see that they are taken care of.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have to thank my colleague on the other side of the House for his comments. I am often challenged by which comments are more worthwhile to the House, his or the deputy House leader's, because they both seem to be taking up a lot of oxygen and they are frankly more partisan than they are practical. I would suggest that a little parsimoniousness in their words might get us a little further toward where we are going here.

Let the record show as well that while we are potentially two days away from this line shutting down, the member for Kingston and the Islands is smiling and joking in the House of Commons that we should not be bringing this up. I am not manipulating process here; I am speaking on behalf of an issue that very important to this country. It is going to be felt all the way across this country if this line fails.

I am bringing it up in Parliament today two days before a deadline, and I am sorry that the member on the other side of the House cannot recognize the importance of this to 30,000 Canadian jobs and the lifeline of the energy infrastructure across this country.

Could he please explain why he is minimizing this issue for Canadians?

• (1805)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I did not say that he should not bring the issue forward. What I said is that he should make sure that members are speaking directly to how we can make a solution out of this and come to some kind of healthy resolution. If the emergency debate last week was foreshadowing for today, it completely demonstrated that the Conservatives have no interest in talking about this issue other than for the purpose of political grandstanding.

I will be the first to agree with the member that I have no problem standing up here, saying what I believe in and putting it forward. However, if he is suggesting that I am as partisan as some of the members I hear on his side of the House, I will let my electorate decide that.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made the good point that we are supposed to be discussing the Canada Elections Act in case there is an election at any time. Does he not think it is ironic that the Conservatives are distracting us from that, as they have voted numerous times in the last few weeks, along with the Bloc, to have an election?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would agree. I find it absolutely perplexing and hypocritical for the Conservatives to stand here and say how dare we even threaten them with an election. They are the ones who keep voting for it at almost every opportunity they get. Maybe they are doing some political calculations on how the other parties will be voting and are thinking their bet is a safe one, but this is a minority government. All they need is for the NDP and the Bloc to agree with them and we will have an election. All I am saying is for us to be prepared for that by making sure that Bill C-19, which would protect Canadians during an election, is put in place.

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Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will agree with one thing the member for Kingston and the Islands said: He is afraid that he has disappointed us. I am sure he has disappointed more than us in his life, because when it comes to political grandstanding, no one in the House does it better. He did not talk about the concurrence motion. He wants to talk about Bill C-19 because the Liberals want to have an election during a pandemic because they think they can get a majority. That is the only thing the Liberals care about. They are great at campaigning, but they are terrible at government because they are out of touch with the people of Canada.

We have brought forward a topic that affects hundreds of thousands of people's jobs and the economy of Canada, and for him to push it off to the side of the desk by saying that it is all political grandstanding is disrespectful to people across the country. He should have stood and said he listened to the Minister of Natural Resources in question period. The fact is, they think they can jump in at the last second and save this pipeline—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it is fascinating to look at the questions that were asked of me. The only person who asked me a question on policy was the NDP member. The other members, who are Conservatives, just attacked me. That proves the point of my entire speech. Although they will grandstand, as the member for Regina—Lewvan did just now, and suggest they want to talk about the issue, they do not. The only member who asked me about substance was the NDP.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather fascinating to see that my colleague from Kingston and the Islands is so desperate to talk about Bill C-19 when, today, we were forced to vote on limiting debate on this bill.

Bill C-19 has been around for four months. We could have talked about it, but there was complete radio silence for four months and now, today, the government imposed a gag order.

If the Liberals were so eager to debate Bill C-19, why did they wait until today to say that it was urgent?

• (1810)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the bill has been tabled since December, yet the Conservatives still do not even know what the content of it is, as demonstrated during the 30-minute question and comment period.

I will say to the member that, yes, this bill might be before the House today, but by supporting the ridiculousness that is being demonstrated by the Conservatives today, we are losing three more hours to talk about it. It is up to Bloc members as to where they want to fall on this. They can agree that this is the position they want to take, but at the end of the day, we are losing more time as a result of this discussion.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Prince Albert.

Today's concurrence debate on the interim report for Enbridge Line 5 is vitally important and matters to Canadians. Canada is on the precipice of a national energy security emergency, and the deadline is Wednesday, May 12. A critical piece of Canada's energy infrastructure is set to be shut down, and Canada simply does not have the luxury of time.

On November 13, 2020, the State of Michigan revoked the easement that allows the Enbridge Line 5 pipeline to travel underwater through the Straits of Mackinac between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. Unless reversed, this decision requires Enbridge to cease operations of this section of the line by this Wednesday. However, any disruption to Line 5 will be devastating for Canada's energy security and economic well-being.

Enbridge Line 5 carries up to 540,000 barrels a day of petroleum products, including light crude oil and natural gas liquids from Alberta and Saskatchewan. It supplies over 53% of Ontario's crude oil and 66% of Quebec's. Line 5 provides an estimated 4,900 direct jobs and up to 23,000 indirect jobs in the supported industries. It supplies significant portions of diesel fuel, propane for Canada's east and much of the jet fuel that supports Pearson airport. Line 5 generates over \$65 billion of direct and \$28 billion of indirect revenue in annual trade.

Closure of this section of the pipeline under the Straits of Mackinac would require 2,000 tanker trucks or 800 railcars a day to keep pace with the demand. Estimates indicate that there would not be enough surplus truckload and railcar capacity to support this increase. Furthermore, a rise in the volume of trucks on Canada's roads and at the border would dramatically increase congestion, vehicle emissions and the risk of serious traffic accidents.

This should be a wake-up call for Canada, not only because of the short-term challenges but for the long-term ones as well. Citizens in Ontario, Quebec and the maritime provinces heat their homes, support their families and keep planes and trains moving and crops growing because of western Canadian oil and gas that travels to eastern Canada, among other places, through Line 5.

The decision to shut down a portion of the pipeline happens this Wednesday, so in the short term, what is the plan B if Canada is unable to get this decision reversed? Where will the additional trucks or railcars come from when there is already a shortage in our ability to use rail and get supplies to market? How will the tens of thousands of jobs be replaced? What will this shutdown do to the price of oil, gas and propane? How will aircraft at Pearson airport get back in the air? Even more importantly, how will this affect our economic recovery after COVID, at a time when lives and livelihoods have already been so drastically disrupted during the pandemic?

Even more disconcerting are the long-term implications. A unilateral decision made outside of Canadian jurisdiction threatens the very health and security of millions of Canadians. Even if it was not a U.S. political decision and was instead a natural disaster or equipment failure that threatened the delivery continuity of this pipeline, Canada's overwhelming dependence on this one infrastructure asset is simply too great. Canada must have an alternative, preferably one that transits from east to west entirely within Canada.

COVID-19 has made every Canadian increasingly aware of the risk of dependence on other countries for critical health, safety and security supplies. As a trading nation, being part of a global supply chain is central to Canada's economic prosperity. However, this must be balanced with domestic self-sufficiency for critical items that Canadians cannot live without, such as PPE, vaccines and critical drug supplies. With the threat to Enbridge Line 5, Canada's self-sufficiency should also include the supply of oil, gas and propane, which support the agriculture that feeds us and the energy that keeps us warm.

● (1815)

Climate change is real, and as Canadians we must do our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to sound environmental stewardship. The Canadian oil and gas industry meets the highest environment regulations and standards in the world. Other countries look to Canada to achieve a higher standard in environmentally responsible resource production. If all of the oil- and gas-producing nations around the world adopted Canadian standards, worldwide greenhouse gas emissions would be reduced by a substantial 25%. Canadians can be proud of the current standards that have been achieved and the research that is under way to further push the boundaries of greenhouse gas reductions.

Despite being the world's sixth-largest oil-producing nation, Canadians get 44% of their supply from foreign producers rather than domestic supply. Increased use of Canada's domestic oil and gas supply would reduce Canada's energy vulnerability and the nation's total greenhouse gas emissions.

The future of Line 5 is in the hands of the U.S. courts, and with it Canada's fortunes. That is why this report by the Canada-U.S. economic relationship special committee is so important, as are the critical recommendations. I would like to share with the House four of the seven recommendations that are drastically worthy of note.

The first says, "That the Prime Minister of Canada and his Ministers pursue frequent and direct dialogue on the issue of Line 5 with the U.S. President and his administration, in an attempt to resolve this dispute diplomatically as soon as possible." We have not seen this. It must happen. We do not have the luxury of time, and we need a sense of urgency. We need the Prime Minister to take this matter up with the President of the United States.

Second, we need to put forward Canada's legal perspective, so we recommend:

That, based on the information currently available to the Special Committee, the Government of Canada file an amicus curiae brief if a negotiated or mediated settlement permitting the continued operation of Line 5 is not reached between Enbridge, Inc. and the State of Michigan prior to the date by which such briefs must be filed. The brief should set out Canada's legal position with respect to the operation of

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pipelines that cross international boundaries, including but not limited to advising the court of any rights set out in bilateral or multilateral treaties or agreements....

This includes the one that protects the Line 5 pipeline, which is the 1977 agreement between the Government Of Canada and the Government of the United States Of America Concerning Transit Pipelines.

Third, we need to start looking into what our plan B is if the decision is not reversed. We recommend:

That the Government of Canada work with industry to develop contingency plans designed to ensure that Canadian oil and gas products will continue to be delivered in a timely fashion to the Canadian refineries and industries that rely on the Line 5 pipeline should an interruption to Line 5's service occur.

Obviously we do not want an interruption. Obviously we want this decision to be reversed. However, we cannot just say that it is going to happen. We have to have an urgent plan B.

Lastly and most importantly, we recommend:

That, in light of the external threat posed to Line 5's continued operation, the Government of Canada should evaluate other possible vulnerabilities to Canada's critical energy infrastructure and supply chains, and develop contingency plans to ensure that Canadian interests are protected in the event of disruptions.

Canada's energy security, economic recovery and commitment to climate change require an oil and gas pipeline that connects west to east entirely within Canada. It is the right thing for Canada and it is the right thing for the contribution that Canadians make, as global citizens, to the world.

● (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

In all likelihood, according to what experts are saying, it is very unlikely that we have to worry about Line 5 being shut down on the May 12 deadline, if we are even worried. According to some sources, the Governor of Michigan may be using that threat to force Enbridge to upgrade the pipeline, whose condition has raised some concerns because of its age.

What does my colleague think about the statement that there is no need to worry about the shutdown of the Enbridge pipeline and that authorities are probably more concerned about safety?

[*English*]

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Speaker, the fact is to never say never. The Governor of Michigan has said that she is absolutely committed to shutting this down, not to mention that this is not something new. The discussion started officially in November of last year, but this narrative and this trend toward shutting it down has been going on since 2015. Canada has not taken it as seriously as we needed to.

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I do not believe that is going to go away, which is why, at the same time, even if we are able to reverse a decision and have this pipeline continue, we still need a plan B and some mechanism to protect Canada's energy security going forward.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, back when the Kalamazoo spill happened and 840,000 litres went into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan, environmentalists were already flagging the problem with Line 5 crossing the Straits of Mackinac. I saw an underwater video of that pipeline flagging this issue way back then. Why did the Harper Conservative government do nothing about this? Why have we waited so long when we knew that this could be a potential problem? We need to hold companies, like Enbridge, responsible for their infrastructure, especially when we are reliant on that infrastructure for our economy.

Does the hon. member think we should have stronger regulations on these pipeline companies to make sure that they adhere to environmental standards?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Speaker, the important question is what are we, as Canadians, going to do today. This should be a wake-up call for us. We have the highest environmental standards in the world and we hold our companies to a very high standard. If the rest of the world were to meet our standard, greenhouse gases would be reduced by a whopping 25%.

The question is not how we got here, but what are we going to do to protect the environment, energy security and Canada's own self-sufficiency so we are not vulnerable to decisions made in other jurisdictions.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her good work on this special committee. One of the points she touched on was the recommendations and specifically working on the contingency plans. With all the testimony heard, with all of the witnesses and with the questions in the House of Commons, has she heard of what the short-term and long-term plans are for this, depending on what decisions are made over the next couple of days?

• (1825)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Speaker, ultimately, my colleagues and I, on the Conservative side, have brought this forward in this urgent discussion today because we have not seen a plan B. The plan B to use trucks and rail is not actually a viable plan B because we have been told by witnesses at committee that there is a shortage of trucks and there is not enough rail capacity.

Essentially, the current government plan says it is never going to happen. Obviously, we, as Canadians, hope that is correct, I do not think it is a viable plan because we need a plan B that says what we are going to do if our greatest fear that this pipeline is shut down happens. That is why the recommendations, the sense of urgency and this discussion are so important in the short term, but also in the long term to make sure that we do not find ourselves in this position again.

The Deputy Speaker: We will go to resuming debate. There is exactly 10 minutes left in the time for debate on the motion that is before the House, so if the hon. member for Prince Albert would like some question and comment time, he may want to stop before the 10 minutes for his speech, but it is absolutely up to him.

The hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you could give me seven minutes' notice, I will at least have three minutes left for some questions and answers. I am sure the member for Kingston and the Islands has all sorts of burning questions relevant to Line 5 and nothing else.

Last Thursday, Canada's ambassador to the U.S. made the following statement on CBC's *Power and Politics* regarding the potential shutdown of Enbridge's Line 5:

It is not a threat to Canada's national economic or energy security. I think that it is an important dispute or disagreement that exists between Enbridge and the state of Michigan that needs to be taken very seriously.

The minister said something totally different. This is a bit of a pivot for the government, whose Minister of Natural Resources stated at the committee back on March 4 that Line 5 "is a critical energy and economic link. It is vital to Canada's energy security," and that the government takes the threat "to our energy security very seriously".

That was last week. We are talking about the government supposedly understanding the consequences of Line 5 being shut down, yet our ambassador, when asked, does not seem to see the same urgency necessarily as we see here in Canada or as the minister claims to be saying is here in Canada. Why the disconnect?

If we had a true, actual plan in place to deal with Line 5 and the shutdown of Line 5, there would be no missteps, misquotes or mis-speaking. There would be a consistent message coming from not only the minister, the Prime Minister, our ambassador and everybody who is talking to people down in the U.S. in regard to Line 5, but there is not one. We have to wonder how seriously the government has taken the Line 5 shutdown.

I am sure the member for Kingston and the Islands would ask, "Well, why aren't you bringing forward suggestions and proposals?" Let me bring in some proposals. On May 12, the line shuts down. How many trains have you acquired? How many railcars have you acquired? How many trucks have you booked? Just on the trains, I think we would need something like 800 railcars a day, which is roughly 200 cars to a train. That is a train every six hours on top of what is already heading down those lines as we speak today.

I am a farmer here in Saskatchewan and we have all sorts of rail issues in the wintertime when it comes to getting trains delivering product to ports on time. Has anyone put in a plan to deal with that?

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When we look at trucks, if we are going to go to 25,000 trucks a day, has anyone talked to the Windsor border authority to see how that volume of trucks going across the border will be handled? How many people have you hired to deal with the movement of those trucks across the border? What has been done about talking to the mayors of Windsor and Detroit in regard to facilitating this type of movement through their cities? I bet no one has thought about that.

It is really interesting that the government does not do anything until it is a crisis. Now, there was talk about this during the campaign last fall with the governor, who had this proposal. The governor is of an extreme leftist philosophy and she is an extreme environmentalist. She does not care if she shuts everything down and people get laid off or thrown out of work. She does not care, but she wants to go to her environmental buddies to check a box. If they were really serious about the environment, if they were really concerned about it and really had an issue with it, why would they not put in a reasonable plan? They could have said that they told us that they needed to do something different in the States.

Wait a minute. Enbridge already has a reasonable plan. It already had a game plan where it was actually going to burrow underneath the straits and then put the pipe in concrete to make sure of that. It just needs time to get it done, but what is happening? It is just being shut down.

If I was a consumer in Ontario and Quebec, I would be very concerned listening to my members of Parliament. It is lucky we are going into summertime. It is lucky I do not need heat for my house. If I was a farmer going into harvest and it was a damp harvest, it is lucky I do not need propane to dry my corn. If this does get shut down, those questions are not going away and there has been no plan B put in place to deal with them. It is really disappointing when we start hearing parties from the left talking about how they are worried about our own sovereignty. Here is a situation where Canada's sovereignty is being dictated in a U.S. court. That means there are 25,000 jobs in Sarnia being decided outside of Canada. That is what is happening right now.

When we go to the committee and speak to members from other parties, we tell them that this is not that smart. The member who spoke before me talked about this. Maybe we should have our own pipeline. Maybe we should make sure that we have our own capacity, so that we can actually take care of ourselves, especially from the lessons we have learned from COVID-19. Nobody talks about the 25,000 to 30,000 people who, on May 13, if this is shut down, may or may not have jobs. They may or may not be able to pay their mortgage, and may or may not be able to buy groceries.

• (1830)

Is there a game plan put in place for unemployment offices? Is there a game plan put in place to transition them into new jobs?

If we look at it, what about the auto sector and the other manufacturing sectors? Everybody thinks this is just oil and gas. What about the plastics and the other components that come out of those refineries that go into Ontario manufacturing that get shipped around the world? The auto sector right now is having an issue with computer chips. What would happen if all of a sudden it could not get the plastics it needs for the bumpers or other items in its cars? How sustainable is that auto sector in Canada if we cannot even

supply the components that go into the cars? Does it just move to the U.S. with everything else and then the left say that is what happens when we shut everything down?

It is very frustrating when I look at Line 5. We had this special committee and I thought everybody was on the same page and understood the importance of it, then I started hearing comments from people in government or our ambassador that were different. I see the member for Kingston and the Islands not even talk about it and show such contempt for the 25,000 jobs, not understanding that two days from now these folks could possibly be unemployed. He wants to worry about an election. The Liberals want to talk about an election. I am worried about the jobs. I am worried about those people. I am worried about the economy. I am worried about Canada having a future for our kids to grow up in.

When we had an NDP government in Saskatchewan, at least people could go to Alberta to work, but when we have an NDP-Liberal government federally, where do our kids go to work?

I will end it there.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the member referenced me a couple of times in his speech, and I appreciate that, I figure I owe him a question.

He said I would probably be asking him a question about proposals, then he proceeded to talk about what was a proposal in his mind, but it was not. What he did was continue to talk about what might have to happen otherwise if the line is shut down.

A proposal would tell the House what the government should be doing differently in order to secure this piece of infrastructure so that it continues. The question is very simple. What more would he do to encourage the governor to reverse her position so that this infrastructure keeps being utilized?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, what should the government do? First of all, get your talking points straight. The ambassador should be saying the exact same thing as the minister and the Prime Minister. If he is not there is a—

• (1835)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, most members know that I do not use talking points I would think, but he should not be saying—

An hon member: Debate.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: The point of order is this. He said, “get your talking points straight”, and I am certainly not using your talking points, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member. Yes, I noticed the hon. member for Prince Albert does use the odd “you” and “your” references in his speech. I think it was done in a rhetorical way. Perhaps he was a little more direct that time, but I think the hon. member is aware of that, so we will let him carry on. We will let him finish up his remarks and then I think that is all the time we have.

The hon. member for Prince Albert.

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Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, through you, the Liberal government should at least make sure that its diplomacy is in such a consistent manner that everybody is talking the same language, selling the same issues, discussing it and making sure they have a game plan on the ground, like we did with the USMCA, where they were actually addressing it to the appropriate key people, the decision-makers, but when the governor will not even talk to them, it kind of tells us how ineffective the Prime Minister is.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

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

[*English*]

I see the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot on his feet.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I ask for a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, May 11, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present three petitions to the House today. The first petition is in support of Bill S-204, a bill that I tabled for first reading in the House earlier today. The bill seeks to make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad to receive an organ without consent. It also creates provisions by which a person could be deemed inadmissible to Canada if they are involved in forced organ harvesting and trafficking. The petitioners are hopeful that the bill will be able to pass in Parliament. It has passed the Senate and is now back in the House of Commons.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition draws the attention of members to the ongoing genocide facing Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. The petitioners would like to see the House, as well as the government, recognize that genocide and apply appropriate response measures. The House has taken this action, as members know, but the government has not yet recognized this genocide.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third and final petition highlights the horrific human rights situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. It calls for greater government engagement in response to the human rights and humanitarian events that have taken place there, as well as for

broader engagement of Canada with developing events in Ethiopia and engagement with the Ethiopian and Eritrean government.

I commend all three petitions to the consideration of my colleagues.

REGINA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Regina on the air traffic control tower at the Regina International Airport. This is a petition that has already done some of the good work that it was meant to, because the transport minister and Nav Canada said the air traffic control tower is going to stay.

However, the second part of the petition says it explicitly opposes any decision or recommendation that advocates for the closure or reduction of service levels at the Regina International Airport air traffic control tower.

I am very happy to present this petition on behalf of 901 signatories from Regina.

● (1840)

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present this petition initiated by seniors advocates in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to: include long-term care in the public health care system under the Canada Health Act; work with provinces to develop national standards for person-centred relational care, which includes the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario's basic care staffing guarantee formula; eliminate profit-making by government-funded, corporate for-profit chains by ensuring funds provided are spent as allocated and by banning subcontracting; provide standardized, equitable living wages and benefits and implement single-site employment for all staff; ensure government oversight and initiate strong penalties and clawbacks for facilities not complying with standards and regulations; and require independent family councils with protected rights.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to present five petitions.

The first petition, signed by members of my constituency, asks that the government seek the agreement of provinces to amend the Constitution to include property rights and to ensure that legislation is implemented to ensure that just and timely compensation would be paid as a result of any federal government initiative, policy, process, regulation or legislation regarding the acquisition of property.

EQUALIZATION

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition asks that the government immediately increase and backdate the fiscal stabilization program and that the government commit to working with provinces to address the current inequities that exist in the equalization formula.

SENATE REPRESENTATION

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is very simple. It asks the government to take the steps required to establish equal representation for each province in Canada's Senate.

ALBERTA

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition includes a number of points: one, to formally recognize Alberta's place as an equal partner in the federation; two, to remove any barriers to Alberta being able to develop its resources without interference; and three, to ensure unfettered access to international markets for those resources.

CONVERSION THERAPY

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition, signed by constituents and Canadians, outlines some of the concerns related to Bill C-6, specifically that the government ban the coercive and degrading practices designed to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, but it raises a number of concerns related to the bill that the government brought forward in this regard.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 586.

[Text]

Question No. 586—**Mr. Michael D. Chong:**

With regard to payments made by the government to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: what is the (i) amount, (ii) exact date of all payments which have either been made or will be made in the 2021 calendar year?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this information is disclosed in the Public Accounts of Canada and previewed in the 2021-22 main estimates. More information on the Public Accounts of Canada and the 2021-22 main estimates can be found at: www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/planned-government-spending/government-expenditure-plan-main-estimates/2021-22-estimates/2021-2022-main-estimates.html.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the gov-

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ernment's responses to Questions Nos. 575 to 585, 587 and 588 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the foregoing questions be made orders for returns and that they be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 575—**Ms. Lianne Rood:**

With regard to providing the COVID-19 vaccine to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members serving abroad: (a) what specific measures are in place to ensure that CAF members serving abroad receive the vaccine; and (b) what is the timeline for when the (i) first dose, (ii) second dose (if applicable), of the vaccine has been or will be administered, broken down by the name of vaccine manufacturer (Pfizer, Moderna, etc.) and the country where CAF members are serving in?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 576—**Ms. Lianne Rood:**

With regard to the 2021-22 Main Estimates and the amount of \$53,132,349 listed under the Department of Finance, for "Debt payments on behalf of poor countries to International Organizations" pursuant to section 18(1) of the Economic Recovery Act: (a) what are the details of the payments to be made under this item, including the (i) name of international organizations receiving payments, (ii) amount, (iii) country for which debt payment is made on behalf of; and (b) what are the details of all payments made through this or similar items in all main and supplementary estimates since 2016, including the (i) name of international organizations receiving payments, (ii) amount, (iii) country for which debt payment is made on behalf of?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 577—**Ms. Lianne Rood:**

With regard to the national vaccine management information technology platform (NVMIP): (a) what are the functionalities of the NVMIP; (b) which provinces and territories are currently using the NVMIP; and (c) what are the details the government has related to the usage of NVMIP by the provinces and territories, including (i) the date each province or territory began to use the NVMIP, (ii) which functionalities of NVMIP are each province or territory is using, (iii) the date each province or territory began using each of NVMIP's functionalities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 578—**Ms. Louise Chabot:**

With regard to federal spending in the constituency of Thérèse-De Blainville, in each fiscal year since 2019-20, inclusively: what are the details of all grants and contributions and all loans to any organization, group, business or municipality, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality in which the recipient is located, (iii) date the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency that provided the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

Question No. 579—Ms. Louise Chabot:

With regard to resolving complaint files associated with the Phoenix pay system: (a) what is the total number of tickets or claims pending; (b) of the claims in (a), how many have been waiting to be resolved for (i) 6 to 12 months, (ii) 12 to 24 months, (iii) over 24 months; (c) of the claims in (a), how many are from citizens residing (i) in Quebec, (ii) in the constituency of Thérèse-De Blainville; (d) of the claims in (a), how many have been identified as priorities by complaint resolution directorates; and (e) of the claims in (d), how many were in the category (i) 1, missing pay, (ii) 2, leave of absence or layoff, (iii) 3, promotion, secondment or acting position?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 580—Mr. Tim Uppal:

With regard to the Prime Minister's comments in the Chamber on March 23, 2021, that "We will continue to ground our decisions based in science and evidence": what specific science or evidence does the government have that proves that quarantining at a hotel is safer than quarantining at home?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 581—Mr. Tim Uppal:

With regard to allegations of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces and the actions of the Minister of National Defence, since November 4, 2015: (a) how many reports of alleged sexual misconduct were brought to the attention, either formally or informally, of the (i) Minister of National Defence, (ii) Office of the Minister of National Defence, broken down by year; and (b) for each instance in (a), what specific action, if any, was taken?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 582—Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to the government's decision to extend the interval between certain COVID-19 vaccines by up to 105 days: (a) what assessment has the government made on the impact of this decision of those who are suffering from cancer; and (b) what is the government's response to concerns raised by a study from King's College London and the Francis Crick Institute, which found that delays in administering the second dose of more than 21 days leave cancer patients vulnerable to COVID-19?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 583—Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to accounts locked by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) between March 13, 2021, and March 22, 2021, over concerns that usernames and passwords may have been hacked: (a) how many accounts were locked; (b) what was the average number of days impacted accounts were locked; (c) did the CRA notify each account holder in (a) that their account would be locked, and, if so, how were they contacted; (d) on what date did the CRA become aware that usernames and passwords may have been hacked; (e) how did the CRA become aware of the hacking; (f) is any recourse or compensation available to individuals whose information has been compromised as a result of their CRA information being hacked, and, if so, how do they access such recourse or compensation; and (g) have any specific measures been taken since March 13, 2021, to ensure the future safety of information shared online with the CRA, and, if so, what are the details of each measure, including the date of implementation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 584—Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:

With regard to federal spending in the constituency of Papineau, in each fiscal year since 2018-19, inclusively: what are the details of all grants and contributions and all loans to any organization, group, business or municipality, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality in which the recipient is located, (iii) date the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency that provided the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 585—Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:

With regard to federal spending in the constituency of Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, in each fiscal year since 2018-19, inclusively: what are the details of all grants and contributions and all loans to any organization, group, business or municipality, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality in which the recipi-

ent is located, (iii) date the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency that provided the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 587—Mr. James Cumming:

With regard to government advertisements launched on Facebook since March 13, 2020: (a) how many advertisements have been launched by month and what were the corresponding campaigns for each (e.g. employment insurance, citizenship services, tax credits, grants, etc.); (b) for how long was each advertisement active online; (c) what were the insights for the advertisements launched, broken down by each advertisement, including the (i) number of people reached, (ii) percentage of women and men reached, (iii) agegroup ranges reached, (iv) federal, provincial, or municipal regions targeted, including postal codes, if applicable; and (d) how many staff are provided with or have access to the Facebook advertisement data collected from each campaign, broken down by ministerial exempt and departmental staff?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 588—Mr. Kerry Diotte:

With regard to accommodating the work from home environment for government employees since September 23, 2020: (a) what is the total amount spent on furniture, equipment, including IT equipment, and services, including home Internet reimbursement; (b) of the purchases in (a), what is the breakdown per department by (i) date of purchase, (ii) object code it was purchased under, (iii) type of furniture, equipment or services, (iv) final cost of furniture, equipment or services; (c) what were the costs incurred for delivery of items in (a); and (d) were subscriptions purchased during this period, and, if so, what were the (i) subscriptions for, (ii) costs associated for these subscriptions?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-19, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (COVID-19 response), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Emmanuela Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me the time this afternoon to speak to Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act, COVID-19 response.

For obvious reasons, I think this is an important bill that should be taken very seriously for the health and safety of Canadians. For over a year now, we have been dealing with a pandemic, and despite how long we have lived with it, we still do not know enough about this virus.

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We are making progress in Quebec, where the numbers are down. The lockdown could be lifted soon, perhaps in the summer. If Quebecers are lucky, they could return to a more or less normal life like last summer. However, in other provinces, like Ontario, the situation is less positive. There are variants circulating that make COVID more contagious. Fortunately, more and more people are getting vaccinated. That is great, but the truth is, we do not know how long the immunity will last.

That is why we must implement measures to protect Canadians. If possible, we must find ways to avoid endangering the public. For these reasons, I am happy to speak to Bill C-19, as it is an important initiative that will help Elections Canada hold an election safely if necessary during the current pandemic.

Worldwide, it has been more than a year now that events have been cancelled, a necessary measure to keep the public safe. Since we do not know how long this situation will last, we must find ways to ensure the health of our democratic institutions. If a general election were to be held, it would have to happen in a way that is safe for everyone, including electors, volunteers and election officials.

[English]

While the need for physical distancing and other public health measures resulted in the postponement of elections at the provincial and municipal levels in some provinces last year, we have realized that, because so little is known about how long we will be in this situation of living with the pandemic, we must find solutions rather than postpone. In a democracy such as Canada, it is important to give the population the right to choose its government and representatives when the time comes to do so.

We can no longer indefinitely postpone elections. Instead, we must make the necessary changes and adapt to our current reality so as to protect Canadians and also the health of our democratic institutions. Some elections have been held worldwide since the start of the pandemic, and efforts have been made to put strict public health measures in place, such as requiring people to wear masks and practice physical distancing, or providing hand sanitizer or disposable gloves to voters.

Bill C-19 would add a new part to the Canada Elections Act that would further protect Canadians in the context of an election. This new part would include extending the Chief Electoral Officer's power to adapt the provisions of the act to ensure the health and safety of electors and election officers; authorizing a returning officer to constitute polling divisions that consist of a single institution where seniors or persons with disabilities reside, or a part of such an institution, and to set the days and hours a polling station would be open; providing for a polling period of three consecutive days, consisting of a Saturday, Sunday and Monday; providing for the hours of voting during the polling period; providing for the opening and closing measures at polling stations; setting the days for voting at advance polling stations; authorizing the Chief Electoral Officer to modify the day on which certain things are authorized, or required to be done, before the polling period by moving that day backward or forward by up to two days, or the starting date or ending date of a period in which certain things are authorized, or required to be done, by up to two days; providing that an elector may

submit an application for registration and special ballot under division 4 of part 11 in written or electronic form; and providing that an elector whose application for registration and special ballot were accepted by the returning officer in their electoral district may deposit the outer envelope containing their special ballot in a secure reception box.

This would allow some flexibility to the Chief Electoral Officer to make changes, as he or she sees fit, that would better protect Canadians. It would make voting more accessible to seniors and people living with disabilities, who would have more of an opportunity to have polling stations within the buildings where they reside. Furthermore, more Canadians would have access to mailing in their ballots. This may be a great option for many vulnerable Canadians who are at higher risk of getting sick, or even for Canadians who are afraid of going to polling stations and would prefer not to do so.

• (1850)

[Translation]

Elections Canada estimates that up to five million electors could choose to vote by mail if the election had to be held during the pandemic. To meet this demand, Bill C-19 provides for the installation of secure reception boxes to receive online applications for mail-in ballots and would allow identification numbers to be accepted as proof of identity for these applications.

Furthermore, it would allow electors who have requested a mail-in ballot to change their minds and subsequently vote in person. Certain conditions are attached to this measure to protect the integrity of the electoral system.

[English]

We have to understand that in the context of the current pandemic many Canadians will prefer to vote using the mail-in options. The mail-in vote measures outlined in the bill are designed to strengthen a mail-in vote system that is expected to see a significant surge in electors opting to vote in this manner. The overall goal is to facilitate the use of this voting method for Canadians who may not feel safe to show up at the polling station in person. Electors would have the option of using an identification number rather than a copy of their ID to establish their identity and residence when registering to vote by mail.

Furthermore, extending the voting period from one day to three days would allow Canadians more flexibility as to when to go vote, which would allow for less gathering to take place at a given polling station. After having lived with physical distancing for over a year now, I am sure we can all see the reason behind extending the voting period.

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With regard to long-term care considerations, the federal government recognizes that our most vulnerable Canadians should be able to exercise their right to vote in a safe way that does not endanger their health in any way. Bill C-19 proposes specific measures to ensure we protect the right to participate in the democratic process while allowing them to do so in a healthy and safe environment.

Specifically, it would provide a 13-day period during which election workers can safely deliver the vote to residents of these facilities. The period would provide election staff with enough time to determine, along with employees of these facilities, specific dates during which the vote can be safely delivered. Furthermore, it would allow election workers to create polling stations even on certain floors within a given building in recognition of hot spots or quarantine areas that have been established across these many facilities.

[Translation]

In short, this bill would make elections safer for Canadians. It is important to remember that elections can occur at any time when there is a minority government. We must take precautions to protect Canadians in the event that an election is called.

As I mentioned earlier, we do not know when this pandemic will be over. If it lasts longer and there is a fourth or fifth wave after this one, we will not have a choice about holding an election during the pandemic. Let us do the right thing and make elections safer for Canadians.

[English]

Let us vote in favour of this bill to ensure if there are elections held during this pandemic, even though all of us do not want it to be case, we can do so in a safe way. Hopefully we will be over this pandemic soon enough and before the next election.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion today about the idea of a sunset clause. I know certain members of the Liberal Party have taken shots at the Conservatives, saying it is clear that it is in section 11 of the bill. I read the bill quite extensively and followed some of the experts who examined it, and the problem is that it lacks clarity and democracy, among many other things.

Specifically, this place being the custodian of Canada's democratic infrastructure, clarity is such a vital part of ensuring elections are held with certainty for Canadians. Could the member opposite maybe add some clarity to what supposedly is the sunset clause? I certainly do not see it being that in section 11 of the bill.

• (1855)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, I agree that clarity is extremely important when discussing these bills and putting them into law. It is absolutely important the members on the committee take these comments into consideration. It is being sent to committee, so hopefully members of all parties can discuss and try to improve the bill even further before we vote on it.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will read a quote from the member for Winnipeg North. In 2014, after closure was imposed on debate of the Canada Elections Act, he stated:

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide comment on the fact that the Elections Act and the Parliament of Canada Act are fundamental to our democracy, and changes to them must be achieved by a broad consensus and backed by solid evidence.

Could the member comment on that?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

As members know, we are in the middle of a pandemic. Parliament has done all kinds of things that have never been done before. For example, we used new special powers to help all Canadians. It is very important that we take this reality into consideration.

These are not normal times. While more time should have been allocated for studying the bill, as is the case for most of the bills we have introduced this year, the fact remains that these are extraordinary times.

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, throughout the debate on Bill C-19, I have heard countless Liberals say that they do not want an election and no one in the House wants one. The Liberals have continuously said that throughout this debate. If no one wants the election, why are they pushing this bill through so fast? Why did the Liberals bring in time allocation? Why are they pushing if they do not see an election on the horizon? If the Liberals do not want an election and no one else in the House wants one, we should take time to examine this bill and ensure we get it right for our democracy and for the sake of all Canadians.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, it is really important that during a minority Parliament, we are ready for this type of thing at any moment, because we never know when the government could fall. I think everybody in the House agrees with that. If we were a majority, we would not need to be looking at this as quickly as we are. However, because we are a minority Parliament and can fall at any moment, it is important that we take these things into consideration and do so quickly just in case.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would hope that we do not have a pandemic election. I was hoping we would see some other changes to the Canada Elections Act, given the promise in 2015 that it would be the last first past the post election.

Does the hon. member think it is fair that a party that received 1.3 million votes got three seats, while a party that got five times as many votes, the Liberal Party, got 50 times more seats? Each Liberal represents about 37,000 constituents or voters and each Green Party member represents 380,000 voters. Does the member think that is a fair representation of democracy and should we have a fair vote system—

• (1900)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Laurent.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is fair and I do not think the system is perfect. I definitely think that different changes could be made and that it should be studied further to ensure we move forward in the right way and in the best way for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

The member for La Prairie has four minutes remaining.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, shutting down debate on Bill C-19 hinders our democratic institutions in two ways.

There should be consensus in this place for any changes that affect our democracy and the right to vote. The government is using time allocation to shove Bill C-19 down our throats. That is shameful. If I were in government, I would be ashamed—

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is no English translation and I would like to hear what the member is saying.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the interpretation working? It is working in the House.

It seems to be working now.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, our institutions are being undermined first by the closure motion and second by the fact that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs worked on this issue as of October 22 and presented a report entitled “Final Report: Protecting Public Health and Democracy during a Possible Pandemic Election”.

Committee members worked for 24 hours, heard from at least a dozen witnesses and rushed to table a preliminary report to enlighten the government, which needs all the help it can get because it is short-sighted. Committee members submitted their report as soon as possible, in other words on December 11, 2020, but this bunch of Liberals introduced its bill on December 10, 2020. It is an affront to the institutions. I would be embarrassed if I were them. I would make like an ostrich and bury my head in the sand.

The Liberals did not wait for the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to be done before introducing their bill on December 11, 2020. They did not bring it up again in the House un-

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til March 8. Why not wait for the results of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, since the committee members had called professional witnesses, studied the issue, taken the time to do the work and were only too happy to advise the government?

The pandemic is being used as an excuse. It seems to be making the members opposite do all sorts of foolish things. They claim that since we are in a pandemic, they can play with democratic rights. No, that is not how it works.

Here is a clear example of the lack of ethics in this government. Everything this government does is the opposite of what Midas did. Everything Midas touched turned to gold, but the Liberals are Sadim. Midas spelled backwards is Sadim. Everything this government touches turns to dirt.

The Liberals tried to close the borders, but they never managed to. The third wave is their fault. That is a fact. When the rail crisis happened, the government sat on its hands. It took the Liberals 30 days to wake up. While travelling abroad for a week and a half, the Prime Minister said it was the responsibility of the provinces and Quebec. When he returned home after 10 days, he finally got it and said that the Bloc Québécois's idea was a good solution.

This same government, which is incapable of making a decision, is shutting down democracy, thanks in part to the NDP's help. How can I possibly describe what the NDP is doing and still be polite?

The NDP is happy to gag itself. NDP members are stuffing rags in their mouths and saying nothing. They are propping up a government that is trampling on voters' basic rights.

Voters have the right to vote intelligently, and members of Parliament have the right to govern the right to vote through discussion and consensus-building. The Liberals are violating democracy, and they are proud of it. What a government.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 7:04 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

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

• (1905)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I would ask for a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Tuesday, May 11, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

*Orders of the Day***ORDERS OF THE DAY**

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

The House resumed from May 3 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to speak to this report. It was certainly exciting—

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order.

I apologize for the interruption. I was under the impression that I had adjourned debate the other day, but that does not prevent me from being able to continue with my speech.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member parliamentary secretary for his intervention. We are going to check on the time he has available.

Indeed, the adjournment motion was adopted. The parliamentary secretary, should he wish, does have some time remaining, and we will get that to him.

[Translation]

I appreciate the patience of the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue. I will give him the floor next and he will be able to give his speech.

[English]

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader had 17 minutes remaining in the time for his remarks on the motion before the House at that time. We will go to him now.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my apologies for the interruption to my friend from the Bloc.

There is no doubt that foreign direct investment does play an absolutely critical role to Canada as a developing nation, as we want to encourage ongoing economic activities, and in many ways it is because of foreign investment that we get to see them realized.

I want to provide a number of thoughts on the concurrence report. First, I would like to be able to pick up where I left off prior to the adjournment, which is kind of a fitting place, with the member from the Bloc who has just finished speaking prior to us going back into this report.

My friend and colleague from Kingston and the Islands did a fabulous job of explaining the process and what we are being asked to concur in. It is very interesting. The member for Kingston and the Islands pointed out, for example, on the issue of Bill C-19, what the debate was supposed to be about. There are a lot of similarities between what the member for Kingston and the Islands said and what I said on this report back on April 27.

Back on April 27, I expressed my disappointment. I talked about how the Conservative opposition party was playing that destructive

force on the floor of the House of Commons. That was much like earlier today: When I got the chance to speak or when the member for Kingston and the Islands spoke, we talked about that destructive force in terms of process and what we are ultimately being asked to vote on.

The last speaker provided comments about how shameful it is that we are trying to limit debate on Bill C-19 and bringing in time allocation. In the back of our minds, I want members of the House to reflect on those comments, because that is in essence what took place back on April 27, when a concurrence report was brought in because the Conservative Party wanted to debate an issue, as opposed to debating what the government needed to see debated.

It is important to recognize this, because if we were to do a concurrence motion on all the different reports coming in, we would not have government days. We would not even have opposition days to the degree we have them today. There are many reports out there. It is easy to pick a report and move concurrence, and there go three hours of debate on the floor of the House.

We could argue that it is an important issue. Let us look at the issue of this particular concurrence debate. It is about those valuable resources that we have. We could talk about natural resources or our health sector, and I will get more into that. There is no doubt that is important.

However, what we were supposed to be debating on that particular day was the net zero legislation, important legislation that Canadians want and expect their government to act upon. For whatever reasons, the Conservatives moved a motion to ultimately say that we want to debate foreign direct investment as opposed to the net zero legislation. One could say that happened once or maybe twice, but it has happened more than that.

● (1910)

The Bloc member just criticized us in the Liberal Party, and to a certain degree even my friends the New Democrats, by asking how we can limit debate on Bill C-19. The member for Kingston and the Islands pointed out that because of the concurrence motion, much like this concurrence motion, instead of debating Bill C-19, we were actually debating another issue, one we just finished having an emergency debate on last Thursday.

Members should look at April 27, when the Conservatives were playing political games in the chamber. Because of their dislike for allowing the government to pass legislation, they brought in another motion to prevent debate on yet another piece of legislation so that we can be criticized again for not allowing enough debate, just as the Bloc member criticized us for not allowing enough debate on Bill C-19.

What I did not reference was the fact that we had attempted to bring a Bill C-19 before today, and the Conservatives introduced another concurrence motion back then, just like today.

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Is there any reason the Conservatives are behaving in such a pattern? They adjourn debates. They want to take time off. They bring in concurrence. They look for ways to attempt to frustrate the government when it is trying to do the things it needs to do as government. It is not as though it only happens two or three times; this destructive force has been playing its games for quite a while now. There is a substantial cost to it.

I would suggest this to my friends in the Bloc: Maybe they should look at some of the comments that came from my New Democratic friends and maybe not be as quick to take the side of the Conservative Party. Many would suggest to us that either the Conservatives are conning the Bloc into supporting their legislative abuse or that the Bloc does not know any better. Maybe it is that the Bloc wants to participate in this destructive force as much as the Conservative Party wants to play its political games.

Is it any wonder, when we see the things that are happening inside the chamber, that the Prime Minister and Liberal members of Parliament are consistently saying some of the same things, such as that we will continue to remain focused on the priority of all Canadians, which is the pandemic? From the very beginning we have been saying that, led by the Prime Minister of Canada.

The Conservative official opposition, throughout this last number of months, with what I would suggest is its irresponsible behaviour, has been focused on the two things I referenced earlier today. It has moved another concurrence motion to try to kill the time allotted for government legislation. The first agenda for the Conservative Party is the character assassination of government members, and it will go out of its way to do that.

• (1915)

The second thing Conservative members do is cause as much detailed frustration as they can on the floor of the House of Commons so that, as we just heard before we got into this report, the opposition members can say something to the effect that the Liberal government is not being respectful of democracy because of time allocation.

Maybe we could have an indication of co-operation, at least to a certain degree. I am not saying that the Conservative Party has to agree with everything we are saying, but there is some onus, especially in a minority government, to be a little more responsible in terms of the legislative agenda.

Unlike opposition members, the government does not have timing processed on government bills. For example, the Conservatives had a choice and could have concurred in this report, and no doubt many others. They could say that foreign direct investment is so vitally important to our nation that they were going to bring the topic in on an opposition day, when they can highlight what they believe.

After all, if we take a look at the report, I believe we would see that there was a dissenting report that came from the Liberals. However, the Conservatives, as opposed to bringing in a motion to concur in a report, could have highlighted some of their concerns in the form of an opposition day motion and then asked for support from the Bloc and NDP. They could have just as easily have done that, just as they could have done for the report on Line 5 earlier today.

Unlike government legislation, at the end of the day—

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. If I could just interrupt the parliamentary secretary because the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has been trying to get his point across and put the opposition on trial since the beginning. He forgets that the people elected a minority government.

Right now, he is off topic. Since the beginning of his speech, he has been off topic and has not said a word about the report. He has talked about nothing but time allocation. I think we understand where he is going with this, but could he talk about the report?

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary wishes to respond.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I trust that the clock has been stopped.

However, throughout my comments, I have been talking about and referencing the report and the process whereby we are debating these issues. In fact, just before I was interrupted, I was talking about how the Conservatives could take part of the minority report and incorporate it into an opposition day.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Indeed, the clock has been stopped.

I have taken note of the point of order raised by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. Members have a certain latitude in speaking and giving arguments in favour or against a motion, but they also understand that they need to keep their comments on topic. Therefore, I will let the hon. parliamentary secretary continue his speech, while asking him to ensure his comments are relevant. He has about four minutes left.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, as I was indicating, the official opposition members had an option and they chose not to use it.

For example, with respect to foreign investment, certain areas are of great national interest. I could talk about food and medical supply lines. There are some very good examples that I could cite today. We can think about PPE and how much was being manufactured in Canada prior to the pandemic and contrast that to what is happening today.

Let us take a look at the importance of our natural resources and recognize the issue of ownership and how important it is that we ensure the national interest is served. We could talk about media and culture. There are many other areas where there is a national interest. Therefore, foreign investment matters.

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I would have welcomed a debate on that issue, but, as I indicated prior, the Conservatives' focus does not facilitate that sort of a debate per se. Rather, they would enter into a debate of that nature by a concurrence motion, which then prevents the government from ensuring more hours of debate on important legislation or they will often use their days to look at ministers or staff of ministers through what I have always referred to as character assassination. We see that played out in the House a lot more than we need to.

There is no doubt about the fact that there are important issues in these concurrence motions. However, I do not see members in the Conservative Party saying that maybe we should have concurrence in report on an opposition day. As I indicated, on the opposition days, those matters before the House are actually voted on. The net-zero bill was supposed to be debated longer than it was, but because of this report, it was not. It was the same with Bill C-19 earlier today. The Conservatives do that because they are more interested in the partisan politics than they are in seeing a chamber that can be productive and supportive of Canadians through some very challenging times.

Yes, we are in a minority government and the government is very much aware of that. I would remind some within the opposition that in a minority government, opposition parties also have a responsibility to live up to, and I am afraid not all are doing that.

• (1925)

Mr. Earl Dreessen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting listening to the member opposite. He speaks of character assassination of government members. I would like to remind him of the \$16 orange juice incident and the main lead on that, which was his leader.

When we talk about behaviour, adjourning debate and his concern about the concurrence motion, the member perhaps forgets about prorogation. He perhaps forgets about the filibusters that we see in so many different committees to protect various ministers or staff. I guess those are other things that seem to go past him today.

The question was on supply days. Why do we not deal with that? I would like to point out for the member that of the recommendations that we had, and there were nine of them, six of those were rejected by the Liberals in their dissenting report. If the Liberals did not listen to the experts on the subject in committee, what would make us think that if we were speaking to that here, as an opposition day, there would be any more attention given?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would think the member would have better luck if it were an opposition day, where the Conservatives could be more specific and then ultimately there would be a specific vote. In regard to prorogation, ultimately two or three days were lost. Could the member indicate when the last time the House actually sat, albeit in a committee format, but on the floor of the House of Commons? It was over the summertime, when literally thousands of questions were being answered. That is accountability and transparency, and it more than compensates the prorogation where we lost a couple of days.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am completely flabbergasted by the argument that we only lost two or three days.

In reality, because Parliament was prorogued, the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology had to stop its work and postpone its studies. It took two and a half months to catch up. The committees began meeting again in mid-October, but by the time they held elections, established their priorities and recovered the work that had already been done, they really only got back to work in November.

To come back to the parliamentary secretary's speech, I want to thank him for his opinions on Bill C-19. However, I would have liked to hear him talk about one thing, namely, the focus of the Investment Canada Act. Is it important for him to adequately protect our businesses in Quebec and Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I did speak at length in regard to foreign investment. If the House would have given me more time to speak, I probably would have been able to address more of those issues.

However, standing committees play a very important role. For example, the other day I stopped by to listen to the agriculture committee. I was quite impressed with the number of things being discussed. I contrast that to the other standing committees, where thousands and thousands of pages are being requested, especially during a pandemic. The purpose is questionable, but sometimes there is a need—

• (1930)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will ask a quick question. First, prorogation took more than a couple of days. It is disingenuous to suggest that is all it was.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary what he feels about recommendation 2 and whether he supports it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first, I fully support the minority report that was published, and I would encourage the member to read that minority report.

When I said “two or three days” for prorogation, that is exactly what it was. I was in opposition for over 20 years, and if he asked me for a trade-off between sitting for days in the summer when opposition members were provided literally thousands of questions versus giving up two or three days for the government to reset, given the pandemic, I would have done exactly what we did.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Just to make sure it is clear, I am actually one of the authors of the report, so I have read it.

The Deputy Speaker: I think that is probably in the category of debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will refer back to the question preceding this one. If the parliamentary secretary would like to continue talking, I would be happy to move a unanimous consent motion to let him, but I do not think I will get co-operation from the other side.

He started off his speech by talking about the concurrence motion, which is helpful Canadians who are watching this understand how we are here right now. The reality is that the Conservatives have put on notice something like 35 or 40 motions that they can move during this concurrence period. It is like they have built up this buffer and are ready to go. As soon as they need to throw one to block something, they do it during Routine Proceedings.

Could the parliamentary secretary add to that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to use the word hypocrisy in my comments, but the Conservative Party is definitely not very consistent. It talks about the election more than any other entity in the House of Commons. When it comes time to vote, if the Conservatives have a chance to vote non-confidence in this government, they take that chance. They like to play partisan politics extensively. At times, I can be somewhat partisan myself, but in the last number of days we have seen a lot of party politics as the chamber seems to be—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments; the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, during the parliamentary secretary's speech, whenever he said the Conservatives were playing politics, I was reminded of Claude Rains in Casablanca with the great line, "I am shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here." As he complains about his lack of speaking opportunity, I reflect sadly on the day I have had, waiting to speak on Bill C-19 at second reading, before the Liberals imposed time allocation, only to be deprived the opportunity to speak because the Conservatives decided to pull the concurrence motion.

It is more of a comment than a question. As somebody in this place who respects the place, loves our traditions and loves real democracy, today did not feel like any of that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I respect about the former leader of the Green Party is that she does her homework and often will provide comment on a wide variety of bills. As much as possible, we have tried to accommodate her words of wisdom on numerous pieces of legislation. I would have looked forward to hearing what she had to say about Bill C-19, given my role with respect to the bill. I guess we will have to wait until committee stage. It is unfortunate because we could have had at least another three hours of debate earlier today.

• (1935)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously the member for Winnipeg North wants to talk about Bill C-19 more than the concurrence motion we are talking about right now. I find it so ironic on a day that he wants to talk about new election laws that he was found breaking old election laws. I am not going to use the word hypocritical. I will use the word inconsistent that he stands there as a martyr asking for help to pass government legislation and then he breaks election laws in the 2019 election.

Is that not a bit too much for us to bear today by listening to the member preach about the respect he has for democracy when he was found to break election laws?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I have been a candidate for over 10 elections, both provincially and federally, and I made a mistake on election day. I boosted an ad. I did live car waving and I boosted it. I also boosted something the previous day and I did not cancel it at midnight. When I was told that it was wrong, I went to Elections Canada. I did everything I could possibly do. I think that is why it was reduced. I made a mistake. That goes to show that no matter how much experience one has as a candidate, mistakes can still be made. I am sorry for it.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for a brief question.

The member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

My colleague from Regina—Lewvan did not dare to use the word "hypocrisy", but I am going to.

My colleague from Winnipeg North reached the height of hypocrisy in his speech. He told us that the prorogation of Parliament did not really harm our work. I think it is unacceptable to minimize the prorogation of Parliament.

The report on the Uighurs was supposed to be published in August, but it was not released until October 19 because the government prorogued Parliament. The publication of that report was important for the Uighur community.

I find what he said today to be appalling.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, to be very clear, I agree fully with the Prime Minister's decision to prorogue, given the priority of this government in fighting the coronavirus. It was the right thing to do. We came back in with the throne speech on September 23. I would encourage people to read it. It reset the agenda for the House of Commons. Unfortunately, as we continue to go through this day after day, the Conservatives seem to want to lose that focus and the Bloc seems to have bought into the Conservative con job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will pick up where I left off earlier. I am pleased to speak to the report on the work of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, of which I am vice-chair.

I would like to remind members that this study was carried out in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and examined what action was taken to support our economy.

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I would like to highlight the initiative of the member for Calgary Nose Hill, who moved this motion—

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I believe if you review the record, you will see that the previous speaker, the parliamentary secretary, ended his comments with what I suggest is unparliamentary language. I would ask that you to review it and that, if it is in fact unparliamentary, he be asked to withdraw the statement.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for Battle River—Crowfoot. I am not sure what he is referring to, but I will check the record and get back to the House if necessary. I appreciate him pointing that out.

I see the hon. parliamentary secretary wants to speak. Perhaps he can enlighten us as to what this is about.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my intention was not to make anyone feel uncomfortable, so I apologize for the comment and withdraw it.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the House accepts the hon. parliamentary secretary's apology.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

• (1940)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to attempt to begin my speech a third time. I acknowledge my colleague from Red Deer—Mountain View, and I am pleased that he is interested in hearing this speech, especially since he is a member of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, which I appreciate. He is always there to stand up for the people of his riding, as is the member for Windsor West, who is present and who I hope will be able to give a speech soon.

We are not debating Bill C-19 right now. We are debating the Investment Canada Act. As I was saying, the member for Calgary Nose Hill, who was co-chairing the industry committee with me at the time, moved this motion so that we could study the Investment Canada Act. In the context of COVID-19, we had very legitimate concerns about the devaluation of Canadian and Quebec businesses, which could be at risk of being acquired by foreigners at bargain basement prices. We had the real and legitimate concern that head offices could be moved out of Quebec or Canada, benefiting foreign investors.

China is obviously one potential aspect, but there were many other issues, such as Air Transat and Air Canada. These airlines were seeing a significant increase in liabilities coupled with a significant decrease in passenger numbers. They were becoming vulnerable, which was why the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology met and invited witnesses so that we could protect these companies.

Based on the report summary, “The Investment Canada Act (ICA) allows the federal government to review foreign investments. The ICA provides two distinct processes: a net benefit review and a national security review.” There are two key words.

For me, the net benefit for Canada must always be demonstrated. We expect some transparency from the government in this regard, particularly from the Minister of Industry, who will be able to place conditions on a sale.

Obviously, I am thinking of the acquisition of Rona by Lowe's, which happened in our own backyard. We never found out whether the federal government had laid down any conditions. It obviously must have, to allow the acquisition of Rona by Lowe's. The problem is that since these conditions were never made public, it was easy for Lowe's to back out of its commitments a few years later. Quebecers are no longer attached to Rona. We saw brick-and-mortar businesses in cities across Quebec close their doors. The key issue is supply. A company like Rona would buy goods from Quebec and Canadian suppliers. Now that it is owned by an American company, it will favour the suppliers that can offer the lowest possible price. For an American company, that lowest possible price will be in the United States.

I just want to provide some background and say that, in its report, the committee recommended a more cautious, responsive, and transparent approach to regulating foreign investments.

I submitted a supplementary opinion on behalf of the Bloc Québécois. Although the report contained enough to make it positive, relevant and constructive, we believed that it was missing some important information, mainly surrounding the issue of reviews. I would like to read to my colleagues the Bloc Québécois's supplementary opinion, which is simply entitled “Better Protecting Our Companies” because that is what this is all about.

Can we trade in our neo-liberal economy for an economy where we protect our domestic market, for a Quebec economy and a Canadian economy where we can be independent, do business with local suppliers and keep our economy going in an independent manner?

It is important to remember that, in the context of COVID-19, we were dependent on other countries, whether it was for personal protective equipment or any other health-related issues, such as vaccine production. We lost eight months because of that.

I want to remind members of the context in which our study was conducted. I think it is absolutely fundamental. It is more important than ever. We need to come back to the principle of a strong domestic economy where we protect our national interests and where we buy from Quebec and Canada.

Here is the Bloc Québécois's supplementary opinion, which is entitled “Better Protecting Our Companies”.

The industry committee's report is an important and welcome change in terms of foreign investment control. The Bloc Québécois welcomes this shift after a decade of inaction, but we would have liked the committee to go even further.

In our opinion, the report should have suggested that the government bring the review threshold for foreign investments down to a reasonable level so that it can determine which investments are truly beneficial. Hence this supplementary opinion.

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● (1945)

The federal government's foreign investment policy these past years can be summarized in two words: deregulation and permissiveness. The policy provides for increased scrutiny when national security is at stake, and ongoing oversight when investors are foreign countries. The fear of China is real.

However, the floodgates are open for all other foreign investments, which are approved automatically and without review. Statutory review mechanisms, which the government readily insists on protecting in every trade agreement that it signs, are essentially rendered ineffective for foreign investments.

In 2013, the Conservatives set the tone by announcing that they would raise the review threshold used by the federal government to determine whether foreign investments are truly beneficial.

From 2015 on, the Liberals have been doubling down on this change. Between 2015 and 2020, the threshold applicable to “private sector trade agreement investments” increased from \$369 million to \$1.613 billion. The result is striking: the share of reviewed foreign investments fell from 10% in 2009 to 1% in 2019. You read that right: under the current rules, 99% of foreign investments are now approved automatically and without review.

This lack of oversight comes at a bad time. Over the past 30 years, the nature of foreign investment in OECD countries has changed. New investments are down, while investments in the form of mergers and acquisitions of existing companies are up. I would add that this trend has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between 2010 and 2015, only 54% of foreign investments in Canada went toward new entities, while the remaining 46% went toward mergers and acquisitions, where foreign investors took over a number of our companies, either in part or in full.

Canada is doing significantly worse than other industrialized countries in this regard. New entities receive 72% of foreign investment in the U.S. and 78% in France, compared to only 54% in Canada. And the trend continues to this day: from 2018 to 2020, mergers and acquisitions accounted for \$90 billion of the \$244 billion in foreign investments in Canada.

Simply put, over the past three years, foreign companies have invested \$90 billion to take over a number of Canadian companies in part or in full. This \$90 billion in takeovers has led to the downfall of head offices and turned them into regional offices with little power.

Quebec has gained significant economic and financial leverage since the Quiet Revolution, enabling it to pursue a policy of economic nationalism—the intensity of which varies from one government to the next—that gives Quebecers greater control over their economy.

Our economic nationalism has two components. On the one hand, we are open to foreign investment as a driver of growth and development. On the other hand, we invest in Quebec companies to keep them intact and fuel their growth. And we protect our head offices because we know how important they are as decision makers.

Quebec does not, however, want to shut the door to foreign investment. Our economy is and will always be open to the world, and openness toward foreign investment is essential for enabling Quebec to access major trade networks, which is crucial for guaranteeing the prosperity of our relatively small-scale economy.

As Jacques Parizeau wrote in 2001, even before China joined the World Trade Organization, “we do not condemn the rising tide; we build levees to protect ourselves.” Unfortunately, weakening the *Investment Canada Act* has caused those levees to break.

● (1950)

One striking realization is that the federal foreign investment legislation was being gutted at a time when Quebec was becoming concerned about foreign takeovers and the collapse of our companies' head offices.

In 2013, the same year that Ottawa announced that it would raise the threshold for reviews under the *Investment Canada Act*, Quebec went in the opposite direction and established the Task Force on the Protection of Québec Businesses.

The task force was established by a Parti Québécois government, co-chaired by a former Liberal finance minister and composed mostly of businesspeople. It reflected Quebec's consensus for protecting our businesses.

The task force began by noting that Quebec's 578 head offices provide 50,000 jobs that pay twice the average salary in Quebec, in addition to 20,000 jobs for specialized service, in such as accounting, legal, financial and IT providers. That is huge.

In addition, Quebec companies tend to favour Quebec suppliers, while foreign companies with a foothold here rely more on global supply chains, which has an obvious impact on our SMEs, particularly in rural Quebec. As we have seen during the pandemic, global supply chains are fragile and make us entirely dependent on foreign entities.

Furthermore, head offices are essential for Montreal's financial sector, which is in turn essential for SMEs across Quebec, since it gives them the financial tools needed to spur their development. Quebec's financial sector is responsible for 150,000 jobs and generates \$20 billion, or 6.3%, of its GDP. A large part, close to 100,000, of these jobs are in Montreal, which ranks 13th among the world's financial centres according to the Global Financial Centres Index.

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Lastly, companies tend to concentrate their strategic planning, scientific research and technological development where their head office is. In other words, a subsidiary economy is a less innovative one.

The task force's recommendations were mainly addressed to the Quebec government: make more equity investments in companies, facilitate the distribution of employee shares and better equip boards of directors against hostile takeovers.

However, the power to legally regulate foreign takeovers to ensure that they are beneficial for the economy and society is in Ottawa's hands. And at a time when Quebec was concerned about foreign takeovers of its key economic assets, the federal government chose to relinquish its power to keep foreign investments in check.

Quebec and Canada are two contrasting economies.

While Quebec upholds economic nationalism, Canada focuses on deregulation. That is because our economies are different.

Quebec's economic nationalism encourages Quebec companies to grow. However, Canada's economy is largely based on major foreign companies' subsidiaries. Whether in the automobile industry, with Ford Canada, GM Canada and so on, or in the oil industry, with Shell Canada and Imperial Oil, Canada has had a subsidiary economy for a long time.

As for Canada's large companies, they operate in industries that are protected against foreign takeovers by federal law, such as finance, rail and telecommunications. Canada, unlike Quebec, cares very little about protecting head offices because it does not believe that doing so is in its national interest. Nevertheless, Canada's stance is informed by policy difference, not contempt for Quebec's interests.

It is a welcome albeit incomplete shift.

A new wave of major investments from companies linked to the Chinese government has been a game changer. Canada is starting to realize that it needs to better control foreign investments and make sure that they are in fact beneficial before green-lighting them.

The Bloc Québécois is pleased that this issue has finally surfaced in the context of a study and in the report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

The report suggests that the government should tighten restrictions on investments from foreign governments and investments that could impact national security; better protect strategic sectors of the economy; better protect intellectual property to ensure that China cannot access our technology; and increase the transparency of the government's net benefit review process. The Bloc Québécois fully supports all of these proposals.

• (1955)

However, the committee did not take the next step needed to protect our economy, businesses and head offices, namely, lowering the review threshold. Hence this supplementary opinion, in which the Bloc Québécois speaks on behalf of a broad consensus of Quebecers.

Even if the committee did not adopt our proposal, we hope that it will provide the government with some food for thought. After all, the pandemic has shown us that global supply chains are fragile and that it is unwise to be completely dependent on foreign decision-makers. All the more reason to protect our companies here at home.

I will add a few more points to this presentation of our supplementary opinion, beginning with the importance of ensuring that we can protect our intellectual property. I would like to highlight a few recommendations. One of our proposals in the report reads as follows:

That the Government of Canada protect strategic sectors, including, but not limited to: health, the pharmaceutical industry, agri-food, manufacturing, natural resources, and intangibles related to innovation, intellectual property, data and expertise.

I believe the report forgot to mention the aerospace sector, because I am positive we voted for it.

When the committee discussed it, it was important, and I want to recognize the interventions of Jim Balsillie, whom I just had to name in the House. We know him well for his leadership in the Canadian and Quebec economies. He has appeared numerous times as a witness before the committee, most notably on the importance of being able to protect innovations, intellectual property, data and expertise. That is absolutely essential in a knowledge-based economy.

One of the Bloc Québécois's recommendations is that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry justify their decision whether or not a transaction is to Canada's net advantage. We want more transparency, an explanation of the factors leading to this decision and that the minister make public the conditions imposed for the acquisition by foreign investors to ensure that there is follow-up. When the information remains secret, a company can easily ignore the conditions because it is not accountable to the people. The foundation of a democracy is accountability to the people.

For me, the debates we had at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology about the recommendations to be made centred around the recommendation that the Government of Canada lower the review threshold to 2015 levels, or \$300 million in 2000 dollars. Unfortunately, this is not what happened.

I recognize that when the Conservatives amended the Investment Canada Act they were trying to protect Quebec and Canadian businesses from Chinese investments. At the request of the Conservatives, the Liberals sought to make no changes to the Investment Canada Act. It seems that that thinking has not changed much since 2000.

The recommendation that I made concerning the threshold of \$300 million in 2000 dollars was not accepted. This threshold would be revised every year, which is surprising. However this provision recognizes that the mechanism, which I wanted to strengthen, already exists. The threshold will be adjusted annually using formulas based on nominal GDP set out in the act and calculated in accordance with the principles set out in sections 3.1, 3.3 and 3.5 of the regulations.

Another part of our argument focused on thresholds, but other parties did not want to protect our businesses unless there was a national security risk. The goal is to protect our economy by displaying strong economic nationalism that enables us to make choices for our economy without opening ourselves up to takeovers by foreign investors.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have to send a heartfelt thanks to my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his speech. We can see how well he knows the file and how passionate he is about it. It is obvious. I would like him to talk a little more about what is missing from this report.

● (2000)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean for his intervention.

The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology is currently conducting a study on the green economic recovery. Two weeks ago, Benoit La Salle from SRG Mining appeared as a witness to talk about the critical and precious metals aspect. There is no guarantee that these metals will remain under Quebec or Canadian ownership, because, at this time, it goes to the highest bidder. However, the highest bidder is not necessarily what is best for Quebec and Canada. These metals are the oil of the future, what oil was in the early 19th and 20th centuries. The modern-day equivalent is precious metals like lithium and graphite.

If we cannot protect our deposits and our companies that acquire these deposits, if we cannot supply our companies, like Lion Electric, which everyone applauds and governments subsidize to ensure growth, if this company cannot procure lithium, then it will all be for naught, because we will not be able to make the investments needed to ensure the growth of our economic development. These are examples that really matter to me.

[English]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue does a great deal of work on our committee, and I certainly appreciate what he has done.

We heard from probably 25 expert witnesses on this issue. He mentioned Mr. Balsillie and the encouragement he was giving everyone to make sure that we understood the importance of intellectual property.

I am curious if the member could describe the frustration he has over the fact that six of the nine recommendations the committee spent a lot of time on and the witnesses spoke to were rejected by the Liberal members on our committee.

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[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Red Deer—Mountain View, who inadvertently gave our committee a somewhat amusing demonstration of how important it is for all Canadians to have a safe and reliable Internet connection at all times. That is the subject of another study that we, including my colleague, conducted at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

I also want to talk about his dedication to agricultural issues. When I talk about having an economy of business owners, about food safety and sovereignty, and about all kinds of issues connected to protecting our economy, the member for Red Deer—Mountain View is there to stand up for farmers. I often hear him doing so.

I want to reiterate that my frustrations about our recommendations are about how important it is for the minister to be accountable. If the Conservatives retake power, or whoever Canadians choose to form government, in the short, medium or long term, I hope they will remember how important it is for the minister to be accountable and transparent. This is essential because we need predictability.

The other aspect is to set thresholds as low as possible so that the government can intervene and protect our businesses from foreign takeovers.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize my colleague for how co-operative he is. It has been good to work with him. The industry committee generally has a good reputation for taking a thoughtful and less partisan approach. I want to thank the member for his really solid contribution here. He came really well prepared and that needs to be acknowledged.

I want to ask him a specific question about Rona's takeover of Lowe's, especially given the pandemic and that lumber materials have been increasing in price. What we have now is a loss of competition and supply, and I think that really affects people's quality of life in a different light than ever before.

I would like to ask for the member's reflections on that, because Rona is, of course, a proud Quebec company that exists not only in Quebec, where its foundation is from, but across our country.

● (2005)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Windsor West.

To be honest, I must say he is a mentor to me at the industry committee. I think it is important to mention that. If I am not mistaken, he has been a member of that committee for around 15 years. He always takes a constructive approach as he stands up for the interests of his constituents. I learn a lot from him.

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As for the acquisition of Rona, a company founded by Rolland and Napoléon, yes, that has major consequences. The main problem that we have in Abitibi—Témiscamingue is the labour shortage. Why are we unable to attract labour? One of the reasons is that we do not have any more housing. Why do we not have any more housing? Because now it costs too much to build.

The price of materials is staggering. Construction in Canada is stalled because we cannot get our materials. There are many reasons for that. There is the federal government's lack of investment in the forestry industry. We have to ensure we have a significant domestic market in Canada and Quebec. There is also access to suppliers and price negotiations.

How can we help our economy back home? It is not a simple matter of increasing the value of the Canadian dollar only for our materials to become more expensive. Suppliers have to shop locally to build homes and meet the needs—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will allow one more question.

The member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated hearing the member talk about the importance of safeguarding resources during this COVID time, and would ask, on a bit of an expanded note, if that includes the safe, ethical, environmentally friendly oil that comes from Alberta.

However, more specifically to the debate at hand, we have seen massive disruptions in the supply chains because of COVID-19, which has put a specific stress on many corporate interests across our country. Certainly, the scope of this report and its relevance to the current pandemic is to ensure that there are safeguards so the disruptions that have taken place because of the pandemic do not put Canadian business and industry at risk. I wonder if he could comment further on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot.

I would not go so far as to say that the oil in Alberta is ethical, but that is a debate for another day.

I would like to talk about something that floored me. Members will remember the airplane that departed China and was diverted by the U.S. government. This plane was carrying PPE and medical supplies that hospitals across Quebec and Canada desperately needed. I do not know how much it cost or how the federal government negotiated to try to bring those supplies back to Canada, but this situation goes to show just how vulnerable we are. I also do not know how much the government's vaccine portfolio cost, since Canada and Quebec were unable to manufacture their own vaccines.

Having an economy of business owners and economic nationalism means not being reliant on foreign takeovers or foreign economies. It means not being caught up in bidding wars with other countries and their needs. A mask can cost us four or five times more because demand is very high.

In theory, a G7 country with a strong economy should be able to produce its own equipment. That is what COVID-19 laid bare and what the Investment Canada Act can also demonstrate.

We almost lost our flagship businesses, whether it was Air Transat or Air Canada. When Air Transat was for sale, had the shareholders received an interesting offer from a foreign country that was ready to invest a little more money because the company was vulnerable, we might have lost out. In the end, who would be the losers? That would be the consumers, the citizens of Quebec and Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about this report. It is a very important one. The discussion of the Investment Canada Act has been very lively for many years.

This report is the result of a motion from the member for Calgary Nose Hill, and there was much support to bring it to fruition. I want to thank all the witnesses who came forward to present and also those who made submissions. I also want to thank the staff. Our legislative crew is excellent. The researchers and analysts always did a good job during the process on a very complicated issue. We have a report that is quite extensive, about 50 pages of materials that have been condensed, reflecting some of the concerns that emerged from the sale of Canadian companies, but also the loss of sovereignty, in some respects, in the lost investments.

I will start, though, by discussing something that took place in the debate tonight that related to the parliamentary secretary. It will be interesting to see how the Liberals configure their position out of that. I asked about recommendation 2, which is, "That the Government of Canada introduce legislation to amend the Investment Canada Act so that thresholds are reviewed on an annual basis." The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, if we think it is significant, responded by saying he supported the recommendations of the committee, yet the Liberals put in a dissenting opinion. They could have put in a supplementary opinion, but they put in a dissenting opinion, which said, "Under the ICA, the annual net benefit review thresholds are reviewed and revised by the Minister on an annual basis, rendering the proposed legislative amendments unnecessary."

Since the parliamentary secretary represents the Prime Minister, I am wondering whether he is having second thoughts to the committee members or to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, who did not address this, or whether the parliamentary secretary is freelancing by himself on this issue. I do not know which it is, but it will be interesting to sort that out because that is the reality of what has been presented to us today.

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The reality is that the thresholds have been raised over a number of years and have created quite a concern among Canadians and businesses. They have been raised because of the iconic ones that we have lost, Falconbridge, Inco, a whole series that are name- and brand-recognizable firms. However, what has been presented, and what the previous speaker so eloquently discussed, is that there are smaller firms right now that go under the radar of the threshold and are gobbled up on a regular basis. In fact, there has been an exponential increase.

Part of the discussion we had at committee and part of the report is that, under COVID-19, a lot of vulnerable businesses could be purchased by non-democratic governments. I do not want to speak to just one particular country at the moment, but the reality is that some countries are using their public assets to purchase Canadian companies. With the COVID-19 issue related to the vulnerability of businesses, we have a lot of start-ups and medium-sized businesses that are very vulnerable to this.

This issue goes back quite some time, at least from my perspective. I first raised it at the industry committee with regard to non-democratic governments buying Canadian companies back in 2004. I had discussed it before, but we actually had hearings at that time. There was a headline in *The Globe and Mail*, “Chinese bid prompts MPs to eye revising investment act”. That was because of Noranda being purchased by China Minmetals.

At that time, I raised the question as to whether it is appropriate to have that type of investment, because it is a non-democratic government. It is not necessarily that it is China, but there are others as well. China decided to go on a purchasing spree after 2000 across the globe, and that included Canada. If we look at the sliding scale of purchases and investments, they are quite significant. That brings up a lot of questions about privacy and control of ownership of different types of assets, and, I would say, it has played itself out in terms of the housing market and speculative approaches that have had significant consequences for Canadians.

I pushed for it, and it came back in Parliament again in 2007. A *Toronto Star* article said, “Security may be factor in buyout review”. When I pushed for Industry Canada to look at this again, it was about looking at a national security clause in review, which has now been introduced as part of it, because a lot of companies were being purchased that were important to our national security.

● (2010)

This comes from my interest in it representing Windsor, Ontario where the manufacturing centre has been part of our DNA since our establishment as a community and as part of Canada. During the First and Second World War and recently, manufacturing has been part of our heritage. In fact, during the Second World War, we were very much a logistics centre for producing materials to fight fascism.

I have always viewed manufacturing as part of our national structure of defence and also our national importance of connecting people to jobs and meaningfulness and also self-determination. If we did not have that capability, we would not be able to do the things that we do today. Back at that time, it was maybe more raw materials and turning them into things that were used, versus today where there is lack of that vision.

I will always remember and I reference quite often the Prime Minister going to London, Ontario and saying that we actually had to transition out of manufacturing. That was pretty offensive because we do not need to just do rip and ship. One of the tragic things about our oil and gas industry is that we do not have enough refining capacity. I have seen Oakville, for example, lose Petro-Canada. I have seen several other refineries close down as opposed to being invested in, often because of the loss of Canadian control or they no longer became investment opportunities because of a lot of different issues. We lost the capability there.

We have lost some of the capability right now for our forestry industry, as we have a lot of our industry co-owned between Canada and the United States. There does not even have to be collusion, there can just be a disinterest in competing against ourselves and lowering market prices because there is no real interest to do so.

Canada has had some of our natural resources purchased. I mentioned the mining industry to be prioritized because it goes to foreign markets for value-added manufacturing that the Prime Minister wants us to transition out of. That is unfortunate because the value-added economy of manufacturing is important today in this new age for innovation.

When we are looking at solar, wind, alternative energy and also the innovation that is taking place, I often point to what is taking place in Detroit, basically two kilometres from where I am right now. It has billions of dollars going into new electric vehicles and manufacturing there and we do not have the same here. We have some piecemeal and some very important projects taking place that are exciting, but we do not have a national strategy and we do not have the same type of investment taking place. In fact, in Detroit there was over \$12 billion of investment in the last number of years and for all of the Canada in the last five or six years, we were at around \$6 billion, which is basically not in the game any more with respect to where we should be.

This report did get a response from the minister. There have been some modest improvements to the bill and there has been some strengthening related to national security review, but they did not make some of the bigger changes that we had asked for. I had done some work with Unite, a labour union in British Columbia. It represented a number of companies that had basically been taken over by the Chinese state. I will not get into the full details, but I am going to read this recommendation that has not been implemented:

That the government of Canada immediately introduce legislation amending the Investment Canada Act to allow for the establishment of a privacy protection review and the ability to enforce Canadians’ privacy and digital rights in any ICA approved acquisition, merger, or investment.

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That is the one that I want to talk about. The one that did get pushed through, which I am pleased about, also allows for divestment issues to take place and the minister did move on that. That is important.

I want to pivot because we are looking at some of our privacy laws right now and people need to be aware that we have a Privacy Commissioner in Canada. The United States does not have that; other places do not have privacy. Our privacy laws affect everything from our capability to be involved as a citizen and our own personal life, but also our businesses, and our ability to share information, to work collaboratively and to be connected in terms of mergers and so forth in a more modest way.

● (2015)

We have asked for this to be part of the actual law, because with those expectations we can keep data and information under a review process. I will give a specific example of the Canada census, which I had worked on, to show the vulnerabilities.

It is ironic, because the census is taking place right now, and I encourage everybody to sign up for it. My riding, for a lot of different reasons, has one of the lower rates of compliance, which needs to be improved. Often it is because of language, but there are other reasons as well. However, it is important to fill out the census for government supports and services, and a whole series of things.

At any rate, at the time, our census was actually outsourced to Lockheed Martin. It may sound bizarre to some people that an arms manufacturer would actually get hold of our Canada census, but it did. It had won the contract, and it did that in a number of places. However, because of the Patriot Act, it was going to assemble our data in the United States. It would have allowed all of our census information to be vulnerable to the Patriot Act.

The way the Patriot Act works in the United States is that we would not have control over our data. The U.S. can access that data and then the company that is actually giving it up through the act is not even allowed to report it to us. The act is a fallout from 9/11, when a series of laws were put in place.

The data was going to be moved from Canada, but we fought hard, and we were able to get the data to stay in Canada and actually be processed here, protecting the data from that.

Ironically, Lockheed Martin is no longer doing our census. It was one of those things where we outsourced to be “efficient”, but it turned out to be a loss, because we had to actually pay more money. On top of that, the company is no longer around, and we are back to where we started from, and so that shortcut did not work.

I really believe that there should be a privacy screen as part of takeovers. When we look at the complications that Facebook and other companies have had with some of the privacy breaches, even being held hostage, it is important to note that we are very vulnerable, but we still do not have laws to protect companies.

The University of Calgary had a security breach and actually paid money to have its privacy protected. We do not even have a sense of the entire situation right now, because a number of companies have compromised privacy. They make payouts and different types of restitution, but they do not have to make it public. Some of

it does go public but some of it does not; it just depends upon the situation.

When we look at foreign takeovers and the Investment Canada Act, I would point to a few takeovers that have really affected people in their day-to-day lives.

My colleague raised Lowe's and Rona, and I thank him for that, but it is a great example of the consequences, because we have lost competition there. We basically had two competing companies that have been erased off the chessboard, so to speak. Now we are very vulnerable, and there is no motivation to compete. In fact, not only is there less competition, it has made housing more difficult, fixing up our properties more difficult and small businesses are more dependent upon one provider. It has had significant economic consequences.

I opposed that merger and appealed to the government to stop it, but the government refused. I think the parties signed a side agreement to maybe keep their headquarters here and that is about it. However, eventually the stores closed, and I cannot think of a worse situation that we have right now, because we are now dependent upon a one-source provider. We have lost those jobs, but more importantly, the competition.

Another example, which may seem less significant but true, is when Future Shop was taken over by Best Buy. Again, how did that benefit consumers? We lost another competitor, the Canadian franchise company of Future Shop, and for electronics, we are made very vulnerable to being one-source supplied. We have lost that competitive element.

One of the worst examples ever is Zellers being bought out by Target. Here we had Zellers making a profit during a time when chain retail was having difficulty. It had a union, wages just above minimum wage and benefits. Then Target came in, bought up Zellers and promptly shut the stores down in a failed operation. The jobs were lost, the workers lost their benefits, and we lost competition, and for nothing. We had a phony U.S. chain come in here and basically do a social experiment. We lost a significant part of our retail market economy. We have not recovered from that in many respects, because we do not have that type of competition any more.

● (2020)

I think about London, Ontario, where Caterpillar took over Electro-Motive. That was an important one, because those were good manufacturing jobs. That was about union busting and driving out competition.

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One of the more iconic ones was when Stelco was taken over by U.S. Steel in Hamilton. We still are feeling the repercussions of that. We lost production capacity, which was an important part of our long-term history of manufacturing steel in the Hamilton region. An exceptional skilled-labour workforce was thrown out because U.S. Steel wanted to wind down operations.

I do not think we are going to continue having the type of situation we are seeing at the moment because of COVID. However, we have a lot of situations with smaller companies. There can be a better way.

I do not want this to be a negative speech because it is about raising awareness. There have been some wonderful cases where we have fought back and we have seen Canadian companies remain. I would point to the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. In 2004, the Australian company BHP Billiton was trying to take over the Potash Corporation. We fought that and were successful.

The second example I can think of is MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates and Canadian space and satellite technology. We were able to prevent some of that takeover, and some of that is Canadian innovation.

I want to touch on something that is often forgotten. When we look at some of the tax on research and development, and incentives such as SR&ED credits and a whole series of others, we have to remember that as we are building up some of these companies, and providing subsidies for them to do research and development, we should have an obligation to stay Canadian and so should they. That is one of the things that we have to recognize. When we are giving incentives, whether they are direct or indirect subsidies, there is an obligation and an investment by the Canadian public. Therefore, if we were going to have a so-called free-market economy, where we get government out of the way, we would not be doing tax credits or subsidies for a whole series of things. We choose them as a democracy and as an innovative society to make advancements. If we do not actually get the fruits of those investments, they do not make any sense at the end of the day.

We have talked a bit about thresholds, but we are not seeing the action that we need to. We have much more work to do on this, and so much awareness is necessary. It is a very complicated file, but there is no doubt that it is sometimes captured in some of the iconic companies in the bigger acquisitions that take place. Let us not forget the small and medium-sized businesses that fly under the radar and under the requirements for review, that we just get notifications that we are losing. That is a poor choice for a country, especially if we are trying to build up our small and medium-sized businesses. We need to protect those assets and develop them better.

I will conclude my speech by again thanking the staff and the analysts for all the work that went behind this report. I know that some have diminished the importance of this debate for different reasons in the House of Commons, but I appreciate it because it has been important. At least we have it on the record, and I know that the House of Commons worked really hard to present issues in front of the government and the minister, as food for thought and also for making a difference.

• (2025)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Windsor West who is the dean of the industry committee. We always learn a lot by listening to him. I believe at our last meeting, we had Dan McTeague lamenting the lost Liberal legacy as far as industry and business are concerned.

I would like to ask the member if he could comment on the expert testimony that we have seen. Although he did not mention it in his speech, could the member comment on one of the recommendations, and the discussion that we had, where the Liberals felt there was no need to compel the minister to consult with our security agencies during a national security review? In the past, the minister actually did not consult with CSIS or RCMP while doing these reviews. Most experts we heard said the minister does not normally even bother consulting with them.

Is it a good idea to leave it as it is, with so much discretion of the minister?

• (2030)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I have had a chance to serve with my colleague a couple of times at committee and it has always been very positive. I am glad he raised this question. Although I did have it circled at one point, I did not mention it. The recommendation states:

That the Government of Canada immediately introduce legislation amending the Investment Canada Act to compel the Minister to consult with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and the Canadian Security Establishment in the national security process.

The member brought up a really good point that this would mandate it and ensure that it would get done, as it has not always been done. He made an excellent point that it is about best practices and good practices, ensuring everything is thorough and consistent. The most important thing about the Investment Canada Act, especially when it comes under the scrutiny and fairness review, is that this consistency should be there. I know he had raised this and had been a champion of it. It has been a missed opportunity, because some of it gets done, but not all of it. It is not consistent. That would bring some solid resolution to even the challenge of a decision under the Investment Canada Act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): My colleague from Windsor West struck a nerve when he mentioned Falconbridge in his speech. I am from Rouyn-Noranda in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

Noranda was the name of the mining company that founded the city. Noranda became Falconbridge in 2005, if I recall correctly, and then was acquired by Xstrata. It went from being a Canadian company to being an Anglo-Swiss company.

Naturally, this has consequences. Noranda has such a rich history, especially in terms of union activity. My colleague will be pleased to learn that that is where the union movement came into its own in Quebec. Of lesser interest, it is also there that canisters of tear gas were thrown for the first time, according to Richard Desjardins. Richard may well be the most famous Quebecker born in Rouyn-Noranda.

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My colleague will also be pleased to learn that a very famous citizen of Rouyn Noranda, Dave Keon, from Noranda, managed to pull off the not insignificant feat of winning the Stanley Cup for Toronto. This little guy from back home was the last Toronto Maple Leaf player to win the Conn Smythe trophy.

All joking aside, I would like my colleague to tell us about the importance of owning our own businesses. When talking about strategic and precious metals such as copper, gold, cobalt—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor West.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, that was exciting to hear. I did not realize that about Dave Keon. He was an awesome hockey player and goalie. People fear players like him.

That is a point well taken and it is interesting. The riding I represent had the Ford sit-down strike. The Rand Formula eventually came out of there and so forth. It is part of our DNA. I would like to thank the member for that. We can see by this discussion that there is a sense of pride that goes deeper with ownership, heritage and a connection to the community. I do not think we want to lose sight of that. A lot of people forget that about building our businesses. There is nothing wrong with showing that interest.

The unions and the people, the men and women working at a company, want it to do just as well. The issues around safety, fair compensation and so forth are there, but they want it to be successful and to wear the signature of their company with pride, just as much as anybody else.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as someone who was not part of the committee, but had an opportunity to read through the report, it was eye opening and helped me to understand the environment in which our companies now are made vulnerable because of the COVID pandemic.

I would ask the member to comment, to loop back to his earlier comments in his speech, about the circumstance that provided the genesis for this report. This report was brought about because of the COVID pandemic, and the vulnerability that Canadian companies now have to takeovers and investments that may not serve the public interest well. I would encourage the member to perhaps share some further thoughts on how important it was for that study to take place.

This is not a trite study, as our Liberal colleagues have suggested. They would rather debate the Elections Act, which would help them go into an election in the fall, but I want the member to comment on why the study even took place and how it has helped us understand why Canadian companies need to be protected under an investment Canada regime.

• (2035)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I thank that member for Abbotsford for his question. As a former minister, he has experience dealing internationally with a number of different matters.

What has changed significantly is the vulnerability in the financial capabilities of some companies right now. In some sectors, like the mould-makers sector I represent, companies would traditionally, if they had a hard time transitioning, find new ownership. If

somebody was looking to retire or take the next step, their company might be sold outright. Now we have questions about companies that are doing well and building up but that do not have the equity to continue. They could be bought in a fire sale. That is the concern.

There has been a lot of support to try to deal with the solvency issues taking place, but at the same time, there are so many mid-range companies that could be vulnerable. It has taken so much work for them to build up, and the innovation that is taking place with some of them is incredible. We do not want to lose them, but that is taking place. Under COVID-19, they are even more vulnerable.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was reading this report, I noted the tremendous amount of work the committee put into it. However, it was unusual to have a dissenting opinion from the government and the other two opposition parties.

I would ask the member to expand on some of the specific concerns that are raised about smaller companies, not necessarily the big companies that often make headlines. The report specifically mentioned, although I forget the quote exactly, a particular expert who said there is more concern about a company valued at around \$10 million in a specific sector like health or technology than about a \$100-million company in a more traditional sector.

I wonder if the member has further comments on that.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the member is very correct, and that is the vulnerability we see in some of these companies.

Jim Balsillie talked about some of the vulnerable tech we have, as did a series of other witnesses. This is where we have some innovation and breakthroughs that are very unique, especially in the digital economy, which is still emerging. Canada is competing quite well in some aspects of it, but we are not giving the proper supports for it to expand. That is a whole other separate conversation, but we do have some exciting opportunities.

For example, I mentioned mould-makers earlier in this area. When we had trouble with the auto industry, we helped them diversify into aerospace, medical devices and a series of different things. We have some exciting companies and opportunities, but they are vulnerable right now and will be in the immediate future. That is where thresholds will not provide a proper review and a takeover is going to happen, *fait accompli*, and that is really against the public interest.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I promise I will not talk about hockey players.

My question is simple. What does the member for Windsor West think of the Liberal Party's dissenting opinion, which does not support the report that I feel was the product of consensus?

How does he interpret the Liberals' position on that?

*Orders of the Day**[English]*

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I thought it was interesting that the parliamentary secretary said to the Prime Minister that he supported a recommendation that was directly quoted in the Liberal dissenting opinion. Then he said he supported the rest of the report. They have some sorting out to do, I think. I asked the member about this specifically, to give him a chance. Later on, he mentioned that I should read the report.

At any rate, I do not really know where the Liberals are on this, but I can tell members that I think the report overall is a very solid document to read over, and I appreciated being part of it.

[Translation]

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I am pleased to respond to the hon. member for Carleton's earlier observations about foreign investment in Canada. The issues raised in the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology's report on the Investment Canada Act are important ones.

Canada must attract foreign investment that is beneficial to Canada while protecting this country's interests, which include national security. That is what the government is working on in accordance with the general provisions of the Investment Canada Act, in co-operation with Canada's security organizations and economic departments and by reviewing our policy directions.

These are national security guidelines, which were recently strengthened with added emphasis on important review factors, such as transfer of and access to sensitive technology, potential impacts of investment on critical minerals and how a given investment might provide access to sensitive private information held by Canadian companies.

- (2040)

[English]

Under the Investment Canada Act, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry must consult the Minister of Public Safety and get their recommendation on national security reviews. That process includes consulting all relevant investigative bodies—

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am so sorry, but the interpretation is not working. I really want to hear my colleague from Saint-Laurent especially because we are finally going to get a Liberal opinion. I would really like to be able to hear her.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: We will check if the interpretation is working.

It is working now. I appreciate the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue pointing it out.

We will go back to the hon. member for Saint-Laurent.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what he might have missed.

Under the Investment Canada Act, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry must consult the Minister of Public Safety and get their recommendation on national security reviews. That process includes consulting all relevant investigative bodies.

The standing committee report itself notes that as soon as an investment raises a national security concern, Public Safety Canada coordinates a review process involving 18 different federal departments and agencies, including CSIS, the Communications Security Establishment, the Department of National Defence, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Global Affairs Canada, Natural Resources Canada, the Public Health Agency and the Department of Finance.

Public Safety noted that this whole-of-government approach brings the relevant expertise to bear as we assess the national security risks of each transaction.

[Translation]

The government is in favour of foreign investment, but not to the detriment of national security.

The Investment Canada Act is the government's primary legislative measure for reviewing foreign investment in Canada. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry has to review and approve major foreign investment based on likely net benefit before it can proceed. What is more, every foreign investment, no matter its value and country of origin, is subject to review under the Investment Canada Act's national security review process.

When an investment is subject to the Investment Canada Act, investors have to provide important detailed information. They are required to provide information on every source of funding of the investment and details on the investor's plan for the acquired Canadian company. This information is necessary to allow a thorough review of the investment based on its likely net economic benefit for Canada and whether it could be injurious to Canada's national security. This information is protected by the robust confidentiality provisions of the Investment Canada Act.

For each net benefit review, the minister must consider six factors that are expressly stated in the act. These are, among others, the effect of the investment on the level and nature of economic activity in Canada, including the effect on employment, and the contribution of the investment to Canada's ability to compete in world markets. An investment is only approved if the minister is convinced that it will constitute a global economic advantage for Canada. Each decision is based on a thorough, rigorous review and on the careful review of the investment's potential economic impact.

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The national security review process described in the act is just as thorough. This process takes into consideration the nature of the goods involved, including intangible property, as much as it does commercial activities targeted by the investments or the stakeholders involved. Relevant information on each investment is provided to the department and to security agencies, including Public Safety Canada and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, or CSIS, so they can review the information concerning the investment. These organizations can consult Canada's allies to determine if the investment could be injurious to national security or if an order needs to be issued to address national security concerns.

I know that I only have a limited amount of time, but it is also important to point out that the act takes into account the fact that investments made by foreign state-owned enterprises can be motivated by non-commercial imperatives that could harm Canada's economic or national security interests.

The provisions of the act demonstrate the special attention that is paid to state-owned enterprise investment. That includes a threshold [*technical difficulties*] for net benefit reviews and state-owned enterprise guidelines. The COVID-19 policy statement and the national security guidelines [*technical difficulties*] all of these measures related to state-owned enterprises.

It is not just all foreign investments by state-owned investors that are subject to more scrutiny, but also private investors assessed as being closely tied to or subject to direction from foreign governments.

● (2045)

[*English*]

Under the Investment Canada Act, the government already has among the broadest foreign investment review powers in the world. Through existing authorities we can address problematic investments that threaten Canada's national security, while remaining open to most foreign investment. The vast majority of foreign investments in Canada pose no national security risk.

The government continues to engage with our allies, including members of the Five Eyes, on foreign investment issues. The Investment Canada Act is not the only tool that the government uses to protect against national security concerns arising from economic activity.

[*Translation*]

The standing committee's report raised important points regarding foreign investments, state-owned enterprises and the safeguarding of Canada's national security interests. Whether it be a net benefit or national security review, the reviews conducted under the Investment Canada Act are always very thorough and comprehensive.

I would also like to once again point out the government's commitment to examining investments under the act in terms of their benefit for Canada and Canadians. Pursuant to the Investment Canada Act, the government will continue to ensure that Canada's economic interests are taken into account during the review of foreign investments in Canada.

[*English*]

Across a range of economic-based threats to national security, through budget 2019 our government committed almost \$14 million per year on an ongoing basis, which has helped reinforce Canada's robust approach to address national security threats to the economy.

[*Translation*]

What is more, the government has never and will never compromise Canada's national security, as demonstrated by its excellent track record on that front.

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her speech and for digging into this report and study. Earlier tonight her colleague, the parliamentary secretary, suggested that the government actually supports the recommendations of the committee contained in that report.

Can she confirm whether the government supports the main recommendations of the committee in that report?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I did not hear the comments made by my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, and so I cannot necessarily comment on what was said. However, being a member on the committee, I personally agreed with many of the recommendations put forward, as well as the dissenting report.

● (2050)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Saint-Laurent began by pointing out that the minister will examine the six factors as part of the process.

I would like her to comment on transparency. Does she think it is important in a democracy that people know the conditions being imposed on our businesses if they come under foreign ownership? Is it important for people to know what the minister has negotiated, what he has given up, to ensure that jobs are protected and that our suppliers are entitled to services? Is transparency important in a democracy?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I would say it depends on the negotiations and what is being talked about. I think in many cases the key element is confidentiality. Consider the example of the vaccine contracts that we just had. Everything had to be kept confidential or we were not necessarily going to get the doses of vaccine that we needed for Canadians. I am giving this as a simple example, because it always depends on the type of negotiation.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her work at the committee. She is always consistent and has been at almost all, if not all meetings, and been part of these recommendations.

I do want to follow up on my intervention with the parliamentary secretary. The member represents the Prime Minister and he said he fully supports the recommendations. In particular, I asked him specifically about the recommendation that the Government of Canada introduce legislation to amend the Investment Canada Act so the thresholds are reviewed on an annual basis, yet the Liberal dissenting opinion is counter to that. Perhaps the member can enlighten us on whether this is just a one-off, or is the Liberal Party position changing because the minister of industry did not address that in his response to the committee's report.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, this report was tabled and recommendations were made for the minister to consider. Obviously, opinions do change based on reports and recommendations. Again, I am not in the shoes of the person who made these comments. However, what I can say is that the whole point of these committees and of making these reports and recommendations is to have the minister review them to see if they would be beneficial to Canada.

I remember hearing many of the witnesses at committee. Obviously, not all of the opinions were the same, but many of them were saying that there are already the necessary tools in the Investment Canada Act given to ministers in order to make the right decisions. Many of them said that we should remain flexible because of things like the pandemic that is taking place, and that we need to take into consideration the different conditions that exist at a given time.

It is possible that, upon review, the minister or the parliamentary secretary made comments to opinions that the government has had ever since reading the report and the recommendations.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to comment on the question asked by the member for Red Deer—Mountain View, I believe the government members on that committee voted against six of the nine recommendations in this report.

Specifically, I would ask the member this. During the time of COVID, we have seen significant disruptions in supply chains and in various industries and corporate interests across this country, leading to vulnerability in various sectors across our economy, and certainly that has exposed those vulnerabilities. In reading the report and seeing some of the possibilities that would lead to our economy being put at risk by foreign state interests that would invest in this country, I am wondering if the member has any further comments on how it is important during the pandemic that these protections be put into place.

• (2055)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Mr. Speaker, the Investment Canada Act already has many protections in place. As I mentioned previously, the situation at a given time is always taken into account, and obviously more vigilance is being used at this point in time.

It is also important to note that during the pandemic and the economic recession that we are about to experience or are currently going through, it is important that we also attract investment. There is a balance to be had there, and I think the government is doing its best to maintain that balance without putting the Canadian economy at risk.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Deputy Speaker: It being 8:55 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

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

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I ask for a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 12, at the expiry of the time for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, toxic masculinity is not a military problem. It is a Liberal Party problem.

I am strong, proud and ready, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, to represent Garrison Petawawa. It is the 4th Canadian Division Support Base, and includes 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, 1st Canadian Field Hospital, 450 Tactical Helicopter Squadron, 427 Special Operations Aviation Squadron, the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the Royal Canadian Regiment, 2nd Regiment, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, the Royal Canadian Dragoons, 2 Service Battalion and a multitude of other support units. I salute them all for their service to our country.

On May 4, I asked the Prime Minister why he thinks repeating the same mistake will get a different result. In his place, Canadians had to listen to the predictable talking points of the Minister of National Defence, who is ordered to regurgitate those every day.

I also asked if the only woman he was interested in protecting was Katie Telford. While the Prime Minister was afraid to face Canadians with the truth during question period, Canadians got their answer last Friday. The Prime Minister did what he does best: He threw another woman under the bus. The first person who should have stood up to the Prime Minister's toxic masculinity was his chief of staff, Katie Telford. The fact she did not is reason alone she should be dismissed.

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Will she now become another piece of female Liberal roadkill, joining the former justice minister, the former health minister and the former MP for Whitby, to name a few? Who could forget the cringeworthy shot of the female MP for Waterloo who was sent to take the fall for the Prime Minister's WE family scandal, crouching in a demeaning position behind the Prime Minister in costume for a photo op during the Prime Minister's outrageous Bollywood tour?

Canadians are disappointed in the female members of the Liberal caucus because they will not stand up for victims of sexual assault. The majority of victims are women. Female Liberal MPs who at one point in their career wore the uniform and were members of the Canadian Armed Forces should know better. By not standing up for sexual assault victims and enabling the toxic masculinity of the Prime Minister, they have become victims themselves. If they want to break the cycle, it starts with them.

Leadership in any organization starts at the top. Did the female Liberal MPs ever stop to think about the victims of sexual abuse? The fact that their toxic masculinity has real effects on real people seems to escape the understanding of the Liberal Party. The Prime Minister's toxic masculinity is never going to change unless members of his own caucus and his own party stand up to him.

Some members of the Liberal Party may feel I am making the refusal by the Prime Minister to answer my question during question period a bit too personal by calling out individual female Liberal MPs, such as the member for Kanata—Carleton for her role in enabling the toxic masculinity of the Prime Minister. Well, this is personal.

This is not about Katie Telford or the Prime Minister. This is about the victims. Every victim of sexual assault is a person. Let us take some time to stop and think about the victims of sexual assault. That is what my unanswered question to the Prime Minister was really about.

• (2100)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that the hon. member for Kanata—Carleton served 31 years, was the first female squadron commander in the Canadian Air Force and has an incredibly honourable career serving Canadians.

I appreciate the opportunity to share more details about the independent external comprehensive review of our military. It is clear that our previous efforts to address sexual misconduct did not achieve their goals. It is clear that people are still being harmed. This is completely unacceptable.

Sexual misconduct in the military is a systemic issue that dates back decades, which no government has effectively tackled, including the member opposite when she was part of Prime Minister Harper's Conservative government. That is why we are taking action by having Madame Louise Arbour conduct an independent review.

I would like to comment about the choice of Louise Arbour to do this. No only is she a former Supreme Court Justice, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, but she notably was also on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and

Rwanda. In that position, she was one of the first internationally to ensure that under international jurisprudence that rape was considered a war crime. This is the person in whom we have entrusted finding out exactly how we are to combat sexual misconduct, sexual harassment and sexual violence within the Canadian Armed Forces. She is eminently qualified to do that.

We need to know why harassment and sexual misconduct persist within the Canadian Armed Forces despite extensive and concerted efforts to eliminate them. We need to know what the barriers are that make it difficult to report inappropriate behaviour. We need to know how we can respond more effectively when people choose to report. The answers to those questions and more will inform recommendations, and I would note recommendations that the Minister of National Defence has said will be binding, of Madame Arbour's report on preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct in our military and creating the conditions for lasting change.

As Madame Arbour conducts this review, she will build on previous independent reviews concerning the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. She will assess our progress in applying the recommendations of the Deschamps report. She will coordinate with the Hon. Morris Fish, who is finalizing his review of the National Defence Act. She will consider reports by the Auditor General as well as other internal audits, reviewing their findings and recommendations.

To be clear, we are not discarding the findings and recommendations of these previous reviews. Madame Arbour will expand on them, taking a broader look at the how and why sexual misconduct continues to be a pervasive issue in our military. We will look to her for guidance on how we can set up an independent external reporting system for defence team members that better meets the needs of those who experience sexual misconduct.

We will look to her for support to ensure our military justice system can properly respond to incidents; to strengthen our existing structure across the defence team, including the sexual misconduct response centre, to instill greater confidence in those who need support; and to review our evaluation and promotion system in the Canadian Armed Forces, with a focus on how our organizations select and train its leaders.

Madame Arbour will carry out this work transparently and independently from the chain of command, with input from appropriate stakeholders inside and outside the defence team. Throughout the process, she will provide interim recommendations that we can implement right away. I know Madame Arbour's insights will be critical to these efforts.

• (2105)

The Deputy Speaker: Before I go to the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I want to mention to her that her characterizations of individual members of the House and an individual member bordered on the kind of language that we normally do not consider to be respectful as it relates to individual members. I know strong words can be used to relate to members as a whole, to parties, and this and that, but when we get to individual characterizations it gets very close to being a personal context and I ask her to avoid those kinds of characterizations.

The hon. member.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I encourage MPs to read the Operation Honour manual, understanding that during Operation Honour, there were 581 incidents of sexual assault and 221 cases of sexual harassment reported between April 1, 2016 and March 9, 2021. Trauma for victims of sexual misconduct is individual. Directly after an incident there is a lot of shock.

When a victim knows the alleged offender, there can be guilt and self-doubt. The emotional damage can emerge immediately after or take time to appear and can include anxiety, long-term insomnia, a sense of alienation and thoughts of suicide. While some victims may experience hypervigilance, others may start taking risks and turning to harmful coping strategies.

The trauma of sexual assault can impact victims for a lifetime, affecting their health, education and their careers.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Speaker, we are determined to listen and learn from those who have been affected by sexual misconduct. That is why Madam Arbour's review will be based on the views, accounts and experiences of current and former members of the defence team. We invite those who feel ready to share their experiences to come forward. They can rest assured that Madam Arbour will conduct her review without referencing specific cases and maintain the strictest confidentiality.

We cannot rest until members affected by sexual misconduct and survivors have faith in the investigation and reporting process. We have a lot of work to do to rebuild trust, but I am confident that through these efforts and the dedicated action of our defence team members at all levels, we will get there.

HEALTH

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Mr. Speaker, on January 29, I asked the Minister of Health about directly funding community organizations providing mental health services and removing taxes on counselling as direct action we, as parliamentarians, can take for improving access to mental health services.

Before the pandemic, many Canadians were facing the reality of living with a mental illness. Now survey after survey finds Canadians' mental health eroding as the pandemic continues. This is a crisis that will have a lasting impact on the lives of Canadians. In the

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last year, every time I asked a question of the minister regarding mental health, I was invited to check out the [wellnesstogether.ca](https://www.wellnesstogether.ca) portal as an example of the work being done to help Canadians. I am very familiar with this resource and I know it can be valuable for some people, but we also need to acknowledge that we cannot fix everything with a virtual band-aid. These issues are complex and nuanced and an overreliance on websites in the digital format is not enough.

Mental health is not a luxury. It is a necessity. The mental health care system in Canada is not meeting people's needs. Long waitlists, inequity and underfunding are the root causes of the problem. Lengthy wait times are a barrier in part because there has been a chronic underfunding of community-based mental health services and a reliance on intensive high-cost services, like hospitals and acute care, and the consequences are life and death. Once patients finally make it onto a list to receive care, they can wait anywhere from six months to two years to see a counsellor. If they can afford it, they go to the private sector. It is a two-tier system that accentuates social inequalities and it clearly shows that lack of access to mental health is most pronounced in those with lower incomes or with disability. In Canada, only 7% of the health care budget is dedicated to mental health and behavioural health, while experts recommend it should be higher. My home province spends even less.

As members of the all-party mental health caucus, myself and other MPs are in search of solutions. We listen to organizations, stakeholders and people working on the ground to try to provide services the best they can. One of the ongoing challenges is always a lack of consistent funding. We need to ensure direct funding for organizations and communities across this country that have the solutions ready to deploy. Funding community-level interventions to alleviate pressure on our acute care system will get people the help they need as fast as possible. This is the very least we can do for the family of 16-year-old Lexi Daken, who was not helped after having waited for hours in the emergency room.

I want to take this moment to also honour Monique Paul from St. Mary's First Nation. She was Wolastoqiyik, she was loved, she is still loved and missed every day. The impacts of suicide and mental illness are particularly hard hitting in indigenous communities. Intergenerational trauma and systemic racism have left a painful legacy. Every time someone is lost, especially a child or youth, the frustration and hurt are heavy, like a storm cloud hovering over the community.

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Individuals cannot carry this burden alone. Communities cannot carry this burden alone. We need help, more help than a virtual portal can provide. It is time to lead, to build a better system that will truly be there for Canadians when they need it.

• (2110)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy of mental health supports. We agree that the need to give support to Canadians for mental health is substantial, and I want to thank her for this opportunity to speak more about the programs we have in place.

The member is absolutely right that prior to COVID-19 mental health was a significant concern, with one in three Canadians experiencing mental illness or problematic substance use during their lifetime. Our government recognizes the seriousness of this problem and has taken a comprehensive approach to mental health.

When COVID-19 struck, our government took action to address the mental health needs of Canadians and alleviate some of the burden on the provinces and territories. Five hundred million dollars in additional support was provided to the provinces and territories for immediate mental health and substance-use service needs as part of the \$19-billion safe restart agreement. We also provided \$7.5 million in funding to Kids Help Phone to provide young people with mental health support.

We launched Wellness Together Canada, which the member mentioned, on April 15, 2020. It offers a range of free mental health and substance-use supports to individuals across Canada on a 24-7 basis, in both official languages and with interpretation available during phone sessions in over 200 languages and dialects. Supports include access to peer-support networks and confidential text and phone sessions with mental health professionals, and a dedicated text line for health care workers and front-line personnel. Since its launch, over 1.2 million individuals in all provinces and territories have accessed Wellness Together Canada in over 3.6 million web sessions. Our support of this initiative continues through budget 2021, which provides \$62 million to Wellness Together Canada so that it can continue to provide Canadians with tools and services to support mental health and well-being.

So that Canadians can access timely evidence-based care, treatment and support, budget 2021 has also committed \$45 million over two years to help develop national mental health service standards in collaboration with provinces, territories and key stakeholders because, as the member opposite points out, we need a multi-faceted approach to providing supports to Canadians for mental health.

I also want to point out that in recognition of the intersections between mental health, gender, race and occupation, budget 2021 will provide \$100 million over three years for mental health projects and \$50 million over two years for mental health programming to support populations at high risk of experiencing trauma brought on by the pandemic.

To conclude, we know that investments in mental health were needed prior to COVID, and that significant investments in it have been needed throughout COVID. When we get through the pan-

demie, support for the mental health and well-being of Canadians will continue, and we will be there for them.

• (2115)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Mr. Speaker, there are tangible solutions, some of which are under way, and I recognize that. There is not only earmarked dedicated funding in the health transfers for mental health, but the recent commitment for the government to define and implement national standards for mental health care. I am grateful.

We also need to put mental health in the Canada Health Act and provide the provinces and territories with the help they need to do it well. Best practices can be shared, but ultimately Canadians need to be able to receive quality care regardless of where they live in this country. Mental illness is linked to many challenges we are facing collectively, and the longer an illness persists the more difficult it is to treat. Early intervention leads to better outcomes.

We know that every one dollar invested in mental health saves the health system two dollars. Beyond the monetary argument, our quality of life, safety and well-being can be greatly improved. We need access when and where people need it. I want all Canadians to know that if they are facing mental illness they are not alone. We will continue to advocate for better mental health services for all, every month of the year.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the member opposite for her advocacy for high-quality mental health services. It is something we are committed to as well, as I mentioned in the investments outlined above.

With that, the member opposite spoke about the need for national standards. We are working collaboratively with provinces, territories and stakeholders. I will continue to work with the member opposite for additional ideas because we know that even after this pandemic, the supports and the mental health needs of Canadians are going to continue. We will continue to improve services and access to make sure that no Canadian is left to suffer in silence.

We continue to work with all members of the House and community providers who can provide these services. We are committed to working with them because we want to make sure all Canadians receive the help they need.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising tonight to follow up on a question I asked in the House on March 21 regarding funding for services for Canadians with print disabilities. CELA, the Centre for Equitable Library Access, and NNELS, the National Network for Equitable Library Service, are national, not-for-profit organizations that provide accessible reading services to people with print disabilities in Canada.

In the fall economic update, the Liberal government announced its decision to cut \$4 million in essential funding for them. Cuts to these organizations would have severely impacted their ability to produce and distribute accessible reading materials and would have resulted in reduced accessibility for persons with disabilities across Canada. Fortunately, because of NNELS and CELA's advocacy campaign, as well as the work of so many disability advocates from across the country who made their voices heard, the government was forced to reverse the proposed funding cut in support to Canadians with disabilities.

In response to NNELS and CELA's advocacy campaign to restore funding, the federal government announced on March 16 that it would provide an additional \$1 million for this coming year. This additional \$1 million really reinstates funding for NNELS and CELA to the same level as in previous years. However, the government also made it clear that the reinstatement of funds was because the pandemic had affected the timeline. It made no provision to ensure that funding cuts would not proceed as planned starting in 2022-23.

My office reached out to CELA and NNELS and they provided an important overview on the situation they were facing. I want to thank Kevin Millsip and Laurie Davidson for their advocacy and work on this issue, and for providing excellent resources.

In the most recent budget, there is no provision for long-term, sustainable funding for NNELS and CELA. Although the federal government announced that there would be no funding cuts for 2021-22, as it stands now starting in 2022-23 NNELS and CELA will be facing a 50% cut in funding, which will decline to zero funding by 2024-25. The current funding envelope is small. It is only \$4 million a year, but the impact of this funding is significant and the loss of NNELS and CELA services to people with print disabilities in Canada would be devastating.

CELA and NNELS work to ensure books and other library materials are accessible across multiple formats for Canadians with print disabilities. People with print disabilities include those who are blind or have low vision, those who have physical disabilities that impact a person's ability to read or manipulate a physical book, and those who have learning or cognitive disabilities such as dyslexia.

This funding enables seniors and persons with disabilities to have access to public library materials. This is even more critical in rural Canada where access and resources are limited. In fact, CELA estimates that one in every 10 Canadians needs accessible formatting for reading materials, proving the essential nature of this partnership. Further, it is expected that this number will only increase with a growing senior population across the country.

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One library in my riding offered the following remarks regarding CELA services: "The number of users and inquiries have risen noticeably in the past year and with the aging baby boomers and the general older population of Grey Bruce, we are bound to see an increase in the number of users. Hopefully funding will continue for these important services."

I would like to talk briefly about my own grandmother. She is 98 years old, soon to be 99. I got her an audio book in January. Within a couple of weeks she had gone through nine books. She is loving audio books to the point that she is no longer socially active in her long-term care home. She loves them. They give her a sense of life, and I can hear the joy in her voice.

I just want a clear answer from the government. Will the government commit to providing long-term, stable federal funding for CELA and NNELS to ensure that equitable reading services will continue to be made available to people with print disabilities in Canada?

● (2120)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound's advocacy is making a difference in the lives of his constituents.

Our government is committed to the principle that everyone should be able to access information and reading material. That is why we signed on to the Marrakesh Treaty four years ago and at the same time set up a working group comprising disability groups, including CELA, NNELS and the publishing industry, to develop a long-term strategy on the production of alternate format materials in Canada.

We recognize that alternate format materials are more important than ever for persons with print disabilities. They allow persons with print disabilities to read, to learn and to fully participate in society. Moreover, they are critical during the pandemic. People need up-to-date information, directives and guidelines related to their health and safety in alternate formats. Many Canadians have also been asked to stay home as much as possible in order to flatten the curve. They have felt isolated and have relied heavily on accessible books and materials to cope.

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One of the first organizations I heard from about this issue was the Windsor Public Library, a champion for accessible reading in my community of Windsor—Tecumseh. We continue to listen to the disability community and to organizations like the Windsor Public Library about the importance of CELA and NNELS. That is why our government announced an additional \$1 million on March 16 to support activities related to the production of alternate format materials carried out by the Centre for Equitable Library Access and the National Network for Equitable Library Service, or CELA and NNELS, for short.

The funding provided through the social development partnership program, disability component, recognizes that the pandemic has been hard on persons with disabilities. It has also delayed the publishing industry in its goal of making significant progress to ensure that books are born accessible in Canada. As a result, the additional \$1 million will help CELA and NNELS provide more accessible reading materials to persons with print disabilities in Canada.

This investment adds to the \$10 million for CELA and NNELS that was already announced in the 2020 fall economic statement. The fall economic statement provided, for the first time, stable, predictable, multi-year funding for the not-for-profit sector in this area. It adds to the \$22.8 million in funding announced in budget 2019 for a transition strategy that supports moving the production of alternate format books from the not-for-profit sector to the Canadian independent publishing industry.

This money is helping independent publishers to create alternate format books and to get to a point where they are able to do so independently. In fact, in 2017 we set up a working group on alternate format materials with representatives from disability organizations and the Canadian publishing industry, including CELA and NNELS, and based on their recommendations we developed a transition strategy.

However, we are still in a pandemic, and it is causing challenges for the not-for-profit and publishing sectors. That is the reality. The Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion recently met with CELA and NNELS, and we understand there is a need to keep engaging with publishers and to possibly re-evaluate the transitional timeline.

We will not leave people high and dry without accessible information during a pandemic.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for committing, and I appreciate the government having a long-term strategy, but I think the most important comment to be made is that the government is willing to re-evaluate the strategy going forward.

The bottom line is that I can understand how they want to move these costs over to the publishing network and make it more self-sustaining; that makes perfect sense. However, will the government commit to continuing to work with CELA, NNELS and all these other organizations to ensure that long-term funding stays there and we do not end up with a reduction in funding or support for these critical industries and critical capabilities for our disabled?

● (2125)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Mr. Speaker, our announcement of \$1 million for CELA and NNELS is in line with our commitment to the Marrakesh Treaty. It adds to previous new investments from budget 2019 and the fall economic statement. Our support will enable access to alternate format materials, such as Braille, e-books and audiobooks, during the pandemic. In fact, this funding will help increase the overall volume of accessible print material available for Canadians with print disabilities. It will also support Canadians with print disabilities to familiarize themselves and get comfortable with using new digital tools.

I would like to thank again the member for his tremendous advocacy on behalf of his constituents.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is 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 9:26 p.m.)

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