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CANADA

43rd PARLIAMENT, 2nd SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

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Thursday, June 10, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 10, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

[English]

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to section 10.5 of the Lobbying Act, a report on investigations from the Commissioner of Lobbying.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: Pursuant to paragraph 90(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in relation to the Conflict of Interest Act for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

Pursuant to paragraph 90(1)(a) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in relation to the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

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 seven petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

REDUCING BARRIERS TO REINTEGRATION ACT

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-31, An Act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled "Questions of Conflict of Interest and Lobbying in Relation to Pandemic Spending".

The committee wishes to highlight the fact that throughout this study it faced many challenges related to the appearance of witnesses and the procurement of documents. While appearances before committee are normally done through invitation, which witnesses normally voluntarily accept, some witnesses only appeared before this committee after the summons was issued, or the threat of summons, in this case.

In addition, the committee is of the view that some of the witnesses' responses to requests for documents or written answers to questions are incomplete. Despite all the documents and written responses received, the committee believes that there are still many questions to be answered.

Routine Proceedings

We would like to take note of the non-appearance of ministerial staff before committee following the motion adopted in the House of Commons on March 25, 2021. Those staff included Rick Theis, the Prime Minister's director of policy and cabinet affairs; Amitpal Singh, the Deputy Prime Minister's policy adviser; and Ben Chin, the Prime Minister's senior adviser. We would also like to note that the Prime Minister refused the invitation to testify before the committee.

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

I would also like to take this moment to thank the clerk and the analysts for their diligent work under frustrating circumstances.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while I am pleased to have the opportunity to follow our committee chair, the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, and present our supplementary opinion to the ethics committee report on conflicts of interest in the government's pandemic spending, what we saw through the study and the subsequent reports was that the Liberals' filibuster of 20 meetings of the committee after the government's shutdown of Parliament was clearly an attempt to cover up their corruption. The extent that they went to really saw no bounds.

As detailed in our supplementary report, Canadians deserve a government that is committed to good, ethical governance, one that does not lay out the red carpet for their friends and help them skip the queue and get to the inside track in Ottawa. Canadians deserve a government that is going to stand up for them. They deserve a government that is not going to go to any length by shutting down Parliament and filibustering at committees.

If that is what we are going to expect from the government, and we saw and heard that from the government House leader today when he put on a performance at a press conference, with all of that being said and with a view to not hearing any more from the corrupt government today, I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

• (1010)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Point of order.

The Speaker: Unless it is a technical problem, there is not much we can do. I am afraid we cannot have a point of order.

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 Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1055)

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

Mr. Blake Richards: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the rules established for voting via the app were that all members vot-

ing by app must be in Canada and could not be abroad. It is my understanding that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance was in fact outside of Canada at the G7 meetings. We noticed that she voted today. I want to ask if she can confirm if she is, in fact, within the country. I am sure she would not want her vote to be counted if she voted contrary to the rules.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, to this point of order, I have been informed that the Deputy Prime Minister was, indeed, in the country when she cast her vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, there is no way for me, as Speaker, to know whether the member actually voted out of the country or in the country. At this point in time, I will allow the vote given the fact that I anticipate members do know the protocols and have voted accordingly.

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 138*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultouf	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Calkins
Carrie	Chiu
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genius	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Harder	Hoback
Jansen	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kusie
Lake	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mazier	McColeman
McLean	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Nater
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Rempel Garner	Richards

Rood
Sahota (Calgary Skyview)
Scheer
Seeback
Shin
Sloan
Stanton
Strahl
Tochor
Van Popta
Vidal
Wagantall
Waugh
Williamson

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Members

Alghabra
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Arseneault
Ashton
Badawey
Bains
Barsalou-Duval
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Bendayan
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Bessette
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
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Damoff
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El-Khoury
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Fisher
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Fragiskatos
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Garneau
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Hardie
Holland
Hussen
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Jaczek
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Julian
Khalid
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Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux

Anand
Angus
Arya
Bachrach
Bagnell
Baker
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias
Bratina
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Casey
Chagger
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Chen
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DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhillon
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hajdu
Harris
Housefather
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Ien
Johns
Jones
Jowhari
Kelloway
Khera
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Lalonde
Lametti
Larouche

Routine Proceedings

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LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Lotis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacGregor
Maloney
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Masse
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès
Michaud
Monsef
Murray
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Qaqqaq
Ratansi
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota (Brampton North)
Saks
Sangha
Savard-Tremblay
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Tassi
Therrien
Turnbull
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Vignola
Weiler
Wilson-Raybould
Young
Zann
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Manly
Martínez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Regan
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saini
Samson
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PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion lost.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, a point of order. I believe you received a notice regarding my motion for concurrence but you did not call it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do apologize for that. I would invite the member to propose his motion now.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, presented on Friday, February 26, be concurred in.

Routine Proceedings

● (1100)

I will be sharing my time, Madam Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this important report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which relates to international development and to the situation globally in light of vulnerabilities created in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Canadian response to those events. This is a four-part study and the committee has decided to present interim reports on each part of the study.

Earlier this week, the second report was tabled, which is very interesting. It contains a joint supplementary report among all the opposition parties, the Conservatives, NDP and Bloc, highlighting, in particular, the plight of Canadian children who are detained in northern Syria. That is the second report as far as this COVID study.

The report I am requesting concurrence in is the third report of the committee.

The first report in this study deals with a different set of issues. It deals broadly with vulnerabilities created by the COVID-19 pandemic and Canada's response to it.

In the Conservative Party, we recognize and appreciate the important role that international development plays. First and foremost, our engagement with respect to international development is an expression of our belief in universal human dignity and of our commitment to the advancement of justice. It is a core principle for us, recognizing the importance of engagement in the area of international development and stemming from that basic motivation to seek the advancement of justice, especially for the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

We also recognize that strategic advantages come from international engagement, and a recognition of the strategic dimension should not supersede the commitment to justice that is involved. We recognize that in a world where hostile revisionist powers are increasingly using the language of aid to exert greater influence and to advance their autocratic objectives, our engagement in open-handed friendship with the peoples of the world in a way that expresses our commitment to justice, freedom, autonomy and human rights is the right thing to do. It also has strategic advantages for us.

Our party has also been very clear in articulating a commitment to not reduce aid levels and in articulating a commitment that emphasizes partnership in international development. For too long there has not been enough attention to the people who are struggling to develop and improve their circumstances, really as the heroes of the stories. The heroes of the stories are not those from developed countries giving resources. The heroes of these stories are the people themselves who have autonomy, who have choice, who seek the expansion of their own rights and abilities. We can support them in the effort to remove those barriers.

When I look at the particulars of the report in front of us, we heard from many excellent witnesses, and many important issues were raised as a part of that study. I want to focus on three issues that came out of this report. The first one I want to address are aid levels.

Recommendation 8 in the report calls for the government to effectively be more transparent and to articulate its intentions with respect to aid levels as a percentage of gross national income. Generally speaking, the international standard for measuring commitment to international development is how much countries can contribute as a percentage of gross national income. This metric is important because some people like to talk about their commitment to aid in terms of nominal dollar value. However, I think all members of the House understand, or should understand, that as a result of inflation, the value of a dollar gradually decreases over time and also that a country's capacity to contribute shifts as a result of gross national income.

● (1105)

This is why the general standard with respect to international development is to assess the commitment of countries, of governments, as a percentage of gross national income, not in raw dollar numbers. Even if somebody is over time contributing slightly more in terms of raw dollar numbers, in substance they may be contributing less.

When the government talks about international development, it says that it is increasing aid level amounts. While that may be true in nominal dollar terms, that is not true as a percentage of gross national income. Aid levels over the years, since the Prime Minister took office, have been cut in terms of a percentage of gross national income. The consistent levels under the last Conservative government, but also the government of Brian Mulroney, were higher than they were under Liberal governments, measured in the way these things are measured, as a percentage of gross national income. The Liberals like to talk about their commitment to international development, but, in fact, in real and meaningful terms, they have not really been where they need to be.

The other thing to note, though, about this measurement is that when there is a dramatic drop in gross national income, that can lead to the increase in apparent contribution in aid levels measured as a percentage of gross national income. Although we have been critical of the government for this cut in aid levels as a percentage of GNI, we do not want it to achieve this level by simply presiding over significant reductions in our gross national income. As a result of its failures on the economy, frankly, there is a risk of doing this, that instead of increasing our contribution to the world, we would be increasing the apparent contribution simply by seeing our gross national income go down, and that is not a particularly good thing either.

This report calls for the government to be transparent about what its plans and intentions are with respect to aid levels as a percentage of GNI. Unfortunately, we have not seen that transparency, and we did not see a commitment to that transparency in the government's response to this.

The second issue I want to talk about is direction and control. Direction and control is a structure by which charities are required to be in full direct and control of monies that they receive to maintain the qualification of those resources as part of their charitable status. Canadian requirements around direction and control are relatively unique in the world. Other countries emphasize that charities have to be accountable for the resources they spend. Being accountable for those resources does not mean they have to be in total control of how those dollars are spent.

Let me make this concrete. If a Canadian charity is working on a project in a village somewhere overseas, the gold standard in terms of development would be to give as much autonomy and control over that project to local people and have the international organization, the Canadian charity, come along as a partner and supporter, recognizing the need to build and support autonomy for the local community with respect to its delivery of this program.

The direction and control requirements that the CRA imposes are not only extremely expensive with respect to the requirements around compliance, they effectively take dollars away from international development by requiring charities to spend more money on tax lawyers. They also run counter to the values of local autonomy and partnership that are supposed to be part of what effective international development looks like.

The Conservatives have been consistent in calling for reforms to the direction and control system. I have asked the minister about this. I have also specifically raised the question of Bill S-222 from Senator Omidvar, a bill that seeks to reform the system.

I call on the government, again, to articulate its position, and there is a strong unanimous recommendation in this report for the government to, as quickly as possible, reform the direction and control system.

I wanted to talk a bit about COVAX, but maybe I can get to that in questions and comments.

• (1110)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There seems to be an issue with hon. member's microphone. I would ask him to unplug his mike and plug it back in before I go to questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, at the end of my hon. colleague's speech, he mentioned COVAX, which we know is an important program. Could I give him a couple of extra minutes to explain the importance of the COVAX program?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for Cariboo—Prince George for the excellent work he does on so many issues.

Canada is the only G7 country to be drawing from the COVAX program, and this reflects what has been a real failure on the part of the Government of Canada to effectively make vaccines available to Canadians. The government likes to talk about how it is doing the first dose as well as this—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens: Madam Speaker, there is no interpretation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The problem seems to have been resolved.

[*English*]

The hon. member can restart his response.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, Canada is the only G7 country that is drawing from the COVAX program, and that just reflects the fact that our government has not been effective in getting vaccinations to Canadians. It is now drawing from this program that was generally designed to provide equitable access to vaccines to support the needs of developing countries.

I know a source of disappointment for a lot of people is the sort of general failure of the government in making vaccines available, but also that the result of that is not just affecting Canadians. This choice the government is making to draw from COVAX is also affecting people around the world.

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I note the member's concern about two things, and I want to ask him about the campaign pledge that was made during the last federal election by his party, which was to dramatically reduce foreign aid. He ran on that party platform to reduce foreign aid, yet today he seems to have had a complete change of heart, or a change of head, and I would like him to comment on that. I would also like him to comment on the government's response to recommendation 10, which is very positive, to understand that absolutely we support COVAX and will support vaccine distribution.

Does he have any response to the government's response on recommendation 10?

• (1115)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is very clear from the numbers what the Conservative record in government has been with respect to international development. Leadership was shown by the Mulroney government and the Harper government around maternal and child health. It is important to always be asking how we can increase our effectiveness. Part of increasing that effectiveness is supporting the world's most vulnerable, and part of that is removing red tape for charitable organizations, such as with the reforms to direction and control. I will say again that our leader has been very clear about not reducing aid levels.

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In terms of the member's question about COVAX, the government has offered financial support to COVAX. However, the government has not, on its own, been able to secure supply necessary for Canadians and thus has gone to COVAX. The fact is that Canada is behind. People can see that, around the world, other countries are certainly ahead of us in being able to open up, and that reflects the failure of the government to make vaccines available. The point about COVAX is that failure does have consequences, not just for Canadians, but also for people in developing countries.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I did not really understand what the member had to say, especially with the hon. parliamentary secretary's question about the Conservative campaign commitments with respect to decreasing foreign aid. With what the member is saying right now, there seems to be a kind of duplicity.

Can the member clarify for us if he believes that Canada needs to provide more aid or not, based on his party's platform?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think I was very clear that we effectively saw cuts, in terms of aid as a share of GNI, from the time of the Harper government to the current government. Going forward, Conservatives have committed to maintaining our aid levels and also to taking steps, such as the reform of direction and control, that would remove red tape and effectively deliver far more in terms of dollars to the front lines. If we remove that unnecessary red tape through processes like direction and control, we can do so much more good around the world.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank our hon. colleague for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for sharing his time with me to comment on the third report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, as well as the effects of the pandemic on some of our most marginalized countries.

To date, more than 112 million people around the world have been infected by the COVID-19 virus and 2.5 million people have died. This pandemic rocked our world. As of March 11, 2020, it was designated a global pandemic and things are just now getting back to the new normal, whatever that looks like. I think this report is important to see how Canada can not only do its part helping those here at home, but do its part on the world stage, which is always important.

Out of the report came 10 recommendations. I have been part of committees in the past that have studied important issues such as the suicide epidemic in our first nations, sexual trauma within our military and the impacts of post-traumatic stress disorder on first responders and those who serve our country and communities. Another report we studied was on the impacts of changes to the Fisheries Act from the previous Harper government to the Liberal government in the previous session. These reports are important. We hear from witnesses who give us a different perspective from the ones we 338 members of Parliament, who have been elected to represent the electors in our fine country, bring to the House. It would not be in line with one of my speeches if I did not remind the House that it does not belong to us, to the Prime Minister, to the Speaker or to me: It belongs to the electors. This is the electors' House.

The report that we are tabling today talks about Canada's contributions on the world stage, and the impact of the COVID pandemic worldwide. The 10 recommendations that came out of this were for the government to play a lead role in the global response to COVID-19 with the aim of:

ensuring a coordinated, timely and needs-based response to the vulnerabilities created and exacerbated by the pandemic in crisis- and conflict-affected areas.

We know that in developed countries such as our own, and to the south of us, the impact has been immeasurable, but for countries deeply affected by conflict and for some of our most marginalized countries that impact has been absolutely devastating. COVID has had an immeasurable impact on them. My colleague talked about the COVAX program that developed countries pay into to support the purchase and supply of vaccines for underdeveloped countries. Sadly, what we saw from the current government was that Canada shamefully had to apply to dip into it. It took vaccines that were destined for underdeveloped countries and administered them here within our own borders. This was because of the government's failure early on to take the pandemic seriously.

On January 27, 2020, I stood in the House and said to the Minister of Transport, as I was the then shadow minister for transportation, that Canada was the gateway to and from Asia and that we were the jumping-off spot for international travel. Many Europeans and people from all around the world enter our country through our ports and airports and then travel domestically.

● (1120)

I challenged the government at that time on what it was going to do to secure our borders. In response I was called a racist, and I was told I was fearmongering. I challenged the health minister the next week about what steps we were going to take at our airports and ports to ensure those frontline airline and aviation personnel, as well as those on our borders, had the PPE they needed to stay safe. Again, I was chastised for fearmongering.

At every step of the way, we have seen that the government has not heeded any of the early warnings. If it had, we would not be at the end of third wave. Hopefully, we will not get into a fourth wave. What stopped the third wave, or put the brakes on the third wave, was the fact that the government had to get into or apply to the COVAX program, an international program that was designed to supply underdeveloped countries with the vaccines necessary to weather the storm.

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Our Prime Minister is with other world leaders as we speak, talking about how COVID has impacted the world and how it really changes our perspective. We talk about getting back to normal, but what does that normal look like? Then we talk about the new normal. This report has 10 recommendations that the government could hopefully heed. As I alluded to earlier, as a member of Parliament, I have been part of a number of different studies. Sadly, what I have seen is that the recommendations go unheeded, much as they did back in January 2020, at the very beginning of this pandemic.

If only the government had heeded our recommendations and questions at that time, I believe Canada would be in a far better state than we are today. Perhaps we would not be in a third wave. Perhaps things would be opening up. Perhaps Canadians would be able to see their relatives and loved ones, and hug them and be with them.

We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel, which is great. However, this report details some things Canada could do to make sure that, if heaven forbid, another global pandemic were to take place, Canada would be right there, prepared to help not only here at home but also on the world stage. That is rightfully where we should be. That is our position. Canada should always be that beacon of hope. Canada should be there to lend that helping hand.

As I mentioned, there were 10 recommendations. I read out recommendation 1. The second recommendation is:

That, by allocating new funding, the Government of Canada increase its contributions to international humanitarian appeals in line with the growing demands on the humanitarian system, while ensuring that assistance reaches the most vulnerable people based on need, including in relation to food security, child protection, education and health care in emergency settings, psychosocial support, and gender-based violence prevention and response services.

Again, I hope our government heeds these recommendations. Our hon. colleague, in his intervention, mentioned three important recommendations. I want to go to the third one that I think is important:

That Canada lead and coordinate, with like-minded nations, an expansion of a feminist agenda specifically addressing domestic abuse and gender-based violence during COVID lockdowns....

That is a feminist agenda. We know that our government holds that dear to its heart. We know that the incidents of domestic violence, suicidal ideation and anxiety have been felt here at home, which is why we challenged the government to implement 988, a simple three-digit suicide prevention hotline.

• (1125)

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really was paying attention to the member's speech, and he talked about how this House does not belong to us. He said that it belongs to the people who trusted us to come here, represent them and do the work that they require us to do to move this country forward.

Therefore, why is the member's party preventing legislation that would provide support to local businesses in Canada and to workers here in Canada? Why has his party been voting consistently against providing that support to Canadians?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, the comments from my hon. colleague, for whom I have great respect, are simply mislead-

ing. Every step of the way, we have worked tirelessly on a team Canada approach. Sadly, what we have seen is a government that chooses to do whatever it wants to do. The Liberals are in power. They have their legislative agenda. Why are they dithering and delaying on the important pieces of legislation that they would like to see brought forward?

We have, in full honesty, worked diligently since the very beginning in offering a full team Canada approach. I am saddened by the comments from my hon. colleague. I know she is better than that.

• (1130)

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, everything that the member has said could have easily been said during what was supposed to be debated today, which is the budget bill.

The Conservative Party of Canada is playing a destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons. The Conservatives' intention is not to have a genuine debate on the issue. That is the reason why they moved adjournment. Their irresponsible behaviour is at a great cost to Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

When is the Conservative Party of Canada going to stop playing the political, partisan games that it has been playing for the last little while so the government can continue to work with willing opposition parties to serve Canadians well in the House of Commons, as opposed to the games being played by the Conservatives? We want to work. Why does the Conservative Party not want to work? Why does it want to play a destructive force?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, that is simply not true. This is coming from a government that prorogued last summer right when Canadians were desperate for their relief programs, which were just about to end. Why did the Liberals prorogue? They prorogued to cover up another scandal by the government, by this Prime Minister.

It is absolutely false, and again there are more falsehoods coming from the other side. It is really disappointing when we have tried so hard to work in concert with the government, and at every step of the way, it has either prorogued Parliament or filibustered at committees. It is the most corrupt government that we have ever seen, and I am appalled by that question.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech, and the previous speaker's as well, regarding this report and their work on direction and control. The government stated that Canada would be back on the international stage, and yet the record does not show that. I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

Routine Proceedings

I understand from previous Conservative administrations that Canada's percentage of foreign aid was up to 0.55%, or fifty-five pennies out of a hundred dollars of gross net income, under the Mulroney government. It was up to 0.37% and 0.38% under the Harper government, yet in the last several years, it has hovered between 0.26% and 0.28%.

The Liberals say they are back, yet we continue to drop in our place in the world. I wonder if my colleague could comment.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely right. We have seen the government master very well the manipulation of the media in spinning the story about how Canada is back. What we have really seen is that the Liberals have taken first nations children to court, that they are a government plagued by scandal, and that they continue to only look after their Liberal friends and family. This is a shame. It is truly shocking.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I hope Canadians can see and understand what is going on here, which is that the Conservatives are being a destructive force in the House. They are intentionally doing everything they can to prevent legislation from getting through.

The previous member just said a few minutes ago that he wanted to work with the government, yet what they are trying to oppose right now, what they are trying to prevent from getting to a vote, is a motion to extend the hours of the House so we can continue to do that work on behalf of Canadians.

Canadians should also know and realize that it is only the Conservatives who are playing these games. The NDP and the Bloc are clearly demonstrating that they want to be part of putting forward legislation.

One has to ask oneself, what is it that the Conservatives do not want to see get put forward as legislation? What legislation are they so afraid of? I would argue that it is Bill C-6, a bill to ban conversion therapy. We saw the tactics that they were up to on Friday, intentionally delaying the House.

A member is heckling me right now. I do not think we have to go too far into her record to see how she feels about conversion therapy.

They are intentionally trying to prevent the House from moving forward on progressive legislation such as conversion therapy. We saw what they did on Friday. They held up the House so that we could not debate that. They are doing it again now. They do not want legislation that will protect Canadians, particularly members of our LGBTQ community, to pass in the House.

I am proud to stand with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP to make sure that legislation like Bill C-6 gets put into law as quickly as possible.

With that, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

• (1135)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 139*)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Bachrach
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baker
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bessette
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blois
Boudrias	Boulerice
Bratina	Brière
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Champagne
Champoux	Charbonneau
Chen	Cormier
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hardie
Harris	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Julian	Kelloway

Privilege

Khalid	Khera	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Epp
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Kwan	Lalonde	Fast	Findlay
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Gallant	Généreux
Lamoureux	Larouche	Genuis	Gladu
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Godin	Gourde
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Gray	Hallan
Lefebvre	Lemire	Harder	Hoback
Lightbound	Long	Jansen	Jeneroux
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Kelly	Kent
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor	Kitchen	Kmiec
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Kram	Kurek
Manly	Marcil	Kusie	Lake
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Lawrence	Lehoux
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Lewis (Essex)	Liepert
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCrimmon	Lloyd	Lobb
McDonald	McGuinty	Lukiwski	MacKenzie
McKay	McKenna	Maguire	Martel
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McPherson	Mendicino	McColeman	McLean
Michaud	Miller	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Melillo
Monsef	Morrissey	Moore	Morantz
Murray	Ng	Morrison	Motz
Normandin	O'Connell	Nater	O'Toole
Oliphant	O'Regan	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perron	Poilievre	Rayes
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon	Redekopp	Reid
Powlowski	Qaqqaq	Rempel Garner	Richards
Qualtrough	Ratansi	Rood	Ruff
Regan	Robillard	Sahota (Calgary Skyview)	Saroya
Rodriguez	Rogers	Scheer	Schmale
Romanado	Sahota (Brampton North)	Seeback	Shields
Saini	Saks	Shin	Shiple
Sangha	Sarai	Sloan	Soroka
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia	Stanton	Steinley
Schiefke	Schulte	Strahl	Stubbs
Serré	Sgro	Sweet	Tochor
Shanahan	Sheehan	Uppal	Van Popta
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Vecchio	Vidal
Simard	Simms	Viersen	Vis
Singh	Sorbara	Wagantall	Warkentin
Spengemann	Ste-Marie	Waugh	Webber
Tabbara	Tassi	Williamson	Wong
Thériault	Therrien	Yurdiga	Zimmer — 120
Trudel	Turnbull		
Van Bynen	van Koeverden		
Vandal	Vandenbeld		
Vaughan	Vignola		
Virani	Weiler		
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould		
Yip	Young		
Zahid	Zann		
Zuberi — 205			

PAIRED

Nil

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED BREACHES OF PRIVILEGE PRESENTED IN THE SECOND REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege.

Today, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics tabled its second report. Following the notice I gave you earlier today once that report was tabled, I would like to present you, Madam Speaker, with this question of privilege.

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alleslev
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Calkins
Carrie	Chiu
Chong	Cooper
Cumming	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	d'Entremont
Diotte	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen

Privilege

The second report represents the culmination of the ethics committee's study of the Liberal government's ethical messes, created under the guise of helping Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic, all amounting to a pattern of corrupt behaviour. I will set that aside for a moment.

It also presents the House with what I believe are several contempts and breaches of privilege. I should thank the Chair in advance for the indulgence in hearing my submission because regrettably the second report lays out no fewer than seven matters of privilege. Thankfully though, several of them can be grouped together under common themes, which should help us move through some of those points more efficiently.

For everyone's benefit, and in my view, there are three breaches concerning the failure of witnesses to appear before the ethics committee as ordered by this House on March 25. Then there are a further three breaches concerning the government's instruction to those witnesses to defy an order of the House. Finally, there is a matter of misleading or interfering with the evidence provided to committees by the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth.

Let me start with the witnesses' failure to appear. On March 25, the House of Commons ordered, as recorded at pages 699 and 700 of the Journals, the following:

That, with a view to support the authority of committees in their important inquiries of public interest:

- (a) regarding the study on questions of conflict of interest and lobbying in relation to pandemic spending by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

It continues:

- (ii) Rick Theis, the Prime Minister's Director of Policy and Cabinet Affairs, be ordered to appear before the committee on Monday, March 29, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.,
- (iii) Amitpal Singh, the Deputy Prime Minister's Policy Advisor, be ordered to appear before the committee on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.,
- (iv) Ben Chin, the Prime Minister's Senior Advisor, be ordered to appear before the committee on Thursday, April 8, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.

Further down, it states:

- (c) should the Prime Minister instead appear before the committees mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b), at any of the dates and times mentioned, for at least three hours, the witness otherwise scheduled to appear, and any other witnesses scheduled to appear before the same committee at a later time, be relieved of their obligation to appear pursuant to this order.

This mode of proceeding whereby the House adopts an order in aid of committee proceedings might be unusual, it is not irregular. Australia's *Oggers' Australian Senate Practice*, 14th edition, for example, notes at page 51, "The Senate may order particular witnesses to appear before committees. The Senate may also order documents to be produced to committees."

In any event, appendix A of the second report informs us that the committee agreed to report to the House through that appendix that each of the three witnesses were absent at the appointed times. Furthermore, appendix A confirms that the Prime Minister did not appear on behalf of the three witnesses as the House permitted in its order.

It is well known that a question of privilege must be raised at the earliest opportunity. Given that the March 25 decision of the House

makes a hybrid creation of a House order an exclusive aid of a committee proceeding, it raises the question as to the correct venue for bringing forward a complaint concerning any breach.

Our procedural authorities suggest that when committees are involved, the matter must first come to the House through a committee report. Pages 152 and 153 of Marc Bosc and André Gagnon's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, confirms. It states, "Speakers have consistently ruled that, except in the most extreme situations, they will hear questions of privilege arising from committee proceedings only upon presentation of a report from the committee which deals directly with the matter and not as a question of privilege raised by an individual Member."

● (1225)

On April 12, that is to say on the first day the House sat following the absence of the witnesses, the law clerk and parliamentary counsel was a witness at the ethics committee, and I asked him for his advice in this exchange.

At page 22 of the evidence, I asked:

In this specific case, sir, of an order of the House being issued for persons to appear at committee and documents to be presented or delivered to committee, what process needs to be followed? Does it first need to be referred by the committee chair to the House, or as it is an order of the House, can the issue simply be raised by a member to the Speaker directly?

The law clerk replied:

Normally, the Speakers have indicated in rulings that, if a matter relates to a committee and to information to be provided to a committee, it would generally be the practice to wait for the committee to first address it, giving the opportunity to the committee to determine it is satisfied.

On the basis of the advice I received, I awaited completion of the ethics committee's work before raising this matter on the floor of the House of Commons, as I am doing right now.

Before moving along, there is one further timing aspect I should speak to since I anticipate the Liberals may address it when they answer these arguments. The committee agreed to request a response pursuant to Standing Order 109 from the government to the report. While Standing Order 109 bars motions for concurrence in the report until the response is tabled or 120 days have elapsed, whichever comes first, I would respectfully submit that this constitutes no barrier to a question of privilege.

Bosc and Gagnon are, for example, silent on the matter. Moreover, Standing Order 48(1) clearly directs "Whenever any matter of privilege arises, it shall be taken into consideration immediately."

Page 81 of Bosc and Gagnon describes breaches of privilege and contempts of Parliament. It states:

Any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its Members, either by an outside person or body, or by a Member of the House, is referred to as a "breach of privilege" and is punishable by the House. There are, however, other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege: tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; ...or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands...

Bosc and Gagnon, on the very next page, favourably refers to the 1999 report of the United Kingdom Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege that attempted to set out various categories of known contempt. The eighth item in that list is “without reasonable excuse, failing to attend before the House or a committee after being summoned to do so.” It is followed by the tenth item “without reasonable excuse, disobeying a lawful order of the House or a committee.”

The point is made even more succinctly at paragraph 15.5 of Erskine May's *Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 25th edition, which states “Witnesses who refuse to appear may commit a contempt.”

Paragraph 15.7 meanwhile states:

A particular rule which, if disobeyed, may give rise to proceedings for contempt is the refusal or neglect of a witness or other person to attend either House or a committee when summoned to do so.

These issues go to the heart of Parliament's privileges, a body of law which allows us to carry out duties and responsibilities on behalf of our constituents and whose origins are ancient and anchored in the Canadian Constitution.

Page 137 of Bosc and Gagnon observes the following:

By virtue of the preamble and section 18 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, Parliament has the ability to institute its own inquiries, to require the attendance of witnesses and to order the production of documents, rights which are fundamental to its proper functioning. These rights are as old as Parliament itself...

● (1230)

Indeed, paragraph 234 of the 1999 U.K. report that I just mentioned notes, “At least since Elizabethan times committees have been examining matters where witnesses were required to appear.” To be clear, that is not referring to our present sovereign, but to Her Majesty's namesake who reigned as Queen of England from 1558 to 1603.

Derek Lee, a former Liberal member of the House, for his part, at page 6 of his 1999 book *The Power of Parliamentary Houses to Send for Persons, Papers & Records*, dates the origin of this power back to the reign of King Edward III, which spanned half of the 14th century.

Alpheus Todd, a former parliamentary librarian, wrote in his 1840 book *The Practice and Privileges of the Two Houses of Parliament*, at page 313, “It is an essential and undisputed privilege of both Houses of Parliament, which they possess in common with every other court, to summon Witnesses before them for examination upon any subject on which they may require information to guide them in their deliberations.”

The breadth of these powers rooted in our established role as grand inquest of the nation is described at page 190 of Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, “The only limitations, which could only be self-imposed, would be that any inquiry should relate to a subject within the legislative competence of Parliament, particularly where witnesses and documents are required and the penal jurisdiction of Parliament is contemplated. This dovetails with the right of each House of Parliament to summon and compel the attendance of all persons within the limits of their jurisdictions.”

Privilege

A moment ago, I referred to the principle that breaches of privilege at the committee level should first be reported from the committee. Bosc and Gagnon provides some examples of such reports, at page 153, which states:

Most matters which have been reported by committees have concerned the behaviour of Members, witnesses or the public, or the disregard of a committee order. Committees have reported to the House on the refusal of witnesses to appear when summoned; the refusal of witnesses to answer questions; the refusal of witnesses to provide papers or records; the refusal of individuals to obey orders of a committee; the divulging of events during an in camera meeting; the disclosure of draft reports; and witnesses lying to a committee. Committees could report on instances of contempt, such as behaviour showing disrespect for the authority or activities of a committee, the intimidation of members or witnesses, or witnesses refusing to be sworn in.

Maingot, at pages 239 and 240, outlines how Messrs. Theis, Singh and Chin's disregard of the March 25 order of the House amounts to contempt:

Disobedience to rules or orders represents an affront to the dignity of the House, and accordingly the House could take action, not simply for satisfaction but to ensure that the House of Commons is held in the respect necessary for its authority to be vindicated. Without proper respect, the House of Commons could not function. Thus, disobedience may well be considered contempt, bearing in mind that the House will, in mitigation of any punishment that may be imposed, be mindful of the surrounding circumstances.

Disobedience of rules or orders is an obvious contempt and would include refusing to attend at the Bar of the House after the House had so ordered, refusing to personally attend and to produce the documents requested by a committee (the formal contempt would only be recognized when the committee reported the incident to the House and the House took action)...

As I noted, the matter of a House order for a witness to attendance at a committee is not a common creature. Nonetheless, our House has experienced this disobedience to its orders for witnesses to appear in the House.

Pages 130 to 132 of Bosc and Gagnon recount some of these examples. The first two entries relevant to this question of privilege begin on page 130:

On March 31 and April 1, 1874, Louis Riel (Provencher) was ordered to attend in his place in the House for having fled from justice in the matter of the Red River Rebellion and the murder of Thomas Scott. He failed to attend and was later expelled from the House....

In 1891, the Public Accounts Committee reported that André Sénécal, an employee of the Government Printing Bureau, had failed to appear when called as a witness. The House adopted a motion summoning him to appear at the Bar. When he failed to do so, the House ordered that he be taken into the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms, who could not locate him. No further action was taken.

● (1235)

The latter case concerning Mr. Sénécal, a public servant holding the office of superintendent of printing, begins in the House's records at page 454 of Journals on August 27, 1891, when the public accounts committee reported that Mr. Sénécal failed to appear when summoned, though the sought-after witness claimed he was following medical advice and, furthermore, had offered his resignation from his government position.

While Bosc and Gagnon noted that no further action was taken concerning Mr. Sénécal, it was not for a lack of trying. The acting sergeant-at-arms, Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Smith, informed the House, at column 4747 of the Debates for September 1, 1891:

Privilege

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to report that the witness Senécal left Ottawa on or about the 24th ultimo, and, although I have made careful enquiry, I have been unable to ascertain his present whereabouts. In consequence of his absence, the Order for him to attend at the Bar of the House this afternoon, was left with a member of his family at his Ottawa residence.

A further incident, this one involving a member of the House being investigated in a corruption scandal, is recounted by Bosc and Gagnon at page 136. It states:

In 1891, Thomas McGreevy (Quebec West) was accused by Israel Tarte (Montmorency) of corrupt practices concerning construction work in the harbour at Quebec City, and the matter was referred by the House to the Select Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections. Mr. McGreevy refused to answer questions put to him while appearing before the Committee. The Committee reported this to the House on August 12, 1891, and requested that the House take action. On August 13, Mr. McGreevy was ordered by the House to attend in his place on August 18. On that day, Mr. McGreevy was found not to be in attendance and the Sergeant-at-Arms was ordered to take the Member into custody.

The records of the House concerning Mr. McGreevy show that the orders of the House were not mere words printed on paper. When Mr. McGreevy did not appear at the appointed hour on August 18, 1891, column 4001 of the Debates shows that Mr. Speaker Peter White updated the House on the matter. He stated:

I am informed by the Clerk that a copy of the Order of the House of Thursday last, duly signed by himself, was forwarded by post on Friday last to Hon. Thomas McGreevy at Quebec, when it was learned that he was not at Ottawa, and a telegram communicating the Order was at the same time sent to him at Quebec. The manager of the North-Western Telegraph Company at Quebec has informed the Clerk that the telegram was duly delivered to Hon. Thomas McGreevy on Friday last at 2.45 p.m., in the office of the Richelieu and Ottawa Navigation Company.

When the House ordered Mr. McGreevy into custody, Lieutenant-Colonel Smith did not just keep a copy of the order in his pocket; he jumped on a train and he went in pursuit of the absconding MP. Page 422 of the Journals for August 20, 1891, reveals the following entry:

Mr. Speaker informed the House, that, in pursuance of the Order of the House of the 18th instant, he had issued his Warrant to the Acting Sergeant-at-Arms for the taking into custody of the Honourable Thomas McGreevy, and that he had received the following report from that office:—

House of Commons
Ottawa, 20th August, 1891.

Sir, — I have the honour to report that I reached Quebec yesterday, at 3 o'clock, p.m., and at once made diligent search for Mr. Thomas McGreevy at his residence, office and other places, but could not find him. Later I was informed, on what I considered good authority, that he had left Quebec by the Grand Trunk Railway, but I was unable to ascertain his destination. I have no doubt that he left Quebec several hours before I arrive in that city.

I have the honour to be, sir

Your obedient servant,

Henry R. Smith,

Acting Sergeant-at-Arms, House of Commons

In the end, the privileges committee, which had been investigating the corruption allegation against Mr. McGreevy, completed its work and reported back to the House. Bosc and Gagnon note the outcome at page 136:

On September 29, the House adopted a resolution finding Mr. McGreevy guilty of contempt of the authority of the House by not attending in his place when ordered, as well as being guilty of certain other offences. The House then adopted a second resolution expelling Mr. McGreevy.

This was based on the findings of the privileges committee.

• (1240)

Going back to Bosc and Gagnon's list, which I introduced earlier, at pages 131 and 132, the next relevant case is the following:

In 1894, two witnesses (Jean Baptiste Provost and Omer Edouard Larose) failed to appear when summoned as witnesses before the Privileges and Elections Committee. The Committee reported this and asked for "the action of the House". A motion was adopted summoning the two witnesses to appear before the Bar. They failed to comply and the House ordered them to be taken into the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms in order to be brought to the Bar of the House. They later appeared, answered questions and were discharged.

This 1894 case concerned two Quebec City grocers who failed to appear when summoned by a committee that was undertaking another corruption investigation respecting a member. They based their refusal on the fact they had not been advanced money for their travel expenses. The witnesses persisted in their refusal, even in the face of an order of the House of Commons but, as noted, the House ordered them into custody and the Sergeant-at-Arms saw to it.

Upon being called to the bar, Mr. Provost and Mr. Larose were each asked by Prime Minister Sir John Thompson the same two questions recorded at pages 299 and 300 of the Journals for June 13, 1894, which state:

1. Have you any explanation to offer of your disobedience to the summons of the Select Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections of this House requiring your attendance before the Committee, and of the Order of The House requiring your attendance at the Bar of The House?

2. Are you prepared to undertake to The House that you will, if relieved from custody, attend and testify before the Select Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections at the first meeting of the Committee and at each meeting thereafter until relieved from further attendance?

Following the two witnesses' positive answers to the latter question, the House discharged them from the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms.

As for a witness defying an order to appear at committee, at page 548, Odgers comments that Australian Senate orders of this nature have had a different experience from our March 25 order. It states:

In all such cases the orders were complied with and witnesses duly appeared, or, in one case, required documents were produced. They were all public office-holders; this procedure has not been used in respect of private citizens.

The United Kingdom's House of Commons on the other hand, quite recently had an experience closer to our own. In 2018, that House's Digital Culture, Media and Sport Committee reported to the House that as part of its study into "fake news" it had invited, then ordered, Dominic Cummings, who had been the campaign director for the Vote Leave campaign in the 2016 Brexit referendum to appear for the purpose of giving evidence.

Mr. Cummings defied the order and on June 5, 2018, that committee reported to the House that his absence "constitutes a serious interference with the ability of this Committee to discharge the task assigned to it by the House."

In response, on June 7, 2018, the U.K. House of Commons passed the following motions recorded at pages 1 and 2 of the Votes and Proceedings:

Resolved, That this House takes note of the Third Special Report of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (HC 1115);

Ordered, That Mr Dominic Cummings give an undertaking to the Committee, no later than 6 pm on 11 June 2018, to appear before that Committee at a time on or before 20 June 2018.

Page 5 of the Votes and Proceedings for June 20, 2018, shows that the committee's chair reported to the House that Mr. Cummings failed to comply with the House's orders. Then on June 28, 2018, the House referred the matter to its committee on privileges. After the privileges committee reported back to the House of Commons—

• (1245)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member is clearly using a question of privilege, which is a sacred tool to be used in the House under very important and exceptional circumstances, for the sole purpose of delaying a debate on the very important motion of extending the hours of the House. I would ask you to consider the clear objective and motive of what he is doing and perhaps encourage him to allow the House to get on with the business that Canadians rightfully deserve of us.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Chair, on that point of order, I would encourage all members to stay and hear my response on points of order.

The issue I am raising is of tremendous importance to the House. The timing of this item being referred to the House is directly dictated by the government. First, the government sets the agenda of the House. Second, this was the first available opportunity that I had to rise following the tabling of the report by the committee chair, which contained the report back from him that these witnesses had failed to appear.

With respect to the importance of this versus the importance of the item the member wishes to debate, this item deals with an order of the House passed by a majority of members that ordered witnesses to appear. It was not complied with.

I will continue, with the Chair's permission, to make the case as to why it is an affront to parliamentary democracy when an order of the House is defied. I have not been repetitive in what I have offered. I have not deviated from the subject at hand. As I have said, I raised this at the first available opportunity and did notify you, Madam Speaker, at least one hour prior to my rising on this point. I appreciate your consideration.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The member has been talking about Louis Riel and train robberies. That is literally what he has been talking about.

This is going to make a great video later on for showing how the Conservatives are filibustering the House. I am sure that the member does not want his constituents in his riding, which is less than 100 kilometres from here, to find out about the antics he has been up to.

However, there certainly has to be some form of relevance here when you, Madam Speaker, are considering this.

Privilege

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am going to listen to advice and will be back in a few moments.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, the relevance of the point that the member has mentioned is that it dealt with individuals who were found in contempt of this place. Individuals failing to follow an order of the House may be found by the House to be in contempt.

One of the issues at hand is that we had ministers of the crown interfere with an order of this House by instructing witnesses, who had been ordered by this place to appear at committee, not to appear. The comparison between what may be found in contempt, with the example given by the member of Louis Riel, and the potential for contempt by ministers of the crown to have openly and publicly stated in written form that they instructed individuals to defy an order of the House is certainly—

• (1250)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I get the hon. member's point. I will get back to the House.

On advice, I would like to remind the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes that:

A Member recognized on a question of privilege is expected to be brief and concise in explaining the event which has given rise to the question of privilege and the reasons that consideration of the event complained of should be given precedence over other House business.

I will give the hon. member a few more minutes to make his point. This is just a reminder to be concise in explaining his reasons.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, in spite of the outburst from the member for Kingston and the Islands, I would note that as a courtesy to the House, I have combined multiple questions of privilege into this one. If the Chair would prefer, I can rise in succession on each point, but this will certainly be more brief than if I were to do that. However, I am not just raising one question of privilege. I note in your ruling that this does take precedence over the orders of the day. It is important to the function of this place. I will continue.

While the member for Kingston and the Islands continues to interrupt and is very concerned about the constituents in my riding of Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, I can assure him that Canadians are very disappointed that the government has found itself filibustering committees for 43 hours at ethics, 73 hours at Procedure and House Affairs and 35 hours at the Standing Committee on Finance. The Liberals shut down the study at the national defence committee by filibustering for more than 16 hours. I could go on with that list, so while the member for Kingston and the Islands continues to interrupt the proceedings of this place with his suggestions about how long this should take, I think that the precedents and the orders of this place have been quite clear and that for me to raise the multiple breaches of privilege of this place, which are older than any of us and are as old as this place itself, is tremendously important, so I will continue.

Privilege

In response, the United Kingdom House of Commons on June 7, 2018, passed the following motion recorded at pages 1 and 2 of Votes and Proceedings:

Resolved, That this House takes note of the Third Special Report of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (HC 1115);

Ordered, That Mr Dominic Cummings give an undertaking to the Committee, no later than 6 pm on 11 June 2018, to appear before that Committee at a time on or before 20 June 2018.

Page 5 of the Votes and Proceedings for June 20, 2018, shows that the committee's chair reported to the House that Mr. Cummings failed to comply with the order of the House.

Then on June 20, 2018, the House referred the matter to its Committee of Privileges. After the privileges committee reported back to the House of Commons, the House on April 2, 2019, adopted a motion on the committee's recommendation finding Mr. Cummings in contempt, and admonished him as recorded on page 1 of the Votes and Proceedings.

In opening this segment of my presentation, I referred to Bosc and Gagnon adding a caveat of "without reasonable excuse". The present case, I would argue, can be dealt with very quickly considering that none of the three witnesses offered any excuse for their absence.

I acknowledge that two cabinet ministers wrote to the ethics committee chair to indicate that they would appear on behalf of the witnesses, but that does not constitute an excuse from the witnesses personally. In the alternative, I would say it does not amount to a reasonable excuse.

While I plan to address the government's position that staff are not compellable witnesses when I make my argument that the government's interference with the March 25 order of the House constitutes prima facie contempt in its own right, I have a few brief points at this juncture.

First, the government, through its House leader, advanced this position in debate in the House on March 25, yet the House still adopted the motion for this order.

Second, the House's order did actually permit someone to appear on a substituted basis in the name of ministerial responsibility: the Prime Minister. However, he did not appear as permitted by the order.

Third, the ethics committee did not accept the government's position. This can be seen from the comments in the second report as well as from the records of the meetings the witnesses were due to attend.

Fourth, should the Chair hold the view that it could still be weighed as a possible reasonable excuse, I would submit that the place to do that at this stage is through an amendment to any privilege motion that might arise from this proceeding on the basis the government can test the will of the House for its perspective on these matters.

● (1255)

In this case, it is quite clear. The House adopted an order, and the order was breached completely. There was no effort by the witnesses to meet it in any way, nor was any excuse advanced by them to

be weighed by the House or for the committee to assess and report its findings. Therefore, with respect to the first three matters of privilege, the absence of Mr. Theis, Mr. Singh and Mr. Chin, I respectfully submit that you, Madam Speaker, should find prima facie contempt here.

On the next question of privilege, I wish to turn to the government's role in preventing Mr. Theis, Mr. Singh and Mr. Chin from appearing as witnesses at the committee. The government has freely admitted to this course of conduct, both in advance and at the time of the scheduled appearances.

In his remarks to the House on March 25, the government House leader said, at page 5,234 of Debates:

I say here today that ministers will instruct their staff not to appear when called before committees and that the government will send ministers instead to account for their actions.

Though I find such an openly defiant attitude to be contemptuous in and of itself, I will speak to the specific instances of interference concerning the three witnesses.

In advance of the March 29 ethics committee meeting, the government House leader sent a letter to the chair of the ethics committee, further to his statement to the House the week before, writing:

Accordingly, Mr Rick Theis, Director of Policy to the Prime Minister, has been instructed to not appear before the committee. In his place, I will attend the meeting on behalf of the government on Monday, March 29th.

We are not talking about train robberies anymore.

On May 3, at a meeting of the ethics committee originally convened on April 23, the committee adopted a motion, which can be found in appendix A of the second report, that says, at paragraph 5, that the committee noted that the government House leader appeared on Monday, March 29, 2021 instead of Rick Theis, "who followed the government instructions that staff are not to appear before committees which were outlined during the debate in the House on Thursday, March 25, 2021".

I would like to add that the ethics committee did not accept the government House leader as a substitute witness in satisfaction of the order. Indeed, the committee, at the March 29 meeting, adopted a motion that states, "in relation to its study on questions of conflict of interest and lobbying in relation to pandemic spending, the committee invite [the minister] to appear." He was treated as a separate witness, invited independently of and without any link to the March 25 order of the House.

When the government House leader appeared at the committee, he said, at page 13 of Evidence:

Based on the instructions I gave the other day, it was clear to Mr. Theis and other individuals that they wouldn't appear before committees and would be replaced by the appropriate ministers....

The minister even acknowledged, at page 8 of the evidence, that this was an unsatisfactory arrangement to the majority of the House, when he said:

I am aware that some of the members of this committee would rather be hearing from a staff member from the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Rick Theis, but as I told the House last week and I want to make clear again, we fundamentally disagree with [that] decision....

At page 22, I asked whether Mr. Theis would have been fired had he ignored the government instruction and honoured the order of the House of Commons. The government House leader denied it, but defensively added, "Why are you asking that?"

Now, we turn to the other two witnesses: Mr. Singh and Mr. Chin.

In a letter addressed to the chair of the committee on March 30, the Associate Minister of Finance wrote:

Mr. Amitpal Singh has been instructed to not appear before the committee. In his place, I will attend the meeting on behalf of the government on Wednesday, 31 March 2021.

In another letter to the committee's chair, on April 7, the associate minister wrote:

Mr. Ben Chin has been instructed to not appear before the committee. In his place, I will attend the meeting on behalf of the government on Thursday, 8 April 2021.

The same motion adopted by the committee on May 3 and recorded in appendix A of the second report acknowledged, at paragraph 6, that the committee noted that the Associate Minister of Finance "also requested to appear on [Wednesday] March 31 and [Thursday] April 8, 2021 on behalf of witnesses Amitpal Singh and Ben Chin who followed the government instructions that staff are not to appear before committees which were outlined during the debate in the House on [Thursday] March 25, 2021".

● (1300)

Earlier in my remarks, I cited page 81 of Bosc and Gagnon on a description of privilege, which is equally applicable in this separate question of privilege. From the list, which I had mentioned can be found at page 82, I would refer the Chair to the 11th and 13th items: "interfering with or obstructing a person who is carrying out a lawful order of the House or a committee" and "intimidating, preventing or hindering a witness from giving evidence or giving evidence in full to the House or a committee".

Clearly, Mr. Theis, Mr. Singh and Mr. Chin were prevented from, and maybe even hindered in their ability of, carrying out a lawful order of the House of Commons, namely giving evidence to the ethics committee.

For his part, Maingot comments on page 240:

Obstructing, interfering with, or preventing execution or orders of the House or of a committee would be akin to aiding and abetting a person to commit an offence. Taking action to prevent an order of the House from being carried out could result in contempt because it also represents an affront to the authority of the House.

McGee's *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, fourth edition, states at page 774:

Any attempt to intimidate, prevent or hinder a witness from giving evidence in full to the House or a committee may be held to be a contempt. Such intimidation or hindrance may be overt (for example, physically preventing a witness from attending and giving evidence) or less overt (for example, offering a bribe to give false testimony, or taking legal action to prevent a witness from giving evidence or from producing all the evidence in his or her possession).

Privilege

Page 1080 of Bosc and Gagnon adds, "Tampering with a witness or in any way attempting to deter a witness from giving evidence may constitute a breach of parliamentary privilege."

Erskine May, at paragraph 15.21, declares, "Any conduct calculated to deter prospective witnesses from giving evidence before either House or a committee is a contempt." The same point is also made in paragraph 38.59. Erskine May expands upon the concept at paragraph 15.22:

A resolution setting out that to tamper with a witness in regard to the evidence to be given before either House or any committee of either House or to endeavour, directly or indirectly, to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence is a contempt, was formerly agreed to by the Commons at the beginning of every session. However, following a report from the Procedure Committee which concluded that the sessional passing of such resolutions, although they had some value as statements of intent, did not add anything to the House's powers to deal with contempts or (in the case of tampering with witnesses or the giving of false evidence on oath) the relevant statutory powers, the House agreed in 2004 to dispense with them.

There have been in the past numerous instances of punishment for offences of this kind. Corruption or intimidation, though a usual, is not an essential ingredient in this offence. It is equally a contempt to attempt by persuasion or solicitations of any kind to induce a witness not to attend, or to withhold evidence or to give false evidence.

This matter was considered in 1935 by a committee of the Commons which reported that, in its opinion, it was a breach of privilege to give any advice to a witness which took the form of pressure or of interference with their freedom to form and express their own opinions honestly in the light of all the facts known to them; and the House resolved that it agreed with the committee in its report.

● (1305)

The annual resolutions referred to in that passage can be traced as far back as February 21, 1700, when the English House of Commons adopted a resolution, at page 350 of Journal, which says:

That if it shall appear that any person hath been tampering with any Witness, in respect of his evidence to be given to this House, or any Committee thereof, or directly or indirectly hath endeavoured to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence, the same is declared to be a high crime and misdemeanour; and this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

Insight into just how severe, even in the case where contrition had been expressed, can be gleaned from Speaker Shaw-Lefevre's admonition of a witness at the bar of the United Kingdom's House of Commons on March 22, 1842, which is recorded at page 143 in Journal. It says:

John Ashworth, any interruption of the proceedings of this House, or of any committees of this House, can only be regarded as contempt of its authority, and your offence is much aggravated by the circumstances under which it took place. By improperly interfering with the testimony of a witness under examination, you did your utmost to obstruct the discovery of truth, and defeat the ends of justice. Such conduct cannot be allowed to pass entirely without censure; but that the House, always anxious to act with lenity, and taking into its consideration the contrition you have expressed, and believing that your offence was unpremeditated, has directed me to admonish you as to your future conduct; and I trust that this admonition will be a warning to others that this House will not deal so leniently with an offence of this description, if repeated by another individual. You are now discharged from further attendance upon this House.

Of course, in today's case, we have had defiance, not contrition, and coordinated planning, not unpremeditated actions.

Maingot, at pages 236 and 237, addresses the protection afforded to witnesses and others besides members and officers when they are engaged in parliamentary proceedings and committees. He says:

Privilege

There do not appear to be any Canadian precedents of persons being so obstructed; yet, because the House of Commons need not be so constrained by lack of precedent, it may in its judgment find a person or persons in contempt after an examination of the facts in any particular case.

In Speaker Milliken's much-celebrated ruling on Afghan detainee documents on April 27, 2010, which we have heard about in recent days, he also made some less well-remembered comments on witness matters, including at page 2,041 of Debates, which says that "the procedural authorities are clear that interference with witnesses may constitute a contempt."

Beyond the matter of the government's so-called "instructions", at page 13 of the ethics committee March 29 evidence, the government House leader made the claim that "ministerial responsibility means that a minister can replace an employee who reports to the minister, not to Parliament."

That is just not so. In fact, it is, in my view, a gross misstatement of several constitutional principles. Even if accepted, the government House leader's position is defeated by the facts. Two of the witnesses are employees of and answer to the Prime Minister, while the third is an employee of the Deputy Prime Minister. Neither of those two ministers offered to replace their employees. Of course, the House contemplated the very possibility of the Prime Minister attending on behalf of his employees, something he failed to do, either in accordance with the order of the House or with the policy articulated by the government House leader.

Ministerial staff enjoy no special status in law. Pages 981 to 983 of Bosc and Gagnon state quite clearly that:

The Standing Orders place no explicit limitation on this power. In theory, it applies to any person on Canadian soil.... In practice, certain limitations are recognized on the power to order individuals to appear. Because committee powers do not extend outside Canadian territory, a committee cannot summon a person who is in another country. The Sovereign (either in Canada or abroad), the Governor General and the provincial lieutenant governors are also exempt from such a summons.

This applies as well to parliamentarians belonging to other Canadian legislatures, because each of these assemblies, like the House of Commons, has the parliamentary privilege of controlling the attendance of its members and any matters affecting them. The same logic explains why a standing committee cannot order a Member of the House of Commons or a Senator to appear. At issue in all these examples is the power to order someone to appear; nothing prevents such individuals from appearing voluntarily before a committee following a simple invitation, apart from the obligation incumbent upon some of them to obtain leave from the House to which they belong....

● (1310)

Although they can send for certain persons, standing committees do not have the power to punish a failure to comply with their orders in this regard. Only the House of Commons has the disciplinary powers needed to deal with this type of offence. If a witness refuses to appear, or does not appear, as ordered, the committee's recourse is to report the matter to the House. Once seized with the matter, the House takes the measures that it considers appropriate.

No where on those lists are ministerial staff exempt or political staff more generally. Moreover, there is no general authority for a minister to come as a substitute, though I would again observe that the House, in crafting its March 25 order, accommodated ministerial responsibility by permitting the Prime Minister to appear on behalf of his employees.

To contrast the government's selective approach to parliamentary accountability for those who work under them, let us look at the 1891 case of Mr. Senécal, the public servant whom I discussed earlier. In that case, Mr. Senécal's own minister sat on the committee

to which he was ordered to attend, and according to the public accounts committee minutes of evidence for August 27, 1891, the minister did not claim some kind of higher principle of ministerial accountability to excuse the witness's absence. The minister stated:

In connection with the letter which has just been read from the Superintendent of Printing, I may say I have had no communication with Mr. Senécal, nor even with his family, and did not even know that such a letter would be sent to the Chairman of the Committee. In justice, however, to a man who is absent, and against whom I suppose it is necessary that the ordinary proceedings should be taken to force his attendance here....

I wish it to be well understood, as I stated before, I know nothing about the whereabouts of Mr. Senécal. I do not want to justify his action in writing a letter, or his leaving. I only think it is just for an absent man, to state what I know to be the case....

A former general legal counsel for this House Diane Davidson wrote in a 1994 paper provided to the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Twenty minutes ago you asked the member to be concise and encouraged him to wrap it up in a few minutes. I am wondering if those few minutes have expired so we can carry on with the business of the day.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, as I noted to you following your ruling, I have multiple questions of privilege. I have moved onto a different question of privilege, as I noted for all members of this House, including the member for Kingston and the Islands, who I know is paying very close attention to what is happening in this place and is not worried about what videos he is going to make about the opposition holding the government to account.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that the member for Kingston and the Islands continues to challenge your authority as Chair, and I think that is despicable. It should not be allowed. I think you need to admonish that individual for continuing to challenge your role.

● (1315)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have been trying to be quite open to the hon. member's position in that the hon. member is presenting multiple points of privilege, but notice was given of one point of privilege.

We have allowed for 45 minutes of presentation and argument. I would invite the member to try to sum it up in the next five minutes or so. We usually allow for the argument on a question of privilege once the Speaker has made a ruling on it.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, my notice to you, respectfully, indicated that I was raising seven questions of privilege. I would invite you, should you require it, to suspend, and I could furnish you with a copy of the letter that was provided to your office, as per the requirement of one hour's notice, or perhaps the table officers would have the opportunity to get that letter for you.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on the point of order mentioned by the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, I would hope that the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes is not challenging the ruling that was just made.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will quote the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes's letter, which was received this morning. It does say, "In the interest of bringing clarity to this procedure from now on, the Chair will not accept notices of questions of privilege based on committee reports until after the reports are tabled", quoting a ruling of Milliken, and which we did. The hon. member goes on to say, "I will argue that the report makes out no fewer than seven breaches of privilege in relation to failures" and it goes on.

The letter refers to one presentation. It says, "Should you find a prima facie case of privilege, I intend to move a motion which I have attached in draft". This is, as I explained earlier, the normal procedure. When we receive notices of questions of privilege, we get a summary of what the question of privilege is. The Speaker then makes a ruling on the order of the question, and then the hon. member will have the opportunity to present the full case.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, as I noted in the letter, there are seven separate questions of privilege, but it did say I would rise once. My indication to the Chair was that I would not rise seven separate times but one time for the efficiency of the House and so as to not waste the Speaker's time.

I would again appeal to that in your consideration of the amount of time afforded me to raise these multiple questions. If it is necessary that I furnish your office with additional letters following the conclusion of this question of privilege so I can raise the outstanding items, if that would lend itself to the efficiency of this place, I defer to your rulings.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I refer you to Speaker Milliken's ruling from October 18, 2006, where he defines the issue of concise. It has nothing to do with length.

Speaker Milliken stated:

It is apparent to me from the examples cited above that the interpretation of the term concise in Standing Order 39(2) has evolved since this rule was first adopted. It is no longer interpreted to mean short or brief but rather comprehensible.

I would argue this definition of concise should apply across the board to all proceedings and to this question of privilege. I have been listening, and the material being presented is relevant and comprehensible to the matters before the House. It is my submission that the member should be allowed to finish his submission.

• (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the member for her contribution.

I will answer the point made by the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. We have allowed for 45 minutes of presentation of arguments so far. Whereas the member claims there are seven different points, they are very similar, as are the arguments the member has brought forth.

Privilege

I will allow for another few minutes of this, but when I am satisfied I have heard enough to go to the consideration of the prima facie case, I will then resume the proceedings.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has the floor.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, a former general legal counsel for this House, Diane Davidson, wrote in a 1994 paper provided to the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations:

As to the status of public servants and Ministers as a question of law only, I would subscribe to the conclusion of the Ontario Law Reform Commission in its 1981 Report on Witnesses Before Legislative Committees...that these witnesses are in the same position as any other witness—in theory they could be compelled to testify on any issue, answer any questions or produce any document. There is no legally guaranteed immunity from Parliament's broad power to call for information, and therefore no special status is conferred.

New Zealand's House of Representatives shares the perspective as McGee notes on page 494:

The power to summon witnesses and order the production of documents is not limited in its application to public servants, Government bodies, or other public agencies. It extends to ordering individuals, corporate and private bodies to appear before the House or a committee to give evidence....

In 2013, the Parliament of the United Kingdom's Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege considered a government green paper on parliamentary privilege that, among other things, asked whether Parliament's ability to compel MPs, civil servants and judges should be extinguished. The committee, at paragraph 87, spoke powerfully against the idea of exempting government employees from the power to send for persons:

Reducing Committees' powers to call for civil servants would rebalance the relationship between the legislature and the Executive in the Executive's favour. The Osmotherly rules, which guide officials in their dealings with Committees of the two Houses, are a creation of the Executive, not of Parliament. As a matter of principle, we see no reason why civil servants should be in a different position from other members of the public.

The law clerk advanced the point that there is no immunity for ministerial staff when he appeared before ethics committee on April 12, and the committee thought fit in appendix A of the second report to include a summary of his evidence on this very point:

Mr. Dufresne stated that political staff and public servants have no immunity, by virtue of their positions, from requests to testify before parliamentary committees. He also suggested that the topics of discussion and the different roles that ministers and political staff play have been factors for deciding which person is the more appropriate witness to testify on a given topic.

As to that point, the authorities tend to describe the tendency to show deference toward public servants because it is, in a system of responsible government, ministers who, quite rightly, ought to account to Parliament for policy choices and overall government administration.

Privilege

In the present case, we are not looking to have Messrs. Theis, Singh and Chin account for the merits of helping young Canadians during a pandemic, nor are we looking to discuss the Canada student service grant concept in its broadest terms as the vehicle to deliver the support. They are, bluntly, fact witnesses who directly participated in a number of transactions that led to WE Charity's partnership with the Liberal government being conceived, developed and refined. They personally possess direct knowledge of various transactions and could assist the committee in connecting many of the dots which ministers and senior officials, evidence and documents have laid out.

Reverting back to appendix A, the ethics committee further noted:

Mr. Dufresne argued that because the House of Commons ordered the witnesses to appear, only the House of Commons has the power to absolve a witness from that order.

In debates this year, the government has sought to compare itself to its predecessor. This was also addressed with the law clerk during his April 12 ethics committee appearance, which is summarized at appendix A:

In response to members' questions, Mr. Dufresne explained that a similar situation occurred in 2010, when a parliamentary committee ordered political staff to appear. At that time, ministers appeared instead of political staff, based on the argument that ministers were the appropriate witnesses to respond to the committee based on the principles of responsible government. However, he noted that that instance was based on an order from the committee and not from the House of Commons.

I would also go further and point out that the committee in question, also the ethics committee, deliberated on escalating the absence of three staff witnesses into a report to the House, but on October 7, 2010, by a five to three vote, negated a motion to make that report.

In the circumstances, I would argue that the 2010 ethics committee had, by majority vote, accepted the substitution of ministers for the staff witnesses. Indeed, as the law clerk observed, the originator of the order, the committee in that case, judged compliance with it, and by voting against taking further action, it demonstrated it was satisfied.

• (1325)

In short, only the originator of an order can assess compliance or give relief from it. Certainly ministers or even Prime Ministers do not have the authority to waive orders of the House respecting witnesses as the government House leader may claim.

Harry Evans, former Clerk of the Senate of Australia, wrote in a January 29, 1993 memorandum to the chairman of the Senate select committee on the powers, functions and operation of the Australian Loan Council, which forms appendix 5 of that committee's March 1993 interim report:

You have sought advice on the hypothesis that...the Prime Minister may have improperly interfered with a potential witness before the Committee by directing or encouraging that person, namely the Treasurer, not to assist the Committee or to appear before it. The Prime Minister enjoys no special immunity from the provisions relating to interference with witnesses.... Evidence that a minister wished to assist a committee and was deterred from doing so by, for example, threats of dismissal from office, could generate proceedings for contempt...

Since then, the Australian Senate has built up a body of experience with respect to the matter of ordering the attendance of ministerial staff at committees. Pages 566 and 567 of Odgers' recounts:

The question has occasionally arisen as to whether Senate committees may summon ministerial staff and departmental liaison officers to appear before them and give evidence. Such persons have no immunity against being summoned to attend and give evidence, either under the rules of the Senate or as a matter of law. Departmental liaison officers are not in any different category from other departmental officers. From time to time it has been suggested that ministerial staff are in a special category and should not give evidence before parliamentary committees. Such staff have, however, appeared before Senate committees and given evidence, both voluntarily and under summons. In February 1995 the then Minister for Finance, Mr Beazley, declined to allow the Director of the National Media Liaison Service (NMLS) to appear before a Senate committee to give evidence about the activities of the NMLS on the ground that that person was a member of ministerial staff. The Senate passed a resolution directing that person to appear before the committee, and he subsequently appeared and gave evidence accordingly. The preamble to the Senate's resolution pointed out that the NMLS was provided with public funds, and it was stated in debate that the resolution did not set a precedent for summoning ministerial staff, but the passage of the resolution indicates—

• (1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I call the hon. member to order. I think I have heard the gist of the question of privilege and we will proceed to orders of the day. I have made the decision.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wanted to let you know that the NDP reserves the right to be able to respond to this question of privilege.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is duly noted.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Manicouagan.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, same for the Bloc Québécois. We reserve the right to respond at a later time.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, if you find it acceptable, I would like a future opportunity to perhaps furnish your office with some of my arguments in a written form. After having heard from other colleagues, I would also note that while the Chair has decided that the points were similar to this point, I would also offer respectfully that there is an issue dissimilar to those points in the matter of a minister of the Crown misleading a committee during testimony. I offer that for the Chair's consideration.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will submit the whole document.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS IN JUNE

The House resumed from June 9, consideration of Government Business Motion No. 8, and of the amendment.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to discuss the motion moved by the Liberal Party that seeks to give us more time at the end of the session so we can continue to work on bills and extend our sitting hours. This will apply to three weekdays. On Monday and Wednesday, the House will sit until midnight, and on Friday, until 4:30 p.m.

That was not what was originally proposed. This is never usually a problem, because members here, especially Bloc Québécois members, are hard workers. When we are asked to sit longer, we almost always gladly say yes. We still have many bills to get through, and this will allow us to move them forward. At the same time, this year is different, which has made the debate a little more challenging, to say the least. After listening to the Conservatives for the past two days, it is fair to say that the debate has been a little more challenging.

This process normally runs like clockwork, so why is it more difficult this year?

It is because of the pandemic. We are working in a hybrid Parliament, and that complicates things. Because of the hybrid Parliament, we are currently having trouble keeping the committees operating as they should. We need to make choices because resources are limited and our incredible interpreters are overworked. We need to consider that the more time we spend in the House, the less time we will be able to spend in committee. That is a basic economic concept called “opportunity cost”. The gain from choosing one alternative means taking a loss somewhere else.

That is why the debate was a bit more acrimonious. I say that with all due respect. That is also why we discussed this issue with the government. The initial proposal would have eliminated eight committee meetings a week, which is huge. As we know, the work that committees do is extremely important. Eliminating eight committee meetings a week for the benefit of the House is all well and good, but it would have made the committee work more difficult. That is why time allocation was imposed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I see the hon. member for Jonquière is rising on a point of order.

• (1335)

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, did I hear my colleague from La Prairie say that he would be sharing his time with me?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, I am very sorry. My hon. colleague from Jonquière is absolutely right. I mentioned it, but I used my inner voice. I was unable to speak because my lips were zipped. It happens sometimes and I am very sorry.

You are very kind, Madam Speaker, to give us a chance to share our time. You will not regret it because the member for Jonquière is a great orator. You will be impressed by what he has to say.

Government Orders

Now, for the matter at hand. That reduced the amount of time we would have liked to have in the House. Of course, we must understand that these are extraordinary circumstances. In addition to the pandemic, which is complicating the work that we do in the House and in committee because of limited resources, there is something else going on. I will give my colleagues the scoop. They will be impressed by what I know. We are in a minority Parliament. No one seems surprised to hear that, I see.

This means that an election can happen at any time. Some may expect, and I say so with due regard, that elections may perhaps be called in August, September or October. Over the weekend, the Prime Minister appeared on different television stations. It is as though the Liberals are getting ready. It is as though he had put on his running shoes. It may not mean that he is going to call an election, but it might be about that. Now, we are going to prepare for an election.

There are lots of irons in the fire. A lot of documents are on the table and they just need a little push to be passed. In some cases, it represents the fruit of almost one year's labour. Some bills have been waiting for a long time, and we must try to pass them so we can say that our efforts bore fruit. That is always rewarding.

The Liberals recently told us that they have priorities, including Bill C-6, an act to amend the Criminal Code with regard to conversion therapy, Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts, Bill C-12, Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act, Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act with regard to the COVID-19 response, and Bill C-30, budget implementation act, 2021, no. 1. Those are the government's absolute priorities.

The Liberals also have two other priorities that they would like to refer to committee. I will not speak at length about them, but I am talking about Bills C-21 and C-22. We need to move these bills along.

For reasons it has already given, the Bloc Québécois absolutely wants Bill C-10 to be passed by Parliament and the Senate, because that is what the cultural sector wants.

Madam Speaker, you know Quebec as well as anyone. You are the member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert, and there are surely artists in your riding who have called and asked you to help get this bill passed because Quebec's cultural vitality depends on it.

Quebec's culture is very important; it is the soul of a nation. This bill must be passed. Quebeckers are calling for it, the Quebec National Assembly has unanimously called for it, and my colleagues know that Quebec's cultural sector is waiting for this bill. We want to be able to accomplish this goal we have been working so hard on.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, we must face the fact that the Liberal Party is in power. I have been in Parliament for a year and a half. I was expecting to be impressed. I thought it would be impressive to see 338 members of Parliament capably and efficiently managing a huge country. As I watched the Liberals manage their legislative agenda I was disappointed on more than one occasion, and even very disappointed at times. They did not seem to want to get anything done. It never seemed as though they were taking things seriously.

For example, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs worked very hard on Bill C-19, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act regarding the COVID-19 response. We held 11 meetings and heard from 20 experts at all levels, and we finished drafting the report after the Liberals had introduced the bill.

• (1340)

If I were a sensitive guy, I might have thought I had done all that work for nothing. It might have hurt my feelings. Think of how much work went into coming up with solutions to help the government draft a smart bill. Instead, the government chose to introduce its bill before the committee had even completed its study, without even looking at what we had to say. To top it off, the government waited another three months to bring it up for debate, and that debate lasted just four hours.

Then it decided to move time allocation because the matter was suddenly so urgent despite the fact that the government spent just four hours on it over the course of five months, choosing instead to engage in three months' worth of obstruction at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which wanted to move the bill forward but was working on prorogation and had asked the Prime Minister to appear.

Once the obstruction was over, we asked if we could carry on with our work, but the government accused us of delaying the committee's work when it was actually the Liberals who stalled things. Once again, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs had to get to work on Bill C-19 at the last minute.

That is how the government is managing its legislative agenda, and I could go on about that for hours. On Bill C-10, the committee wanted the ministers to appear but the government stalled, forcing the committee to wait and obstructing the committee's work. When we were finally able to begin, we were like excited puppies waiting for visitors, but the government said we were too late. However, it is the government that has created the problem we are facing today. We are being squeezed like lemons, and the government thinks that if the committee members are not studying an issue, there is something wrong with them. This is what happens when the legislative agenda is not managed properly.

Nevertheless, the Bloc Québécois will support this motion because we want to move things forward for Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with regard to Bill C-10, it was encouraging to see the Bloc support the

time allocation motion so we could get the bill out of the committee stage.

I want to reflect on what has taken place in the last two and half plus hours. I will put it in the perspective of how the Conservatives squander opportunities and filibuster. In two hours, 24 members of the House could have, and should have, had the opportunity to debate the budget legislation. That would have allowed four members to debate at length and others through questions and comments. That is 24 members in two hours.

Could the member from the Bloc indicate whether he and his party would have preferred to have listened to what we heard today or to have debated the budget?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his comments. Yes, of course we would have preferred to discuss Bill C-30, among other things. However, we cannot say the Liberals are entirely blameless in this situation. I watched in committee as members of the Liberal Party filibustered non-stop for three months. As the saying goes, sometimes people see the speck of sawdust in their brother's eye but fail to see the plank—or even the whole sawmill—in their own.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech.

He indicated that he has been here for only about a year and a half. I would remind him that, normally, in May and June, the House often sits until midnight. This has been going on since before the Liberals came to power.

I would also like to point out that the Bloc Québécois also often has a tendency to talk a lot in committee and slow down the work. Every party could accuse each other of doing that.

More importantly, we have bills that are important to certain people, including the LGBTQ+ community, several members of which have approached me about the importance of banning conversion therapy. I am not sure if my colleague is aware of what happened on Friday, but it became clear that the voting application suddenly stopped working for the Conservatives.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about these tactics to slow down the work of the House and the importance of passing the legislation that Canadians and Quebecers sent us here to pass.

• (1345)

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, I salute the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

The Bloc Québécois does indeed speak a lot in the House and in committee, and we often make some very intelligent points, I must say.

We speak a lot because we have a lot to say. One thing I can promise is that we will never prorogue the Parliament of Canada.

When the Liberals prorogued Parliament, they made the House and the committees lose out on five weeks. The Bloc Québécois will never do that.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will keep my comments short and sweet as our hon. colleague has summed it up quite concisely.

My question for my hon. colleague is this. Would he not agree that one group controls the legislative agenda in the House, and that is the government, which has dithered and delayed more than anyone? It has cast stones at us and the opposition, saying we are holding up its legislative agenda, and that is false.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, I commend the minister and thank him for his question. He raised a good point.

I am the House leader of the Bloc Québécois. At these leaders' meetings, as I mentioned, we expect the legislative agenda to move forward at a quick pace.

We unfortunately never really managed to understand this government's plan for its different bills or which bills were most important. We had no idea.

This government's management of the legislative agenda is extremely problematic and inefficient.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, as my charming colleague from La Prairie said earlier, we will support the motion because we like to be constructive.

I completely agree with everything my colleague said. This is like a bad relationship, and I am wondering how we ended up here. I am not here to blame anyone, but I do want to talk about the attitude we are seeing from my Liberal and Conservative colleagues.

The Liberals may have made our Conservative colleagues angry by refusing to provide all of the information required to Parliament. This anger has been evident in recent weeks, and it does not contribute to a productive and harmonious atmosphere here. As we have seen today, our Conservative colleagues have been misusing our time here in the House.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, you may have missed this, but while our Conservative colleagues were requesting votes on some matters of questionable relevance, the charming member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix was singing *Qu'il est difficile d'aimer*. That about sums up the day we have had.

In the context of the pandemic, the government and the Conservative Party often tell us that we have to take a team Canada approach, even if being part of the team makes it hard to love them at times. I think my colleague's song choice was quite apt because they give us little reason to love them. It is complicated. In the past few weeks between the Conservatives systematically obstructing our work and the Liberals withholding information, it is hard to identify with team Canada.

However, there were some very interesting things on the legislative agenda that were important to me, such as Bill C-12 on climate. The federal government announced a recovery plan that was meant to be green, but there is no clear direction. It talks about the electrification of transportation and makes an announcement, that I found distressing, on grey hydrogen, which is an oil-based product.

I fail to see how that can be considered green. We would be better off with more robust environmental legislation. We are not sure if we will get to the end of the study on Bill C-12 in parliamentary committee because we are running out of time.

The same goes for Bill C-10, the culture bill. I know that, in Quebec, the divide between our position and the Conservatives' position on that issue is deep and wide. We believe we should support our cultural sector, but the Conservatives see Bill C-10 as an attack on freedom of expression. That does not justify bringing Parliament to a standstill by raising points of order that can be a bit silly, in my opinion. We could have made a lot more progress on this bill.

There is also Bill C-6, the conversion therapy bill, which has aroused what I consider to be the epitome of bad faith. I heard some things last week, some absolutely outrageous things, that made what is left of my hair stand on end. To draw a parallel between sexual orientation and therapies widely justified by certain pathologies is, in my humble opinion, a demonstration of bad faith.

In my introduction, I asked myself how we got to this point. I get the sense that some members of the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party cling very tightly to their ideology. Instead of placing public welfare and the public good above all else, they favour private and partisan interests, which is the worst possible thing in politics. As a result, we have hit the limit of what we can do in a hybrid Parliament. We have to acknowledge the fact that dealing with the pandemic is slowing us down too.

• (1350)

The interpreters do an outstanding job. They are essential for us francophones. Everyone knows that there are two official languages in Canada: English and translated English. Without the interpreters, we cannot participate in democratic life. When we do more work in Parliament, they are the ones who end up exhausted. I do not think we take that into account enough.

The interpreters do an excellent job in committee and in the House. Many members of the House sometimes do not use the right equipment. They are not aware of the impact that can have on people's health. This shows the limits of technology in the context of a virtual Parliament but also the appreciation—I do not want to use the word compassion—that we should have for these people.

We need to commend the interpreters. In fact, I would like to take a moment to thank them. They are essential for us. I would also like to thank the members of the technical team. Some of the older members of the House have trouble using new technologies. Finally, I would like to thank the committee clerks. This is not an easy situation since we are going to increase their hours of work. I get the impression that they already have a very heavy workload.

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One of the government's responsibilities is also to ensure that the necessary human resources are in place and that they do not burn out. I think maybe the government needs to become a little more aware of that.

In closing, I am not trying to brag, but my party has showed that we were prepared to co-operate. The expression "team Canada" does not really reflect who we are, but we showed that we were prepared to co-operate. I am sure that, if everyone works together, we will be able to finish the work on the important bills, Bills C-12, C-10 and C-6, in the next week.

• (1355)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate a number of the comments that have been expressed by the member from the Bloc. As I indicated to the previous speaker, Bloc members have demonstrated the need, from their perspective, to support time allocation and government legislation, and Bill C-10 is an excellent example of that.

If time allocation was not being used regarding Bill C-10, what would my colleague from across the way have anticipated to be a potential problem, whether at the committee stage or third reading, given the Conservative opposition to the legislation?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I may not have as much parliamentary experience as my colleague, but I am sure that Bill C-10 would have progressed much faster if the government had not prorogued the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was looking at the parliamentary calendar, and it does say we are scheduled to return to the House on Monday, September 20. Of course, the reason we are having all this drama over extended sitting hours and the government trying to rush bills through is because it is widely expected the Liberals are going to call an election. I mean, let us just face the facts here.

Would the member not agree the Liberals are just kind of underwriting this whole crisis with their march to a sure election call this summer?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I agree with part of his analysis.

Indeed, if we thought we would be returning to the House in September, there might not be this sense of urgency. However, I am pretty sure that we will have bigger fish to fry come September and we will be debating and hoping to come back to the House, so yes, I agree with his analysis.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my esteemed colleague's comments, and I am especially fond of his region.

I heard him talking about Bill C-10 earlier. I saw a leading public health scientist on television recently explaining to some journalists who were in front of her that some of the money allocated to public health should go towards culture, too, and not just to psychiatrists and psychologists. She believes that the remedy, the best antidote for the post-pandemic situation, will be culture and entertainment. That is why it is so important that Bill C-10 pass quickly, since that is the vaccine we need the most right now.

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

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I love my colleague's question, and I encourage her to pass along the clip she saw to that Conservative member, whose name I do not remember, but who said that Quebec culture was outdated, that it relied on grants and that it was stuck in the 1990s.

I thought that all of those comments she was making were about oil, but I digress.

[*English*]

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about the paralyzing of Parliament due to points of orders being raised, which really stop debate on issues important to Quebeckers. On that note, I will give my condolences to the member with respect to another femicide that happened in Quebec very recently. We are hearing about women in Quebec who are the victims of domestic abuse, almost every week.

When the member hears the Conservatives raising all of those points of order, when he hears that debate is being halted in this House, preventing the good work that individual Canadians really need our government to do, how does he feel about that? How does he—

• (1400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member 10 seconds for an answer.

The hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, there is probably a connection between what I just said and the femicides.

I could perhaps make a connection with our debate on Bill C-6, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding conversion therapy, an extremely important bill that could be passed quickly if our Conservative colleagues had one ounce of compassion regarding gender diversity.

That is the only answer I have for my colleague.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

PORTUGUESE HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my riding of Davenport is home to the largest Portuguese community in Canada. I am proud to stand up in the House of Commons today, the official day of Portugal, Camões, and the Portuguese communities and to celebrate it during the month of June, which we all know is now recognized nationally as Portuguese Heritage Month.

Due to COVID, we have to celebrate differently this year, but one day soon hope to engage in activities surrounded by a sea of red and green, filled with twirling *rancho* dancers and *bandas* proudly marching with their instruments. I want to thank all the Portuguese leaders, clubs, associations and media that have tirelessly promoted the love of Portuguese culture, language and community to all Canadians.

Whether ordering a meal from a favourite *churrasqueira*, listening to some fado, watching Ronaldo in the World Cup, or having a glass of excellent Douro or Alentejo wine, take the time to celebrate Portugal this month.

Viva Portugal and viva Canada. Obrigada, Madam Speaker.

* * *

ED PREBINSKI

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to honour the life of Ed Prebinski of Cornwall, P.E.I., who passed away last month.

Ed, a veteran, served for 42 years in Canada's Armed Forces, joining at age 16. His postings were all over the world, including Germany, Cyprus and as an NCO at the Canadian embassy in Tehran during the 1979 Iran hostage crisis. His medal rack was full of international honours, too many to name.

A 1982 posting brought him to CFB Summerside and he never left the island for work again, spending the rest of his career at Veterans Affairs and Foreign Affairs and retiring in 2003. Following retirement, his passion became helping to deliver medical humanitarian aid to destinations like Cuba, sometimes several times a year, with Not Just Tourists; even a hefty generator was delivered to Haiti. Ed could cajole substantial medical supply donations and even get a break from the airlines.

We thank Ed for his service. We salute him. We offer condolences to Lynne and family.

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BOOKS OF REMEMBRANCE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians cherish our Books of Remembrance as a way for those not able to visit a final resting place to pay their respects to our fallen men and women in uniform.

In 2005, a seventh book was dedicated to those who died in the service of Canada during the Cold War. At the veterans committee, we heard from retired Major James McMullin who served our

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country for 38 years and spent more than 10 years of his retirement visiting and documenting every military cemetery in Europe with Canadians who were posted, died and buried since October 1, 1947.

Shockingly, his records indicate that 396 individuals buried outside of Canada, three-quarters of those who died, have not been included in the seventh Book of Remembrance. Mr. McMullin's appeal to the Government of Canada to ensure all names are memorialized has fallen on deaf ears. In memory of Canada's Cold War contribution and those who never returned home, the government should admit an error was made and ensure that those who died as a result of their service will forever be remembered.

Lest we forget.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

SAINT-BASILE-LE-GRAND

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the city of Saint-Basile-le-Grand is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. Saint-Basile-le-Grand is one of four communities that make up the riding of Montarville, which it is my honour and pleasure to represent in the House.

Back in the 19th century, local inhabitants, led by a man named Basile Daigneault, requested their own parish, and their request was granted in 1870. One year later, the municipality was founded. Both the parish and the municipality were named Saint-Basile-le-Grand after the illustrious doctor and father of the Catholic church, but also as a nod to the man who had played such an important role in the community's development and would become its first mayor.

Now home to a great community, Saint-Basile-le-Grand will be celebrating its 150-year history. A full slate of events, designed with the public health situation in mind, will soon be announced. I am sure the people of Saint-Basile-le-Grand will be in the mood to celebrate after months of lockdown. I wish them a fantastic 150th anniversary.

* * *

LAVAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, our federal government has chosen to invest in infrastructure across Canada. These investments ensure that our communities grow.

Statements by Members

Laval and my riding, Alfred-Pellan, have greatly benefited from a \$1-million investment for a natural gas refuelling station, \$1 million for the Parc de la Rivière-des-Mille-Îles Exploration Centre, \$8 million for Collège Montmorency, \$45 million for the Société de transport de Laval, \$85 million for the Pie-IX Bridge and \$260 million for Highway 19.

Through these investments, our federal government is reiterating its commitment to support projects that build our community in Laval in partnership with the City of Laval. We are and will remain a partner for the riding of Alfred-Pellan and for all the people of Laval.

* * *

[English]

BILL C-10

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, freedom to speak is a cornerstone of a free society. Bill C-10 will threaten that freedom and opens the door for the government to decide what is acceptable speech and what is unacceptable.

Democracy rests on the rights of a free people to speak freely, to freely debate and decide what are good ideas and what are bad ideas. I trust Canadians to engage in robust debates and wisely seek out truth without the government looking over their shoulders.

It is no wonder that it is the current government, whose entire philosophy is based on weak and faulty ideas, that is trying to ram this legislation through before an election. However, Canadians will not be silenced, and they know that Bill C-10 is simply an attempt to limit their ability to challenge those in power.

I will continue to fight against the passage of this flawed and dangerous legislation. Attempts to silence Canadians are wrong, and I will continue to fight and defend the rights of Canadians to freely challenge those in power.

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ISLAMOPHOBIA

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my wife and I have two boys, and like many racialized families, we try to teach our sons to be proud of their South Asian heritage.

We encourage them to wear traditional clothing, so on religious festivals like Eid, the kurta pajamas come out. I often thought that the worst outcome for parents like us would be that our kids might grow up ashamed of their heritage.

However, after the attack in London, I realize that the worst fear is that our kids might actually be scared about their heritage. At the vigil this week, after a terrorist filled with Islamophobic rage killed members of a Muslim family simply because of their faith, we heard about young kids who were now asking, “Mom, do I look too Muslim?” No Muslim should be afraid to dress how they choose, to fear that visibly manifesting their religion makes them a target for lethal violence, yet this is the legacy of the London attack.

We need to call out anti-Muslim sentiment by name: Islamophobia. We need to call out politically motivated violence for what it is:

terrorism. We need to work to address the root cause of this hatred: radicalization online. That is the work I am committed to, and I urge all my colleagues in the chamber to join me.

* * *

● (1410)

PORTUGUESE HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in June, we celebrate Portuguese Heritage Month, a great time to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Canadians of Portuguese descent. Also, today, June 10, is Portugal day, commemorated both in Portugal and around the world by Portuguese in honour of the 16th century poet, Luís Vaz de Camões, whose prose captured Portugal’s age of discovery.

It is a special day of pride for me, both as a Portuguese Canadian and as a resident of Mississauga, a city with over 20,000 Luso Canadians. Canada is now home to one of the largest Portuguese diasporas in the world, with nearly half a million people of Portuguese origin calling Canada home.

This past year has been very difficult. Personally, I have seen many losses within our Luso community here and back in Portugal. We know we are all in this together, much stronger and closer than ever before.

Again, to our Luso community, *Feliz Dia de Portugal. Viva Canadá. Viva Portugal.*

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KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Alberta and TC Energy announced the devastating news of the official termination of the Keystone XL project.

Canada’s oil and gas industry has long been a sector that has fostered economic growth and prosperity for thousands of hard-working Canadians, generating tax revenues that support social programs and infrastructure, like schools and hospitals. However, a guilty pleasure of the current Liberal government is watching the destruction of this industry, which is, after all, the Prime Minister’s goal.

The Liberals shower the industry and its workers with empty praise, while implementing policies that serve to hasten its demise. Western Canadians deserve the security and dignity that come with a secure, stable and well-paying job. Canada’s Conservatives will secure the future and enact a comprehensive jobs plan to get Canadians back to work in the oil and gas sector, and in every other industry in Canada.

YONGE SUBWAY EXTENSION

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we talk infrastructure during Canada's infrastructure week, it is not just about building roads and bridges. It is about investing in infrastructure that builds strong communities across the country and delivers a better quality of life for Canadians.

That is why the Government of Canada announced a historic \$10.4-billion investment for four shovel-ready public transit projects in the GTA, including the Yonge North subway extension. These investments support strong cities and respect transit decisions made by local decision-makers based on what is best for their communities.

Our York Region Liberal caucus, since the onset, advocated for the Yonge North subway extension and the government listened, with this \$5.6-billion transformational project set to benefit over 1.2 million York Region residents.

We are ensuring that every dollar invested in infrastructure counts, creating good jobs and growing the economy post COVID-19, tackling climate change and building more inclusive communities for all Canadians.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this pandemic has exposed global vulnerabilities to biological threats and shown that progress in biotechnology could be exploited for hostile ends. That is why security breaches at Winnipeg's National Microbiology Lab must not be ignored.

Two scientists were fired from this lab after the Canadian Security Intelligence Service recommended that their clearances be revoked. Chinese military scientists were granted access to work in the lab and deadly viruses were transferred from this lab to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. These national security concerns must be explained.

The government was ordered to provide critical documents to the Canada-China committee, but has refused to do so. Instead, to avoid accountability, the Prime Minister submitted them to a committee that he controls and can subsequently silence. This was not his decision to make. The Prime Minister must abide by the will of Parliament. Canada's national security depends upon it.

* * *

WE CHARITY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the release today of the ethics committee's report into the WE scandal shows how comfortable the Liberals are with unethical and corrupt behaviour. It shows in detail how the Prime Minister gave a contract worth half a billion dollars to WE Charity.

This is an organization run by well-connected Liberals that paid over half a million dollars in fees and expenses to the Prime Minister's family. It paid \$20,000 to fly the Prime Minister's wife abroad for its event and spent over \$10,000 to produce and promote campaign-style advertising for the Prime Minister. The amount of fi-

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nancial and in-kind benefit that the Prime Minister and his family have received from WE is outrageous.

These facts and the appearance of a clear conflict of interest, on top of the billionaire island scandal, the SNC-Lavalin scandal and the illegal casino magnate scandal, among others, have been severely damaging to Canadians' confidence in their democratic institutions. Canadians deserve better and they can count on the Conservatives to secure accountability.

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● (1415)

HOMELESSNESS

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the Women's National Housing & Homelessness Network, homelessness among women, girls and gender-diverse peoples in Canada is a crisis hiding in plain sight.

It explained that the extent of the problem is difficult to fully understand due to the hidden nature of their homelessness and the way women tend to avoid traditional shelters and other options since these spaces tend to be dominated by men. That puts women in precarious scenarios as they rely on relational and potentially dangerous supports when what they really need is a system that understands their needs and a housing policy that prioritizes them.

[Translation]

The network identified eight challenges and opportunities in seeking to prevent and end homelessness amongst women, girls and gender-diverse peoples, and it does not consider the challenges to be insurmountable.

[English]

While there is a plan to allocate 25% of housing strategy funds for the unique needs of women and girls, it is critical that responses to homelessness among women, girls and gender-diverse peoples are urgently prioritized.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

JACQUES PARIZEAU FUND

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Jacques Parizeau is a monumental figure in Quebec's history, one of the main architects of the Quiet Revolution. He played a key role in the nationalization of hydroelectricity and the creation of the Quebec pension plan, the Société générale de financement and the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec.

Then, after being perhaps the greatest finance minister in the history of Quebec, Jacques Parizeau, as leader of the Parti Québécois, became the premier of Quebec in 1994. He was just a few thousand votes shy of finally giving Quebec its independence. He was referred to as "Monsieur". He was a great man, a statesman, a public servant, a monumental figure.

That is why the Foundation of Greater Montréal's Jacques Parizeau Fund plans to erect a monument in his honour, to be installed in the gardens of the National Assembly alongside those of other great former premiers who shaped our history. I invite all Quebecers to visit the Foundation of Greater Montréal's website and donate to the Jacques Parizeau Fund so that "Monsieur" is given a tribute that reflects how much he is appreciated in his country, Quebec.

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[English]

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, incidents of anti-Semitism are on the rise in Canada and the incidents speak for themselves.

The annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents showed that for the fifth straight year Canada had set a record in 2020 with 2,600 incidents, an increase of more than 18%. Another report showed there were 50 incidents of anti-Semitic activity in the GTA in May alone, a fivefold increase over the previous few months.

A 21-year-old girl in Montreal stated, "I felt like I'm going to have to hide this fact that I was born in Israel for the rest of my life living in Canada...it was just terrifying." She said that after being pelted with rocks.

Anti-Semitism is on the rise across Canada and this type of activity cannot be tolerated. Therefore, why is the Liberal Party offering safe harbour to someone who described Israel as a state of apartheid? Why is the Prime Minister accepting and welcoming anti-Semitic activity within his own caucus?

* * *

[Translation]

PORTUGAL DAY

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, people of Portuguese origin everywhere are celebrating Portugal Day, the day of Camões and Portuguese communities.

Portugal Day is first and foremost a time to celebrate everything that has shaped Portuguese culture over the centuries, rather than

just a military deed, a conquest or even the Portuguese discoveries. It is a time to celebrate everything that arose from all of those facets of Portuguese history, from the cartography to the *azulejos*, from our symbiotic relationship with the ocean to the oh-so-delicious use of its resources.

Lusitany is well represented not only by the *pastéis de nata*, our custard tarts, but also by the great and renowned literary works of Camões, Fernando Pessoa, Eça de Queirós and José Saramago; by fado, which embraces and charms us from cradle to grave; and by our simple but delicious gastronomy, enhanced by spices discovered in the 16th century and the skilful use of sea salt.

Finally, being Lusitanian, whether in Portugal or elsewhere in the world, means living with this rich heritage in our hearts without feeling too much *saudade*.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister suggested that the breach at the Winnipeg lab was espionage, but later he would not confirm it. Canadians are getting a little tired of the shell game that the Liberal government is playing with our national security.

Will the government confirm that espionage by Communist China was taking place at the Winnipeg laboratory, yes or no?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is playing a very dangerous game. As the Prime Minister has stated, we have provided the requested documents to the Canada-China committee with protections in place for privacy and national security. We then went further and provided unredacted documents to the only committee that has members with security clearance as well as the right safety protocols.

I suggest the member opposite go back to his conspiracy theory drawing board.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see the political games and cover-ups that the member and the government are willing to go to with respect to a breach at our level 4 biosecurity lab in Winnipeg. This is a lab working with the deadliest viruses in the world. People need two security clearances to work at that lab, and a security breach of that nature is catastrophic.

Canadians have questions. We do not need cover-ups from a parliamentary secretary. We need to know this: Will the Liberals follow the order of this Parliament and disclose to all Canadians the nature of their security breach?

Oral Questions

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only the Leader of the Opposition considers the fact that our government has provided all of the documents unredacted in a secure manner to be somehow a cover-up. Either the member opposite does not understand national security or he simply does not care.

We have provided those documents. We have faith in the hard-working members of NSICOP and the secretariat that supports them to do this work and to provide that transparency while maintaining the safety and security of our national security systems in Canada.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed in the parliamentary secretary. She should know that I take the national security of our country extremely seriously. It is why I served 12 years in the Canadian Armed Forces and why I am concerned that there has been an infiltration at the top lab in Canada.

Yesterday, one of Canada's top security experts said that Chinese agents had infiltrated the lab under the watch of the Liberal government. We know that the lab's director resigned shortly after this breach. Parliament has a responsibility to examine a failure of this nature.

Why is the member continuing to cover up a failure to protect Canadians?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition cares about national security, he has a pretty funny way of showing it. We have provided all of the documents unredacted to NSICOP. Because the member opposite references his service, let me point out a quote from a professor from the Royal Military College of Canada in reference to the work of NSICOP. He said, "I think it demonstrates the value of having an independent review of organizations by parliamentarians of the changes that the government has put in place."

I think the NSICOP report is very important for everyone to read. NSICOP is respected—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister suggested that the breach at the Winnipeg lab was espionage, but he does not want to confirm that.

Canadians are getting tired of the political games the Liberals play by always withholding information. Will the Liberal government confirm that espionage by Communist China was taking place at the Winnipeg laboratory, yes or no?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, only the Leader of the Opposition thinks that the government providing all of the documentation unredacted, as well as the documentation in a secure form to two separate committees, is somehow a cover-up.

The Conservative leader is playing a dangerous game with national security matters for his own political stunts. We will not engage in that. We have faith in the hard-working members of NSICOP. I know just how hard they work. I was a member and I also understand the security measures that go in place to ensure that members have the right security clearance and that documents are held in a—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve a serious answer on a serious issue.

The Winnipeg lab is a level 4 biosecurity lab, which means that it works with the deadliest viruses in the world. This type of security breach is a catastrophic failure on the part of the government. It is extremely serious.

Is this government trying to cover up its failure to protect Canadians?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians deserve is a Leader of the Opposition who does not put the national security of Canadians at risk for a political stunt based on his own innuendo and conspiracy theories.

We have provided all of the documents, and I do not know how many times the government has to say that, in a manner that is safe and secure, unredacted, to those members. I do not know why the Leader of the Opposition does not have confidence in his own members on the NSICOP committee to review this material.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Alain Thérien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec needs to pay attention to Bill C-30.

The federal government is using it to bring back the Canada-wide securities commission. If that happens, the commission would wipe out Montreal's financial sector to the benefit of Toronto. That is why Quebec has been opposing this commission for 40 years and the Quebec National Assembly has voted four times in favour of motions against this project.

The Bloc Québécois managed to get the funding for the office mandated to create this commission cut from Bill C-30, but the Liberals are doing everything they can to bring it back with an amendment. The vote could be held on Monday.

Will the Liberals respect the unanimous will of Quebec and withdraw their amendment?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect, I disagree with his characterization of the funding designated for the Canadian Securities Transition Office. That organization co-operates with willing partners at the provincial level on securities regulations and on other important matters, including tax evasion.

It is the government's view that this organization does good work, but I would point out that provinces that do not wish to co-operate with the CSTO are not forced to in any way, shape or form. I look forward to the debate on that proposed amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's economic nationalism is at stake with Bill C-30.

We need a strong markets authority in Quebec to protect our head offices in order to ensure that our companies are growing and that they are doing so in French. We are the 13th-largest financial centre in the world. That is something. That is what the federal government wants to destroy by centralizing activities in Toronto.

The Bloc Québécois managed to remove the funding for the office mandated to create this Canada-wide securities commission, but the Liberals are doing everything they can to reinstate it with an amendment to Bill C-30.

Will they withdraw that amendment? Quebec's business community is watching.

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me reinforce this essential point. The Canadian Securities Transition Office in no way, shape or form impacts the jurisdiction of Quebec managing its own securities regulations. It is free to behave in the way it deems fit.

It is an opportunity for provinces that wish to co-operate on important issues: not just on securities regulations, but also on money laundering, tax evasion and other important financial matters. This organization does important work for the benefit of all Canadians. To the extent that Quebec wishes to pursue an independent process to achieve those outcomes, it is free to do so. This amendment will not change that.

* * *

*[Translation]***ETHICS**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the WE Charity scandal, we now know what to do with the Liberals. We need to hold their hand and tell them, no, it is not okay to think only of the interests of their filthy rich cronies, and no, it is not okay to give WE Charity privileged access to the finance minister's office.

They really are like little kids and have to be told everything. If they are not told what to do, they will do the same stupid things again.

All kidding aside, will the Liberals commit to implementing all the recommendations in the report from the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics released this morning, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we respect our parliamentary institutions, including independent officers of Parliament, such as the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We also appreciate the work of committees.

The opposition seems to be focused on playing partisan politics during a pandemic, rather than focusing on the needs of Canadians. Today, we could have been debating the budget implementation bill to actually bring about measures that would waive interest on student loans and extend rent and wage subsidies, for example.

We appreciate their work. I look forward to reading the report and getting back to the matter at hand.

● (1430)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government spent a year stalling, filibustering and even shutting down Parliament, but it has not been able to hide the fact that the WE scandal did not come from the civil service. The scheme was politically driven by key political ministers to help their friends the Kielburger brothers.

In an unprecedented economic crisis, the Prime Minister turned key government departments into an open bar for his friends and cronies, and they in turn hired his relatives and flew his family and the finance minister around the world.

This question goes to the Prime Minister. During the WE scandal, Canadian students and the taxpayers were the losers. When is he going to clean up the ethical mess in Ottawa and within his own ministries and cabinet?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner investigated the matter and his report cleared the Prime Minister of all allegations.

Let me quote directly from the report, at page 3, which states the Prime Minister “did not contravene subsection 6(1), section 7 or section 21 of the Act.” Further on page 3, the commissioner writes, “there is no evidence of impropriety in relation to [the Prime Minister's] decision making in relation to [this matter]”. The commissioner continues on page 40 with, “I cannot conclude that a contravention has occurred.” That is it.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***JUSTICE**

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our justice system and its processes must be impartial, unbiased and, above all, non-partisan.

However, the use of the “Liberalist” partisan tool in the appointment process is seriously troubling. According to the CBC, a former Liberal political aide said himself in 2019 that there was the potential for a scandal. For once, it seems that a Liberal was right.

How can Canadians continue to have any confidence in our justice system?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when our government was elected in 2015, we created a more rigorous, open and accountable system that better reflects Canada's diversity when appointing top-notch judges to our institutions.

Our appointments are always based on merit. They are also based on developmental needs, the expertise of the various candidates and the recommendations of the independent judicial advisory committees.

We are proud of all those who have been appointed since the implementation of our system. They come from diverse backgrounds and political affiliations.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the Liberals only fix their mistakes once they have been exposed. With their partisan “Liberalist” tool, the government could promote judicial candidates who support the Liberal Party.

The Minister of Justice said that he was the only one who made recommendations. We know that the Prime Minister's Office helped screen the candidates before they were presented to cabinet.

Why did the minister insist on the fact that he was the only one making recommendations when that is just not true?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I talked about our rigorous and transparent process that led to the appointment of 400 jurists. I also want to point out the diversity of these appointments, because it is also unprecedented.

Among the judges appointed through the new process since 2015, 55% are women, 11% are visible minorities, 6% identify as LGBTQ2, 3% are indigenous and 1% have a disability. This clearly shows the effectiveness of our process, and we will continue to ensure that it remains rigorous, transparent and merit-based.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary gave a lot of statistics there. How about this one: 25% of the judges the Liberals have appointed are Liberal donors. They keep parroting the same tired talking points, but we know the higher one's donations the better one's chances of finding oneself on the bench with the Liberal government. Now Liberals are saying they will use only public databases to vet these appointments where, surprise, Liberal donation records can still be found.

When will the Liberal justice minister start appointing judges based on merit and merit alone?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken significant steps to create a better process for appointing judges. It is one that ensures our judiciary reflects the country it serves. Let us be clear: All judicial appointments are made by merit. There are no partisan considerations in the decision-making process. In fact, when we formed government, we removed the partisanship that was in place under the Harper government and brought in a more independent and a more rigorous process.

● (1435)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary must be talking about how rigorously the Liberals checked their Liberal donation database, because that is what reports are telling us today. They have to stop using Liberalist, because that is how they have been making their selections.

The justice minister said, “There is no partisanship in my decision-making process.” Well, an internal Liberal donation database seems to be quite partisan. When the PMO is vetting and approving and top Liberals have their fingers on the scale, we have a problem.

Did the justice minister willingly mislead the House when he decided to cover up the Liberals' partisan appointment process?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate that the process we have in place is rigorous and transparent, and has resulted in the nomination of more than 400 jurists. Let us talk about holding the administration of justice in high repute. That comes when we have a set of jurists who reflect the litigants who come before it.

Who have we appointed? Since 2016, we have appointed 55% female candidates and 11% racialized candidates. As well, 6% of the candidates who have been appointed are LGBTQ2, 3% are indigenous and 1% are persons with a disability. That reflects the Canada that we hope all jurists will serve.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 100% of them were put through the Liberals' partisan database and checked for how much they donated.

Oral Questions

Today we see that, after months of filibustering, blocking of witness and sealing of documents, the ethics committee was finally able to table its report on the WE scandal. The report clearly outlines the depth of corruption and cronyism within the Liberal government. Liberal insiders have unfettered access to government, which will always help its friends jump the queue and get the inside track.

Canadians deserve a government that will serve them instead of the Liberal elite. Will this corrupt government start putting the interests of Canadians first and implement the recommendations outlined in that report?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we respect the work of committees. We also respect the role of the independent officers of Parliament, who do their work independently and free from partisan political consideration.

While the Conservatives remain focused on the WE Charity, our focus remains on delivering important bills for Canadians, including those bills we were to discuss today. However, what did the Conservatives try to do? They tried to shut down Parliament. They said that it was over. They did not want to work anymore. If they do not want to work, they should get out of here and let us work for Canadians.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to number all of the hours the minister's Liberals have filibustered at committee, including dozens of hours at the ethics committee.

This report shows widespread Liberal insider access and corruption. It is undeniable. The Liberals used the pandemic to line the pockets of Liberals and their well-connected friends. They tried to cover it up. They tried to block investigations. They tried to tamper with witnesses.

Corruption and these Liberals go hand in hand. What will it take for the government to stop the corruption and commit to good ethical governance? The minister said he respects the work of committees. Will he commit right now to implementing their recommendations?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a bit rich coming from a member who does not respect the work of Parliament. We are meeting here today to discuss a very important bill, and what did this member and his friends on the other side do? They tried to shut down Parliament.

They said they were finished working for the day and were going home. That is unacceptable. We need to keep Parliament open to debate important bills such as Bill C-6, Bill C-12 and Bill C-30. We have to do that for Canadians.

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[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the leader of the Bloc Québécois spoke about the tragic events in

London, he called for an end to the hate and violence. He called for more solidarity, love and friendship.

By contrast, the Prime Minister seems to want to sow division. He made a vile connection between intolerance, Islamophobia and Quebec's secularism law, comments that were particularly shameful in light of recent events. Will the Prime Minister retract his comments, which do more to divide us than to bring us together?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are standing up for their rights in court. We are following the situation closely. We have been open and clear about our position on this matter. It is worth noting that the Government of Canada is not involved in the litigation.

• (1440)

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a question from the member for Lac-Saint-Jean, the Prime Minister said, "I urge the Bloc Québécois to listen to members of the Muslim community, who have expressed concerns about what they are experiencing right now in Quebec."

In a context where we must all pull together, this comes alarmingly close to conflating these issues. There is no connection between Bill 21 and the London tragedy, and to try to make one is irresponsible. Will the Prime Minister retract his comments?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, Quebecers are defending their rights before the courts. We continue to monitor the situation closely. Our position on this matter is clear and well known. It is important to note that the Government of Canada is not a party to this dispute.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not the only ones to have noted this conflation.

This morning, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously passed a motion that the National Assembly strongly condemn all forms of hate and violent crimes, and that it condemn the fact that certain politicians and media outside Quebec are conflating the tragedy in London, Ontario, and a Quebec law.

Speaking of intolerance and Islamophobia in the same breath as Bill 21, in this context, is conflating the issues.

Will the Prime Minister retract his comments?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already stated, Quebecers are defending their rights before the courts. We continue to monitor the situation closely. Our position on this matter is clear and well known. It is important to note that the Government of Canada is not a party to this dispute.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three years ago, the government turned a blind eye to a complaint alleging that some members of the Iraqi forces, trained by Canadian troops, had committed war crimes. The Iraqi soldiers allegedly raped women, tortured and executed prisoners, and proudly showed videos of their victims to Canadian soldiers.

Lieutenant-General Michael Rouleau, the former commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command informed General Vance about this on two occasions, but the matter was never resolved. The Minister of National Defence must have been informed of this. Can he confirm that?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to respecting and defending human rights during all Canadian Armed Forces deployments and operations.

As the minister said, these allegations are extremely troubling, and we will ensure that they are thoroughly investigated. We take every incident involving human rights during armed conflict very seriously and we take the appropriate actions to resolve every problem that arises.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2018, Canadian soldiers reported to commanders that they had seen videos of horrible atrocities being committed on the phones of the very Iraqi soldiers they were training, but our troops were ordered to look the other way and keep training these alleged war criminals.

Now, we know that a secret memo was given to the former chief of defence staff in 2020, which clearly demonstrates that top defence officials in National Defence knew there were serious problems with the security screening of Iraqi recruits.

Why did these Liberals extend Operation Impact not once but twice after learning we were training war criminals in Iraq?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is contributing to 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.

The Canadian Armed Forces is no longer operating with the Iraqi security forces related to these allegations. Our government takes this very seriously. We are actively looking into these troubling allegations.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian soldiers are entrusted to embody the highest moral doctrine and uphold international humanitarian law, but in 2018, when Canadian soldiers training Iraqi troops witnessed horrific war crimes, they were told to ignore the evidence and carry on. The NATO training mission commander knew. The Canadian joint operations commander knew, and General Vance knew, but they all failed to act.

How could the defence minister do nothing in the face of something so serious?

Oral Questions

• (1445)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, our government is committed to respecting and upholding human rights during all Canadian Armed Forces deployments and operations.

As the minister has said, these allegations are extremely troubling, and we are ensuring that they are thoroughly investigated. We take all incidents regarding compliance with the law of armed conflict seriously, and we take proper actions to address any issues that arise.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another graduating class of students is finishing its school year, and yet again, students are struggling to find work over the summer due to the pandemic, work that will help to pay for their overwhelming education costs. Many students will have to make some tough decisions about whether they can even afford school in the fall. The government continues to insist it is helping, when the reality is it has only helped itself, its friends and those at the top.

When will the government commit to permanently ending interest fees on federal student loans, and when will the government see education as more than just a money-maker for the federal coffers?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the member and all Canadians that our government will remain focused on all Canadians, including students and youth. Today, we could have been debating waiving interest on student loans. We could have been extending the rent subsidy and wage subsidies. However, we have the Conservatives in the opposition playing political games.

We will remain focused on delivering for Canadians. That is why, exactly as the member is asking, waiving interest on student loans is in budget 2021, and it is within the budget implementation act. I would encourage her to talk to her Conservative counterparts to get the debate—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the public safety committee heard that the continued use of solitary confinement in Canadian prisons amounts to torture under international law. Black and indigenous people are severely over-represented in Canadian prisons as a result of more than a century of systemic racism, and are therefore more likely to be subject to this torture. Lack of transparency, oversight and direction have allowed it to continue. It must stop. Torture must stop. Systemic racism must stop.

When will the Liberal government end state-sponsored torture of Canadian citizens in our prisons?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through the act formerly known as Bill C-83, we are ending administrative segregation. We will continue to work to further develop systems to serve our communities more equitably. We value the work performed by the independent external decision-makers who review inmate cases on an ongoing basis and issue decisions that are binding upon correctional services.

We will continue to work to ensure that administrative segregation is ended and replaced by the legislation that we have brought forward.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although day scholars were able to seek compensation under the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement for physical and sexual abuse suffered while attending residential schools, they were not able to seek compensation for the experience of attending Indian residential schools because they returned to their homes at night.

The Sechelt and Tk'emlúps Indian bands challenged this in court as two of the plaintiffs in the Gottfriedson Indian residential scholars class action. Yesterday, after a journey that took over a decade, our government announced that a settlement has been reached with the survivor and descendant class members in the class action.

Can the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations update the House on this important milestone for day scholars?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his leadership and his advocacy. Yesterday's announcement does take us another step closer to bringing meaningful resolution and healing for our day scholar survivors and their descendants. After years of advocacy, this agreement is a testament to their dedication and resilience, and their courageous effort should be recognized.

The agreement combines individual compensation for harms experienced in attending a residential school as a day scholar with investments to support healing, wellness, education, language, culture, heritage and commemoration for survivors and descendants. This is an important step forward.

• (1450)

HOUSING

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for many families in my riding, the dream of home ownership is just that: a dream. The Liberals' answer is the first-time homebuyers' incentive, but it has been a failure and few Canadians are using it. The worst part is the latest idea to raise the program's max home price to \$722,000. This is completely tone deaf, and will obviously change nothing for my community.

Do the Liberals know how much the average home in South Surrey and White Rock costs?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have done a lot in the national housing strategy to ensure that Canadians are assisted with their housing needs. We introduced the first-time homebuyers' incentive, which will help families achieve the dream of home ownership. The Conservatives have never been leaders in affordable housing solutions for Canadians.

They do not support the national housing strategy, which is working. It is like choosing to swim across a crocodile-infested river because one does not want to use the bridge out of fear that the bridge will fall down, even though the bridge is working, in this case the national housing strategy. It does not make sense, and Canadians see right through that.

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HEALTH

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day I hear heartbreaking stories from my constituents who have been separated from their families and loved ones by the lengthy and extended border closure with the United States. Some have missed family funerals. Others cannot cross to look after their elderly parents or a sick family member. Grandparents are forfeiting precious time with their grandchildren. Nearly 15 months into this pandemic, no formal plans for the safe reopening of our border crossings have been announced.

Does the Liberal government not care about the human impacts it is having on my constituents by its inaction?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we care. Our entire government has been working throughout this pandemic to care for Canadians, to keep them safe throughout a global pandemic, which many of us have never seen before. All of the measures that we have put in place have been done with the advice from scientists, experts and doctors, with the purpose of stopping the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives.

Oral Questions

We made an important announcement yesterday in regard to lifting restrictions. We need Canadians to keep doing that hard work, keep getting vaccinated, and we will see life return to normal—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the CRTC announced it will start consultations on a three-digit national suicide prevention hotline. We do not need more consultations. We do not need more inaction. Help should only be three digits away. The government could have introduced legislation immediately after passing our motion to bring 988 to Canada, six months ago.

The government has the power to get this done right now. Instead, what it did was pass the buck. It failed to act and passed it to the CRTC. Why?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. One of the first commitments we made in our mandate was for additional support for provinces and territories, specifically around mental health supports. This is something we have been committed to not just throughout the pandemic, but every single day of our mandate we have been working to help support the mental health needs of Canadians. It is something that can be seen again in budget 2021.

We will continue to work in terms of creating a three-digit mental health support line, but in the meantime we will not take lessons from the Conservatives, because we have been there every step of the way—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been 181 days since we passed this motion, 181 days of inaction. Every 24 hours, 11 Canadians die by suicide. A further 275 attempt it. Using those numbers, in the 181 days nearly 2,000 Canadians have died by suicide. A further 50,000 have attempted suicide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death of young children in Canada.

Will the Liberal government commit to passing my bill, Bill C-294, today and help save lives, finally take action and finally bring 988 to Canada, yes or no?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that any life lost to suicide is one life too many. This is precisely why we did not just act in the last 188 days. We have acted over the last five years to bring the mental health supports and the investment that provinces and territories have asked for. We provided throughout the pandemic the funding needed to create *wellnesstogether.ca*. Over a million Canadians have accessed mental health supports that the member opposite flippantly misses, but this is real help, helping real Canadians access the help they need.

We are going to continue to invest in more ways. We will not—

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the CBC informed us this morning that the Liberal government has stopped using its Liberalist for judicial appointments. The Bloc Québécois has been asking for this for years. Naturally, I thank the minister for accepting our arguments.

However, not everything has been resolved. The appointment process is still not impartial, because all ministers, including the Prime Minister, have a say in the selections. The Liberals have stopped using the Liberalist, and that is a good thing. Now they must stop choosing judges who are Liberals. When will the minister establish an impartial appointment process?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when our government was elected in 2015, we put in place a more rigorous, open and accountable system that better reflects Canada's diversity to appoint outstanding judges to our institutions.

Appointments are always merit-based. They are also based on the needs of the various benches, the expertise of the various candidates and the recommendations of the independent judicial advisory committee. We are proud of the judges we have appointed since implementing our system. They have diverse backgrounds and political affiliations.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the judges' competence is not in question here; the partisan appointment process is.

The Bloc Québécois is savouring its victory over the Liberalist, but that is just the first step. So long as the party in power is able to interfere in the process and put its buddies in senior positions, the credibility of the judicial system is compromised.

The Liberals appoint Liberals, the Conservatives appoint Conservatives, and justice takes a back seat. This needs to stop.

Will the minister accept my offer to create a committee to recommend an impartial judicial appointment process?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that the committees are masters of their own proceedings. They are independent and make their own decisions.

Accordingly, we cannot dictate what a committee decides to study. That said, we are working on meeting the needs of the courts by appointing highly competent judges to our institutions who reflect Canada's diversity. This process has been very successful.

Our government has so far appointed more than 400 exceptional legal minds from all backgrounds and political affiliations to the judiciary.

*Oral Questions***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at Mikes, a restaurant in Lévis, there are four workers; Serres Laliberté in Sainte-Claire has four workers; and IPL in Saint-Damien has 24 workers.

The recovery is critical, but our businesses are facing a labour shortage. The temporary foreign worker program, while essential to their survival, is also a veritable obstacle course.

Instead of the lofty rhetoric, when will the minister finally do something to align his program with Quebec so that the workers, who are ready and waiting, can come and work in our businesses?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working closely with our Quebec counterparts on this and many other files.

Over 34,000 foreign workers have already arrived in Canada for the 2021 farming season, including over 14,000 in Quebec. These results speak for themselves, and we will continue to provide the labour that Quebec needs to support the economic recovery.

* * *

[English]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has not had a softwood lumber agreement with the United States since the fall of 2015, and the current government neglected to negotiate it into the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement. Hundreds of thousands of Canadian workers, many in Kootenay—Columbia, rely on the softwood lumber industry to put food on the table for their families.

When will the Prime Minister act to protect these jobs by removing the softwood tariffs?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying unequivocally that the duties imposed by the U.S. on Canada's softwood lumber are both unwarranted and unfair. I have raised this issue at every opportunity possible, including with President Biden, Ambassador Tai and the commerce secretary, Secretary Raimondo. As we have always done, we are going to vigorously defend our softwood industry, as well as the hundreds of thousands of workers that it employs.

* * *

● (1500)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Red Deer Indian Industrial School was one of the first iterations of what would become the residential school system. Like residential schools, terrible things occurred there. According to records, 20% of the students who were sent there never made it home. The school was closed in 1919, and it is not included in the list of 139 residential schools in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings.

Can the government ensure that groups like the Remembering the Children Society will also be eligible for funding to find the unmarked graves that are believed to be at the site?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, addressing the historical harms committed against indigenous children is a crucial step toward healing and justice for survivors, their families and their communities. The IRSSA and the McLean, Gottfriedson and Anderson settlements represent historic milestones in Canada's efforts to address harms associated with the tenants at federally operated educational institutions. We know that there are outstanding claims in other educational and care settings, and we are committed to collaborative discussions with both the provinces and territories and those affected on how we foster the healing and make sure they—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought all members of the House agreed that our artists have enabled us to stay strong and connected throughout this pandemic.

That was why I was dismayed to hear the member for Lethbridge say, and I quote, “[t]hat arts fund actually goes toward a very niche group of artists that are stuck in the early 1990s because they haven't managed to be competitive on new platforms. So they are very reliant on government grants in order to continue to exist.”

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage care to respond to that disgraceful statement by a Conservative Party member?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel for her ongoing support for the arts.

The member for Lethbridge should apologize to the House for her shameful remarks because she made them both outside the House and in the House. Canadians are proud of our arts community, and we should celebrate it, not put it down.

Every day, our artists find more creative ways to give Canadians hope. Are artists such as Lise Dion, Yvon Deschamps and Claude Legault outdated, as the member for Lethbridge says? I do not think so, and I think that—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY***[English]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor have been unjustly detained for years. The genocide of Uighur Muslims continues. The erosion of Hong Kong freedoms is still happening. Military threats and provocations towards Taiwan are rampant.

Could the Prime Minister give one reason why he still supports the location of Beijing in Communist China as the site for the 2022 Winter Olympics?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is deeply concerned by reports of egregious human rights violations against Uighurs and other minorities in the Xinjiang region. We have announced sanctions targeting individuals and entities implicated in the repression, in coordination with like-minded democracies. We will continue to call for unfettered access to the region so independent investigations can report first-hand.

That said, we must recognize the independence of the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic committees with regard to Canada's participation in the games. The Minister of Canadian Heritage spoke to both organizations and informed them of the House of Commons vote regarding the situation in China—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Foothills.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's trade relations with the United States are in shambles. There is no softwood lumber agreement. The Canadian dairy sector is under attack under the new NAFTA. Keystone has been cancelled. Line 5 is now in jeopardy. Now the Biden administration is threatening our livestock industry by reinstating the mandatory country of origin labelling program.

Conservatives secured a softwood lumber agreement. We built pipelines. We successfully ended COOL at the WTO. With higher carbon taxes, Canadian farmers could not afford another Liberal trade failure. Is this yet another mess by the Prime Minister that a Conservative government would have to clean up?

• (1505)

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and the U.S. share one of the biggest agricultural trading relationships in the world, with nearly \$51 billion in agricultural trade in 2020.

The WTO ruled in 2015 that mandatory COOL measures in the U.S. discriminated against Canadian exporters, and we expect the U.S. to continue abiding by this ruling and its WTO obligations.

Our government will continue to stand up for Canada's beef industry and for the workers whose jobs it supports, and we firmly oppose any new proposals from the U.S. to resurrect mandatory country of origin labelling for beef or pork.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, a man was murdered in broad daylight outside of YVR. We have since learned that the victim had ties to gangs. Following the shooting, I, along with my colleague from Steveston—Richmond East, asked the minister what steps he would be taking.

Instead of targeting legal, law-abiding firearm owners, when will the Liberal government take action against dangerous and violent gangland slayings taking place on the streets of Richmond and in other communities across Canada?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad for the opportunity to remind this House that we have promised Canadians that we will strengthen gun control in this country, while of course the Conservatives have promised to weaken it.

I would also point out to the member opposite that we actually provided \$327 million to the provinces and territories to support law enforcement efforts to do gun and gang investigations, including in her community. She voted against that funding. We are also making monies available for communities to invest in kids and in families in order to prevent this gun violence. Again, the member opposite voted against this.

Our communities need more than tough talk. They need the support we are providing.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many fish harvesters and industry stakeholders in my riding about the recent 3Ps codfish management plan for the 2021-22 season. While we know that the stock is facing challenges, it is a valuable resource for my riding and our many small rural communities and residents. Harvesters have expressed concerns with the scientific assessment model that is used for stock assessment and have called for a review of the science.

Can the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard explain the steps the government is taking in advancing—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Oral Questions

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his tireless advocacy on behalf of the hard-working fish harvesters in Bonavista—Burin—Trinity.

Sustaining healthy and protected fisheries, which many communities depend on, is a top priority for this government and we rely on the best available science when making management decisions. Support and confidence in science models and assessments used to determine stock health are critically important, particularly to those whose livelihoods will be impacted by the results and outcomes, so we will be convening a small group of scientists, as requested by the industry, to provide a consensus-based analysis of our assessment models for 3Ps cod over the summer.

We will continue to consult with harvesters on the path forward for this—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the horrifying revelation of the 215 children found at Kamloops residential school makes clear that Canada has committed genocide against indigenous peoples, but the Prime Minister has failed to recognize this as genocide. He has not acted decisively to bring in international experts in genocide, such as the ICMP, as requested by the Pimicikamak Cree Nation. Instead, the government is sending links for recycled grant applications. This is an insult.

Why will the Liberals not take decisive action to bring in international experts to find these children, victims of genocide, and allow communities to bring their children home?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been very clear in the calls to action that communities must direct the research, the processes and the ceremonies using their customs. It is really important that each of the communities is able to direct that research.

Last night, we met with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation and the only forensic pathologist in the country who is indigenous. It has been very important that people have the tools to make those decisions and we be able to bring their children home.

* * *

• (1510)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my constituents and many civil society organizations would like to have a stronger governance mechanism to ensure Canada meets its climate goals. Bill C-12 is a step in the right direction. Canada is warming at double the rate of the rest of the world and, to date, Canada has not met its targets.

With COP26 being held in Glasgow, can the minister advise whether he would institute a more regimented and independent governance structure for Bill C-12 as the U.K. has done?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would reiterate the government's commitment to taking strong and meaningful climate action. The net-zero accountability act proposes a number of different accountability measures, but I would note that significant and meaningful amendments were made to the bill at committee, which included a 2025 review of our 2030 target, an interim emissions reduction objective for 2026, enshrining the principle of progression for future targets and codifying our new 2030 emissions reduction target of 40% to 45% below 2005.

This is a landmark piece of legislation that will fundamentally alter how future governments report on the progress toward our climate goal and I certainly hope that the member will support us in moving this forward.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for La Prairie on a point of order.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, during question period, the member for Manicouagan asked the Prime Minister three times to retract his comments because he conflated Bill 21 and the tragic events in London. Three times the parliamentary secretary gave answers that had nothing to do with the questions asked.

When the Prime Minister was asked to retract his comments because they conflated the issues, the parliamentary secretary answered with the same kind of nonsense. As these are extremely important issues, I am asking the Speaker to rule on this and to ask the government to answer questions posed by the opposition—

The Speaker: I remind the hon. member that it is not the Speaker's role to assess the quality of answers or questions. That is the responsibility of members when they answer or ask questions.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

If you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, that in the opinion of the House the government must recognize what happened in Canada's Indian residential schools as genocide in accordance with article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which reads that:

any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That this House offer its deepest condolences to the family of Salman Afzaal and Madiha Salman, to friends and to the community of London following the tragedy of last Sunday; that this House strongly denounce all forms of hatred and violent crimes; that this House denounce the conflating of issues between the events in London and a Quebec law.

● (1515)

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (House Leader of the Official Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could my ministerial counterpart, the hon. minister and member for Honoré-Mercier, inform the House what business lies ahead in the coming days?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his loyalty to the tradition of the Thursday question.

This afternoon we will continue debating the motion to extend sitting hours. After that, we will proceed to the report stage of Bill C-30, the budget implementation act, 2021, No. 1, and that debate will continue tomorrow.

On Monday, we will resume debate at third reading of Bill C-6, which deals with conversion therapy. Following that, we will consider report stage and third reading of Bill C-12, the Canadian net-zero emissions accountability act.

Tuesday and Thursday will be allotted days.

On Wednesday, we will continue debate on Bill C-30.

In closing, I would remind the House that there will be a take-note debate on Tuesday evening so that members not seeking re-election may make a farewell speech, as agreed upon among the parties.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS IN JUNE

The House resumed consideration of Government Business Motion No. 8, and of the amendment.

Government Orders

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I get directly involved in the debate on Government Business Motion No. 8, I just want to take a minute to offer my sincere and personal congratulations to three first nations on the southwest coast of Vancouver Island for having come together to directly take ownership of their traditional territories when it comes to managing the resources. This has been a long journey in my riding, and there have certainly been some high emotions present on the subject of old-growth forestry. It is nice to see the first nations come together and really take ownership of this issue. I just want to offer my congratulations to them for taking this important step on this journey.

I will now turn my attention to the business at hand. As my colleagues in the House know, we are here today debating Government Business Motion No. 8. This motion comes before us under the authority granted under Standing Order 27(1).

The main government motion aims to make sure that the House can extend its sitting hours. The government side would like to see us continue to sit on Mondays and Wednesdays until midnight and have the Friday sitting extended until 4:30 in the afternoon. I believe my Conservative colleagues want to see the motion changed so that on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays we would only sit until 8:30 p.m.

I cannot continue to speak about Government Business Motion No. 8 without talking a little about the circumstances in which we find ourselves, which gives me sympathy for Shakespeare's character Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* when he cried, "A plague o' both your houses!" However, in this case, I think we can substitute the Capulets and the Montagues for the Conservatives and the Liberals. Both of these parties are demonstrating no room for co-operation and no finding of a middle ground in order to move forward important pieces of legislation, which I think many Canadians would like to see us pass.

I will start with my Conservative friends, and because of what happened yesterday and what has already happened this morning in the House, we are not actually going to see a vote on the motion before us until Monday, and so we have lost a lot of very valuable time.

Yesterday, the Conservatives were successful at prolonging the Routine Proceedings of the House by forcing a vote to move to Orders of the Day, which, of course, we as a House rejected, and that then finally allowed the government to actually introduce the motion that is before us. However, this morning, they moved a motion to adjourn the House, then there was a debate on a random committee report, which was then followed by an extended debate on a question of privilege. These parliamentary shenanigans, members can see, are very naked attempts to try to delay, and quite successfully, a vote on the motion before us.

Government Orders

I have been a member of the House since 2015, and experienced members should know that this is a time of year when we usually find the time to come together and usually agree in some straight-forward fashion that the House does need some extended sitting hours so that we, as members of Parliament, have the time to represent our constituents and to give voice to important policies and pieces of legislation that concern them. I will never not be in favour of allowing my colleagues to have extra time to do work, which is why I took strong umbrage against the motion to adjourn the House today. It is a Thursday, and unlike a Friday, it is a full sitting day. I think our voters would be shocked to see one party wanting to so blatantly quit the business of the House while there is so much important work to do.

I will leave aside the Conservatives and now turn my eye to the Liberals, because I think it is the height of irony and hypocrisy for the Liberals to stand before us and talk about the dysfunction of the House. When we look at what has been happening in several of the most prominent committees, the Liberals have actively filibustered to prevent those committees from arriving at a point where members can collectively make a decision on a motion that is before them.

● (1520)

I am very lucky to sit on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I invite my colleagues to substitute on that committee to see what a well-run committee of the House is able to do. We have differing opinion on the agriculture committee, but the one thing that unites us all is the fact that every single one of our parties represents ridings with farmers and has strong agricultural basis. We usually find a way to work together by consensus to arrive at decisions in a respectful way. It does not mean to say that we do not have our debates and our points of disagreement, but it is probably the most ideal demonstration of how committees can work.

The actions of the Liberals at various committee by filibustering are adding to the situation in which we find ourselves. I would have preferred for us to have arrived at a place where we could get a vote on Government Business No. 8, but unfortunately we will have to delay that until Monday because of the special orders we are operating under in this current hybrid system.

Standing Order 27, I believe, dates back to 1982, but even predating that year, it does reflect a long-standing practice that has existed since Confederation for Parliament, and I am sure in the provincial legislatures, to seek the time necessary to advance important legislative agendas.

When we look at why we are where we are today, we also have to identify the fact that the government needs to bear a lot of responsibility for the mismanagement of its own legislative agenda. It has left a lot of very important bills in limbo. We are not very sure if the Liberals will have the runway left for them to arrive at the Governor General's doorstep for the all-important royal assent.

We seem to be operating right now under this sort of manufactured emergency. I use that term because if my colleagues look at the parliamentary calendar, we as a House are scheduled to return on Monday, September 20. Therefore, there really is no reason for this panicked rush to try to get these bills passed or sent to the Senate. We should, under normal circumstances, be planning to

have a pleasant summer in our constituencies where we get to engage with our constituents and, hopefully, as the lockdowns lift, attend limited participation in community events. Then as the summer draws to an end, we should look forward to our return to Ottawa, to the House of Commons, on September 20, when we can resume this important business.

The reason we are operating under these circumstances right now, which is quite clear to anyone who has the slightest sense of political know-how and what is quite apparent to many skilled observers, is that the Liberals are very much putting everything into place to call an election. There is no matter of confidence coming up except, of course, the votes on the estimates. There is no motion before the House, no budget, except for Bill C-30, which I believe will pass because we do not want to have an election during this third wave, from which we are recovering. The only plausible reason we would be entering into an election is because the Prime Minister will take it upon himself to visit the Governor General unilaterally and recommend the dissolution of Parliament, as the Liberals seek a new mandate. All signs are pointing toward this.

We should have the time when we return on September 20 to effectively deal with a lot of this. We scheduled a take-note debate next week to give MPs who are not running again the opportunity to give their farewell speeches. The Liberal Party has implemented an emergency order so it can hand-pick preferred candidates instead of letting local riding associations democratically go through the process of selecting their own people. The signs are all there.

● (1525)

When I look at the House schedule for March and April, and the government's completely scattergun approach to how Government Orders were being scheduled at the time, there was really no rhyme, reason or logical pattern to the government bills that came before the House. The Liberals are paying the price for that right now. At the time, they should have identified maybe two or three key priority pieces of legislation and put all their efforts into seeing those across the finish line. Instead, they wasted a lot of time on bills that really were not going anywhere. This is why we see this rush right now.

The Liberals have to realize that this is a minority Parliament. Yes, they are the government, but they were elected to that position with only 33% of the vote in the 2019 election. By virtue of the quirks of our first past the post system, even though the Conservatives got more Canadians to vote for them, the Liberals still ended up with more seats. Therefore, they have to realize that if we are in fact going to have government legislation passed, they have to do so with the consent of another opposition party, and that is a good thing. As an opposition member who sat across the benches from a Liberal majority government, it is good policy and gets more Canadians involved when we have more voices at the table and we try to reach that kind of consensus.

Government Orders

I am proud of how the parties have worked during the worst of the pandemic. If we look back at the history of how we were able to work together in the 2020, I am really proud of the accomplishments that New Democrats were able to provide for Canadians. The major amendments we made to pandemic response programs, such as the Canada emergency response benefit, increasing the Canadian emergency wage subsidy from the initial 10% to 75%, getting those improvements to programs for students and persons with disabilities, putting pressure on the government to fix the much-maligned commercial rental assistance program and ensuring that it was turned into a subsidy that went directly to the tenants instead of having this complex process that involved landlords, are good accomplishments and really demonstrate how minority parliaments are able to work. Again, we are not scheduled to have an election until the year 2023, so theoretically we could have two more years of this, where more voices are at the table for important legislation.

I would like to turn my attention to some of those important bills that will be well served by the extra time we get as a Parliament to debate. I am very proud of the fact that Bill C-15 has made its way to the other place. I want to take the time to recognize Romeo Saganash who brought in Bill C-262, which served as the precursor to Bill C-15. I am glad to see that important legislation seems to be on its way to becoming one of the statutes of Canada and that we will finally have in place an important legislative framework to ensure that federal laws are brought into harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

However, there are two bills in particular that have not yet crossed the House of Commons' finish line, and those are Bill C-6 and Bill C-12.

I had the opportunity to speak to Bill C-6 earlier this week. It is incredibly important legislation. It is a very important use of federal criminal law power. It is high time the House of Commons, indeed the wider Parliament of Canada, made this very significant and important amendment to the Criminal Code to ban this practice. It has been rightly criticized by many professional organizations around the world and we know it has done incredible harm to people who have been forced through it.

• (1530)

It is sad to see members of the Conservative Party trying to hold up this legislation. They are clinging to the belief that the definition of conversion therapy in that bill is not specific enough. Those arguments have been discounted. They have been refuted effectively through debate in the House. I look forward to us having the required number of hours to get Bill C-6 passed so we can get it on its way to the Senate. It is incredibly important for us to get the bill passed into law.

The other bill that we hope will be affected in a positive way by the passage of government Motion No. 8 is Bill C-12. I would agree with some people that Bill C-12 still leaves a lot to be desired, but the important thing to remember is that this is a Liberal government bill and improvements have been made. The amendments made at committee have made it a stronger bill from what was initially on offer at the second reading stage. We need to see that bill brought back to the House. We need to see it passed at third reading and passed on to the Senate.

We are in a critical decade for properly addressing climate change and we need to have those legislative targets put in place. I think of all the years that we have lost since Jack Layton first attempted to pass a bill to put in place those legislative targets. I think about the damage that has been done by climate change since then, about how much further Canada would be ahead if we had taken the steps necessary all those years ago.

We see Bill C-12 as an absolute priority and we want to see it positively impacted by the extension of sitting hours. I want to take the time to acknowledge the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and the member for Victoria for their incredible work on the bill, helping to shepherd its way through the committee process and for their sustained engagement with the Minister of Environment in laying out our priorities. I want to take the time to acknowledge that.

With Bill C-6, I would be remiss if I did not mention my hon. colleague and neighbour, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, for his incredible advocacy on this issue over the years. He has done yeoman's work on the bill during debate, standing and refuting some of the Conservative arguments against it. He deserves special recognition in attaching importance to that bill and in trying to get it through to the finish line.

I want to reiterate that I was elected to come to this place to work. We all knew when we signed up to be members of Parliament, when we were privileged enough to be elected, that this job would sometimes require us to sit extended hours, to work those long hours, to do the work on behalf of our constituents. We certainly have a lot of stuff pulling at our attention these days. It is a careful balancing act between our critic role, our constituency work and what goes on in the House. However, we all know that this is the time of year when we have to roll up our sleeves, get to work, find a way forward to identify the pieces of legislation that are important to us all and work together to get it done.

I appreciate this opportunity to weigh in on Government Business No. 8. I look forward to us having those extended hours next week so we can attach the priority to those bills I spoke about.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I suspect we are debating this motion because the Liberals may not have managed their legislative agenda properly and now we need to work quickly to pass all the important bills.

The NDP also wants Bill C-12 to be passed quickly. We saw it in committee.

Government Orders

The member said that Bill C-12 is flawed and that more improvements could have been made to it. However, his party chose to vote against almost every amendment that the Bloc Québécois proposed to improve Bill C-12 and to make this climate bill truly binding and transparent by establishing accountability mechanisms, which is currently not the case.

I would like to know why the NDP decided to leave their environmental convictions at the door for the debate on Bill C-12.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I will remind my colleague, first of all, that this is a Liberal government bill, so the Liberals can take ownership of its shortcomings and its faults. We worked with the limited tools before us to make the improvements that the Liberals ultimately would allow.

I guess the decision or the choice before us was whether to stop this bill completely in its tracks, given the importance of climate change and the little time that is left before us, or to pass a bill that at least sets up a framework that hopefully can be improved upon at a later date. We chose that option because we believe that climate change needs addressing right now.

I will admit that the bill is still flawed and needs work, but it is a significant improvement from where we are, and we look forward to the opportunity in the future to work on that bill and make the improvements that are necessary. I can certainly give my commitment to doing that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I note that the NDP members, probably more than any other of the opposition parties, often talk about the need to have additional debate time.

I want to reference the behaviour of the Conservatives today, and that is all I am specifically focused on right now. It lasted for about two and a half hours of chamber time. Had that not occurred and had we gone right into the process, it would have allowed for at least a two-hour period with 24 members being able to participate, for example in the budget debate, whether with longer speeches or questions and comments.

Could my colleague provide his thoughts on these lost opportunities? In fact, we are trying to extend hours and the government is, to a certain degree, being frustrated even in using the hours that we currently have to deal with government business. Next week, we have two opposition days.

• (1540)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary brings up a good point. That was a bit of a crazy morning with all kinds of procedural shenanigans. If the business that was planned for today had proceeded in a smooth fashion, we would have looked forward to having a vote on Government Business No. 8 immediately following QP. Because of the results of this morning, we of course now have to wait until Monday.

With a bill as important and as all-encompassing as a budget implementation act, I agree that it is probably in the House's interests to allow as many members to speak to the bill as possible. There are a significant number of changes in that bill that are going to have impacts on communities across the country. Some are good and some leave a bit to be desired, but we need to provide the room, the time and the space for members to contribute to the debate on behalf of their constituents. Therefore, yes: It is incredibly important for us to give space for that.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. When I first came he was very supportive in assisting me with the procedures of the House.

I heard tales of the Conservative blue book that was used to frustrate committees and council at the whole, and now we are seeing the Liberals do the same thing with filibustering, and there are conversations around filibustering in the United States.

Could the hon. member give his opinions on how filibusters are used to sometimes frustrate democratic processes?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: That is an excellent question, Madam Speaker. We have, at various times during my tenure as a member of Parliament, had important debates on the nature of the filibuster. It is an important tool in the hands of the opposition because it is one of the few tools we have to try to blunt what we may see as heavy-handed government overreach. We certainly saw that at the Procedure and House Affairs Committee in the last Parliament, when the government was trying to unilaterally change the Standing Orders. However, it is a tool that needs to be used wisely and with a careful goal in mind.

I see the tool being used now by government members to frustrate the opposition. It is being used for, frankly, very silly purposes including trying to prevent the Prime Minister from appearing before the Procedure and House Affairs Committee and preventing the national defence committee from accurately coming to the end of its report. These have no rhyme or reason other than a government that is afraid of transparency and afraid of the opposition coming to the truth. That has been very well exposed by the opposition and also by the media. The Canadian public can see through the Liberals' antics in this regard.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the topic of filibustering, the member should know that actually the records for filibustering the longest belong to members from his political party. I believe former MP David Christopherson has the record, and I believe that the member for New Westminster—Burnaby is often contending for that record.

If I understand this member correctly, filibustering is okay, as long as it serves the NDP purpose. Is that what we are to believe?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I am glad we had time to mention the legendary David Christopherson. I was very pleased and honoured to serve in the caucus with him for four years. His knowledge of public accounts and procedure and House affairs is unparalleled among parliamentarians. Certainly, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, our House leader, has been fearless in going to the wall when he thinks there is government outreach.

What I would say to the member for Kingston and the Islands is basically a repetition of my previous answer to the member for Hamilton Centre. Filibustering is an important tool in the hands of the opposition, but it has to be used with a clear purpose in mind. I would argue that David Christopherson and the member for New Westminster—Burnaby had clearly set goals in the use of their filibusters. If we look at the various Liberal tactics at committees, the Liberals are quite obviously trying to avoid transparency and trying to avoid the opposition uncovering the truth in its various investigations.

• (1545)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for his really excellent analysis of how we got here and the issue of how much time was wasted by the government through the fall and early spring, when the only goal it seemed to have was how to get an election under way. The Liberals suddenly realized that an election was not going to happen in the near future, so they are trying to rush things through, and now the Conservatives are just wasting time to try to block those actions.

Could the member take some time to speculate on where we would be if we did have a government that governed with the best interests of the country in mind? Where would we be if the government had just worked with the NDP? We have focused on what would be good for Canadians.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, those were excellent points raised by my friend for South Okanagan—West Kootenay. It is a very beautiful riding, for those members who have not had the opportunity to visit that part of British Columbia.

I talked in my speech about Bill C-12 and Bill C-6. Those are obvious areas where the government could find co-operation from our party in moving them forward. Also, another bill, Bill C-22, is important to reform our justice system by reforming the Criminal Code and would put some important reforms on the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. I just wish, in hindsight, that the Liberals had focused laser-like attention on two, three or four government bills at the most, and tried to shepherd those through. Instead, I made mention of the scatter-gun approach. It was all over the place, with no rhyme or reason, and suddenly we are in late May and June, and the government is looking at the calendar and panicking. That is where we are today.

We are scheduled to return on September 20. There should not be a reason for panic, but we know the Liberals are trying to engineer an election this summer.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the previous member started off his intervention by talking about the Liberals and Conservatives taking the lead roles in a Shakespearean novel. I would love to hear his thoughts on where the NDP falls into that, but perhaps that is for another day.

Given that this motion now is going to be impacted, because we are after question period and there have been some antics put forward by the Conservatives today, I would like to move, seconded by the member for Winnipeg North:

Government Orders

That the amendment be amended by deleting all the words after the word “deleting” and replacing them with the following: the words “Friday, June 11, 2021”, and replacing them with the following “Monday, June 14, 2021”.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The sub-amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a point of clarification, would that amendment then end up having the extended hours start on Monday instead of tomorrow?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, effectively that is correct, I believe they would start on Monday. However, the reality of the situation is that because the Conservatives put us in this position of having to end this debate after Question Period, it throws off the wording in the motion and possibly subjects us to the motion being out of order.

In keeping with making sure the motion would be in order, because I am sure all members of the House would like to see that, we made sure that the motion could be amended so that it would retain its status of being in order.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, since we will not be voting on this motion until Monday, am I to understand from my colleague's amendment that we will not be able to retroactively say that tomorrow's sitting will be extended?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have been known to see the clock into the future, but certainly not into the past. I would agree with what the member is suggesting.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the amendment to the amendment.

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

[*English*]

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request that it be adopted on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 14, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021, NO. 1

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-30, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021 and other measures, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are two motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-30.

[*Translation*]

Motion No. 1 will not be selected by the Chair as it could have been presented in committee when the committee examined clause 24 of the bill, as indicated in the note accompanying Standing Order 76.1(5).

[*English*]

The remaining motion has been examined, and the Chair is satisfied that it meets the guidelines expressed in the note to Standing Order 76.1(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at the report stage.

Since the objective of the motion is to bring clause 158 of the bill back to the way it was before being negated during clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, which is within the rules, Motion No. 2 will be debated and voted upon.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motion No. 2 to the House.

● (1555)

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-30 be amended by restoring Clause 158 as follows:

158 Subsection 14(1) of the Canadian Securities Regulation Regime Transition Office Act is replaced by the following:

14 (1) The Minister may make direct payments, in an aggregate amount not exceeding \$119,500,000, or any greater amount that may be specified in an appropriation Act, to the Transition Office for its use.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a pleasure to rise in debate, but in particular on the occasion as we approach what I hope is the expeditious adoption of Bill C-30, the budget implementation act, which will put in place a number of important measures designed to help continue the fight against COVID-19, ensure that our economy has the strength to bust out of the pandemic recession and create serious economic growth, but also ensure that the growth we expect to see occurs in a way that is both sustainable and inclusive.

Before I begin my assessment of Bill C-30, which I am obviously in support of, having spoken in support of the bill in this House previously, I want to address some of the proceedings that have taken place today.

We have seen, over the course of this pandemic, in some ways some very optimistic co-operation from various opposition parties. I remember back in the early days of the pandemic when it seemed there was a real team Canada spirit to get the supports to workers, businesses and families across Canada that were at severe risk as a result of the changes that COVID-19 foisted upon our communities. It seems, from the proceedings earlier today in the House, that this spirit of co-operation, at least on the part of the Conservative Party of Canada, has evaporated completely.

When we were seeking to move forward with Bill C-30, I was struck by the incredible inconsistency when I saw the Conservatives' House leader host a press conference declaring their appetite to continue to co-operate to get benefits where they are needed. At the same time, one of the Conservative members had moved a motion in the House of Commons to shut down debate for the day on the very bill that is going to extend the benefits they purport to support.

Over the course of the several hours that followed, we saw an adjournment motion seeking to have House members go home before noon rather than get to work to pass these important measures, and we saw speeches given on points of privilege that included texts drawn from the records of Hansard from 1891, which I do not think demanded the attention of the House so much as the emergency benefits that are destined for Canadian families and workers. My sincere hope is that, moving forward, we will be able to rebuild that sense of co-operation in order to get benefits where they are needed.

I will address the three chapters I outlined in my introductory sentences. The first focus of budget 2021 is to continue and finish the fight against COVID-19. That is going to require our focus to be drawn on the issue of vaccines. I am pleased to share that Canada, out of any G20 country, has had more of its citizens receive at least one dose of the vaccine than any other comparator economy in that group. Some people will point to the need to achieve two doses before full vaccination is complete, but from a population health point of view, from a procurement point of view and certainly from a signal that we are going to have a significant portion of our population that is willing to become fully vaccinated, this positions Canada as perhaps the leading economy in the world when it comes to the social responsibility our citizens have exhibited, putting their hands up and saying they want to do their part to help protect their communities, their families and themselves.

Bill C-30 ropes in certain supports that are going to help provincial governments expedite the administration of their vaccines, \$1 billion, in fact, for this purpose, but we also know that from a public health point of view, there is more to the fight against COVID-19 than vaccinations. We know that public health care systems have seen serious delays, with appointments being cancelled and surgeries being pushed back months and months. I would hazard a guess that every member of this House has friends or family members who have been impacted by that. That is why this bill includes \$4 billion to help address some of the short-term pressures on provincial health care systems that have flowed from this pandemic.

In addition, it is essential we recognize that no epidemiologist in the world was seriously arguing that vaccines alone were going to help us get through the various waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why we have put roughly \$20 billion toward the safe restart agreements, to help provinces make sure that workers could get their hands on personal protective equipment and help businesses erect the kind of infrastructure within their premises that would keep people safe.

There have been various investments in my own community through some of these funds that help protect the mental health of vulnerable members of the community. I am thinking in particular of some of the work that the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre has moved forward with as a result of some of the investments. I am thinking of some of the money that we have put toward facilities like the R.K. MacDonald Nursing Home in Antigonish. I am thinking of some of the facilities in Pictou County, whether it is schools or long-term care facilities, or those on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia that are benefiting from things like improved ventilation.

- (1600)

These are good investments that were made in partnership with provincial governments to help combat some of the consequences that we have seen as a result of COVID-19.

Of course, there is more to the COVID-19 pandemic than a public health threat. This has been the greatest economic challenge we have seen at least since the Great Depression. What I have seen was remarkable. Our institutions have really proven their mettle as we were hit with a virus that had economic consequences that were beyond comprehension a year and a half ago. We have seen Parliament react quickly to help get programs like the Canada emergency wage subsidy to help keep workers on payroll. We have seen the Canada emergency rent subsidy to help businesses literally keep their doors open. We have seen programs like the Canada recovery benefit, which has helped workers keep food on the table.

I am pleased to see that these measures, along with relaxed criteria for employment insurance for affected workers, have been extended in Bill C-30 to provide additional relief for businesses as we transition from the public health emergency to the economic recovery. These benefits are staggered so that, as time goes on, although some of these emergency benefits will diminish, new benefits will come onboard to inspire businesses to hire more workers to help kick-start that recovery in an effective way.

Government Orders

When we talk about the recovery, it is important that we do not simply view it as the need to stabilize existing businesses, which has been one of the top priorities over the past year and a half. We have to look forward to the policies we can adopt that are actually going to kick-start economic growth, because growth is how we are going to help offset some of the immense costs that COVID-19 foisted upon our communities.

When I look at some of the policies that are included in Bill C-30, and indeed in budget 2021, I think of the announcement around Canada's first national child care and early learning strategy. There is over \$30 billion dedicated toward this important social and economic policy. Of course, there is a social imperative with the need to level the playing field, particularly for young women who might be starting a family, who are disproportionately affected when they bring a new child into the household.

A policy like this is not just the right thing to do to create that economic equality across Canada. It is also one of the best things we can do to grow our economy, by having more workers who are willing and able to take part in the workforce because they can afford accessible child care. Within five years, it will be at \$10 a day, and by next year at half the price it is offered at today. I expect we are going to see a serious boost to our GDP. The forecasts tied to this specific policy are beyond what almost every other policy that is in the playbook globally could offer in terms of the impact it will have on jobs and growth for Canada.

However, this is not a one-trick pony. This budget includes new programs for small business financing. I mentioned the hiring incentive, which will cover half of the increased costs of payroll for businesses that are trying to get out of this pandemic and put people to work who are looking for jobs today. There are major investments in infrastructure, including a renewal of the national trade corridors fund, which has helped advance important projects in my own community, like the twinning of Highway 104 between Pictou County and Antigonish, or the expansion of the Air Cargo Logistics Park at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport. These are important investments. We have more investments in our economic infrastructure through the small craft harbours program, which is going to see an additional \$300 million poured into rural communities to help grow the fishery.

Government Orders

It is essential that we do not just focus on growth, but we focus on growth that is equitable, sustainable and inclusive. When I look at some of the investments we made to kick-start the green economic recovery, I look to the additional \$5 billion put toward the net-zero accelerator that is included in budget 2021. I look to the recently expanded home energy retrofit program, which would provide up to \$5,000 grants for homeowners who conduct a home energy audit, which is going to have the dual benefit of creating jobs in the community and fighting climate change, and of course I should add the tertiary benefit of saving homeowners money. There are benefits here for students, with one of the largest packages globally to support young people in our economy. There are benefits here to expand long-term care facilities so our seniors can retire with dignity.

I will conclude by saying that as we seek to emerge from this pandemic, we cannot forget the people and businesses that continue to hurt and we must extend support to them. We need to adopt these policies that are going to help kick-start our economic growth to punch out of this recession, and we need to ensure that we extend benefits to the vulnerable and benefits that will help kick-start a green economic recovery.

I am thankful for my time. I am so happy to take any questions, and I urge all members of the House to vote in favour of this important motion.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

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

He spoke about the most vulnerable. The crisis made a lot of people vulnerable. It created a lot of homelessness, a lot of vulnerable people without housing. In the budget statement, the government announced a program called Reaching Home to fund emergency resources that were set up during the pandemic. In my riding, there is a Reaching Home community called Halte du coin, which is accessible 24-7. Many similar organizations have been set up across Quebec.

Unfortunately, the Réseau solidarité itinérance du Québec is still waiting for a response from the government. The money is supposed to be renewed after July 1 to maintain funding for these extremely important resources, but the government has not said anything.

The government says it will happen, but it is not giving updates. People are very worried, and vulnerable, at-risk individuals need a place to live in the coming months. They are still waiting for an answer.

Could my colleague answer that question?

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, without full knowledge of the background, aside from what was just provided in that question, I would suggest to the hon. member that organizations of various types do in fact qualify for some of the emergency benefits, whether it is the rent subsidy or the wage subsidy.

When it comes to ensuring that people have a safe and dignified place to call home, I would point him to the national housing strategy and the first-time home buyers' incentive. When it comes to support for non-profits, I would point him not only to the emergency community support fund that was rolled out over the course of the pandemic, but also to new investments in excess of \$400 million to support non-profits.

If the hon. member would like to follow up with more specific detail around the organizations he is referring to, I would be pleased to make time for him and plug him into officials within the Department of Finance if necessary.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, speaking of vulnerable people, during the pandemic, and because of the impacts of COVID, people with serious illnesses such as cancer or other long-term illnesses need extended EI sickness benefits more than ever.

Of course, the government has limited the expansion of EI sickness benefits to only 26 weeks, instead of the 50 weeks the NDP is calling for. Can the member explain why the government is denying sick people the weeks of benefits they need and why they must wait until 2022 to receive them? Many of my constituents have written to me to saying they need those extended benefits now and that 26 weeks is not enough.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, with great respect for the hon. member, I wholeheartedly reject the notion that we are extending to “only” 26 weeks. The 26 weeks of EI sickness benefits will help thousands of vulnerable Canadians. We based that number, in part, on the recommendation of the Canadian Cancer Society, which requested in its pre-budget submission that we extend EI sickness benefits to at least 26 weeks.

While I have the floor, I want to draw attention to a constituent of mine named Kathy McNaughton. She introduced herself to me back in 2016 and told me about her husband David, who died at age 50 of esophageal cancer. David was as hard-working a man as one can imagine, and in his final days, he was laying laminate flooring to help provide income for his family when he should have been taking care of himself and spending time with his loved ones.

Kathy has made it her mission to change this policy and testified before the finance committee in support of the motion to extend this to 26 weeks. I would like to thank Kathy for her advocacy. This measure is going to be billions of dollars that will help vulnerable—

• (1610)

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

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the leader in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

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 have a very quick question. The member expressed some disappointment at the beginning of his speech regarding the tactics used by the Conservative Party. I want to get his thoughts on the fact that we have lost many hours.

For every hour of lost time, we lose the potential for 12 members to address the legislation. For example, we would have been able to debate the bill that the members talked about today. We have lost a number of hours today. What are the member's thoughts?

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Speaker, this is very important. The hon. member has drawn attention to the fact that certain speakers may not be able to advocate on behalf of their constituents whatever their position on the bill may be in Parliament, but there is another effect that is really important to draw attention to. In the limited time window we have before the House is set to rise for the summer, there is other urgent work that we must address.

I point to Bill C-6, which would ban conversion therapy. The House needs to address this because it is urgent that people are not subjected to conversion therapy. I point to Bill C-12, which would provide climate accountability. These measures will not get addressed if the Conservative Party continues to launch procedural tricks to avoid debate on what matters to Canadians. They should put their country ahead of the interests of their party.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-30 on behalf of my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country. Like so many things with the Liberal government, this omnibus budget is unfocused, leaving many of the most affected by the economic crisis behind.

The budget outlines bold new ideas to build back better with new debt of \$354.2 billion last year and \$154.7 billion this year. This is a plan where every person in Canada would owe over \$13,000, or over \$52,000 for a family of four, in new debt in just two years. Not to mention the years of needless deficits leading up to this, which the Conservatives have been warning about since the government took office in 2015. However, I believe Canadians are smart enough to realize that the budget is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt by the Liberals to buy their votes on the backs of their own borrowed money.

It was in this House, when the budget was first tabled, that a Liberal member alluded that this budget has something for everyone. This is not true if someone had just opened a new business. For a year now, the Conservatives have been bringing forth the issue that new businesses, which do not have any sales track record, are not eligible for many programs, and the Liberals have ignored this.

This is an election budget, not a budget focused on economic recovery. It is clear that what the Liberals claim is stimulus is more about their own partisan priorities, rather than about maintaining jobs, creating jobs, helping businesses the most affected by the pandemic, or growing the economy.

Despite billions in new spending, this budget still leaves people and small businesses behind. The budget lists the establishment of

a \$500-million tourism relief fund as well as \$100 million for Destination Canada to market Canada. This amount is a drop in the bucket of a \$157.4-billion budget and is an insult to the tourism industry. Tourism was the first affected, and it will be one of the last to recover, yet tourism only garnered one and a half pages in a 750-page omnibus budget document. In my riding, tourism small businesses are a backbone of our community.

Lou is owner of Cheers Okanagan Tours in Kelowna—Lake Country, a tour and shuttle company offering winery tours, ski shuttles, airport transportation and other tour options. They are ambassadors for our local attractions. It has seven vehicles it has had to continue to store and pay for. Lou told me that once her business is back to pre-pandemic levels, it will take three years for her to recover her small business.

Terri, owner of Vacanza Destinations in Kelowna—Lake Country, a boutique travel tourism company, has had no revenue in over a year. She has gone substantially into personal debt. In order to keep her business ready to turn back on, she has to retain all her licensing, liability insurance and many other expenses, costing thousands each month. Terri told me that once business is back to pre-pandemic levels, it will take up to five years for her to recover.

Terri and Lou are two women who have built up their small businesses with hard work. The Liberals say there is money in the budget for people to upgrade their transferable skills in order to work in different industries. Maybe some people, like Terri and Lou, like their jobs, the careers they have built and the relationships they built. It is not up to the Liberals to pick what jobs they like and which ones will survive the pandemic. Tourism is not a priority for the government, nor is it reflected in the budget.

The budget details how arts, entertainment and recreation are the largest affected sector for people losing work in February 2020 compared to 2021, yet there is just slightly over one page out of the 750-page budget referencing these sectors, which are sectors important to Kelowna—Lake Country. The budget outlines approximately \$450 million in funding, but much is spread over three years. Musicians, and those involved performing arts, festivals, arts, culture and sports, are some of the hardest hit. This budget is a disappointment.

As I mentioned earlier, the Liberals say there is money in the budget for people to upgrade their transferable skills in order to work in different industries, but why should people not use their talents? Why should they be forced to not work in their field?

Government Orders

I will say it again, it is not up to the Liberals to pick what jobs they like and which ones survive the pandemic. The spending in this budget is unfocused and does not address the hardest hit industries, such as arts, culture and recreation, as priorities.

• (1615)

Aerospace is another major employer in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country. The budget states, “In 2019, aerospace contributed more than \$28 billion to Canada’s GDP, directly and indirectly supporting 234,500 jobs”. The budget also correctly notes, “Highly dependent on purchases from airlines hit hard by the pandemic, the sector is facing reduced demand and a longer path to recovery, relative to other sectors of the economy”.

The government seems to think an appropriate level of support for an industry it states has been hit hard by the pandemic is \$250 million over three years across the entire country. Realizing how meagre this truly was, the Minister of Finance tried to spin this underwhelming investment by stating, “This is in addition to the \$1.75 billion in the Strategic Innovation Fund”. However, that fund is over seven years. This is another example of an unfocused \$154.7-billion omnibus budget.

There are a number of measures in this budget that I could support. However, in the 750-page omnibus budget of debt and election-style spending on the backs of future generations, it is not the real plan that Canada desperately needs. Extending the Canada emergency wage subsidy and the Canada emergency rent subsidy are both welcome ideas. This, in addition to a number of measures to continue helping individual Canadians and industries, I can absolutely get behind. However, this budget leaves out important sectors that have been the most hurt.

In this budget, the Prime Minister would add more to our national debt than all other previous prime ministers combined. The biggest source of federal funds this last year was not tax revenue or lenders, but central bank money printing. The \$303.5 billion of new printed money in 2020 is not free. Devaluing the dollar risks increasing inflation, meaning everyone pays more for things such as housing, food and transportation.

Statistics Canada announced the cost of living went up 3.4% in April 2021 alone. This has been especially apparent in our housing market. Canadians faced a nationwide housing affordability crisis, and the budget completely ignores first-time homebuyers and the housing needs of young Canadians.

On May 26, the finance minister would not answer a simple question of how many units the rapid housing initiative has built. The housing problem is compounded by the recent government announcement of new mortgage qualification rules. Experts are saying this puts home ownership further away for many.

My colleague, the Conservative shadow minister of housing from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, led an opposition day motion yesterday which had many common-sense solutions to address the growing housing and affordability crisis. Instead of embracing these ideas, which have been suggested by experts, the Liberals voted it down, doubling down on their failed strategies.

The budget also fails to meaningfully address the parts of our economy that allow for growth without the need for hands-on government intervention and billions of dollars in borrowed money. Our economic engines of natural resources and trade can create jobs and help pay off our massive debt. Canadian exports are responsible for one in five jobs and nearly a third of our GDP, yet trade is barely sprinkled around the budget.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

For the Conservatives, not only does trade represent a guarantee of economic security for millions of workers, but it is also an important aspect of food security and, especially, our best way to combat debt.

The Liberal government is mismanaging the trade file, and the problems keep getting worse.

[*English*]

It is clear that the government has no real plan to secure our future through an economic recovery where all sectors and all regions are firing on all cylinders. I simply cannot support a budget that is unfocused, fails so many who have been the most affected, and burdens future generations with billions of dollars in crippling debt.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberals received \$850,000 from the wage subsidy, the Conservatives received \$716,000 and the NDP received \$265,000. The current amendment will require that they stop dipping into the cookie jar by the end of August.

If this can continue until August, why not make it retroactive, since we are saying that, starting in August, this is no longer allowed? That is what I do not understand. What are my colleague’s thoughts on that?

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, our leader has made comments on this already. When we originally approved a lot of the programs last year to help businesses, the major focus was to help small businesses and get the money out the door. We have now seen that a lot of those programs have not worked for a lot of small businesses, and our focus has absolutely been on making recommendations to the government on a number of those programs and amending them.

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, given today's behaviour from the Conservative Party in trying to prevent debate from taking place on this particular bill, can the member give any indication as to how long she thinks the Conservative Party will continue to delay the passage of it, or when she believes the Conservatives will stop playing their partisan political games so that we can start dealing with legislation and getting it passed for the benefit of all Canadians from coast to coast to coast?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, that is a very rich question considering that it took two years for the budget to come forth.

Last year we had a COVID committee, which was not really Parliament. We were not able to debate legislation, nor debate at all, and there was no opportunity for opposition day motions. Then we had the prorogation of Parliament, and many committees were not sitting for a big part of last year. It is clearly the government that has delayed any legislation and work in the House.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking about small businesses, because we know they have struggled throughout the pandemic and have had difficult times getting the support they need.

One thing we have heard the government make promises for is capping merchant fees. We pay five times the merchant fees that Europe does and have some of the highest interchange fees in the world. We have not heard how the Conservatives feel about capping merchant fees.

The government has made a commitment that it is going to do something to tackle merchant fees. However, we heard this commitment five years ago from the same government. We know how unfair it is that Canadian merchants and small businesses are paying these outrageous fees, and the banks are having record profits.

I would like to hear if the Conservatives will join the NDP in calling on the Liberals to take action on this, not just talking about it, but actually legislating a cap on merchant fees so that we are in line with the European Union.

• (1625)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, we know that small business is the background of our economy in Canada. As a former small business owner, I am very aware of working in retail and where some of those fees are.

The government really does not understand small business, and we see that in a lot of its policies. We even see that in how it talks about legislation. It is small business owners who are putting themselves on the line every day. They are working seven days a week and taking risks, and the government really does not understand how small businesses operate and the needs of small business. There are a lot of different ways that we need to look at supporting small businesses.

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ALLEGED BREACHES OF PRIVILEGE PRESENTED IN THE SECOND REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

With at least one hour's notice, I did file with your office information noting that I would be raising this question of privilege at this time.

First, I would like to turn to the misleading or prevaricating evidence given by the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth to committees, evidence that she gave to the Standing Committee on Finance on July 16, 2020, and to the ethics committee on August 11, 2020, the latter being under a solemn affirmation recorded in the minutes of proceedings and at page 17 of the evidence.

As a preliminary comment, I should acknowledge that the evidence the committee relies upon in its report spans the prorogation of Parliament last summer. I would also point out that the ethics committee, on November 16, adopted a motion that provided, among other things:

this committee undertake a study into issues of conflict of interest and the Lobbying Act in relation to pandemic spending;

that this study continue our work relating to the Canada Student Service Grant, including this committee's work to review the safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest in federal government expenditures; government spending, WE Charity and the Canada Student Service Grant; and the administration of the Canada Student Service Grant and WE Charity;

The language of that motion clearly indicates that it would be a continuation of the committee's work begun during the first session of this Parliament, building upon the evidence received then. This is reiterated at paragraph 3 of the second report of the committee tabled in the House this morning:

Committee members agreed that this study would represent a continuation of the August 2020 study. As such, testimony heard in early August 2020 is included in this report. Where necessary for context, this report also includes references to public testimony or documents from other committees of the House of Commons that have conducted studies relating to the [contribution agreement granted to WE Charity].

The background to this matter of privilege can be found at paragraphs 76 to 81 of the second report under the heading "Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth's Relationship with WE Charity". For the benefit of the Speaker and of the House, let me read key excerpts:

Her second interaction with WE Charity was during a call with Mr. Craig Kielburger and Ms. [Sofia] Marquez on 17 April 2020; both later stated that they discussed WE Charity's proposal for a youth social entrepreneurship program. When asked whether anything other than the Kielburgers' social entrepreneurship proposal was discussed, [the minister] stated that she asked how the youth WE Charity was working...during the pandemic.

Mr. Craig Kielburger later stated that during the 17 April 2020 call, [she] had suggested adding a volunteer stream to WE Charity's initial proposal regarding youth entrepreneurship. Ms. Marquez stated that she did not recall [the minister] mentioning the CSSG at that time. Rather...

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Here the committee quotes Ms. Marquez at length:

within the mandate of [the minister's] office she was tasked with overseeing [...] the Canada Service Corps program, which has nothing to do with the [CSSG]... That program was something we were deeply interested in better understanding and supporting the federal government in scaling... I can't recall word for word what [the minister] said regarding the service piece, but I do remember it was focused mainly on the social entrepreneurship proposal that we had at hand.

I will now get back to the committee's words:

In addition, Ms. Marquez said she could not recall [the minister] "saying word for word that there was a specific service stream that we should have been building." It was, rather, her and Mr. Craig Kielburger's—

• (1630)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, members of the House earlier today had a demonstration of another matter of privilege that went on for an excessive amount of time. The member is now standing up for yet another matter of privilege, and my concern, to get to the point of order, is that we might be witnessing the use of points of order to prevent members from being able to contribute to debate.

I am wondering if you could ask the member if he could give any indication of how long he is going to be. Members are supposed to be concise in their comments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the hon. parliamentary secretary's intervention.

Given the rules of the House, the hon. member is able to rise in the House and present his question of privilege. The hon. member did go through the proper process to notify me that he would be bringing this discussion to the floor. The regulations do not stipulate how long a member can speak, but they do stipulate that it should be a brief presentation, so I want to remind the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes of that.

I will not ask him how long he is going to speak. I will allow him to continue with his deliberation.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, to continue, these are the committee's words from the report:

It was, rather, her and Mr. Craig Kielburger's 19 April 2020 call with Ms. Wernick that prompted her team to build a proposal based on Ms. Wernick's directives.

[The minister] did not recall any instances of the term "volunteer" being used during the 17 April 2020 call, but the term "service opportunities" was used. [The minister] told the Committee that at the time of that call she was unaware that the Prime Minister would make an announcement regarding youth programming five days later, on 22 April 2020.

[The minister] was provided a briefing note concerning the call, which has since been disclosed, but she did not take notes during the call. After that meeting she asked her team to follow up with other federal officials regarding WE Charity's proposal. She later stated that she never considered the entrepreneurship proposal, but that it was important for other officials "to be aware of it and to make sure they look into it and consider its merits." [She] explained that she did not mention her 17 April 2020 call with WE Charity to the Finance Committee because they did not discuss the CSSG during that call.

The ethics committee offers a damning conclusion about this evidence at paragraph 224:

The Committee notes that when [the minister] spoke at Finance committee she failed to disclose her 17 April 2020 meeting with Mr. Craig Kielburger. In follow-up testimony before this Committee, she failed to disclose that those discussions included discussions about giving the WE Group the heads up that a "separate service stream" was in consideration. [The minister] failed in her obligation to be accurate with a committee and potentially impeded our work.

It is important for me to give further context and to unpack that a bit. Obviously it is tremendously concerning.

The troubling exchange that I referenced at the finance committee of July 16, 2020, occurred when I asked the minister, at page 11 of the evidence, "Did you discuss the program with anyone at WE before discussing it at cabinet?" The minister answered, "I did not discuss this program, the CSSG program, with anyone at WE." If I may, I would say that the cartoon stink line started coming off of that answer just a couple of hours after the minister left the committee, when Rachel Wernick, a senior assistant deputy minister with the Department of Employment and Social Development, made reference, at page 25 of the evidence, to approving a briefing note for the minister in connection with a meeting with WE Charity.

Days after this finance committee meeting, the Toronto Star confirmed that on July 20, 2020, the minister had indeed met with WE Charity's Craig Kielburger on April 17, 2020, just days prior to the Prime Minister's launch of the Canada student service grant. Then, when Marc and Craig Kielburger appeared before the finance committee on July 28, 2020, they confirmed under oath that there had been a mid-April 2020 telephone conversation with the minister.

We can see that the ethics committee's second report offers a reasonable summary of the evidence given. It speaks to the point that the minister misled two parliamentary committees. It does not, however, adequately convey the real flavour of the minister's conduct at the committee, which is to say, the prevarication she displayed. I will quote a couple of sample exchanges of the minister's August 11, 2020, appearance at the ethics committee in order to give the Chair and the House a better sense of how the testimony had to be extracted from her.

First, there is my exchange with the minister, at page 19 of the evidence. I asked the minister:

At the finance committee I had the opportunity to ask you some questions, Minister. There was a disparity between my question to you and your response. I asked if you had spoken with the WE organization about the CSSG, and you responded that no, you hadn't, but you had spoken to them, we later learned, in the time period in question. I believe the date was April 17.

In that call, what details did you discuss with this organization? Was it about anything that would later appear in the proposal for the CSSG?

The minister answered:

Madam Chair, just to make sure it is on the record, on December 10, I appeared at WE Day in Ottawa after I had become Minister of Youth. That was to talk to an auditorium full of youth at the National Arts Centre.

● (1635)

The second time I interacted with WE Charity, Craig Kielburger personally, was over the phone on April 17, 2020. I had a phone call with him as well as another member of his team at 11:00 in the morning. That phone call lasted just over 30 minutes. We spoke about an unsolicited program in regard to youth entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, and something that had been shared. As it was not something that I was not considering, I referred it to officials.

That phone call on April 17 was not in regard to the Canada student service grant at all. I did not comment on that.

This led my colleague, the member for Carleton, to try a different angle in getting the minister to give a full testimony to the committee. This exchange is at page 25 of the evidence. The member for Carleton asked, “Did the word ‘volunteer’ ever get spoken in your 30-minute meeting with Mr. Kielburger?” The minister answered, “Madam Chair, off the top of my head, it was more of a listening exercise than...” Here my colleague then prompted for an answer by saying, “Was it spoken, yes or no?” The minister then said, “Not that I’m aware of. I can’t say that I said it.”

Later the member for Carleton asked, “Did someone else say it?” The minister replied, “Madam Chair, this is a lengthier answer, but I recall the conversation in regard to their advancing and sharing their unsolicited proposal. I listened to it.” The member for Carleton persisted by saying, “No, that’s not my question. My question is about whether the word ‘volunteer’ was spoken. Was youth service mentioned?” Again, the minister dodged the question by answering, “Youth service is top of line for me.”

After the member for Carleton attempted to press the point, the Chair, the member for Lethbridge, intervened saying, “Minister, thank you. I do understand that, but the question that has been asked of you is quite simple. It is really a yes or no question. You need to respect the member who’s asking you that question and answer accordingly. Thank you. Minister, yes or no?” The minister relented by replying, “I would say that ‘service opportunities’ was said, yes.”

From this point, the member for Carleton asked, “Of course, that grant wasn’t mentioned because it wasn’t created at the time of your meeting, but did you speak about anything at all other than the Kielburgers’ social entrepreneurship...[program], anything at all, yes or no?” The minister answered, “I would have definitely asked how the youth that they were working with were doing in the face of the pandemic.”

In documents originally provided to the finance committee in which the Clerk of the Privy Council in his appearance before the ethics committee, also on August 11, 2020, undertook to provide to the committee and recorded at page 2 of the evidence saying “it transpired” that the following information would come to light.

In an undated memo, but obviously predating April 17, 2020, the deputy minister for diversity and inclusion and youth wrote to the minister entitled “Meeting with WE Charity founder Craig Kielburger”. This can be found at page 4,203 of the Department of Employment and Social Development’s documents deposited with the committees. The summary, in a big, bold box at the top of the first page, is what is interesting here. I would like to quote that.

The document states:

On April 17, 2020 at 11 am, you are expected to engage in a conversation with WE Charity founder, Craig Kielburger, on their proposal (Annex A) which explores

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how the organization could support the Canada Service Corps (CSC) program as well as other youth programming efforts. Given the situation with COVID19, he may raise ways in which WE Charity can engage more actively in the short term to work with CSC.

Do not forget that this meeting did not just happen out of the blue. As we saw from other documents, testimony and the Ethics Commissioner’s report, discussions were already well under way in other corners of government about a youth program and about contacting WE Charity. It is no wonder the minister wanted to hedge in her answers to committee.

The next document of special interest is from April 20, 2020. It is an email from Sofia Marquez at WE Charity to Ritu Banerjee, the executive director of the Canada Service Corps. It starts at page 430 of the Department of Employment and Social Development document. It states:

I wanted to give you a quick note following our meeting with [the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth] on Friday. Below the highlights:

...

[The Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth] expressed interest in exploring ways to adapt the entrepreneurship proposal we submitted to [the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade] and include a service component to it. She suggested that we should consider opening a service-stream for youth who are currently not well supported through virtual mentorship are looking for microgrants to advance their project. That effect, Craig reassured the Minister that if given the right policy objectives we could amend the proposal.

...

[The Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth] expressed her willingness, as next steps, to connect WE with her team and identify tangible ways to move this opportunity forward.

That sounds like a lot more engaged than a passive comment and the type that we heard from the minister when she said that she heard the term “service opportunities”.

● (1640)

There are three more documents I want to cite that all come from the morning of April 22, 2020, the Prime Minister’s big launch of the Canada student service grant at Rideau Cottage.

First, we have Ms. Marquez’ email to Alessia Avola, who was then the senior policy assistant to the small business minister at 9:02 a.m., found on page 2 of the documents deposited by the Department of Industry:

Allow me to share that we had the opportunity to connect with [the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth] and her team on Friday. I have the chance to discuss the social entrepreneurship program proposal and we’re happy to share it was a productive conversation—she’s very enthusiastic about the idea of supporting young Canadians during COVID-19.

One of the main points that came out of our call was the suggestion we should consider developing a second stream of programming focused on providing digital service opportunities.... Please note that Craig will be sending an email to Jason and the Minister today with the same update.

Here, she put a large smile emoticon.

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There is, in my opinion, a large gulf between being “very enthusiastic”, including suggesting the second stream and what the minister told the member for Carleton, that she had some passing concern about how youth might be doing.

Then there is Craig Kielburger's 11:30 a.m. email to the youth minister herself, found at page 50 of the Privy Council Office's documents—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would ask you to consider relevance here. The member is literally reading, almost verbatim, committee blues into the record. Perhaps you could explore that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I rise on that point of order. With respect to relevance, I am presenting a question of privilege with respect to a minister of the Crown potentially having misled a committee of this House. The exchanges which speak to the veracity or not of the minister's statements are important.

With respect to the member opposite's assertion that I am reading the blues into the record, that is factually incorrect. In fact, I am quoting, for the benefit of the Chair, information that was deposited with committee by various ministries. I am not reading the blues into the record.

With respect to relevant quotes provided by the minister to give context to whether or not she gave answers that were misleading at committee, that is certainly relevant to my question of privilege on whether the minister made statements that were misleading to the committee.

On the question of relevance, I think you, Madam Speaker, would find that my comments are absolutely germane to the question of privilege that I am raising for your consideration.

• (1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate both points of order. I do want to remind the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes that in Bosc and Gagnon, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, it specifically mentions:

A Member recognized on a question of privilege is expected to be brief and concise in explaining the event which has given rise to the question of privilege and the reasons that consideration of the event complained of should be given precedence over other House business.

It also indicates:

When satisfied, the Speaker will terminate the discussion.

I would ask the member to wrap up his brief and concise information that he wishes to provide. I also want to remind the member that once a decision has been made as to whether a question of privilege is accepted, the hon. member will have a chance to debate this further.

I will allow the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes to wrap up.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that very much.

With respect to the passage you cited in Bosc and Gagnon, I would just ask, if possible, if you could ask one of the table officers if there has been precedent set on what the definition of “concise” is. I think Speaker Milliken did that, for context, with respect to how concise or what the definition of concise is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will recognize that the Chair will decide when that moment will come. I will allow the hon. member to wrap up his presentation on the question of privilege, and remind him again that it should be brief and concise. It does not have to go into every detail, because the hon. member would have an opportunity to do that once the debate is before the House, should the question be accepted.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I do hope to furnish the Chair with sufficient information that they do find a prima facie case of privilege in this case, and of course will await your ruling on once we have reached the threshold of exceeding concise.

I would like to reference an email from Craig Kielburger on the date that I was previously mentioning. It goes to the youth minister herself and it is found at page 50 of the Privy Council Office's documents that they deposited with the committee. It says:

Thank you again for your time Friday. We greatly appreciated you so kindly listening to our proposal of a 12-month social entrepreneurship training and support program reaching 8,000 young participants during the COVID-19 era and beyond. We appreciate your thoughtful offer to connect us with relevant members of your Ministry. Over the weekend our team has also been hard at work to adapt your suggestion of a second stream focused on a summer service opportunity.

With respect to her “thoughtful offer” and her “suggestion”, again, one would never have suspected such an active role of being a catalyst for WE's \$900 million program, given the minister's oral testimony at committee. It is little wonder that she danced with her words.

Finally, there is Mr. Kielburger's 12:16 p.m. email to Christiane Fox at page 78 of the Privy Council Office records. Before quoting it, let me remind the House that Ms. Fox was, at the time, the deputy minister to the Deputy Prime Minister and she had, until shortly before, been the deputy minister for youth when the Prime Minister served as youth minister. Turning to the email, it states:

We are processing in our conversations to provide a national program to support youth employment, entrepreneurship, and service during COVID-19. Understanding you're aware of the program we've been developing alongside [the small business and youth ministers], allow me to humbly ask whether you'd be willing to share it with [the Deputy Prime Minister], [the then innovation minister, the member for Mississauga—Malton] and any colleagues you believe would be interested.

A co-development, the plot just keeps thickening. Far from the passive assertion made by the minister, it gets further and further away from the picture that the minister tried to paint for the two committees of this House last summer before the documents and before this evidence surfaced. It now falls to us to sort out what to do with this state of affairs.

As the Speaker ruled on May 11, 2021 at page 7,023 of the Debates in respect of a question of privilege concerning misleading statements in the context of committee evidence:

There is no precedent where the Chair has used testimony from a committee without there being a report on the subject.

This aspect of the matter is a concern for the Chair. It is not for the Speaker to untangle the committee evidence to determine who knew what and when. Such an initiative would trespass on the role of committee members and constitute a breach of my duty to act with impartiality. It is up to the committee to continue its own study and to inform the House of its conclusions, if it deems it appropriate, as has been the tradition.

I would submit that the ethics committee has done its work. It has untangled all of the evidence, it has informed the House of its conclusion that the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth obstructed two committees of this House through misleading evidence. As for the matter that the minister took the solemn affirmation at the ethics committee but not at the finance committee, Bosc and Gagnon point out, at page 1,081:

...refusal to answer questions or failure to reply truthfully may give rise to a charge of contempt of the House, whether the witness has been sworn in or not.

Madam Speaker, I sense that my time is drawing to a close and I will ask for your indulgence for a few more moments, but should my time expire I would just ask that any remaining information that I am unable to offer, I would like with your leave to be able to provide to you in written form for your consideration.

Bosc and Gagnon also comment at page 94 and 95:

...allegations that a witness has lied or misled a committee are taken seriously and may be pursued by the committee. If a committee determines that a witness has given untruthful testimony, it may report the matter to the House. The House alone is responsible for deciding if the witness has deliberately misled the committee and is in contempt of the House as well as for determining the appropriate punitive action. If the House determines that a witness has lied while testifying under oath and the House deems it appropriate, it may waive its privileges over the testimony and refer the matter to the Crown to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to charge the witness with perjury for deliberately lying to a parliamentary committee.

• (1650)

The House has, in the past 20 years, held two witnesses in contempt for misleading committees. I have examples from 2003 and 2008.

In 2003, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates concluded that the former privacy commissioner, George Radwanski, had deliberately misled the committee in his testimony and should be found in contempt of the House. However, given that Mr. Radwanski apologized to the House in writing in addition to having resigned as an officer of Parliament, no sanctions were applied beyond the contempt finding.

In 2008, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts determined that RCMP Deputy Commissioner Barbara George had knowingly misled the committee in her testimony before the committee and recommended that she be found in contempt of the House, but ordered no further actions on the recommendation of the committee, which said, “as this finding of contempt is, in and of itself, a very serious sanction.”

For an example concerning a minister in 2011, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development provided the House with extracts of evidence given by

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the then minister of international co-operation. This report led to Mr. Speaker Milliken's ruling on March 9, 2011, at page 8842 of the Debates. There was a prima facie case of privilege. The matter was referred to the procedure and House affairs committee, which heard from the minister and other witnesses, but it did not complete a report before Parliament was dissolved.

In my presentation on the government obstructing witnesses, I referred to an annual resolution of the United Kingdom House of Commons on witnesses. That was in a separate question of privilege that I raised with the House earlier today. That resolution contained a second paragraph relevant here. It states:

Resolved, That if it shall appear that any person has given false evidence in any case before this House, or any Committee thereof, this House will proceed with the utmost severity against such offender.

Erskine May puts it at paragraph 15.5 as follows, “In the past, witnesses who have...given false evidence, wilfully suppressed the truth, or persistently misled a committee have been considered guilty of contempt.”

McGee's *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, fourth edition, comments in relation to witnesses' obligations to tell the truth at page 776, which states, “Even to prevaricate before a committee might invite questions.”

I do have remedies that I would like to propose to the Chair should you find a prima facie case of privilege. What I would like to do is, again, offer to deposit those with the Chair in written form so they would be included in consideration.

The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, second edition, defines the verb to prevaricate as “Speak or act evasively or misleadingly”.

In the United Kingdom's House of Commons, several committee witnesses in the 19th century faced the wrath of the House when giving this type of evidence, with findings of contempt and even committed to the custody of the Serjeant at Arms or at Her Majesty's Gaol of Newgate.

For example, cases may be found at page 601 of the Journals for August 28, 1835, and page 258 of the Journals for February 24, 1848. I will include in my written submission some further examples.

I do hear encouragement from the government side of the House, but I am trying to be concise.

A cousin of prevarication is the willful suppression of the truth. On March 3, 1828, a committee of the whole of the U.K. House of Commons considering the East Retford Disfranchisement Bill had before it a witness, Jonathan Fox, who spent about 90 minutes answering most questions with some variation of “I cannot say”. The witness was asked to withdraw while the committee deliberated. These deliberations, beginning in column 936 of the parliamentary Debates, are insightful:

Mr. Alderman Waithman observed, that the committee could not suffer its dignity to be trifled with in this way. He would appeal to the committee whether this man's answers could be believed. Something ought to be done to support the dignity of the House, which ought not to be trifled with in this manner. He should move, that the witness had been guilty of gross prevarication.

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Mr. Baring asked, how, if the inquisitorial power of the House was to be exercised, that power could ever be exercised if it was treated in this manner? One phrase was perpetually in this man's mouth...Here was a man...who had entertained the committee for an hour and a half, with the same answer. He had been guilty, in his opinion, of gross prevarication.

• (1655)

Mr. Peel thought it doubtful whether the witness had been guilty of prevarication; it seemed a wilful suppression of the truth.

The Attorney General agreed, that the conduct of the witness did not amount to gross prevarication, although it was evidently a wilful suppression of truth.

Mr. Wynn confessed that he did not know what prevarication was, if the witness had not been guilty of it.

In the end, the House adopted a resolution that Mr. Fox “has attempted to defeat the investigation of the committee, by wilfully suppressing the truth.”

In addition to misleading, prevaricating or wilfully suppressing the truth, the United Kingdom committee has even called out dissembling evidence from a member of Parliament as concerning. I do have a citation for that. It is December 1996 first report in the U.K. House of Commons from the former Committee on Standards and Privileges, at pages 37 and 38.

I will move past those quotations and move on to say that the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth was quite clearly dodging and weaving in her evidence at committee, desperate to avoid giving answers. She was, to borrow the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* definition, speaking evasively.

Normally we are used to answers which split hairs and where words are chosen carefully that can be understood sometimes, but here we are confronted by a ministerial witness who thought she was in question period and could just give answers to whatever question she wished would have been asked.

In conclusion on this point, it is my respectful submission that the minister's evidence was, as reported by the ethics committee's second report, misleading or prevaricating and, therefore, constitutes a prima facie case of privilege.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I greatly appreciate the contribution the hon. member made toward his question of privilege. As indicated earlier, with respect to the other information that was provided during the earlier question of privilege when he also put his point forward, we will take all under advisement. We will get back to the House to determine if this is a prima facie case. If so, the hon. member will be able to present more on that decision.

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 Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, Transport; the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock, Justice.

• (1700)

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order to inform the House that the NDP reserves the right to intervene on the current question of privilege at a later date.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am also interested in the possibility of responding to the question of privilege. I would like to go over what the member has said. A

great deal has been said by the member throughout the day. I will do my best and try to get back to him no later than Thursday next week, if at all possible.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, sometimes we rise on a point of order to thank staff. I just want to thank the member's staff for the incredible work they put into preparing this. There were people behind the scenes doing that and I thank them.

* * *

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-30 laid the foundation for an undertaking that Quebecers, in a rare show of unanimity, opposed. That is why I am pleased to say that I am very happy about a major victory won by my party, the Bloc Québécois, and by Quebec.

Bill C-30 would have renewed and even significantly increased the budget for the Canadian Securities Transition Office to maintain it and accelerate its work. The government wanted to spend \$120 million on it or even more if Parliament voted to do so in an appropriation act. Fortunately, thanks to my colleague's tireless work, the Standing Committee on Finance listened to reason and agreed to our demand to cut that clause from the bill and cut funding for the organization, whose raison d'être was centralization.

I would note that the office was created in 2009 to set up a single securities regulator in Toronto for the whole country. If the plan were to come to fruition, regulation of the entire financial sector would have been concentrated in Toronto. We are fiercely opposed to that because it is a heinous attack on our ability to keep our head offices and businesses viable here.

Therefore, I urge my hon. colleagues from all parties in the House to uphold the amendment adopted by the committee, which will put an end, once and for all, to this harmful bill to strip Quebec, the provinces and the territories. If the amendment stands, the office should close its doors in the next few months and bring its centralizing mandate to an end. That is what the committee democratically recommended, and the government must respect its will. It must also respect the unanimous will of the National Assembly of Quebec, which called on Ottawa four times to abandon another such attempt to interfere.

I also want to again point out that this bill generated an incredible response, as stakeholders from all sectors rallied in a seldom seen show of unity and spoke with one strong voice to oppose it. All political parties in the National Assembly and stakeholders in the business community, financial sector and labour-sponsored funds condemned it, and with good reason. It is rare for all these people to be of the same mind.

Once again Ottawa is sticking its nose where it does not belong despite many Supreme Court rulings confirming that securities are not a federal jurisdiction. My colleagues across the way might say that they got the green light to interfere in this area in 2018. I would remind them that this authorization was subject to conditions: not to act unilaterally, co-operate with the provinces, and be limited to systemic risk analysis and management.

If every single political and economic actor agrees, that is mainly because this is a fight between Bay Street and Quebec. I hope members will pardon my concern, but the plan for this Canadian body was tailor-made for the small window that the Supreme Court opened to the federal government. Even assuming that the federal government respects the conditions that were imposed, the result is nonetheless the creation of a single securities commission and therefore the marginalization of Quebec's financial position.

Montreal is the 13th-largest financial centre in the world. Our financial sector is vibrant and represents 150,000 jobs in Quebec. It contributes up to \$20 billion to Canada's GDP. Installing a Canada-wide securities regulator in Toronto would inevitably cause a migration of regulatory activities out of Quebec. Quebec's current securities regulator is strong and represents a pool of qualified labour and good jobs, but it is especially vital to the operations of our head offices and the preservation of our businesses.

It is a well-known fact that businesses concentrate their strategic activities, in particular research and development, where their head offices are located. The Task Force on the Protection of Québec Businesses estimates that the 578 head offices in Quebec represent 50,000 jobs with a salary that is twice as high as the Quebec average in addition to 20,000 other jobs at specialized service providers such as accounting, legal, financial or computer services.

• (1705)

These head offices could end up in Ontario if the Canada-wide commission is established, and then Quebec will become a subsidiary economy, a branch plant economy, or in other words, a less innovative economy with limited growth. This centralization would make it complicated for businesses to get access to capital.

Keeping the sector's regulator in Quebec ensures that decision-makers are nearby, which in turn enables businesses to access the capital they need to support investment and growth across Quebec.

This potential exodus of head offices would affect all sectors of our economy, not just big business, since Quebec companies tend to favour Quebec suppliers, unlike foreign companies in Quebec, which tend to rely more on globalized supply chains.

This will have a major, even devastating, impact on our network of SMEs, which is at the heart of our economy and upon which the vitality of our regions depends. The current health crisis has shown how dependence on globalized supply chains can have disastrous consequences that make us dependent on other countries.

The government has the duty to protect SMEs in Quebec and Canada, and the Bloc Québécois will be there to remind it of that. We are very satisfied that we managed to nip this harmful plan to centralize in the bud by removing the controversial clause from Bill

Government Orders

C-30. I again urge my colleagues to respect the will of the Standing Committee on Finance and keep the proposed amendment.

In closing, I would like to reassure my fellow Quebeckers who are opposed to this plan that, as long as it has not been officially abandoned, we will continue to fight against this plan, which benefits Ontario to the detriment of Quebec. If the government tries to bring back the clause that was taken out at report stage, we will challenge it. We will strongly oppose it.

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the budget implementation bill is a continuation of the commitment the Prime Minister made to Canadians last year when he said we would be there in a very real and tangible way. We created programs to put disposable income in the pockets of Canadians and to support small businesses from coast to coast to coast. The budget implementation bill continues a lot of those programs.

Could the member provide his thoughts on how important it is that we see the budget implementation bill pass, specifically to deal with the continuing pandemic?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary.

As I am sure he is aware, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-30. In my presentation, I decided to focus on something that seems eminently dangerous, and I do not regret doing so.

As for the rest, since there are more pros than cons overall, the Bloc supports it. Of course, the support programs for small businesses, for example, must be renewed.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this pandemic has really highlighted a lot of places where our supports for Canadians have been very thin. One thing it has shown is how our medical care system has been eroded over the years as federal government supports to the provinces have gone down.

Would the member be willing to agree with the NDP that we need to increase those transfer payments for our health care system?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague.

Government Orders

As he knows, the Bloc Québécois has called for unconditional increases in health transfers time and time again, even before this pandemic. This was an urgent, necessary requirement long before this pandemic, because our population is aging, which is causing health care costs to skyrocket.

The burden is on the provinces to hire more doctors, nurses and orderlies, but the money is staying in Ottawa, which goes against the Canadian legislation governing health transfers.

The Bloc Québécois fully supports increasing transfers, provided that this is done without conditions and therefore without further centralization. This is of course partly our money. It is not a gift to Quebec and the provinces. We are paying for it as taxpayers in each province.

I think my colleague is aware of our position, which is that we need a clear, strong and substantial increase in transfers for health care systems, with no strings attached.

• (1715)

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Mégantic, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He relayed how difficult it has been for SMEs and how the Canada emergency wage subsidy helped them out. It also helped other organizations, namely the political parties.

The government just proposed an amendment on that because it realized that it is inappropriate for political parties to use this program.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks. The government says that this practice will be inappropriate after August 2021. Why not sooner? Why not make the amendment retroactive, so that the political parties are retroactively not entitled to the emergency wage subsidy?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I believe my colleague and I are on the same wavelength on this and many other issues.

It goes without saying that this was an assistance program for struggling businesses and that the filthy rich major parties are not struggling businesses. This was inappropriate from the get-go. It would only make sense for this to be retroactive to cover the entire period.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege and honour today to rise and speak to the bill.

As we know, we are dealing with four crises right now. We have a climate crisis, an opioid crisis, a homeless crisis and of course the COVID pandemic, which we have all been battling together for over a year. Many people have been living daily with the anxiety of losing their jobs. They are worried about their health and the health of their loved ones. In the meantime, the wealthiest Canadians have grown their wealth and Canada's largest corporations have benefited from this pandemic, and we have a Liberal government that has been resistant to having them pay their fair share and contribute to the cost of the pandemic. We know this is going to fall on the backs of everyday, middle-class Canadians and the most vulnerable, as services will be cut in future years because of the government's lack

of courage to make those who should pay for the pandemic contribute more.

On the other side, the Conservatives are using delay tactics to get support to Canadians. In this budget there clearly are very important pandemic supports that small businesses need. As the federal NDP critic for small business and tourism, I know all too well from talking to entrepreneurs how important it is that they continue to get supports such as the wage subsidy and the emergency commercial rent assistance program. While we were glad to see the government extend those programs through the summer, the cuts to those programs as they are slowly and gradually phased out will impact those businesses, especially in the tourism industry.

Many businesses that rely on international tourism likely will not see international guests this season. Any tourists who planned on coming to Canada have cancelled their bookings, so these businesses have been asking for the wage subsidy and the rent program, which are lifelines for them. As members may recall, these are programs that the NDP fought to have increased. The wage subsidy was initially going to be 10%, and we pushed so the government would increase it to 75%. The commercial rent program is a program for which the government took our idea, but of course it rolled out a flawed program that was landlord-driven and forgot about the tenants.

We kicked and screamed to get these programs fixed. We got the wage subsidy up to 75% and the rent program to be tenant-driven. These benefits are absolutely essential to those tourism businesses and small businesses that are going to have to go through fall and into next spring. We heard from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada at committee, and other tourism industry organizations such as the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, that said they needed those programs to go to the spring.

While I am mentioning it, the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada has seen a cut of 83% to its core budget. At the time when we needed it most, ITAC delivered over \$15 million in loans to indigenous-led businesses, because it has that intimate relationship with its member businesses. It saved over 1,900 indigenous businesses with over 40,000 employees. These are going to be the most vulnerable businesses as we come out of the pandemic.

I am encouraging the government to come back and try to save these businesses. Time is running out. They need help.

Government Orders

In terms of the Canada emergency business account loan, we were glad to see the government finally fix the last increase of the CEBA loan during the second wave, but businesses are saying it is not enough. They have gone through a third wave. They need more funds. They need help and liquidity to get through the summer and beyond. The repayable timeline of next fiscal year is absolutely impossible for almost any small businesses to meet, in order for them to get the rebate of one third of that CEBA loan. We are asking the government to extend the terms of that repayment at least to the end of 2025, so that these businesses have a fighting chance to get back on their feet.

The government also keeps talking about credit card merchant fees. We know that the government is in bed with the big banks, but the reality is that small businesses are being constantly ground down by the banks. We just saw the banks increase their fees for consumers and small businesses again, during a time when they are having record profits. This is completely unacceptable to Canadians. In Europe, when it comes to merchant fees and interchange fees, they are paying 0.3%. Right now in Canada, 1.4% is the voluntary rate that credit card companies say they are paying.

• (1720)

I have met with Visa and Mastercard. They say that it is actually not their issue and that it is the big banks that are setting the rates on the interchange fees. We have seen the big banks having record profits. Why are they not stepping up to the plate and providing some relief to small businesses and consumers? We know that merchant fees are often put on the backs of small businesses.

As members know, I can speak for a long time about small business. The other piece is start-ups. The Liberals have completely abandoned start-ups, and those who started a business after March. They may have signed leases months and months, or even years, before. They have paid their employees and their rent through the pandemic. They have a record of receipts they have paid.

There are many different tools the government could use and industry standards it could look at. They have had leases and made these payable expenses. Liberals should set some criteria to save these businesses, or we are going to lose a generation of businesses. Throughout every riding in our country, we are hearing from people who have been abandoned by the government.

As members know, the other file I carry as the federal critic for the NDP is for fisheries, oceans and Coast Guard. We were happy to see the government finally listen to our call. Members heard me kicking and screaming in the House of Commons, calling on the minister to declare a wild salmon emergency and to make this a wild salmon recovery budget.

We are happy to see the Liberals put a significant allocation to wild salmon recovery, but we still have not seen the fine details. We have heard the broad framework of what they want to use to guide them in terms of delivering that funding, but we have not had the details of how they are going to spend that money, and time is of the essence.

Also, we have not had a commitment to reconciliation with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and we need a wild salmon secretariat that is government to gov-

ernment with the province, with indigenous leadership and communities, the nations on the coast and the federal government working together in co-management. We know what Liberals mean by “consultation”. They check a box, then they leave and abandon communities without listening and implementing what they have been told by those communities.

The other pieces we have not seen are the transition funding supports for those that were in the salmon farm industry. The government is hopefully following through with its commitment to move away from open-net salmon farming and to support those workers, their families and the communities in which those fish farms are in. The government made the right decision on Discovery Islands, but it did not come back with a plan to support the workers. This is something the NDP has been calling for. I have been calling for it. I tabled a bill about moving away from open-net salmon farming to closed containment, and the government abandoned it. I want to see the government do something significant around that.

Friday was the one-year anniversary of the death of Chantel Moore, a Tla-o-qui-aht member from my riding who was shot by a New Brunswick police officer. She was a Tla-o-qui-aht member, and she was killed on a wellness check. I think all of us can join together in offering the family of Chantel Moore our condolences, along with the nation and the Tla-o-qui-aht tribal council, especially as they seek justice. We need to work together to ensure that no one else suffers the same fate Chantel did during a wellness check. Canada needs comprehensive police reform.

In this budget, the Liberals put forward \$100 million for mental health. That is not even close to enough. They put forward \$108 million for first nations policing, which is not even close to what is needed. Police are supposed to be there to serve and protect people from our communities, but instead, the federal government has not acted to address the disproportionate amount of violence indigenous people are facing at the hands of police.

I will continue, and the NDP will continue, to advocate in Parliament for indigenous participation in investigations into police violence, ongoing mental health assessments of police officers, enhanced vetting of new recruits and cross-cultural training for police forces in all levels of Canadian society. There needs to be reforms to the police act.

I can speak in great detail about many other things. There is the opioid crisis, as I touched on earlier. There is the government's blue economy. The fact is that it is completely tainted and tilted toward industry, instead of doing the right thing, which is protecting our oceans. Our oceans are critical right now, especially as we are seeing a warming planet and a warming ocean.

Private Members' Business

● (1725)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, I see the hon. Minister of International Development rising on a point of order.

NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-30, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021 and other measures.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the respective stages of said bill.

If you will allow me, I did not have an opportunity to thank you for all of the service you have provided us. I wish you well in your retirement. I hope you do not mind allowing me to take a moment to thank you and tell you that it has been a pleasure to work with you.

The Deputy Speaker: You are very kind. Thank you.

I am sure the hon. members present will indeed be thankful of the notice given with respect to the advice the minister offered this afternoon.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-30, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 19, 2021 and other measures, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that my hon. colleague's riding in B.C. on the island, the gorgeous Courtenay—Alberni, is suffering like mine from a severe housing shortage.

Could my hon. colleague give some insight into his perspective on whether this budget adequately addresses the national crisis in housing affordability and availability of supply? What measures would he argue are missing from the budget?

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, this budget does not address the housing crisis we are in. Young people have lost hope. We are hearing that people have to work 12 years to have a down payment to buy a house in many cities across the country.

In Europe, 30% of housing is non-market housing. In the seventies and eighties, the housing stock in Canada was over 10%. We know it is much less than that. The private sector has not delivered in building the housing that Canadians need. We need non-market housing and the government needs to build over 500,000 units: We know we are 300,000 units short now but we are losing units every day. As we commit to building more units, we are falling short. The gap is actually widening, so people are living in fear about where they are going to live.

Everybody should have the right to adequate housing. This is an opportunity for the government to get back into non-market housing, because the free market is not going to resolve these really important issues. It is a crisis for many Canadians right now, and it is getting much worse. The government has not dealt with it in a way that demonstrates the crisis that we and many people are facing right now in our country.

● (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: There will be three minutes remaining for questions and comments for the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from April 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-254, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by reminding members of some important points we all agree on in this House. It is important to give Canadians the real facts and the real issues so that we can find common ground and common solutions.

First, we agree that French is a minority language in North America and that we need to do more to protect and promote it.

Second, we agree that Quebec deserves special attention within the Canadian francophonie, as the only majority francophone province in the country. The Prime Minister told the House that if we want to ensure a bilingual Canada, we must ensure that Quebec is first and foremost a francophone Quebec.

Third, we agree that the vitality of Canada's francophone communities from coast to coast to coast plays a key role in growing the Canadian francophonie, especially in terms of living and working every day in French.

Last, we agree that the Official Languages Act must be modernized to make it more responsive to the challenges of our time, and we also agree that federal and provincial jurisdictions must be respected in this process.

I would like to invite my colleagues to refocus our debate on the fundamental facts and issues behind Bill C-254. I agreed with my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou when she stated during the first debate that the recognition of the importance of promoting the use of French must come from all sides, including citizens, businesses and also all levels of government.

Since we are in agreement on these fundamental issues, then we just need to debate the most effective means of achieving our common objectives and propose reforms for Canada's language regime as a whole. We also agree that reforms that apply to all federal legislation, in both the economic and the cultural sectors, are more effective than a single provincial law.

I want to be very clear on that point. Some of our colleagues believe that language of work is strictly a provincial jurisdiction and that only the provinces should pass legislation in that regard. Our government disagrees. We firmly believe that if we are to ensure the vitality of Canada's francophonie, it is imperative that we have a strong Canada-wide language regime that protects French both within and outside Quebec.

As Canadians, we are deeply attached to our two official languages, which are an integral part of our collective identity. We also agree that, although the passage of the Official Languages Act in 1969 transformed the face of federal institutions, it did not put an end to the evolution of the Canadian linguistic landscape. We all know that, despite the great progress that has been made at the federal, provincial and territorial levels over the past 50 years, significant challenges remain.

That is exactly why our government initiated a far-reaching effort to modernize the Official Languages Act after much consultation with francophone and anglophone Canadians, communities, businesses, experts and partners in order to propose a modernized and strengthened act. This act will be effective at countering the decline of French, protecting our communities and guaranteeing the vested language rights set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It is important to remember that the modernization of the Official Languages Act and its related instruments also applies to federally regulated private businesses, the same ones that are targeted by Bill C-254. The modernization of the act affects these businesses both within and outside Quebec.

In this age of globalization and labour market integration, protecting French as a language of work needs to happen from the top down with a clear, strong, coherent Canada-wide language regime. That is our government's position.

In that regard, our position has been clearly and publicly articulated. We announced a suite of very concrete legislative and administrative proposals with one clear objective: to promote the equal status of the official languages in federally regulated private businesses and, most importantly, to protect the right to work in French in Quebec and in all regions of the country with a strong francophone presence.

Private Members' Business

• (1735)

In addition, with respect to language of service, the government is proposing to give consumers of goods and services the right to be informed and served in French in all federally regulated private businesses in Quebec and in regions with a strong francophone presence.

To ensure that the new language of work and service rights are meaningful and effective, they will be supported by recourse mechanisms. The government took the time to listen to the expert panel tasked with developing recommendations regarding possible recourse for workers and consumers, the criteria for recognition of regions with a strong francophone presence, and the implementation of the government's commitments and the relevant legislative instruments.

As a result of all these analyses, the government's proposals for Canada's next language regime clearly go much further and extend beyond the framework proposed by Bill C-254. Specifically, with respect to federally regulated private businesses in Quebec and in regions with a strong francophone presence, we will give workers the right to carry out their activities in French. We will require employers to communicate with their employees in French and to publish job postings, collective agreements and arbitration decisions in French. We will prohibit discrimination against any employee solely because they do not speak French. We go even further. With respect to language of service to the public, the next Official Languages Act will ensure that consumers of goods and services of federally regulated private businesses will have the right to be informed and served in French, in Quebec and in regions designated as having a strong francophone presence.

To promote French in Canada, it is important that the federal government maintain its power and encourage private businesses under its jurisdiction to implement measures. In turn, these measures will have to increase the active use of French as the language of service and the language of work across the country.

I would like to reassure my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou that, when it comes to protecting French in Quebec, her objectives are also ours. She agrees with our government that this is not about taking away the rights of English-speaking Quebecers, but about protecting and promoting French.

For that reason, I cordially invite her and our opposition colleagues to join us in our efforts to modernize the Official Languages Act and to support our bill, which will soon be introduced in the House. This means agreeing to abandon Bill C-254 and its provincial limitations.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise as you preside over the work of the house. This is surely one of the last weeks before the summer break. I would therefore like to say hello to the people of Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, and tell them that it is such a privilege to represent them.

Private Members' Business

Today we are debating a bill that the Conservative Party intends to support, as mentioned at first reading stage. It is Bill C-254, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act. In my opinion, there is cause for concern.

As we know, Canada is based on a vision of cultural diversity, but also of linguistic identity and duality, and this duality is threatened.

I have some news articles here with me.

An article from the *Journal de Montréal* entitled "The situation of French in Montreal: a catastrophe. Interview with Frédéric Lacroix" states, "We are in an unprecedented situation where the relative weight of francophones in Quebec is rapidly declining whereas that of anglophones is increasing."

Charles Castonguay is a leading expert on this issue. He appeared before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. In his hard-hitting book, he bemoaned the fact that the use of French is declining rapidly in Quebec and that French itself is in an unprecedented free fall. Quebec is not the only place where this is happening.

I have here an article by Benjamin Vachet, an excellent journalist with ONFR+, entitled "Déclin du français au Québec: un danger pour tous les francophones?" He notes that only 20% of the country's population speaks French. I am a member of a committee that studied minority language post-secondary institutions, and I can say that all our institutions, be they in northern Ontario, in Saint-Boniface, on the Campus Saint-Jean, in Alberta or in Moncton, are experiencing financial pressure. It is time for a complete overhaul of the Official Languages Act, which we have been calling for for years. As we near the end of the session, and with Saint-Jean-Baptiste just around the corner, the Liberals are telling us they might introduce a bill. That is nice and all, but we will not be able to pass it.

French is in decline. Canada recognizes French and English as its official languages, but the two are not represented equally.

I am proud to belong to a party that is taking action for official languages and has done so all the way back to Brian Mulroney.

The Official Languages Act is just over 50 years old. Brian Mulroney's government was the one that really gave this legislation some teeth and enabled official language minority communities to become free and independent with the major reform of 1988. That reform entailed much more concrete action than the lip service of 1969.

We can also think about Mr. Harper. He gave Bernard Lord the mandate to come up with the roadmap. The Harper government invested \$1 billion, which was then re-invested to support our communities. It also made it possible to recognize Quebec as the cradle of French, francophone culture and French-Canadian culture. Mr. Harper and the Conservative government recognized that Quebec forms a distinct nation within Canada.

I would like to use my time to correct a Liberal mistake.

The Liberals are always saying that the Conservatives did away with the court challenges program and that the Liberals reinstated

it. They are forgetting a very important part of the truth: When Stephen Harper's government abolished the court challenges program, it established the language rights support program, which sought to support francophone communities.

Then, the Liberals took office. For 20 months, the communities no longer had an organization to turn to that would defend their rights. It is always important to distinguish between the narrative and the facts. The Conservatives are there to support francophone communities.

Bill C-254 seeks to support the large francophone minority in the English ocean that is North America, namely the Quebec nation. That is based on a choice that Quebec made, the much-talked-about Bill 101 or Charter of the French Language.

In my opinion, the Conservative Party was a little quicker off the mark. This is not the first time the Bloc has introduced this bill. Two months before the bill was introduced, our leader said that it was important that federally regulated institutions in Quebec be able to enforce the Charter of the French Language.

• (1740)

Why is this important? It is important because this linguistic duality is fragile. As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, French is in decline in every respect across Canada. The federal government has a constitutional responsibility, and a quasi-constitutional responsibility under the Official Languages Act, to ensure that French has the support and structure it needs to continue to be a tool of vitality and development. In that regard, I can say that there are significant needs at the post-secondary level, even in Quebec. Some big decisions will have to be made.

When our leader met with the Quebec premier in September 2020, he announced his support for the full application of Bill 101 to federally regulated private businesses in Quebec. The bill we are debating was introduced in November 2020.

Our leader promised something that goes much further than the private member's bill we are debating today.

Our political party is committed to modernizing the content of the Official Languages Act and renewing the spirit of the act. The Liberals are telling us that that is what they want to do, but they have not introduced a bill that would do it. We feel it is important to create a new funding envelope for francophone universities in minority settings in the first 100 days of our term.

This is what my leader said about this subject:

As it stands, the act is based on the principle of reciprocity between the two official languages, but if we are being honest, that statement does not reflect reality... The federal government must develop an asymmetrical approach that prioritizes protecting the French language.

We are seeing a paradigm shift. Not only does the Official Languages Act protect francophones in minority situations, that is francophones outside Quebec, but it also supports Quebec's anglophone minority, which certainly deserves to be supported. The bill we are debating today recognizes this.

However, it is also important to take positive measures to support French and the emancipation of French in Quebec and across the country. That is what fundamental change is all about. On that note, I should mention that the Standing Committee on Official Languages has embarked on this enormous task, and this is just the beginning. We are coming to the end of the session, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

● (1745)

[*English*]

I would also like to mention that the bill that is in front of us would amend the preamble, part VII and section 55 of the Official Languages Act, to have the federal government commit to “enhancing the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada and supporting and assisting their development” and “fostering the full recognition and use of both English and French in Canadian society.”

[*Translation*]

Essentially, that means that the federal government must not be given this additional responsibility to the detriment of Canada's minorities, whether they are anglophones or francophones. As the saying goes, we must not rob Peter to pay Paul.

Again, it is important to ensure that minorities are promoted in a proactive and asymmetrical way, including francophone minority communities, but it is also important to promote linguistic duality.

In closing, I would like to reach out to the Liberals. Currently, there is only an English version of the fundamental law of our land, the Constitution of 1867. The government is fighting a lawsuit demanding that our country's founding document be accessible in both of our country's official languages. I am calling on the Liberals to ensure that we have a legal French version of the 1867 Constitution. Instead of promising the sun and the moon, they should do something meaningful.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to say that we will support Bill C-254. I personally support it, and my party does as well.

I would like to share some of my own personal journey, but before that, I would like to say that, under our leaders, from Jack Layton, Nycole Turmel and Thomas Mulcair to the current NDP leader, the member for Burnaby South, the NDP has always supported strengthening the French language. One of our members, Yvon Godin, whom I can name because he is unfortunately no longer in the House of Commons, was one of the most passionate champions of strengthening the French language.

It is clear that this is a common-sense bill that deserves our support. I will get back to that shortly, but it is clear that it makes perfect sense for a worker working in a francophone environment in Quebec to have the right to communicate and have a collective agreement in French, and that is precisely the goal of this bill.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Speaker, you are a francophile yourself. As you know, I grew up in British Columbia on the traditional territory of the Qayqayt First Nation in New Westminster, right next to Maillardville, home to one of British Columbia's biggest francophone communities. Since childhood, I have seen signs in businesses where everything was written in French. I was fascinated even though I had no way to learn French at the time. There was no immersion school. When I was young, there were French classes, but we all know that one French class a week is not enough to master the language of Molière.

Today, in British Columbia, just a few blocks from where I live, where I am speaking from right now, there is an immersion school, one of the hundreds in British Columbia. Parents often line up for an entire weekend to register their children to learn French and do all their schooling in French. Our passion for the French language is alive and well in British Columbia. With the network of immersion schools, it is clear how well British Columbians speak French, much better than I do, because they completed all their schooling in French, whereas I only started learning French when I was 24.

Also, thanks to a previous NDP government, we have an entire school system, including elementary schools, high schools and schools following the French curriculum, in other words, French-language schools for francophones. I must say that the status of the French language in British Columbia is much better than it was when I was young. I hope that it will be strengthened and that French will be even more present after all these years.

At 24, I finally decided to learn French. I decided to do it in the best possible place, so I went to Chicoutimi. I arrived on January 3 in the middle of a storm. We do not often get storms like that in British Columbia, especially in New Westminster, which is in the greater Vancouver area. I loved learning French and living in Chicoutimi, in the beautiful Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region. Then I moved to the Eastern Townships, to Sherbrooke. After that, I went to Montreal, to the east end of the city, Laurier—Sainte-Marie, and finally to the Outaouais, in the riding of Hull—Aylmer. In each of those places, I saw the importance of the services that are always offered to the English-speaking community, everywhere, even in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. I had the choice between the two official languages, even with the Quebec government. I thought it was extremely important that these services be offered in the minority language.

● (1750)

However, I also learned that, right now, if a worker wants to work in French in a federally regulated business, that is left to the discretion of the business. So long as this bill is not in force, businesses have no obligation to provide collective agreements in French or ensure that employees can communicate in French with their employer. We need to address this. We need to provide a framework so that all workers can work in French. It is only natural, and that is why we must support this bill.

Private Members' Business

I loved the 12 years I spent in Quebec. I had the opportunity to travel all over the province. I learned about how important it is to strengthen the French language, not just in Quebec, but across the entire country.

This brings me to the important point I want to raise about the modernization of the Official Languages Act. This act was adopted 50 years ago, and things have certainly changed since then. We must all work on this issue and develop tools to modernize the language situation across the country.

In my professional life, before becoming a parliamentarian, I often had the opportunity to travel to Atlantic Canada, across Ontario, especially in the north, and through western Canada, in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. There are many francophone communities throughout. You might think of Maillardville, or the Saint-Sacrement neighbourhood in Vancouver. There are many franco-phone neighbourhoods and towns across the country.

However, the Official Languages Act does not meet their needs the way it used to 50 years ago. We have to strengthen and support these communities no matter where they are. Whether in Saint Boniface, in Hearst, in the beautiful and extraordinary region of Acadie—Bathurst, in Shippagan-Lamèque-Miscou or in Edmundston, we can see there is a remarkable francophone presence there.

Modernizing the Official Languages Act will make it possible for these communities to not only to continue to exist, but also prosper and attract newcomers, new people who will also speak the language of the Molière.

As I mentioned, our late leader Jack Layton, our former leader Thomas Mulcair, our former MP Yvon Godin, our former acting leader Nycole Turmel and, of course, our current leader have all advocated for strengthening the French language.

The NDP believes that strengthening the French language is not something that is done solely at the federal level. NDP governments in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba set up school systems that offer umbrella programs in French-language schools for francophone students and immersion programs so that people can learn French.

NDP members such as Léo Piquette, Elizabeth Weir and Alexa McDonough, when she was the leader in Nova Scotia, also strengthened francophone institutions. It was the former NDP government that did the most for francophone rights in Ontario. It is therefore not just federal NDP MPs who advocate for the need to strengthen the French language. It is the entire party and all of its members, at both the federal and provincial levels.

For all those reasons, I am pleased to support this bill, and I hope that the right to work in French in Quebec will be strengthened.

• (1755)

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though I have not had the pleasure of knowing you for very long, I, too, would like to begin my speech by thanking you for your services and wishing you a very well-deserved retirement.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-254. I would like to digress somewhat and even look back in time to explain. I apologize in advance if this feels like Groundhog Day for

members, but I want to reread some excerpts from question period on November 18, 2020.

The leader of the official opposition asked the Prime Minister the following question through the Chair, obviously, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, Chelsea Craig is the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada. Ms. Craig recently called Bill 101 oppressive. The Liberals continue to flout Bill 101, 43 years after it was adopted. Why do Liberal leaders continue to undermine French in Quebec?

The Prime Minister answered, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, I do not need any lectures from a party that still refuses to commit to appointing only bilingual justices to the Supreme Court. We have always done what is necessary to defend the French fact in Canada, including in Quebec, as we said in the throne speech. We know how important it is to promote the French language across the country and also to protect the French language in Quebec, in partnership with the Government of Quebec.

The leader of the official opposition asked the Prime Minister another related question. He said, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, the member for Saint-Laurent showed considerable contempt for francophones, but no Liberal members from Quebec have spoken out against that. These members are doing nothing to defend the French language. No action has been taken on official languages in five years. Will the Prime Minister introduce a bill on official languages before Christmas, yes or no?

The Prime Minister replied, and I quote:

Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to show his commitment to the French language, will he promise today to appoint only bilingual judges to the Supreme Court of Canada? That is something he did not want to do and we will see whether he agrees to do that. We will always be there to defend the French language and defend the French fact in Quebec and across Canada. That is why we deplore the comments made by the member for Saint-Laurent and that is why we are pleased that she apologized for what she said.

I was so taken aback by that exchange that I felt compelled to post the following on Twitter: “Fascinating question period. The Liberals and Conservatives are arguing over who is the biggest defender of French.” I thought that was excellent proof of the need for a strong Bloc delegation in Ottawa. I would be willing to bet that if the Bloc did not have 32 members in the House, this debate on the issue of protecting the French language would not have happened, or at least certainly not in such a lively manner, hence the importance of having a strong delegation in what is, for us, a foreign parliament.

A little more recently, on the more specific issue of protecting French as language of work, I had the pleasure, if I can put it that way, of an exchange with the Minister of Official Languages as recently as May 25. Once again, I would like to go back in time and have a bit of a Groundhog Day by quoting that exchange directly:

I said the following:

Private Members' Business

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill 96, an act to protect French, the official and common language of Quebec, is to ensure compliance with Bill 101. Clause 65 clearly states that any enterprise or employer carrying on its activities in Quebec is subject to the act, and that includes federally regulated enterprises. We know that the Minister of Official Languages is working on her own language reform. Will she clearly state that she has no intention of interfering in any way whatsoever with Quebec's intention to apply the Charter of the French Language to federally regulated enterprises?

To which the minister replied the following:

Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for her question, which gives me an opportunity to remind the House about the government's position on official languages and specifically the protection of the French fact in Quebec and Canada. I want to remind my colleague that we will of course protect the right to work in French and the right to be served in French, as well as francophones' right not to experience discrimination in federally regulated enterprises in Quebec and in regions with a strong francophone presence across the country. I would be happy to work with her to achieve that vision.

Once again, what is the government's vision for protecting the French language? The fact is, its vision protects institutional bilingualism. As I have said in the House, their vision is to do to federal institutions what they did to Air Canada.

• (1800)

The government's white paper provides for the protection of the right to work in French. However, Bill 96, which was enacted in Quebec, does not do that. Bill C-254 embodies the principle of Bill 96, in other words the fact that the language of work in Quebec is French.

I asked the Minister of Official Languages countless times if she would interfere in what Quebec is doing. I never got a clear answer, hence the importance of Bill C-254, which I hope will be put to a vote in the House. This vote will leave the government no choice but to clearly express its will, say whether it intends to interfere in what Quebec is doing and challenge its will to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses.

The government will also have to clearly state whether it is for or against changing the Canada Labour Code to reflect that the federally regulated businesses operating in Quebec are subject to Bill 101. It will also have to indicate whether the preamble to the Official Languages Act will be amended to recognize that French is the official language of Quebec and the common language of Quebec. We will finally know whether the federal government agrees to commit in the Official Languages Act to not obstruct the application of the Charter of the French Language in Quebec. We will finally see whether it agrees to change the Canada Business Corporations Act to clarify that the name of a corporation that conducts business in Quebec must meet the requirements of the Charter of the French Language.

We have been talking non-stop in the House about reforming the Official Languages Act. This is something that the minister wants to do and that the official opposition is asking her to do, and these reforms are not inherently good or bad. It all depends on what that they look like. The devil is in the details, as they say. The role of the Bloc Québécois here is to ensure that the reform of the Official Languages Act does not end up consisting of platitudes that lead nowhere.

We must act quickly to reverse the trend that is taking hold in Quebec. The percentage of Quebecers who speak French as a first

language has dropped below 80% for the first time in more than a century, and the Office québécois de la langue française estimates that this figure could be in the area of 70% by 2036. The use of English among young francophones aged 25 to 44, on the other hand, has doubled in the past 15 years in the greater Montreal area. In Quebec, only 55% of allophones switch languages to French, but that figure needs to be 90% if we want to maintain the relative weight of French.

As the only French-speaking nation in North America, Quebec not only needs to be intransigent, but it also has a responsibility to keep its language alive and well. I want to share a quote from Pierre Bourgault, who said, "when we defend French here in Quebec, we are defending all the languages of the world against the hegemony of one."

Bill C-254, introduced by my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou, will not resolve the fate of the French language and its vitality all on its own, but it is a step in the right direction. It is a meaningful step that neither the House nor the French language can afford not to take. That is why I will be very pleased to vote in favour of this bill.

• (1805)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (FedDev Ontario and Official Languages), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to make some remarks about Bill C-254, introduced by my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou. I am very pleased to see that the promotion of French is a priority for her, and I sincerely wish to continue working with her on this file.

This is a priority for our government. That is why, since 2018, it has been working hard to modernize and strengthen the Official Languages Act and its related instruments in order to protect the French language from coast to coast.

The reform document entitled "English and French: Towards a Substantive Equality of Official Languages in Canada" was tabled in the House last February by my hon. colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages and proposes concrete legislative and administrative solutions to protect French across Canada, including in Quebec.

We recognize that there has been a decline in French in this province and across the country. Our bill to modernize the Official Languages Act seeks to remedy this.

This reform document presents a modernized vision of bilingualism to ensure the future of Canada's linguistic duality. It attests to our government's ambitious vision for the protection and promotion of French, whose survival we care about deeply.

• (1810)

[English]

Six proposed guiding principles can be found in this document. First, we are committed to recognizing the linguistic dynamics in the provinces and territories, as well as existing rights regarding indigenous languages, to promote a respectful Canada that is committed to building on its diversity.

Private Members' Business

We are also asserting our willingness to provide more opportunities for learning both official languages, which will help support English-speaking parents who are enrolling their children in French immersion classes to bolster the presence of French across the country.

We will be supporting the institutions of official-language minority communities, including post-secondary establishments, so that they keep reflecting the strength and resilience of these communities.

We are committed to protecting and promoting the French language throughout Canada, including in Quebec, as we recognize its particular situation within the North American context. The modernized Official Languages Act will recognize this and provide increased protection and promotion of the French language, most notably in the Canadian public service and in federally regulated institutions.

We will promote awareness and appreciation of both official languages within the public service by appointing bilingual Supreme Court justices, by strengthening the Treasury Board Secretariat's oversight function and the powers of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

Finally, going forward, we propose reviewing the Official Languages Act at regular intervals to ensure it remains relevant to the rapidly changing Canadian society of the 21st century.

Among the proposed changes, the Government of Canada will adjust its interventions and take concrete measures to strengthen the place of the French language in private businesses under federal jurisdiction and in the fields of cultural and scientific research. This will be done while respecting provincial jurisdiction, as well as the existing rights of English-speaking minority communities in Quebec. Our government is committed to promoting linguistic duality. We will do so until Canadians no longer feel linguistic insecurity. This is a matter of respect and dignity for all Canadians, both English and French speakers alike.

I would also like to add that our most recent budgets outlined significant investment in the field of official languages, including \$180.4 million over three years to support immersion programs to help increase the vitality of French in Canada. We are also putting forward \$6.4 million over two years in order to proceed with the modernization of the Official Languages Act. Additionally, our budget includes a commitment to invest \$121.3 million in minority-language post-secondary education, as well as \$81.8 million over two years to support the expansion of educational and community space. This will help maintain the vitality of French across Canada.

[Translation]

Our reform document contains proposals that respond directly but are not limited to the concerns of the member for Beauport—Limoilou, since we intend to go even further. This document includes major proposals to protect and promote French in federally regulated private businesses both in Quebec and in regions across Canada with a high concentration of francophones.

What is more, a committee of experts, including members of the two linguistic communities, was implemented with the mandate to consider the subject and come up with options and recommendations for the government. We are listening carefully to that expert advisory committee's recommendations, and we are quickly approaching the time when this bill to modernize and strengthen the Official Languages Act will be introduced.

[English]

The Government of Canada believes federally regulated private businesses have an important role to play in the protection and promotion of the French language. That is why we have every intention to further regulate these businesses to promote and protect the use of French as a language of service in work.

That is also why our government established the aforementioned expert panel. Its work has helped our government create our vision for a modernized Official Languages Act further by including not only federally regulated private businesses in the province of Quebec, but also those within communities with a strong francophone presence established throughout Canada.

As the Government of Canada, we cannot in good conscience limit ourselves to Quebec. While I certainly support my hon. colleague's goal of protecting French in Quebec, our government firmly believes a Quebec-only approach does not work. We need to work with both linguistic communities across the country. In other words, while our goals are the same, we absolutely need to put forward a pan-Canadian approach.

We have repeatedly heard from Canadians that the modernization of the act is a priority in order to progress toward a quality of status and use between our two official languages, the ambition of a federal government aimed to do just that, supporting French in and outside of Quebec.

Our proposed measures to modernize the Official Languages Act includes the rights of workers in Quebec and in regions with a strong francophone presence to carry out their activities in French within federally regulated businesses. It would also prohibit discrimination against employees based on the sufficiency of their knowledge of a language other than French as well as the responsibility of employers to communicate with their employees in French in Quebec and in francophone designated regions. This would obviously benefit francophone Quebecers but would not limit itself. It would also support all francophones across Canada.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Finally, as the member for the riding of Orléans, which has one of the biggest francophone populations in Ontario, I care a lot about protecting the French language.

The reform of the Official Languages Act will have a major positive impact on all francophones in Canada, whether they be in Quebec or in minority communities in other provinces.

As members can see, the modernization of the Official Languages Act is far reaching. The use of French in federally regulated businesses is certainly a part of that. The government believes it is important to take action to make these businesses promote and protect the use of French as a language of service and a language of work, both in Quebec and in regions across Canada with a high concentration of francophones.

Our government committed to introduce a bill to modernize the Official Languages Act in 2021, and we will keep our commitment. The measures set out in our reform document seek to do just that, and we would like to invite our colleagues in the House who have already spoken in favour of modernizing the Official Languages Act to work with us so that we can successfully reform Canada's linguistic framework.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

Accordingly, I invite the member for Beauport—Limoilou to take her right of reply. She will have a maximum of five minutes to make her comments.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speeches of every one of my colleagues.

To my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who suggested protecting French in Quebec by using the Canada Labour Code to give workers the right to file a complaint every time an employer did not comply with Bill 101, I would say that this idea is just a band-aid on a gaping wound. It is not a bad idea, but it will only tie up the union processes that he is quite familiar with, without really fixing the root problem since, despite the complaints, the employer would not feel obligated in the least to use the common and official language of Quebec, French, to communicate with its employees.

To my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska, who is in favour of the bill, but surprised to be debating it in the House of Commons since it falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, I would say that the refusal by federally regulated businesses to comply with the Charter of the French Language, the argument being that federally regulated businesses do not need to follow Quebec laws, justifies in itself that we are forced to legislate in the House of Commons to ensure that businesses respect Quebec, their own employees and the French language.

To my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who does not see the point of the bill considering the white paper on official languages, I would say that protecting bilingualism will not allow federally regulated businesses to ignore the Charter of the French Language and the common language of Quebec. Even members of the government get around the requirement to offer information sessions and webinars in both official languages by sending invitations through from their parliamentary email account, which is their privilege, rather than using their ministerial email, which would require them to offer translation. Even in the House, asserting the same rights as anglophones can be complicated, and so can filing complaints.

Some would have me believe that Canada will successfully impose on companies located in Quebec what it does not impose on itself. The word that comes to mind is “nonsense”. You would have

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to be crazy not to understand that Canada wants francophones and Quebecers to shut up and embrace bilingualism.

To my colleague from Sherbrooke, who says that provincial laws alone are not strong enough and federal laws are absolutely required, besides the fact that this is a paternalistic attitude that I do not like any more than first nations do, I could respond with various examples demonstrating that Quebec laws have more teeth than federal laws. For example, Quebec's environment, labour and consumer protection laws are much more stringent. If federal protections were so strong, a CN employee would not have been fighting in court since 2015 to have his right to work in French acknowledged. If federal protections were so strong, parents would not have had to go all the way to the Supreme Court to obtain equal rights to education in French. There are many examples. I have others. The Official Languages Commissioner says that the public service does not have an inclusive organizational structure in terms of the use of the official languages, and French often becomes the language of translation.

Protecting French here and elsewhere in Canada is important. Bill C-254 does not go against the official languages reform. It completes it and strengthens Quebec, which could be a beacon for all francophone communities.

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Beauport—Limoilou.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 16, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1825)

[*English*]

TRANSPORT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be able to rise in the House today to follow up on a question I asked all the way back on March 26, on an issue that is of great concern to the coastal communities on Vancouver Island and particularly in the riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

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At the time, I was raising an issue that prompted an investigation by the Transportation Safety Board. It was concerning a large bulk carrier, which dragged its anchor and drifted over one kilometre, 1,200 metres to be specific, to hit another vessel. We are very lucky that no damage was done at that time, and we are extremely lucky that neither of the two vessels involved found their way onshore, where the results could have been much worse.

The TSB report also indicated that between January 2015 and March 2020, there were over 100 incidents of ships dragging anchors along British Columbia's coastline. These can result in collisions, groundings or extreme environmental emergencies.

Anyone who has been lucky enough to visit our coastline in and among the Gulf Islands, the coast of Vancouver Island, will know just how precious this coastline is, not only to the residents but also to our country as a whole. It is an incredible marine environment. It is something that attracts visitors from across the country and from all around the world, both for the ecological diversity that exists there and the incredible recreational opportunities that abound.

At the heart of this is the fact that we have an interim anchorages protocol in place. It has been in place since February 2018, so it is not looking like it is much of an interim measure anymore. In fact, it is starting to really gather the air of permanence about it.

Residents have had the opportunity to participate in discussions about the interim anchorages protocol at the oceans protection plan dialogue forums, but it has been continually noted how inadequate the protocol has been because we still have a lot of residents who are complaining about noise pollution and light pollution of these incredibly large bulk carriers, which are anchored sometimes just a number of metres away from the coastline. Therefore, it is creating a lot of strife and a lot of discord among the residents here.

It is true not only for residents but also for local first nations on whose traditional and unceded territories these waters lie. Of course, these anchorages were established without free, prior and informed consent. We have messages from Cowichan tribes, the Penelakut, the Lyackson, the Halalt and the Stz'uminus in the area, who have clearly communicated to the Government of Canada that they do not want these carriers in their waters.

The other point I would make is that this particular area off the coast of Vancouver Island and in among the Gulf Islands is being proposed as a designated national marine conservation area. In fact, the private member's bill that I introduced in this Parliament, Bill C-250, is pretty much taking the exact same boundaries as the proposed NMCA and trying to bring about a prohibition of anchorages there.

I would very much like to see the government commit to either supporting that legislation, or at least bring forward for my residents an action plan that will show a noticeable decrease in how these anchorages are used and the frequency by which they are used because, frankly speaking, we have kind of had it up to here with the inaction on this.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The Government of Canada is committed to creating a robust marine safety system to continue providing economic opportunities for Canadians today, while protecting our waterways and coasts for future generations. Canada's marine transportation sector and its associated supply chains are vital to maintaining our growth and collective prosperity.

Anchorage help bolster marine safety in our coastal waterways in and around our busiest ports. These anchorages are a key part of our marine safety system, ensuring that Canadian resources have uninterrupted access to global markets.

The government recognizes that with the steady increase in maritime trade we have seen in the past decade, some geographical areas have experienced additional impacts. The Port of Vancouver and the southern Gulf Islands are two areas that have seen an increase in vessel transits and, consequently, an increased use of anchorages in the area.

The government is well aware of the concerns expressed by local communities and indigenous groups regarding these anchorage sites. Engagement with indigenous and coastal communities, as well as with marine industry stakeholders, is a key component of the oceans protection plan and Transport Canada's approach to advance the issue of anchorages in this region.

I want to assure my colleagues that government representatives communicated with the stakeholders and the indigenous and coastal communities in a variety of ways and asked for feedback on this issue. The comments they received have brought to light a certain number of important social and environmental considerations that are now being used to develop an anchorage management framework for the future.

Transport Canada's vision for anchorage management is focused on reducing anchorage use and transits by commercial vessels and ensuring, whether through incentives or deterrents, that these vessels adhere to a code of conduct when they are at anchor in order to minimize the impact on the marine environment and nearby communities.

In accordance with that vision, officials are also examining active traffic management measures to optimize supply chain efficiency and in turn reduce the use of ships and the time spent at anchor.

Experience gained from the interim protocol for the use of southern B.C. anchorages will continue to serve as the basis for the development of a new protocol. Officials are working closely with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority under this protocol to handle complaints from the public.

Ultimately, our goal is to enable safe, efficient commercial shipping that benefits all Canadians while minimizing the impact on the marine environment and surrounding communities.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's response to my intervention. I am glad to see that Transport Canada is well aware of these concerns, but I would reiterate that residents in this area still do not feel like they are being listened to. I just heard a barrage of negative reactions to how they have been engaged through the oceans protection plan dialogue forms.

I would just remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that Parks Canada is looking at these waters. It sees value in protecting them through the establishment of a national marine conservation area. We just want to see the Government of Canada value the ecological sensitivity of these waters. We need to see some kind of a plan put in place because residents feel like our waters are simply being used as an overflow industrial parking lot for the Port of Vancouver. We need to see some evidence that Transport Canada is stepping up to the plate and taking a leadership role in this and not just leaving it to the Port of Vancouver and the B.C Chamber of Shipping.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, the government is working to improve the management of anchorages outside public ports with a view to ensuring the long-term efficiency and reliability of supply chains.

We are working with the Port of Vancouver to improve flow at Canada's largest port of entry. Industry stakeholders are working together to evaluate the efficiency of the supply chains that serve this western Canadian port.

Specifically, we are conducting real-time evaluations of cargo entering and leaving the Port of Vancouver to identify and eliminate bottlenecks before they happen. The goal is to develop a consistent approach that reduces anchorage use and transits.

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage what he was doing to prevent child sexual abuse material, CSAM, and videos of rape and sex trafficking from being uploaded and distributed on the Internet. I also asked the same question of the minister at the ethics committee just this week. The minister's response was that he would be tabling, someday, an online harms bill that would include a 24-hour takedown requirement of the exploitation images. He also claimed that the government did not have a magic wand to prevent exploitation from being uploaded.

I do not think the minister quite understands the gravity of this situation. I was surprised that after months of hearing from survivors like Victoria Galy, who shared their horrific experiences of online exploitation, the minister still had not seen any of the testimony. Many of them talked about how CSAM and non-consensual videos of them were put up and overnight there were millions of views and they had been downloaded thousands of times, creating an endless nightmare for these victims. They call for the companies

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to be required to verify age and consent of every individual depicted in the videos before they are uploaded. Preventing this exploitive content from ever reaching the Internet must be a priority for the government.

On Monday, in response to an Order Paper question that I submitted, the RCMP revealed that CSAM reported from Canadian entities to the National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre had increased from just over 2,000 reports in 2015 to over 66,000 in 2020, which is a 2,700% increase in just five years. Reports from outside of Canada are also increasing drastically, to over 35,000 in 2019, for a total of 100,000 reports to the RCMP in 2019. To be clear, these are just reports of child sexual abuse and do not include videos of rape or non-consent.

I want to highlight the report released just yesterday from the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, or CCCP. It reveals the urgent need for concrete action from the Canadian government to prevent videos of exploitation from ever reaching the Internet. I also want to commend CCCP for its incredible work through Project Arachnid, which is the global leader in the fight to scour the Internet for CSAM and help victims get their abuse removed from the Internet. There are a few key findings from the project's analysis of over 5.4 million verified CSAM issues.

First, 48% of the content triggered for removal notification to an electronic service provider had been previously flagged, and some ESPs had image recidivism rates of over 80%. Clearly, a 24-hour takedown provision would only provide temporary respite for the many victims.

Second, young victims are being left behind. It is much more difficult for them to remove their images, and it appears that teenagers are unable to get their images removed.

Third, contrary to the assumption, most CSAM is not on the dark web. The vast majority of it is on the clear web, on platforms offered by MindGeek. That is why CCCP makes a clear number of recommendations focusing on the tech industry to prevent CSAM and exploitive content from being uploaded in the first place, such as impose a duty of care that is proportionate to a level of harm, generate proactive content detection for platforms with user-generated content and require platforms to establish age and consent before pornographic material is uploaded.

I know the minister will want to talk about the 24-hour takedown and the funding for education, but this will not prevent the videos of CSAM and rape from being uploaded in the first place. Where is the plan to prevent the upload of this content in the first place?

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1835)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his commitment to this issue and for contributing to this important discussion.

I am happy to speak to private member's bill, Bill C-302, the stopping Internet sexual exploitation act, which was introduced by the member for Peace River—Westlock.

Bill C-302 proposes to amend the Criminal Code to create two new summary conviction offences that will criminalize making, distributing or advertising pornographic material for commercial purposes without first ascertaining that each person whose image is depicted in the material is 18 years of age or older and has given their written consent to their image being depicted. The bill would further authorize the court to make an order preventing an offender from using the Internet or other digital network, requiring the offender to ensure that the pornographic material at issue would no longer be stored on or made available through the offender's computer system and requiring the offender to remove the material at issue from the Internet or other digital network.

[*Translation*]

As its short title suggests, Bill C-302 seeks to stop Internet sexual exploitation.

I know that we all agree that the Criminal Code must effectively criminalize all forms of sexual exploitation, especially when the offence involves producing sexualized images of children and distributing them on the Internet.

I am reassured to know that the Criminal Code already fully criminalizes such conduct through its provisions on child pornography, which define these terms rather broadly in order to include all forms of child sexual exploitation material.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Specifically, in the code, section 163.1 already prohibits making, distributing and advertising child pornography and prevents the accused from advancing a defence of honest but mistaken belief that the victim was 18 years or older, unless they can point to some evidence indicating that they took reasonable steps to ascertain that the person depicted in the material is 18 years of age or older.

Such offences are punishable by significant penalties, in fact penalties that are in excess of those proposed in the private member's bill, Bill C-302.

Also, section 162.1 of the code already prohibits the non-consensual distribution of images and authorizes courts to impose prohibition orders and warrants of seizure under sections 162.2 and 164 to stop the dissemination of child pornography and non-consensual intimate images, including on the Internet.

Again, I thank the member opposite for his commitment to this issue. I appreciate that he was indicating that regulating the Internet

and spaces online is important, as are takedown provisions, but what I am speaking about today is actually the Criminal Code provisions as they currently exist.

We do look forward to, however, examining Bill C-302's proposed reforms in the context of the existing criminal law framework to examine its potential impact on an already robust existing legal regime.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice for his presentation on Bill C-302. He has a robust understanding of it.

The one issue that I am addressing tonight is around the 24-hour takedown for CSAM. That is the frustration, and I am hoping that Bill C-302 will be the counter to that. I think a 24-hour takedown is important, but we need to prevent these images from showing up in the first place.

The bill would establish the requirement for companies to maintain records. It is basically a record keeping, and people would be found guilty if they were not keeping those records. It reverses the burden of proof from the police force, from having to prove that the person is underage. It reverses that onus and places that onus on the host or the creator of that content to have to prove that they have a document that shows that the individuals depicted in the videos are of age and have given their consent.

Offering a 24-hour takedown is like handing out a fire extinguisher to a neighbourhood that has a bunch of arsonists running freely around.

Mr. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the objectives that the member opposite is pursuing in his reference to the takedown component, as well as Bill C-302.

Again, we agree that the objective is laudable, specifically in the digital age when we have seen a proliferation of sexually exploitative conduct effected through the Internet. We know that sexual exploitation, particularly when it implicates children, can destroy lives. It is precisely why the code's existing child pornography provisions prohibit a broad range of conduct, including the making, distributing and advertising of child sexual abuse material, and courts can order the removal of such material from the Internet.

I look forward to further debate in the House and conversations with the member to help achieve the very important objective that he is targeting.

[*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 6:43 p.m.)

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