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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 13, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[*English*]

ONLINE NEWS ACT

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (for the Minister of Canadian Heritage) moved that Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to split my time with the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my Conservative friends. I guess they miss me. I am at home, participating online, and they do not want to hear me for 15 minutes. They want to hear me for the full 30.

I know they enjoy my speeches. I get a lot of feedback in real time. Unfortunately, I cannot hear that real-time feedback at the moment. I am sure they are listening attentively to what I have to say.

I appreciate the opportunity to add and—

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou on a point of order.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé: Mr. Speaker, there is no interpretation right now.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I will keep speaking in English and hope that the translation will come through.

It seems to be resolved.

The parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, that is wonderful. It is unfortunate we lost that minute or so, but I guess that gives me even more time to speak to my Conservative friends who do not want to hear the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer, who is an hon. parliamentarian. It is disappointing. I am sure he will get an opportunity to speak going forward, but I thank my Conservative friends for allowing me to carry on and answer even more questions.

I would like to start my speech with a statement, and I hope all members agree with it: There is no real democracy without a free and independent press. A bankrupt press is not a free press. To play its fundamental role, the press needs revenue. This principle is at the core of Bill C-18, and it is at the core of our approach to supporting strong and independent journalism. What we are seeing now, more than ever, is just how important that is.

The way Canadians get their news has changed a lot. Many of us get our news through Google or Facebook, which is okay. There is nothing wrong with that, but the problem is that digital media platforms do not compensate media when they use their content. Advertising dollars have left Canadian media. In 2020, online advertising revenues in Canada were close to \$10 billion, with Meta and Google taking 80% of those revenues.

The consequences for many Canadian businesses are dire. This is especially hurting Canadian media that rely on advertising to pay their journalists. Between 2008 and 2021, 450 news outlets closed across Canada. Let me repeat that: Canada now has 450 fewer news outlets, and it shows no signs of improving. Since the start of the pandemic, 64 news outlets have closed. This is a crisis.

In many regions, that means there are no more local media and no more journalists holding local governments and officials to account. Many Canadians have no way of knowing what is happening in their communities and no way of knowing what is happening at City Hall. The very foundations of our government are eroding. All this is at a time when disinformation is on the rise. Canadians need credible, independent and reliable information.

We have implemented concrete solutions to address these issues, and I would like to go through a couple of them. We created the Canadian journalism labour tax credit. This has kept many outlets afloat: many more would have gone bankrupt during the pandemic, leaving many communities without any local journalistic coverage. We created a tax credit for subscriptions and donations to media.

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We increased funding to the Canada periodical fund, which many local media outlets had to rely on. We are even adding an additional \$40 million to the budget in 2022. We created the local journalism initiative. Thanks to this program, many communities can count on journalistic equality and consistent access to local news. Without it, many communities would have absolutely zero coverage on the ground. These are all important steps, but we know there is more work to do.

We have heard loud and clear from the Canadian journalism industry that news businesses are struggling. They are in dire need of long-term, reliable and structural supports to continue producing the news that Canadians rely so heavily on. That is why we need tech giants to do their part, and that is why we need Bill C-18.

The compensation that tech giants would provide to Canadian media through Bill C-18 would represent a giant step in ensuring the viability of strong and independent journalism in Canada, which is essential to our democracy. That is what Bill C-18 would do. It is simple. Tech giants would fairly compensate Canadian journalists when they use their content. That is it: no more, no less.

It is a market-based solution that involves minimal government intervention, and I think everyone in this place can agree on that. I am sure my Conservative colleagues will be very happy. They believe in the free market and independent journalism. I really cannot think of anything in this bill that they would not like.

As I said, Bill C-18 is a market-based approach designed to revolve around bargaining and balance between large, dominant digital platforms and news businesses. It would ensure that eligible news businesses are fairly compensated for their content by digital platforms through negotiated deals. The bill incentivizes parties to reach commercial agreements on their own.

It is based on the Australian model, but we made it more transparent. Public and transparent criteria would determine which platform is included and has to negotiate with Canadian media. It is not a minister and not a government. Every step of the way, we would make sure that the government stays as far away as possible from this process.

● (1005)

Digital platforms would be designated under the act. If they had a significant bargaining power imbalance compared with news businesses, they would be required to negotiate with eligible news businesses a fair compensation for the news content that appears on their services.

Again, this is not the government that determines which outlet is eligible. There are criteria. They are written in black and white in the bill. It is as transparent as it gets.

I hope my colleagues are listening carefully. I am sure they are, because they wanted me to go on for an additional 10 minutes. The next part of this speech is important, because the bill is important to smaller local media as well.

Eligible media may collectively bargain if they wish. This would allow smaller media outlets that did not have the resources to single-handedly negotiate with tech giants to still receive fair compensation for the use of their content. In other words, we are ensuring

that local journalism can continue to thrive in communities across Canada.

We went even further on transparency, because we believe this is essential to preserve public confidence in Canadian journalism and in our democracy. Every single deal would be disclosed. Canadians would know which news organizations have deals with each and every platform. Through this bill, we are making sure that commercial agreements between digital platforms and news businesses are in the public interest.

For the deals to be acceptable, they need to satisfy six criteria.

First, they provide fair compensation for news content.

Second, they ensure that an appropriate portion of the compensation will be used for the production of local, regional and national news content.

Third, they do not undermine freedom of expression and journalistic integrity.

Fourth, they contribute to the sustainability of the news market.

Fifth, they ensure that a significant portion of independent local news businesses benefit from the deals.

Sixth, they involve a range of news outlets that reflect the diversity of the Canadian news marketplace.

Again, we see the criteria are public and transparent. There is minimal government intervention.

The bill even contains an exemption to this. It contains a set of criteria that, if fulfilled, may exempt digital platforms from further negotiations. This is essential to encourage voluntary commercial agreements to further minimize government involvement. To be exempt, digital platforms would have to show that they sufficiently contribute to the Canadian digital news marketplace by reaching fair commercial agreements, that they have an appropriate portion of compensation used to support local and independent news, that the agreements are inclusive and made with a diversity of news businesses representing a diversity of Canadian interests and identities, and that the agreements support innovative business models. As we can see, this is another way to make sure that local media also receive fair compensation. It is at the core of the bill.

Without this legislation, Canadian journalism and democracy will continue to erode. It is already happening as we speak. Bill C-18 would ensure that digital platforms are negotiating fair commercial deals with news businesses. This is not just about large news businesses, as I clearly demonstrated through the availability of collective bargaining. As a criteria for the exemption, this bill would ensure that small businesses also receive fair compensation.

This bill would limit government involvement and protect the independence of media from both government and commercial interference, because now, more than ever, Canadians need strong and independent journalism.

The Conservatives have told us they want market-based solutions to the media crisis. I agree, and we agree, but right now there are two companies, Google and Meta, that get 80% of the ad revenue on the Internet. It does not feel like it is a free market. There is not much competition. It is almost a monopoly, but with our bill Canadian media would have the tools they need to negotiate fair deals. It is a solution that protects media and protects their independence.

We are basing this on the Australian model. I know when a similar bill came out in Australia, Facebook, or Meta, attempted to have a fight with the Australian government and threatened to pull all of the country's news sources from Facebook. It thought it would turn the Australian people against their government, but what it did was turn them against Facebook, which backed down.

• (1010)

We have seen other countries and other allies of Canada move in this direction. We have an understanding and we have full knowledge. Again, I hope all members support our need to have strong independent journalism to help our democracy. Australia created a model that works. The tech giants have negotiated fair deals with Australian media outlets, including Australian Crown corporations. Journalism there is now stronger. Australian democracy is now stronger. It worked in Australia, and it will work in Canada.

I think that is what we want. I truly hope that this will be a speedy debate and that all parties will come together on this, because that is what we want to see. I am sure there are members in this House who do not like that there are local news outlets that hold them to account, but that is what strengthens our democracy.

I know the Conservatives have been very vocal on our committee, and I respect that, talking about the Shaw-Rogers merger and its impact on local news. We have had some very good discussion on that. Because there is a potential impact on a number of local television stations and local news across the country, I hope that concern goes broader. The merger is an excellent discussion, a discussion worth having, but this is the elephant in the room, in terms of ad revenues that have left, ad revenues that are going away from local news organizations and going to massive American companies, the dominant digital players. Again, 80% of that revenue goes to those two companies. It does not seem like we could have a healthy space, and this concerns me.

We see the consequences of misinformation and disinformation online. The types of things that local media and national media outlets do are to get the truth out, but on Facebook and other social media, we do not see that impact. To see the safety of the hon. lead-

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er of the NDP threatened because of individuals who have now become subsumed in the disinformation that social media has to offer is horrific. It was frightening to watch, and it was disappointing to see. No member of this place should have to go through that. He handled it with poise, and I tip my hat to him, but none of us should be placed in that position.

I will wrap up by saying that this is a significant bill for Canadians, for democracy. We need to find ways to strengthen that. I look forward to getting this to committee as quickly as possible. We have excellent debates in the heritage committee and we have a very good working relationship with all parties. There is an appreciation across all the parties that we need to do more for local media and we need to do more for national media to ensure that that presence continues to exist.

I hope that we see broad support on Bill C-18, and I look forward to its passing speedily at second reading so that we can get it to committee as quickly as we can.

• (1015)

The Deputy Speaker: I do not know if we always go to the first one standing, but the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan beat everyone to it.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just a simple question for the parliamentary secretary about the discussion around spreading misinformation and disinformation.

Is “spreading misinformation” simply a fancy way of saying “telling a lie”? Does it mean the same thing as telling a lie, or does it mean something different?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the hon. member is getting at. Misinformation and disinformation are endemic on social media platforms. It is much broader than telling a lie. I do not know that I can encompass that in a very brief answer to the hon. member. I think he knows that. I think he knows that we are having difficulty as a society acknowledging what is truthful.

We could take a look at what has happened on COVID-19 and the anti-vax movement. We could take a look at climate change and see the misinformation and disinformation out there, when there is scientific consensus on those types of issues. There is no check against it, seemingly, on Meta, Twitter, Google and other companies, so we are going to rely more heavily on local journalism and national journalism, the media in general, to ensure that Canadians have access to accurate information.

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• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have been waiting for this bill, along with the broadcasting bill, for several years. In this case, it is about levelling the playing field so that the print media can thrive in a media landscape dominated by the omnipresence of new technology.

Does the parliamentary secretary think this bill will actually enable the print media to thrive in today's context?

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question from the hon. member. We need to start levelling the playing field somewhere. This is an excellent start.

This deal is already in place between major media companies in Canada and Facebook and Google. It is time to ensure that there is more transparency. It is time to ensure that smaller entities will be able to get a fair deal as well. This will help level the playing field. The argument that we are making on Bill C-11 is an important argument that we are making on Bill C-18 as well.

We need to get this bill to committee and through the House as quickly as possible, because, as we said, more media outlets are closing. We are in a crisis. We need to do what we can, and this is a model that works.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the highlight of my morning was when I found out that the parliamentary secretary was going to be speaking longer than he wanted to.

I think of a news outlet in my riding. It is called the Kingstonist. It actually just came online, probably within the last 10-12 years, and over the years it has gradually built a larger and larger base of followers. The only way it generates income right now is if people subscribe to the service or if people end up on its website, where it can generate money from ad revenue. However, we know that the majority of people who look at its news content are seeing it on Facebook or perhaps on Google, and it is at a huge disadvantage when it comes to the distribution of its material.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could comment on how he thinks this bill would help an organization such as the Kingstonist in my riding.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member, as always, for his informative questions and his hard work on the file. It is important. News outlets like the one the hon. member mentioned are fundamental to our democratic institutions. Here in St. Catharines, on the few occasions I have had to attend local city council meetings, there may or may not have been one or two members of the local media there, but we need as many people as possible there holding elected officials to account.

In Kingston, it is fundamentally important to do the same thing. Organizations like the one the hon. member mentioned will benefit across the country, to ensure that they have the ad revenue and that dominant digital players are not syphoning off the vast majority of

ad revenue, which they have been doing and which is the centre of the crisis we find ourselves in.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, we are seeing the impacts of many of the larger web giants using local news, much to the disadvantage of local news outlets. We are seeing news outlets in Nanaimo—Ladysmith closing down, and many of the news outlets, such as Nanaimo News Bulletin, The Discourse and Nanaimo News Now, are struggling to keep up with the large web giants. They are set up for failure.

I wonder if the member could speak about why we have not done anything to support local media to date and what needs to be done to ensure that we are supporting these local, hard-working media sources.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, in my speech I listed many of the programs with which the government is helping out media, but there is only so much the government can do. We need to find a more market-based solution to this problem. At the centre of it are dominant digital players syphoning off the vast majority of the ad revenue. That is the big issue that we find ourselves in.

This bill provides a solution. It provides a solution, with limited government intervention, to allow deals to take place with independents. In terms of smaller media outlets, which the hon. member mentioned, they can bargain collectively with other media outlets to ensure that they get a fair deal and that they benefit from this bill, and to help level the playing field to ensure that they can continue to provide news in the hon. member's riding.

• (1025)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I was quite sure I was up ahead of the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, but I will not argue the point. That is virtual reality, so here we are.

I am focusing less on what Bill C-18 proposes to do. It has taken the approach of saying, as we have heard, that when information, news articles and content appear in what we might call our conventional media, the social media giants and the tech giants pay for that. However, it does not get to this new problem. Neither Bill C-11 nor Bill C-18 gets to what is now being called by our security experts "IMVE", ideologically motivated violent extremism, which is spread through social media content. I commend to the hon. parliamentary secretary and other members a recent opinion piece by Beverley McLachlin, former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, and Taylor Owen, the director of the Centre for Media, Technology and Democracy at McGill University.

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We are not addressing the root problem here. It is a dangerous area. People want to back away from this nexus between free speech and protecting people from violent extremism. The solution I would put to the hon. member is to treat these new tech online sources, or whatever we want to call them, not as platforms but as publishers. That is what they are. They publish. We have a vast amount of common-law jurisprudence on what to do with publishing things that are false.

I put it to the hon. member that Bill C-18 and Bill C-11 do not address the threat to Canadian democracy in online disinformation.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I do agree with the hon. member that her virtual hand was up long, long before the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan jumped up on his feet.

The hon. member is also right in terms of where we find ourselves with social media, that it is an unsafe place. I was threatened yesterday when I spoke about a shooting that happened in my riding. This is the type of thing that Canadians find themselves in. It becomes a much less safe place than it has ever been, with the promise of the Internet, as it rose in the 1990s, that it would be this wonderful place. However, it is not a safe place, and it is even less so for women and persons of colour.

That is why the government is consulting on online safety. We hope to have legislation soon, but the consultations are ongoing. It is fundamental. It is in the minister's mandate letter, and we hope to have legislation on that as part of our plan.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we continue debate, I know the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands did have her hand up first. I have to admit that. However, I know the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, among the six Conservatives who stood up, was first in that round. That is just to clarify.

Ms. Elizabeth May: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I know that it would have violated the Standing Orders for the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to stand and be recognized while the hon. parliamentary secretary was speaking, so I was rather teasing the hon. Speaker. I know that virtual hands go up at the beginning of a speech and no one in the House could do that. I withdraw any suggestion that I was critical of the Speaker's decision on who spoke first.

The Deputy Speaker: I am hopeful that this kind of discussion will continue this morning.

Mr. John Nater: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for clarifying her point, because I do worry that the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is now just going to stand in his place for the entirety of today's debate. I just worry that his legs are going to get sore from standing that long.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it certainly is an honour to rise in the House today to debate Bill C-18, the online news act.

I did not get a chance to ask the parliamentary secretary for Canadian heritage a question. He spoke a lot in his speech about the online tech giants, the Facebooks and Googles of the world, gob-

bling up advertising revenue and leaving small local newspapers without the same access to revenue. If I would have had a chance to ask the parliamentary secretary a question, I would have asked him why he spent \$13,000 on Facebook advertising, rather than investing that in his local newspaper, the St. Catharines Standard.

Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to ask the parliamentary secretary that question, but perhaps he can come back to the House at some point and clarify why he felt the need to spend \$13,000 on a tech giant, rather than on his local community newspaper.

I want to begin by stating there is a clear sense that Canada's news environment has changed dramatically, and it has changed especially significantly in the last 10 to 20 years. The Internet has changed how we do business. It has brought many changes to all aspects of our lives, our communities and how businesses operate. As these changes and disruptions have happened in the digital marketplace, they have had a very specific impact on the media industry and in particular the traditional print media industry.

As many Canadians know, the cumulative advertising dollars that are spent in Canada are now being spent more and more on online means. As these dollars move online, a smaller and smaller number of dollars are being spent on traditional advertising and print advertising, which for years and decades have been used to sustain the news industry.

Newsrooms in 2022 are far smaller than they were even a decade ago. We can contrast that even further back, to 20 to 30 years ago. Many of the newsrooms that are now operating with one or two journalists at one point operated with a dozen. I know the Speaker has a background in the media industry and will be able to reflect on the changes that have happened over these number of years. Still other newsrooms have closed entirely, and when these newsrooms close, they leave in their wake news deserts in which parts of the community, or in some cases entire communities, are left without access to reliable local news sources. These closures have particularly hurt small towns and rural communities, like those communities in many of our ridings.

Canadians rely on local news to inform their lives and help inform their decision-making at the local, regional and national levels. Whether it be the members of the parliamentary press gallery, the press galleries of the provincial legislatures or countless individual journalists who cover the goings-on at city halls and town halls in communities across our country, all of these journalists have a role to play in Canada's democratic life. In fact, a free and independent press is essential to a functioning democracy.

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I draw the House's attention to one of the famous comments on a free and independent press from George Mason, one of America's founding fathers. He said, "the freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic governments." That quotation is as true now as it was then. The freedom and ability of the press to fairly, impartially and honestly report the news to citizens of this country are absolutely essential.

• (1030)

That local news is struggling is not in doubt. The traditional business model that saw print publications sell advertising space in hard-copy publications worked for decades and saw successes. Small independent newspapers and large media empires alike relied on the basic practice of using this advertising space to reach the eyes of readers and help sustain their newsrooms. Now, in 2022, while the advertising model has diminished, what has not diminished is the continued need for impartial, honest and trustworthy sources of news.

The government itself has admitted that it has not yet found a solution to this problem. In fact, in his press conference after introducing the bill, the Minister of Canadian Heritage himself conceded that a significant number of news providers have closed their doors in recent years during the government's time in office. This is not only unfortunate; it is weakening our communities.

Local newspapers, radio stations and television stations bring us the stories that impact us in our daily lives. At the local level, they report the stories of community. They cover municipal councils, charitable events and fundraisers, community festivals, fall fairs and the success of our local sports teams or, in some cases, hope for the future success of these teams. Local journalism also covers the more unfortunate but nonetheless essential stories that need to be told in our communities: stories of crime, fires, floods and violence.

As I drive across the 3,500 square kilometres of Perth—Wellington, I find myself flipping through my car radio's preset stations. I want to be clear that I use my radio in my car. I do not use Spotify and I do not use satellite radio. I prefer traditional radio when I am driving, and I listen to it as I drive across my riding and from there to Ottawa. I also listen to local stations as I drive along Highway 401 or Highway 7, depending on which direction I am taking. It gives me an opportunity to hear what is going on in not only my own communities in Perth—Wellington, but those across the country.

As I drive through Perth and Wellington counties, I find myself flipping to *The River*, which is a non-profit entity out of Mount Forest, Ontario, that celebrates everything local and everything important to the community. I often switch to a number of the Blackburn radio stations that are present throughout southwestern Ontario given the important services and news they provide. In fact, one of the Blackburn stations is AM920 out of Wingham. I fondly remember as a child listening to AM920 and being shushed by my mother every time the "in memoriam" part came on, because we certainly did not want to miss that. To this day, it is still part of the station.

In Listowel and North Perth, we can tune in to *The Ranch*, the newest entrant to the news and radio market. It has quickly found an important spot in the media landscape in Listowel and North

Perth and, indeed, in the northern part of Perth County. Of course, in Stratford, we can tune in to *2day FM* or *Juice FM* to hear Jamie Cottle in the morning, and before him, local legend Eddie Matthews.

I would like to highlight the fact that the radio predecessor to *2day FM* and *Juice FM* was *CJCS 1240 AM*. It was in 1945 that the *CJCS* commentators were providing coverage of the Perth Regiment's return from World War II. That coverage on *CJCS 1240 AM* inspired a young, 12-year-old boy from Stratford to begin a lifelong career in broadcasting. That young boy began working at *CJCS* as a high school student, and while he got his start in radio, generations of Canadians know him for his television career as Canada's most trusted news anchor. However, Stratford and Perth County will always lay claim to the fact that Lloyd Robertson got his start in our little community on the radio.

In Perth—Wellington, we also have a number of tremendous local newspapers. In Wellington County, we are lucky to have the *Wellington Advertiser*, which has proudly served the people of Wellington County for more than half a century. It has been recognized for its work on multiple occasions, including being named the top community newspaper in Ontario in its class by the Ontario Community Newspapers Association.

• (1035)

When I attended the 50th anniversary celebration for the *Wellington Advertiser*, I was struck by a story told by Dave Adsett, publisher of the *Advertiser*. He recounted how his father, Bill Adsett, the founder of the *Wellington Advertiser*, once had the option to save money by removing delivery to a small portion of Wellington County. He refused to do so out of principle to ensure that every citizen in Wellington County had access to the news and information contained in the *Wellington Advertiser*. When Bill Adsett passed away on October 5, 2021, he was rightly remembered and honoured for his lifetime of contributions to the County of Wellington.

In my hometown of Mitchell, I have been a reader of the *Mitchell Advocate* literally since I was able to read. I say that completely honestly. Throughout all the years that I have been reading the newspaper, Andy Bader has been working hard to bring the news and our local stories to us each and every week. Similarly, I have wonderful memories of reading *The Stratford Beacon Herald*, and watching as photographers like Scott Wishart chronicled the life of the community through his photos, or as Steve Rice recorded the rise and fall of any number of local sports teams.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned, many local news providers have closed in the past number of years, hurting communities across Canada, including those in Perth—Wellington.

The Mount Forest Confederate, a paper that was first published in the year of Canada's Confederation, in 1867, has closed. The Arthur Enterprise News, founded before Confederation, in 1862, has closed. In 2019, the Minto Express was closed.

In Perth County, many of my constituents were shocked in 2017 when the major media giants abruptly shut down both the St. Marys Journal Argus and Stratford Gazette. The closure of the St. Marys Journal Argus was especially difficult because after 154 years as a newspaper serving the community, it was unexpectedly shut down in one single day without even the opportunity to deliver a final edition to the town's faithful readers.

Fortunately for the town of St. Marys, the St. Marys Independent, led by Stewart Grant, has stepped in to fill that void. I might add that he does so as a true public service to the communities of St. Marys, Perth South and beyond.

While these examples are local to my riding, the challenges are certainly national in scope. Today's debate is not the first time the issue of struggling local news providers has been raised. In fact, at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, we have undertaken a study of the Rogers-Shaw deal and the impact that it will have on local news. This study was initiated by my friend and colleague, the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, a former broadcaster who prided himself during his broadcasting career on delivering local news to his communities in Saskatoon and beyond.

Like many Canadians, I was disappointed to see the CRTC make a ruling to approve the sale based on certain conditions. Obviously recent events involving the Competition Bureau may alter the future of this deal, but what I found interesting and frankly disappointing about the Rogers-Shaw decision by the CRTC was its use of wishy-washy, non-committal language. In its decision, the CRTC used words such as “encouragement”, “expectations” and “reminders”, rather than taking a real stand.

Setting aside for a moment the CRTC's decision on the Rogers-Shaw deal, there is no question that the decisions made by the CRTC and other entities will have an impact on local news. The question is whether the CRTC has the capacity or the competency to actually make decisions that will improve the media landscape in Canada.

That brings me to some of the concerns we have with the bill at hand.

● (1040)

In the last election, there was a general consensus among the different political platforms that something should be done to help local news and journalism survive. In our Conservative platform under our former leader, the member for Durham, we made the following commitment:

Canada's Conservatives will:

Introduce a digital media royalty framework to ensure that Canadian media outlets are fairly compensated for the sharing of their content by platforms like Google and Facebook. It will:

Adopt a made in Canada approach that incorporates the best practices of jurisdictions like Australia and France.

Include a robust arbitration process and the creation of an intellectual property right for article extracts shared on a social media platform.

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Ensure that smaller media outlets are included, and that the government won't be able to pick and choose who has access to the royalty framework.

That is what we committed to in the last election campaign.

It may surprise everyone, but we did not win that election. We came close, certainly, and we did win the popular vote, but we did not form government, to the great disappointment of my friends on the other side of the House. While we did not get to draft this legislation, it is our duty as Her Majesty's loyal opposition to review the legislation introduced by the Liberal government and provide the comments that our citizens and constituents require of us.

Let me say very clearly that Canada's Conservatives believe that news providers should be fairly compensated for the use of their content. That said, we do have questions about this particular piece of legislation. As I explained earlier, local news providers are struggling. This begs the obvious question as to whether Bill C-18 will help the newspapers and radio stations in communities like Perth—Wellington, Sarnia—Lambton, Elgin—Middlesex—London, and other rural communities and small towns across our country. Unfortunately, that is unclear.

● (1045)

A recent report from the Toronto Star, itself a long and distinguished media provider in this country, indicated that the Australian model on which this legislation is based may be leaving out small and medium-sized businesses. The article states, “But while major publishers and networks in Australia had struck deals with Facebook and Google, some smaller, independent outlets were finding themselves shut out from making deals of their own.”

The article goes on to quote Erin Millar, the CEO of Indiegraf, who said, “If we're going to have this bill, how are we to design it in such a way that it doesn't lead to the same outcomes as Australia, which is, from my perspective, really not supporting journalism?”

There are other questions that remain unanswered with this bill as well, such as why the CRTC was selected as the regulatory body to enforce and oversee the act when the CRTC does not have a history or experience in regulating online platforms. Let us not forget that the CRTC is the same entity whose chair met privately for beers with someone from one of the largest industries it regulates. However, beyond the chair's clear lack of judgment, let us remember that the CRTC has still not implemented a three-digit suicide prevention hotline more than 500 days after this House unanimously passed a motion calling for such a resource. It has also been more than 16 months since the CRTC held hearings about the licence renewal for the CBC licences. If the CRTC cannot make a decision within 16 months on what I would assume to be a fairly routine renewal, how in the world can it have the capacity and competency to do anything that is asked of it?

Government Orders

We also have no indication on how much revenue will be generated when this bill is enforced. Budget 2022 earmarks \$8.5 million for the bureaucracy necessary to administer Bill C-18, so it is logical to ask whether the revenues generated through this bill will be greater than or less than the costs to administer it.

We have a number of other questions, including how the code of conduct will be developed and whether it will be tabled in Parliament. We have questions about what undue preference will be considered within the bill. Will non-Canadian news providers be able to benefit from the Canadian system? Why has the government not tabled a charter statement on this bill? Why was a public broadcaster included when it already received other entities? We have these questions and, as such, I think an important committee study ought to be had.

Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following: "Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, be not now read a second time but that the Order be discharged, the Bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage."

• (1050)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Moving on to questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has the floor.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am glad to hear the member listens to radio in his riding. I would encourage him to download the iHeart radio app, or a similar app, so he can continue to listen to those radio stations when he is in Ottawa, as I listen to Reid and Ben every morning, who are on Move 98.3 in Kingston. It is a great way to stay connected to our communities.

I am thinking of those small news outlets. I referenced the Kingstonist, which is one in my riding. I know there is the Stratford Times in his riding. These are small news organizations that do not have the ability to compete against the distributive networks of Facebook and Google. They need supports. This bill creates the framework for those discussions to happen between those big distributors of the content, such as Facebook and Google, and those smaller independent organizations, such as the Stratford Times.

I am wondering if the member can comment on why he wants to reject the bill and send the content to committee through his amendment, as opposed to moving forward on this so we can put together a good framework to allow these discussions to happen so that the Stratford Times can benefit.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I do have the app on my phone, and I stay in touch with my local stations when I am here in Ottawa. I have spent time in Kingston. I served a year there at university, not in the other institution of that great town, and I did read the Kingston Whig Standard when I was there.

The member asked a question about why we would send this bill to committee and have the subject matter reviewed by the committee. It is exactly for the question he asked, which is so we can hear from the small community newspapers. What we are hearing now

from Australia is that they are not able to access the benefits of the Australian model, which is the model being sent here.

There is mention in the bill that the rules of the Competition Act would be set aside to allow for collective bargaining, but we have no clarification on how that works, so we want this to go to committee. We want to see the subject matter go to committee quickly so we can have those discussions with local newspapers, whether they are from Kingston or Perth—Wellington or Chatham-Kent—Leamington. We want to hear those voices, and those voices must be heard.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-18 sets out, in black and white, the rules that the various media players must follow to ensure much healthier competition and quality content for everyone.

It is no secret that small media outlets are in immediate need of financial assistance from the government. What does my colleague think about that?

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, we know full well that newspapers and media outlets are in trouble.

Also, more and more advertising space is being bought from the web giants, including Facebook, Meta and Google. This is a concern for all Canadians who see the value of their local media or local newspaper.

We need to be able to share the stories from our communities. The government needs to do something. I think it is a good idea. We need to make sure that this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage so it can be studied.

• (1055)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the speech from the member, and it was perplexing to me to hear him suggest that the bill should be withdrawn and the heritage committee should study the matter. In fact, if this bill passes second reading, it would be referred to committee, where we would be able to call witnesses and ask questions pertaining to the bill. It is perplexing to me that he would want to effectively kill the bill with his amendment. The NDP supports this notion and has been calling for the government to equalize the web giants with small, local media outlets. This bill is a good start.

Why would the member want to kill the bill if he truly wanted to have a discussion about it and have witnesses presented on this issue?

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I think the preference of our side would have been to draft our own piece of legislation if we were in government, but that is not the case. The next best scenario is this type of amendment.

As the member ought to know, as she has been in the House a long time, there are very few amendments that are acceptable at second reading debate. This particular amendment is one of the few that is permissible and that is the one we have used. It will provide the subject matter to go to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to make suggestions and make a report back to the House of Commons.

The Government of Canada can then use that advice, use the suggestions of all parties and listen to witnesses, of which we are developing a massive list of people who want input on this bill. Their views are both positive and negative, and they have clear ideas for suggestions to improve, change or rewrite the bill entirely.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for a great speech and for moving the amendment because I do have concerns about Bill C-18, especially when we heard the parliamentary secretary talk about how there would not be any discrimination. In every other media policy that the government has brought, there has been discrimination along the political spectrum and, as the member correctly pointed out, small and medium-sized news outlets.

I would like to hear his comments on that.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I want to talk on a different point she raised on where the government puts its priorities and where other members put their priorities.

We just heard the member for Vancouver East rallying their support for this bill, but the member for Vancouver East spent \$17,000 on Facebook ads. The member for Vancouver East is talking about levelling the playing field between major web giants and local newspapers, but the member herself spent \$17,000.

As parliamentarians, we need to look ourselves in the eye and decide what we want to do to promote, and whether government advertising should be focused on traditional local media rather than major web giants.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jamshed Hassan, better known as Jimmy, an individual from my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

Jimmy is a local restaurateur who routinely goes above and beyond when it comes to giving back to our community, by continually giving to those in need.

Last year, he worked on Project Red Rose, which partnered with local organizations such as Martha's Table and Lunch by George to host dinners for hundreds of people on celebratory days like Thanksgiving.

He also launched a new program, Santa Slice, which worked with the St. Vincent de Paul Society and several women's and youth shelters to provide pizza, supplied by his Pizza Pizza fran-

Statements by Members

chise, to over 700 people experiencing homelessness around Christmas.

In the middle of the winter, Jimmy ran a blanket drive to distribute blankets to people across the city who were struggling to stay warm.

I thank Jimmy for always looking out for the most vulnerable in our community and continually looking for ways to improve the social fabric of Kingston and the Islands.

* * *

• (1100)

ENDOMETRIOSIS

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one in 10 women in the world is diagnosed with endometriosis. In Canada, approximately 7% of women are affected by this disease.

Endometriosis, a chronic inflammatory disease, tends to go unnoticed in most women. In Canada, individuals with endometriosis often experience a diagnosis delay of more than five years. This is five years of physical, emotional and mental pain that negatively affects the day-to-day lives of many women living in Canada.

This is unacceptable. Women have suffered long enough. We must commit to providing the necessary resources and funds that will support research and advancement in the field.

The Government of Canada recently announced more than \$3.5 million in funding for reproductive health information. Endometriosis continues to be widely underfunded. We need the resources to support research and ensure women do not have to wait five years for a diagnosis. The government must see this as a priority and commit the necessary funds. Supporting endometriosis research is important for our sisters, our daughters, our mothers and our friends.

* * *

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sunday, May 1, marked First Responders Day, a day we reflect on the selfless contributions of countless women and men in the fulfillment of their duties.

Today, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the often unsung heroes of Ottawa, the members of the Ottawa Fire Services, whose unrelenting work keeps us safe every day.

In particular, I congratulate my constituent, John Sobey, a decorated fire captain, who just retired after over 42 years of service, 32 years with the Ottawa and Gloucester fire services and 10 years in the Canadian Armed Forces. John also served as a union leader and advocated for the recognition of fallen firefighters.

Statements by Members

John Sobey truly epitomizes what we mean when we call first responders “heroes”. With that, I ask the members of this House to join me in commending all first responders across the nation.

The Deputy Speaker: We of course welcome all our guests in the gallery today.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

* * *

OJIBWAY SHORES

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I have the privilege of celebrating 20 years of service to my community as its MP. Through the years, I committed to working directly with my constituents to bring their collective voices and concerns to Ottawa. I am making this commitment again today.

We have worked together for a decade now to save the Ojibway shorelands and establish an urban park for Canadians to enjoy and for species to be protected. This is a project that has endangered species and wildlife habitats and will fight the climate change that is right on the doorstep of Windsor, Ontario.

Yesterday, we learned the government is finally taking action on the request from five years ago to transfer Ojibway lands to Parks Canada. It is finally happening, so today we celebrate 20 years of advocacy together.

On behalf of the residents of Windsor West, I respectfully call on parliamentarians to support my bill, Bill C-248, and start making this park a reality. They can consider it an anniversary gift.

I conclude by thanking my partner, Terry Chow, my son, Wade, and my daughter, Alex, who graduated yesterday, for 20 years of blessed support.

The Deputy Speaker: Happy anniversary.

The hon. member for Gatineau.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GASTON CLOUTIER

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to share with the House that Gaston Cloutier, managing director of the Gatineau-Ottawa Executive Airport was nominated for the Association québécoise du transport aérien's prestigious emeritus member prize.

Drawing on a wealth of experience in aviation, Mr. Cloutier positioned our airport as an attractive site and an economic lever for Gatineau. Our government will be making major investments in the airport.

When Mr. Cloutier retires on October 1 after 10 years heading up our regional airport and an impressive career with the Canadian Armed Forces, he can do so with a sense of mission accomplished.

I thank Mr. Cloutier for his valuable contribution to our regional development. On behalf of the House, I wish him a very happy second retirement.

• (1105)

[*English*]

COVID-19 VACCINES

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the heart-wrenching opportunity to hear the story of Stephen MacDougall. Stephen was a 45-year-old man who was a proud father, a significant contributor to his community and a tremendous athlete. He was also a twin brother, a son, an uncle and a husband.

Sadly, almost a year ago, Stephen MacDougall died after receiving a vaccine for COVID-19. Speaking as a parliamentarian, a physician who worked on a COVID-19 unit and a Canadian, I believe we have a responsibility to understand the adverse events related to this new group of vaccinations. We need to understand the data as it pertains to Canada, the world, and short- and long-term safety.

Since over 11.5 billion doses have been given worldwide and the data has been collected, now is the time for all of us in the House to act. The data needs to be properly analyzed so we can present this scientific information to Canadians to enable them to make informed choices and give informed consent going forward.

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SCIENCE MEETS PARLIAMENT

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of our inaugural Standing Committee on Science and Research, which just concluded its first-ever study on science in Canada, I have the privilege of hearing from many of our brilliant minds. On Tuesday, I hosted two such researchers, Dr. Lachlan MacKinnon and Dr. Stefanie Colombo, as part of Science Meets Parliament, a non-partisan initiative to strengthen the connections between Canada's scientific and political communities.

[*Translation*]

These two scientists represent the breadth and depth of Canada's scientific talent.

[*English*]

Both are tier II Canada research chairs, Stefanie in aquaculture nutrition at Dalhousie and Lachlan in post-industrial communities at Cape Breton University.

[*Translation*]

I thank the Canadian Science Policy Centre and Canada's chief science advisor for bringing scientists and parliamentarians together to promote mutual understanding.

*Statements by Members***SASKATCHEWAN AGRICULTURE**

[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two months after Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, estimates suggest that over 2,100 Russian missiles have rained down on Ukraine, displacing 12 million, damaging over 200 health care facilities, and destroying 200 heritage sites throughout the country. While visiting Irpin, Bucha and Borodyanka last week, I witnessed first-hand the mass atrocities and unspeakable crimes Russia has visited upon Ukraine.

Despite such unconscionable brutality, every Ukrainian I encountered represented an awe-inspiring profile in courage and fortitude.

That is why the surprise visit by our Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs to Kyiv was crucial, a testament to our country's unwavering commitment to support Ukraine and hold Putin to account. Proud Ukrainians will never relent, and neither should we in our assistance.

* * *

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge one of the many amazing constituents of Calgary Midnapore. Lorna Hamm recently received a national award from the Canadian Real Estate Association to recognize her more than 50 years of volunteer work.

In 1986, she helped establish the first Children's Cottage Society crisis nursery in Canada, which has provided refuge to over 40,000 Calgary children, ensuring their safety when a family is in crisis. She also raised an incredible half a million dollars in just two years to fund life-saving treatment at the Alberta Children's Hospital.

Last year, she led a grassroots initiative to provide over 600 ICU workers with "thank you" packages for their work on the pandemic front lines.

It is an honour to congratulate and sincerely thank Lorna Hamm for all she has done to change the lives of so many Calgary children and members of our community.

* * *

● (1110)

AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my dad developed age-related macular degeneration, and I saw what a life-changing development that was.

Age-related macular degeneration, or AMD, is an incurable disease that affects close to 2.5 million Canadians over the age of 50. It causes damage to the central part of the retina responsible for central vision, robbing Canadian seniors of their expected quality of life. However, there is hope that a new, non-invasive treatment currently awaiting Health Canada approval could positively impact the millions of Canadians who live with AMD and could result in Canada playing an important role in managing the disease globally.

Please join me in raising awareness of AMD and supporting the close to 2.5 million Canadian seniors living with this cruel disease.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Friday the 13th, a very scary day for Saskatchewan agriculture.

Here in this House the environment minister and the agriculture minister are creating their own horror movie. Like Freddy and Jason before them, they are slashers. This time they want to slash two key industries in Saskatchewan, farming and fertilizer production.

In Saskatoon West, Nutrien, the largest fertilizer producer on the planet, employs over 3,000 people. If the government slashers have their way, Nutrien will be forced to sell its potash to someone else, and our farmers will pay the price.

We have seen this NDP-Liberal pattern before, attacking Canadian industries in the name of climate change and allowing other countries to take jobs and economic growth away from Canadians. In this case, we are seeing the NDP-Liberals diminish the capacity of wheat fields in Saskatchewan while getting the Americans to pick up the slack.

However, we should not fear; every nightmare ends eventually. Once Canadians give this government the boot, Conservatives will be ready to get to work and promote our resources around the globe.

* * *

FERTILIZER TARIFFS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are those in our country who measure their days in acres rather than hours. With the spring planting season upon us, farmers in Perth—Wellington and across Canada are on the land, growing the food that will quite literally feed our country.

Agriculture is always an unpredictable business, with so many variables that all impact a farmer's bottom line and their hopes to be in the black when the last field is harvested in the fall. While farmers are prepared for these uncertainties that come with the business, what they are not prepared for are the uncertainties placed upon them by the government.

Statements by Members

For over 10 weeks now, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has refused to clarify whether fertilizer orders placed prior to March 2 would be subject to the 35% tariff. Since those orders were placed prior to sanctions being in place, the tariffs impact only Canadian farmers and agri-businesses; they have zero impact on Vladimir Putin and his thugs.

I implore the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to finally stand up for farmers and farm families.

* * *

NURSING WEEK

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is Nursing Week in Canada, and I would like to recognize one of the many outstanding nurses in my riding.

Sandra Ricketts-Fusca has been a nurse with the Scarborough Health Network for 33 years, including 26 years as a perioperative nurse. As a young girl, she was inspired by an aunt and a cousin who were nurses in England. She decided to make it her career when she began caring for her ill grandmother. While she has had many different roles at the Scarborough Health Network, Sandra says she always felt destined to work in the operating room.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Sandra said she enjoyed the camaraderie, professionalism and quality of care provided by the staff. During the pandemic, she said she saw what true teamwork is. We thank Sandra for being part of the Scarborough Health Network team, and for her dedication to her patients and our community. Happy Nursing Week.

* * *

VANCOUVER ISLAND FREIGHTER ANCHORAGES

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith are gravely concerned about the increasing number of freighters polluting ecologically sensitive waters off the coast of B.C.'s southern Gulf Islands.

Our coasts are being used as overflow industrial parking lots for the port of Vancouver, and marine life is suffering. Orcas, salmon and sea lions do not mix with freighters. These eyesores impact local businesses, tourism, the fishing industry and much more.

To make matters worse, these anchorages were established without free, prior or informed consent of the Coast Salish first nations. Constituents and grassroots organizations such as Gabriolans Against Freighter Anchorages have brought concerns to the Liberal government, but the response has been dismal. The NDP has been pushing for real solutions for over a decade.

Enough is enough. Liberals must put words into action and prohibit freighters from anchoring in these waters.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

INTIMIDATION OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND JOURNALISTS

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, disgraceful incidents of intimidation, both of elected representatives and of journalists, have become all too frequent in the last while. Allusions, disagreements, heated tones and often-inappropriate innuendo are all part of politics, and sometimes these get taken too far. That is normal. Many issues evoke passionate feelings.

Threats and intimidation, on the other hand, have no place in democratic debate. Humiliating or defaming journalists on social media is completely unacceptable. Shoving elected representatives, threatening them or throwing rocks at them is also completely unacceptable.

Obviously, we are going to make some people angry. Obviously, not everyone will agree with us. We disagree here in the House every day, but verbal and physical violence, intimidation of journalists who report the facts, of analysts who give their opinion or of elected officials who take an opposing position do not serve democracy and must stop.

* * *

[*English*]

CAMPOBELLO ISLAND

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Campobello is the unique Canadian island in my riding without direct access to mainland New Brunswick. Instead, islanders must drive one hour to the State of Maine and check in at two border points to access their country. A ferry is needed to end Campobello's second-class status so its residents have a domestic route to other parts of Canada, just like every other Canadian citizen.

I researched the public accounts and discovered the federal government provides \$30 million annually to fund ferry service to remote communities within British Columbia. For the past two years, Ottawa has rightly labelled Campobello a remote community. It is past time that the federal government's ferry support program was extended to New Brunswick so travel mobility rights on Campobello are recognized and supported by the Government of Canada. It is a matter of fairness.

* * *

MISSISSAUGA WATERFRONT FESTIVAL

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank Patricia and Wayne Anderson and the team behind the Mississauga Waterfront Festival for their extraordinary contributions to the beautiful community of Port Credit in our riding of Mississauga—Lakeshore.

Oral Questions

For over 25 years, the Mississauga Waterfront Festival has been one of the city's largest and most popular outdoor festivals. Attracting thousands of people each year, it gave our community a reason to look forward to the beginning of summer and it became a destination for families, neighbours and visitors alike, offering something memorable to everyone.

Through the "sponsor a child" program, the organizers helped to support families in the community by making the festival accessible. Over the years, this amazing team had an impact well beyond the event itself. This year, as we bid goodbye to the Mississauga Waterfront Festival, we celebrate the wonderful memories they created for us.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to Pat, Wayne and everyone who helped make the Mississauga Waterfront Festival the best summer event in Port Credit.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week in Laval there were three shootings in three days.

That happened in residential neighbourhoods, and it could have ended badly for the families. Unfortunately, according to the police, we know that this involves street gangs going after each other with illegal guns. We know that in a few days, this government will impose new measures dealing with firearms.

Can the government tell us how these new measures will directly address the current crimes involving street gangs and illegal guns?

• (1120)

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are always disturbed when we hear of people who have lost their lives to gun violence. In fact, the burden of injury from gun violence is something that is of a concern. It is a public health concern to all Canadians.

Our approach to firearms is one of common-sense safety measures, and these measures that were introduced this week would keep firearms out of the hands of criminals, codify businesses' due diligence practices and support law enforcement in tracing efforts. It is another tool in our arsenal to keep communities safe.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything we just heard is false.

The new measures coming into force on May 18 directly affect honest business owners and honest Canadians who own guns. Yes, they exist. Unfortunately, this government is not even considering doing the right thing and directing its attacks at the real criminals: the street gangs and those who use illegal guns.

Again, why, on May 18, is the government hassling honest people instead of going after the real criminals?

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to building safer communities. To reduce gun crime, we must address the social conditions that lead youth to join gangs. That is why we are working closely with municipalities in Quebec and across the country, and with indigenous communities, to provide \$250 million over five years to bolster gang prevention and intervention programs.

I would remind Conservatives that when we studied Bill C-71, they put forward amendments that would have removed punishment for making a false statement to provide a licence, tampering with licences, unauthorized possession of ammunition and more.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, a 17-year-old was shot in the Liberal-held riding of Don Valley East, in the parking lot of Victoria Park Collegiate.

Instead of dealing with the real problem infesting the streets of Liberal-held ridings, which is gang and criminal illegal handgun use, these Liberals would rather engage in cheap political stunts by attacking duck and deer hunters to make it look like they are doing something. In fact, they are solving nothing.

Why will Liberal MPs not act as emboldened as the gangs and the criminals in their ridings, and go after those who are shooting up their streets with illegal handguns?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rather than playing political games around gun violence, we are taking concrete action to keep communities safe and keep the citizens of Canada safe, and we are taking a comprehensive approach to firearms. It is one that includes investing in communities, investing in housing, and investing in ensuring that guns are not crossing the border by investing in CBSA. When the Conservatives were in government, they cut CBSA. We have reinvested to keep the guns from coming into Canada.

Oral Questions

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week a shooting happened in the Liberal-held riding of St. Catharines during a jewellery store robbery. The pattern of gun crime in Liberal ridings has nothing to do with farmers, hunters, sport shooters or collectors, or with scary military assault weapons. It has to do with gangs, criminals and illegal handguns. Even with clear evidence of illegal handgun shootings in their ridings, Liberals, including the MP for St. Catharines, spread disinformation on what the real cause of gun crime is in this country.

Why are Liberals spreading disinformation when it comes to the real cause of gun crime in Canada and, worse yet, why are they doing nothing to solve the problem?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth time I have stood up here and been accused of doing nothing. I take great offence, due to the fact that this government is taking concrete steps that will actually make a difference to keeping Canadians safe, rather than playing politics on the issue of guns and just parroting the lines from the gun lobby.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a different subject, Quebec City encircles the first nation community in Wendake, which I represent here in the House of Commons.

Oddly enough, according to Canada Post, the postal code for Wendake identifies it as a rural delivery area. As a result, it can cost up to 30% more to insure and mail packages. That is totally unfair and unacceptable.

Will the minister responsible for first nations acknowledge that this makes no sense and that we need to fix this problem at once?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first want to correct my colleague's comment that I am responsible for the first nations. I serve the first nations.

In reply to the question, the member opposite is quite right. It is unfair that communities that were previously in rural areas but now are not because of urban sprawl are penalized because of prices linked to postal codes.

Let us hope that Canada Post, which is an independent agency, will rectify the situation. I have been speaking to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement about this and will continue to do so.

* * *

● (1125)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister refuses to close Roxham Road on the pretext that that is not the solution because irregular migrants “will cross elsewhere”.

Yes, they will cross elsewhere. They will cross at the border crossings. That is what they did before the safe third country agreement. If the Prime Minister suspends the agreement, something he can do unilaterally, migrants can cross at any border crossing in Canada rather than coming in through the woods. It is simple, safe and humane.

When will the federal government suspend the agreement and close Roxham Road?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our system for refugees must be robust and humane.

There is no magic solution. Asking to close Roxham Road is not a realistic solution. It will only shift the problem to another location. Suspending the agreement will have the completely opposite effect.

What we need to do is modernize the safe third country agreement, and that is what we are doing by working with the United States on a sustainable solution.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the problem.

The border is long and people can cross wherever they want to, even though they should be going through official border crossings. If we suspended the safe third country agreement, migrants would be redirected to the 117 border crossings across Canada, instead of converging to cross at Roxham Road, as 92% of them are doing.

The number of irregular crossings is expected to rise significantly on the weekend, so the minister cannot stand by. He can immediately suspend the agreement and shut down Roxham Road.

Will he finally do something?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been consistent in its commitment to the most vulnerable people in the world.

We continue to work closely with Quebec to comply with our national and international refugee obligations, while still protecting the health and safety of Canadians.

We are aware that the number of crossings has increased since COVID-19 restrictions have been relaxed, and we are working closely with the Canada Border Services Agency to keep our borders safe and secure.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, after five years of my community demanding that the federal government transfer Ojibway Shores from the Windsor Port Authority to Parks Canada, it finally acknowledged that it could do this the right way. We all know this was in anticipation of the vote on my private member's bill to establish Ojibway National Urban Park, which the City of Windsor and Caldwell First Nation support and want to take place.

Will the government finally do what the residents of Windsor, the environmental community and the indigenous community have asked, and protect endangered species and this rare ecosystem by voting for my bill? This is one thing the government can do immediately that would make a difference for climate change and for Canada.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member for posing that question, which is extremely important. Obviously, everything we can do to take action on climate change and to work with the member on this important issue, we will. Absolutely, we will move forward with looking at this national park.

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HEALTH

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every day, 20 Canadians die from toxic drug poisoning. Every day, 20 families get this devastating news. Last May, Health Canada's Expert Task Force on Substance Use published its report, which clearly stated that criminalizing people who use drugs is causing harm and needs to end. The government has ignored its own experts now for over a year, while thousands of Canadians have died.

My question is simple. How many Canadians need to die before the government will listen to its own experts and support a health-based approach to substance use?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his ongoing advocacy on this and for the conversation that has been raised with his private member's bill. This is all very important conversation in this country. We recognize that problematic substance use is a health issue, and we too want to move it from the criminal justice system to the health system. We are doing everything we can to invest in safe consumption sites, safer supply and all of the alternatives that will eventually stop this terrible tragedy in Canada.

* * *

• (1130)

HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals make big promises on housing affordability, but the changes in their budget law on GST for assignment of sale make a terrible situation even worse. The GST is already charged by the builder of a duplex or fourplex, but under

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these changes, if the purchaser of the units then sells one to a family, that family must pay the GST to the government again.

Can the tax-and-spend Prime Minister please explain to the House how taxing families more and raising the cost of housing help anyone but him?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's question gives me an opportunity to again talk about our housing measures, which his party has voted against several times.

In budget 2022, we have a lot of measures to help access a new house and build more affordable housing. I hope this time around members will support the measures this government is presenting.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are raising the cost of housing and the member has nothing to say about that. I guess the truth hurts.

Let me say that what is truly cruel, though, is when the Liberals propose a shiny, new first-time homebuyer savings account and young families with dreams of home ownership actually believe them. What they do not say is that it will take five years to max it out at \$40,000, if they have the money to save. Even then, they must qualify under the Liberal stress test.

What will the Minister of Housing do when those few but earnest millennials open up the account, save \$40,000 and then are bounced by the stress test? Will he at least send them a "we are sorry" card?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I myself have children who are millennials. I myself am having these discussions with my children about buying their first home.

The Conservatives only ever talk about buying a first property. Yes, that is important. However, they never talk about social housing. They never talk about affordability.

Ensuring that people can buy a house must not be our only focus. We also need to respect renters' rights to have a decent place to live. We need housing, not just home ownership.

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely are talking about affordability, and I will tell the member that the average home price in the GTA reached \$1.25 million last month. That means an average homebuyer needs to have an income of \$223,000 just to afford one of those houses. Families do not make that kind of money.

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Is the minister proud of creating a class of permanent renters because of the government's lack of action on the housing affordability that the member is talking about?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

That is precisely why we need to work not only on home ownership, but also on buyers' rights. Considering the issue of renovations and units that are unaffordable, we need to ensure not only that people can buy a home, but also that people can rent affordably across the country.

That is exactly what we put in our budget: concrete measures to help every Canadian have a roof over their head.

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is living in fantasyland. I will repeat this. An average house in the GTA is \$1.25 million. The minimum required down payment for that house is \$250,000. What is the average income for an average family in the GTA? It was almost \$94,000 the last time we checked.

When will the minister join us in the real world instead of fantasyland and admit that under the government's leadership, we are in a housing crisis?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my colleague for her question.

I live in Canada, not in fantasyland. What I can tell her is that we need to work not only on access to home ownership and increasing the number of housing units, but also on buyers' rights and unfair practices in the real estate market.

The national housing strategies operate on several levels. I hope the Conservative Party will vote with us for once.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Housing continues to insist that his programs are keeping up with rising home prices, but in Kelowna—Lake Country, in just the first two months of this year, the average price of a single-family home increased by \$92,500. That is more than \$10,000 a week. I was speaking to a 15-year-old from my riding who said the dream of home ownership is only a dream.

Will the minister finally admit that his failing housing policies are absolutely not working?

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. Again, it gives me the opportunity to name a few of the measures in budget 2022, namely, the bill to implement an annual tax on the value

of non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential real estate. We also announced a two-year ban on foreign investment in real estate.

We need to do something about access to home ownership. We need to make sure that every Canadian is able to buy a home, if they so desire, and more importantly, that every Canadian has a roof over their head.

[*English*]

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cities in metro Vancouver need 25,000 new houses every year just to keep up with population growth projections, but we are building only 20,000 new homes. This supply and demand imbalance is hurting a lot of Canadian families that just want a safe home and financial security.

Clearly, the government's housing policies over the last six years have not been working. Why should Canadians have any confidence in its newest set of promises?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are well aware that there is a housing crisis across the country, in every riding of every member of Parliament.

[*English*]

There is no silver bullet.

[*Translation*]

However, we have taken concrete action in this budget, and the Conservatives have voted against it every time. It is all well and good to say one thing and then say something different, but there are concrete measures in this budget, such as doubling construction across the country and helping people buy their first home and get into housing.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a shooting in Laval on Saturday left one person dead. On Tuesday, again in Laval, in broad daylight, in a residential neighbourhood, a man was shot in front of children. Wednesday, in Montreal, a man was shot and killed. He was connected to the Hells Angels, according to police authorities.

There is a gang war going on in Quebec. That is all we see on the news: shootings. Where are the images of weapons being seized? Where are the images of arrests being made and gang members appearing in court? Where is the federal government, considering that there have never been so many illegal weapons circulating in Montreal?

[English]

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it obviously is an issue, and that is why we have been taking action on it. I have had the pleasure of working with this colleague on the public safety committee to table a report on guns and gangs. It includes a comprehensive approach, which is what our government is taking.

We are investing in communities to reduce gun crime. We are working closely with municipalities, like Laval, to provide funding over five years to bolster gang prevention and intervention programming. We are also investing in CBSA to stop firearms from crossing at the border.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by all means, let us talk about what the federal government is doing at the border. By mid-April of last year, there had been 21 shootings in Montreal. By mid-April of this year, there had already been 44. That is more than twice as many.

Where are the RCMP officers? They are at the border, not to stop illegal arms trafficking, not to crack down on organized crime, but to deal with the irregular migrant situation at Roxham Road.

Does the minister think the RCMP could be put to better use fighting arms trafficking than trying to make up for his government's incompetence and neglect?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree 100% that gun violence has become a real crisis in Quebec and across Canada. I was with our Minister of Public Safety just this week for an announcement about gun control in Canada. We are taking concrete steps to move forward on this.

Mr. Speaker, I think there is a problem.

The Deputy Speaker: I think someone has their microphone on.

[English]

Let us make sure everybody has their microphone turned off. If we have learned anything over the last number of months, it is to keep our microphones and cameras off.

• (1140)

[Translation]

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I will close by simply saying that I hope that the Bloc Québécois will work with us on better gun control.

* * *

[English]

SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my office is being overrun with correspondence from constituents suffering as a result of passport delays. I recently received a note from Jason, whose son Mason is hoping to travel with his hockey team. Jason asked if he could pay the extra fee to have his passport sooner and was told that he could not, as

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his date of travel was outside of the next 25 days. He was assured he would have it on time. When it did not arrive on time, he called the number but no one answered. He could not leave a message. He called over 150 times in three days and still has not gotten an answer.

To the minister, where is Mason's passport?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after two long years, Canadians are travelling again and we are seeing unprecedented volumes across the country of Canadians who wish to have travel documents. We know that it is both difficult and stressful for them.

The minister has been travelling throughout the country visiting Service Canada passport centres and speaking to staff, who have been working through the weekends and doing overtime. We hired 500 new staff in December to prepare, in anticipation of this. All wickets are open.

We want to thank all those working so hard to serve Canadians.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly 500 is not enough. If only there was a way to have a database to track when passports expire. This is why my community is furious. The passport process delays are predictable and unnecessary. To add insult to injury, we are forced to pay an extra \$200 as a service charge and, incredibly, another \$20 on top of that, not for delivery of the passport but to pick it up at the office. This means more fees, untold sleepless nights and angry Canadians.

When is the government going to assign someone other than the minister to fix the problem?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only were an additional 500 staff hired in December, but three processing centres were opened across the country in anticipation of this demand. In addition to that, over 303 Service Canada centres will accept passport applications. In addition to that, those who submitted within the appropriate processing times but were delayed do not have to pay for transfer fees or expedited fees and will receive their documents.

We are serving Canadians.

Oral Questions

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituent Derek had an opportunity to go to the United States to attend a football camp, so he acted quickly to try to get a passport. When Service Canada called to confirm the information, he, as a high school student and part-time employee, unfortunately missed the call, and his attempts to call back over the course of several weeks were unsuccessful. After he was finally able to provide the required documents, the delays ultimately caused Derek to miss the camp. He still does not have his passport.

When will the Liberals fix this passport backlog?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, staff in Service Canada offices are working long hours over weekends and overtime to ensure that Canadians get the service they need during this unprecedented volume.

I would also like to mention that ESDC has leveraged additional staff to come in to support our passport service staff, in addition to the 500 new hires and the 564 counters open across the country at 100% service capacity.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian travellers returning to Canada are still required to use the ArriveCAN app and disclose their personal data to the government, whether they like it or not. The app asks where someone has been, where they are going and whether they have any health-related symptoms, answers that could easily be stated to an agent at customs.

We know the government has been using COVID as an excuse to track Canadian data, and the minister repeatedly claims that the app protects Canadians. My question is, how?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have gone to a question that included misinformation, and I really am concerned about that.

ArriveCAN is an essential and intuitive tool to protect Canadians. We have streamlined the reopening process.

As the hon. member knows, travel is up. It takes only a few minutes for vaccinated travellers to complete this. To conflate it with privacy issues is really troubling.

* * *

• (1145)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, a report confirmed that the RCMP is an organization built on systemic discrimination, perpetuating violence against indigenous women and girls. The calls for justice provide a path forward to address the misogyny, racism and violence outlined in the report, but the government is failing to act. Words are not enough. It has been three years since the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

When will the government finally get serious about saving indigenous lives and implement the calls for justice?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for her work on this issue. It is indeed a pleasure to work with her to ensure that all the calls for justice are implemented, in particular when it comes to the RCMP.

I want to thank the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action for the report it put out reaffirming gender-based violence within the RCMP.

We are calling for accelerated programs, with a more autonomous Independent Centre for Harassment Resolution. We are also investing in first nations policing and taking steps that will ensure indigenous women are safe in our country.

* * *

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Peguis and communities across Manitoba are being devastated by unprecedented flooding, with homes destroyed, roads washed out and livelihoods gone. More rain is in the forecast. This is climate change.

Peguis has been pushing for long-term mitigation work for over a decade. The federal government has not lived up to its commitments. There is no time to waste. These investments are about the survival of communities.

Instead of padding the pockets of corporate Canada at the Infrastructure Bank, when will the federal government get serious about climate change mitigation and adaptation infrastructure? It is time to stand up for Peguis.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for this very important question.

The flooding in Peguis First Nation is of great concern, and the health and safety of residents is a top priority for our government. We are in constant communication with Chief Hudson and local partners, and are taking immediate action to ensure that Peguis receives the supports required in this emergency situation.

In direct response to the community's requests, Indigenous Services Canada has activated the Canadian Red Cross, ensuring the evacuation of residents and the provision of mental health and emergency services. We will continue to work with the community to make sure that residents are safe.

HEALTH

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Yellowknife-based organization, FOXY, received urgently needed federal funding from the mental health promotion innovation fund to continue and expand its culturally safe and northern-focused mental health advocacy. The \$1.3-million investment will help it use the arts to focus on cultural identity and to develop social, emotional and coping skills while processing trauma.

Can the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions update the House on how this fund is supporting community-based youth mental health programs across Canada?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and also for his tireless advocacy for his territory and this issue.

The mental health promotion innovation fund supports community-led solutions to promote mental health and address the root causes of poor mental health and mental illness, especially for indigenous youth. The funding announced last week is part of the program's second phase of funding that supports 10 projects across Canada, for a total investment of \$12.2 million.

Our government will continue to support projects with a holistic approach to healing by supporting individuals, families and communities.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government likes to brag about its investments to combat gun violence, but an access-to-information disclosure reveals a different story. This Liberal government failed to spend \$325 million budgeted to combat gun and gang violence. In fact, only \$140 million of the promised funding since 2017 has been spent. Meanwhile, gun violence explodes across the country, and now the government is planning to spend another billion dollars to buy back guns from law-abiding gun owners.

Why is this government wasting money going after law-abiding gun owners and cutting funds used to fight gangs and violent criminals?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish that hon. members on the other side were interested in actually developing solutions instead of trying to portray this issue in a simple fashion. It is complicated, and that is why we are taking multiple steps to deal with gang violence, including investing in communities and investing millions of dollars to ensure that we are combatting gang violence.

Let us work together on this issue. Let us find solutions that actually keep Canadians safe.

• (1150)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, the Liberals' gun buyback program is doomed from the start. Gun crime in Canada is largely committed using illegal guns, but

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the Liberals want to use more taxpayer dollars to buy back guns from law-abiding gun owners.

Can the minister explain why they are punishing law-abiding citizens instead of criminals and driving up debt while doing so?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will remind hon. members that assault-style firearms have no place in Canada. Through the mandatory buyback program, we will remove the threat that these deadly firearms pose to our communities from coast to coast to coast.

I would also remind hon. members that over 75% of Canadians who die by firearms are dying by suicide, and that women die because of gender-based violence. Let us not forget the people who are dying by firearms, with the majority related to a mental health issue.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, accountability means taking responsibility when one fails, but the government would rather blame Canadians. The Minister of Transport blames Canadian families wanting to vacation for passport delays and long lines at airports. The Minister of Public Safety blames Canadians for his failure to tackle gang violence on law-abiding Canadians.

What is next: blaming inflation on taxpayers, who are paying more for everything? It is unbelievable. When will the government stop its persecution of law-abiding Canadians and go after the real menace: the dangerous criminals and the illegal cross-border firearms trade?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are acting on illegal trade across the border. In fact, we have invested in CBSA. I do not have the numbers in front of me, but we have confiscated firearms at the border in unprecedented numbers. Why are we doing that? It is because we reinvested in CBSA, unlike the Conservatives, who actually made cuts to the border. Under their cuts, we could not stop firearms from coming into the country in the same way we can now.

Oral Questions

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, although the legal firearms community is not surprised, it is once again disappointed by the NDP-Liberal government. Its gun registry 2.0 will not impact criminals and gangs responsible for gun violence. There are 2,300 businesses like Ellwood Epps that will be forced to hire more folks, which is yet another administrative burden, to do the government's work. Canada has a red tape law. I expect the minister to make the cuts.

Why do these businesses have to keep records for 20 years when Canadians have to keep tax returns for only seven years?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond to that question. Businesses kept records about firearms purchases for many years, for decades, prior to the Harper government coming in and cutting that requirement. We know it is not a gun registry. We know police can use this tool. I remind hon. members of the amendment the Conservative Party put into Bill C-71 that says this is not a long-gun registry. It is in the bill, which the regulations have implemented.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is firmly in favour of sanctions against Russia and stands with the Ukrainian people, but the sanctions need to punish the Russians, not Quebecers.

Our farmers are being hit with a 35% surtax on fertilizer they bought from Russia and paid for before the war. It is costing our farmers an extra 35%, but it is costing Russia nothing. This measure is not penalizing Moscow. It is penalizing our farming villages.

Will the government give our farmers an exemption for orders placed before the war?

[English]

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, together with our allies, we are ensuring Russia's actions do not go unpunished. We announced strong tranches of sanctions against nearly 1,000 individuals and entities from Russia and Belarus, including Putin, his inner circle, Russian banks and members of the Russian Security Council. We have ended all export permits to Russia and we are removing Russian banks from the SWIFT system. We will continue to call on Russia to reverse course, withdraw its forces and choose diplomacy.

• (1155)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think he grabbed the wrong sheet of talking points for his response.

We agree with the sanctions. What we are asking for is a no-brainer. The bill for the fertilizer the farmers bought predates the conflict. The federal government needs to exempt the farmers from the 35% surtax. It is as simple as that. It is not complicated.

Farmers also stand with the Ukrainian people, but they should not be penalized for orders they placed before the war, when no one could imagine the horrors that would unfold in Europe in 2022.

Can the government at least tell the farmers that they will not have to pay for this?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question and his work at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

We are of course working closely with the industry. We must first ensure that we are not providing companies with any incentives to continue doing business with Russia, in light of the illegal war on Ukraine started by President Putin.

We also want to ensure that farmers have access to fertilizer at a fair price. We will continue to work with the industry to find a good solution.

* * *

[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently I spent time in Springhill. All the businesses had concerns about the state of our economy. They need workers, both unskilled and skilled. They need regulatory changes for their products. They need relief from extreme inflation. They need answers, not talking points about the United States or the rest of the world, and they need the government's hand out of their back pocket.

How will the government create good policy, not more handouts, and let small businesses flourish?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been there for our small businesses throughout the pandemic and we continue to be there today. If the member opposite would like examples, let him read the budget. Inside the budget he will find that what we are doing is increasing access to one of the lowest small business tax rates in the G7. We have a 9% small business tax rate in this country, and now even more businesses will be able to enjoy and have access to it.

I think that all small businesses appreciate the health of our economy right now. Our economy is doing extraordinarily well at the moment. We have the highest growth in the G7, and our entrepreneurs are thankful for that.

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, government documents have revealed the Liberals paid out tens and tens of millions in bonuses to public service executives last year: 89% of executives got bonuses, despite the departmental result report showing overall departments missed over half of their targets. There is no clean drinking water on reserves: bonus. There is no fix to the Phoenix pay system: bonus. Vital PPE is thrown in the trash: bonus.

Why is the government so hell-bent on paying taxpayers' money to reward failure?

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has, of course, one of the finest public services in the world. We have professionals who have been able to help support Canadians throughout the troubling times that we have had during the pandemic. We are very proud of our public service. Of course, we want to make sure that public servants are compensated fairly and if they have a compensation system that if they do meet their targets, of course, they are being compensated appropriately. We are very lucky to have such a professional public service.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, guess what? The same government documents show that only 5% of regular public servants, non-executives, got bonuses despite being the ones who are doing all the work. The Liberals paid out millions in bonuses to the government executives who failed to meet over half their goals. The only other place we could find people getting rewarded so well for such failure is in the Liberal cabinet.

Why is the government rewarding so much failure with so many taxpayers' dollars?

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am just trying to understand my hon. colleague who knows the many issues regarding Canada's public service. Is he suggesting that we should compensate folks who do not meet their targets? I am certain that is not what he suggested.

What we are really talking about is our fabulous public service that has worked very hard and has helped Canadians through very tough times. We are certainly making sure that they are continuing to do the proper work that they do to serve Canadians and serve all of us here.

* * *

● (1200)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are celebrating National Nursing Week from May 9 to 15.

This week gives us an opportunity to recognize and show our gratitude to nurses, who make enormous sacrifices to protect us. Canadians working in the health care field constantly demonstrate dedication. They put themselves and their families at risk by working very long hours, often in difficult conditions, to help Canadians get through the worst of the pandemic.

Oral Questions

Can the Minister of Health tell us more about the crucial role that nurses play in our health care system and how the government is supporting them?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my wonderful colleague from Fredericton for the excellent work that she does.

I also want to thank all nurses. It is very important to acknowledge the work that they do during National Nursing Week and during every week of the year.

I also want to acknowledge Linda Silas, the president of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, and her entire team. I thank them for giving me the opportunity to speak with them just a few days ago.

I must also mention that on top of thanking nurses, we need to support the work that they do. That is why we are creating a new position of chief nursing officer, a position that the former Conservative government unfortunately abolished, and are increasing the amount of student loan forgiveness for nurses in rural areas by 50%.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the price of gas in my riding has crept above \$2 a litre.

Since I am in a rural riding, my constituents cannot use public transportation to get to work or activities. Unlike the Prime Minister and his ministers, ordinary Canadians do not have drivers. They have to pull out their wallets every time they go to the pumps.

This government is out of touch. When will it make changes to make gas more affordable for Canadians?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that we need to combat climate change, which is why we put a tax on pollution.

I think it is worth pointing out the majority of Canadians receive more in rebates than they pay. I also want to remind my colleague that most of the taxes on gas are provincial, not federal, and we need to respect jurisdictions.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a failure of the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority's Hydro One conduit project. Three independent engineering firms have confirmed that the failure was due to the lead engineer, CIMA, which was both the design engineer and the bridge consultant. We are told that CIMA was allowed to continue as the lead consultant on the failure review of which they were the subject.

Why were engineering reports ignored? Was there a conflict of interest? Why was no recourse sought for the taxpayer from CIMA?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will endeavour to get more information and will respond to the member in a quick manner.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research require Taiwanese funding applicants to falsely specify their nationality as "Taiwan, Province of China". Taiwan is not a province of China; Taiwan is Taiwan.

Six months ago, I wrote to the Minister of Health and six months later this mislabelling continues. Why has the minister failed to intervene to stop this blatant mislabelling of Taiwan?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to receive this question from a member who is normally less interested in health. Obviously his interest in health will be followed up on, and I look forward to working with him on this particular matter.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a stark reminder that there is no room for complacency and that we must work with our allies to advance the cause of global peace and security.

This week, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is in Germany to participate in G7 and NATO meetings. Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs inform the House about our government's work to coordinate efforts across these critical forums?

• (1205)

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga for his excellent work.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs attended the G7 meetings to discuss the Russian invasion; ongoing peace and security issues in Africa, Asia and the Middle East; and the fight against climate change. In Berlin, the minister is also meeting with our NATO allies to discuss how best to align our efforts to support Ukraine.

Canada will tirelessly continue to support efforts to bring peace and stability in Ukraine and around the world.

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Border Services Agency has reversed, without notice, a long-standing policy of servicing smaller ports across Canada. This is forcing visitors to travel longer distances and pay hundreds of dollars more in fuel to report at the limited remaining CBSA sites. This decision is having a significant negative impact on Canada's cruise businesses, which have been hit hard after two years of pandemic travel restrictions.

Will the minister reverse this decision before people pay the price?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the moments I had, I could not find the statistics, but I know that the number of border crossings being opened has increased significantly. We are working to ensure that we have border crossings open, because we recognize that there are economic impacts when these crossings are closed.

I am happy to work with the hon. member to ensure that we are aware of the exact problems he has, and I am happy to speak to him after question period.

The Deputy Speaker: That is all the time for question period this week.

The hon. government House leader.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the next sitting be 12 midnight, pursuant to the order made on May 2.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on May 2, the minister's request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and consistent with the current policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled "Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Canada on Customs Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters", done at London, March 18, 2022.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), 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.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports.

[Translation]

The first is the report of the Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly respecting its participation at the autumn meeting held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, from October 3 to 6, 2018.

[English]

The second is the report of the Canadian delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly respecting its participation at the 19th autumn meeting, by video conference, November 3-4, 2021.

The third is the report of the Canadian delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly respecting its participation at the 2021 remote session, by video conference, from June 28 to July 6, 2021.

Finally, the last report is from the Canadian delegation of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly respecting its participation at the 21st winter meeting, by video conference, February 24-25, 2022.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports of the delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. The first report concerns its participation in the 40th Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie and working meetings held in Paris from March 14 to 18, 2022. The second report concerns its participation in the Conference of Branch Chairs of the APF America Region held by video conference on April 4, 2022.

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[English]

PETITIONS

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition in support of Bill S-223. Bill S-223 seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It would make it a criminal offence for a person in Canada

Routine Proceedings

to go abroad and receive an organ that has been taken without the consent of the person who is donating the organ.

Bill S-223 has passed the Senate unanimously three times and it passed the House unanimously in 2019, but, shockingly, has not yet been made law. I look forward to the debate on this legislation.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition today that comes from a number of Canadians concerned for the health of our waterways.

They note that, with regard to fresh water within Canada, not dealing with the large issues of our oceans but looking at our internal waterways, our watersheds are significantly degraded by actions by industry. We need to pursue, as the petitioners claim, the Canada water agency; we need laws that protect water and laws that protect our watersheds, including ones that will support and enrich Canada's fisheries and our whole ecosystems that depend on healthy and sustainable water systems; and we need to bring our laws and our practices up to date to protect Canada's water.

We think we are a water-rich nation. We are not.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition on behalf of 517 Canadians who are raising concerns about the impact of foreign donations on orphanages in low-income countries. Despite the best intentions of Canadians who donate or volunteer abroad at these orphanages, they may be undermining other nations' child protection systems, which leads to child rights violations.

As Canada has ratified the UNGA's Convention on the Rights of the Child, the petitioners, including some of my constituents, are asking that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development study the issue and make recommendations to the House on how to address this issue.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present this petition in support of Bill S-223 and my good friend and colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Bill S-223 seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person giving the organ.

Bill S-223 has passed the Senate unanimously three times and it passed the House unanimously in 2019 in exactly the same form as the current bill. We will be debating Bill S-223 this afternoon, and I hope this Parliament will be the one to finally bring this bill into law.

I would like to thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his advocacy.

Routine Proceedings

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present two petitions signed by constituents in Kitchener—Conestoga.

The first petition requests that the Government of Canada address the climate emergency by enacting just transition legislation that would reduce emissions by 60% below 2005 levels by 2030, end fossil fuel subsidies and create good, green jobs and more.

• (1215)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition requests that the Canadian government work to require companies to prevent adverse human rights impacts and environmental damages throughout their global operations.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to present this petition on behalf of 1,110 Canadians calling for urgent action to protect interior Fraser River steelhead trout under the Species at Risk Act. The petitioners recognize that, with fewer and fewer steelhead in the Thompson and Chilcotin rivers this year, inaction will likely drive this vital species to extinction.

Petitioners are urging the government to listen to independent science, which has recommended that interior Fraser steelhead be listed under the Species at Risk Act and that DFO invest in real monitoring efforts to support this species. They are calling on the government to act now so that we can save and rebuild this incredible fish species.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am submitting a petition signed by Canadians from across the country who are concerned with the lack of palliative care services in Canada. They are calling on the government to create a national strategy on palliative care and to work with provinces to create national standards for palliative care training.

UKRAINE

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition, signed by Canadians who are deeply concerned that President Putin has launched an unprovoked and illegal war against the people of Ukraine. The petitioners are calling on the government to immediately implement a government-assisted refugee program for Ukrainians coming to Canada.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present a petition signed by Canadians in support of Bill S-223, introduced by Senator Ataullahjan and championed by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

This bill would make it a Criminal Code offence to go abroad and receive an organ without the consent of the person giving the organ. The bill has passed the Senate three times and it passed the House once in 2019, in all cases unanimously. Debate is beginning

this afternoon. It is imperative that we get this important piece of legislation passed as soon as possible.

UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present a petition initiated by a constituent and supported by over 1,500 petitioners across the country. They recognize that every person has the right to a safe and healthy lifestyle. They recognize that a guaranteed livable income would remove stress on our health care system, among many other advantages. They call on the Government of Canada to develop a national framework for the implementation of a guaranteed livable basic income across the country.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and present a petition signed by Canadians from across the country in support of Bill S-223. I would like to flag the ongoing advocacy on this issue by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

As previous petitioners have noted, Bill S-223 seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking, and would make it a criminal offence for a person to travel abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person giving the organ.

It is very important to note that this bill has passed the Senate unanimously three times and passed the House unanimously in 2019 in the same form as the current bill. With debate beginning today, it is imperative that all members support this bill so we can end this reprehensible and dangerous practice.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today in support of Bill S-223. The people who have signed this are encouraging the government to support the bill, which is being debated this afternoon.

It has passed the Senate three times. It has passed in the House in 2019 in the same form. It seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It would make it a criminal offence to go abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person giving it.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to present, on behalf of many Canadians, a petition in support of Bill S-223, which we will be talking about later today. This bill seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ without the consent of the person giving that organ.

Bill S-223 has passed the Senate unanimously three times and passed the House unanimously in 2019 in exactly the same form as this current bill. We will be debating it this afternoon, and the petitioners hope this Parliament will finally be the one that brings the bill into law.

Routine Proceedings

• (1220)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I usually rise in this place to correct the member for Kingston and the Islands for some of his words, but today I truly support them.

I am here to submit a petition on behalf of Canadians in support of Bill S-223. This is an important subject. Most Canadians would be shocked and horrified to find out that there is not a law prohibiting a Canadian citizen from leaving Canada to receive an organ transplant without the consent of the person that the organ is from.

This is an atrocious practice, and action needs to be taken. Canada is a moral country. I want to thank the member of Parliament for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his advocacy and Senator Ataullahjan for her leadership on this very important issue. I beg the government to consider the petitioners' request.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and present this petition in support of Bill S-223. Bill S-223 seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person giving the organ.

Bill S-223 has passed the Senate unanimously three times. It passed the House unanimously in 2019 in exactly the same form as the current bill. I see today that there are many recognizing the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. I would also recognize that my Liberal colleague across the aisle from Kingston and the Islands is in support of Bill S-223. As this bill comes before the House today, let us make sure it passes this time, since we are all in agreement.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would love to express my position on this particular petition, but it is not appropriate, when presenting a petition, to express one's position on it. Therefore, I was just referring to the petitioners' request.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Canadians, I would like to bring this petition forward on Bill S-223. I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his efforts and advocacy on this.

We live by higher morals here in Canada, and this would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ without the consent of the person giving that organ. We know that this has passed in the Senate three times in the exact form it is in now. We will be debating it this afternoon and, on behalf of all Canadians who have signed this, I hope we will put this into law.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to present a petition on behalf of the Canadians who have signed it. It is a petition in support of Bill S-223. First and foremost, I want to congratulate and thank my hon. colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for bringing this forward and for his advocacy.

Bill S-223 seeks to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking, and it would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ taken without the consent of the person giving the organ. This is important legislation. I hope to see it pass very shortly, and I will be in support of it this afternoon.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to present a petition on behalf of Canadians in support of Bill S-223, which is to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking. I thank my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his good work on this. He has been a dogged supporter of this bill, which is needed because it would make it a criminal offence for a Canadian going abroad to receive an organ taken without the consent of the person giving the organ.

Bill S-223 has passed the Senate unanimously three times and in this House once unanimously. It is similar to my Bill C-208 being passed in the House, which was put forward by former NDP House leader Guy Caron. When I put that bill forward, there was unanimous support by the opposition at that time, and Bill S-223 also has unanimous support. As it will be debated this afternoon with the support of other parties, I am sure that Bill S-223 will finally come into law.

• (1225)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very moving that, on what happens to be Falun Dafa Day, a day when we remember the Falun Dafa community as being a particular victim of organ harvesting and trafficking in China, I can present this petition in support of Bill S-223, a bill to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

I want to thank all of the members who have spoken to this important issue. I particularly want to recognize the member for Kingston and the Islands for his hard work on the file. Some members have suggested that I am behind this, but I think he deserves a lion's share of the credit.

I commend this important petition to the House, and the bill will be debated later today.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 439, 441 and 442.

[Text]

Question No. 439—**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' (DFO) announcement on June 29, 2021, to close 79 salmon fisheries: (a) how many fisheries closed (i) permanently, (ii) temporarily; (b) of the fisheries that remained open, what was the (i) reason to keep them open, (ii) total salmon catch; and (c) how many license holders took advantage of the DFO's compensation program for leaving the industry?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2021, as part of immediate conservation measures under the Pacific salmon strategy initiative, the minister announced commercial fishery closures to protect stocks of conservation concern. For 59 fisheries, the pre-season forecast or outlook indicated that salmon returns were not likely to be strong enough to provide a commercial fishery opportunity in 2021, based on decision rules set out in the integrated fisheries management plans, or IFMPs.

In addition, Fisheries and Oceans Canada took a more precautionary approach and announced a number of additional commercial fisheries that would remain closed where stocks of concern could not easily be avoided. These closures were based on conservation criteria used to identify fishery interactions with stocks of concern and the ability to mitigate these interactions. Under these criteria, it was determined that 12 additional fisheries would be closed and two first nations sale fisheries would be converted to more selective gear types to protect stocks of concern that may be intercepted in the target fishery or as by-catch. These closures were implemented on an interim basis in 2021 with a commitment to review longer-term closures for 2022 and beyond after additional consultation with affected groups.

Fisheries that were not affected by these closures could be opened based on the decision rules set out in the IFMPs. Salmon catch remains preliminary and will be reported through the Pacific Salmon Commission website in December 2022.

The Pacific salmon commercial licence retirement program (the program) will provide harvesters with the option to retire their licences for fair market value, and will facilitate the transition to a smaller commercial harvesting sector. The program is anticipated to be launched in late spring 2022. All individual commercial salmon licence-holders will have an opportunity to participate in this initiative.

Question No. 441—Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:

With regard to the international seabed and high seas: (a) does the government believe that protecting the high seas and seabed is crucial for mitigating climate change, addressing the biodiversity crisis and building ecosystem resilience; (b) does Canada have a written position on the protection of the high seas and international seabed, and does it include support for a precautionary approach to the pause, ban, or moratorium on deep seabed mining; and (c) what is the government's position on the mining of hydrothermal vents, polymetallic nodules, or seamount crusts in Canada's territorial waters?

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers.

In response to part (a) of the question, Canada is a steward of the unique ecosystems and wealth of biodiversity that exists in the ocean and understands that, despite often harsh conditions, offshore and deep-sea marine environments host a diversity of habitats that support many organisms. The oceans are the largest ecosystems on the planet and fulfill a role in mitigating climate change through heat absorption and carbon sequestration. For this reason, Canada's approach to the protection of the high seas and international seabed is to provide leadership and support to the development of a legal and regulatory framework that provide effective protection of marine environments by applying the precautionary approach, the

ecosystem approach, and the use of best available science and Indigenous and local community knowledge. Canada is engaged in this regard at the International Seabed Authority and with the ongoing negotiation for a new implementing agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). Further, Canada is engaging in the UN Ocean Decade (2021-2030) that will advance transformative ocean science to support sustainable ocean policy, including specific initiatives to better understand the ocean-climate nexus as well as marine biodiversity and ecosystems.

Canada has a long tradition of providing leadership on international ocean governance and negotiating strong environmental agreements. Canada is committed to the development of a robust, effective and practical treaty that will enhance the coordination and coherence of international efforts to conserve biodiversity in the high seas. As such, on February 11, 2022, the Prime Minister of Canada endorsed the High Ambition Coalition on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction launched at the One Ocean Summit in Brest, France. This commitment provides further impetus and opportunity for greater Canadian leadership in advancing the conclusion of an ambitious high seas treaty.

As regards part (b) of the question, Canada is a member of the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, or the Ocean Panel, and has endorsed the recommendations of the Ocean Panel's "Transformations for a Sustainable Ocean Economy" document, which advocates for regulations that provide effective protection of marine environments by applying the precautionary approach, the ecosystem approach, and the use of best available science and Indigenous and local community knowledge. This includes working towards the Ocean Panel's 2030 outcome of sufficient knowledge and regulations being in place to ensure that any activity related to seabed mining is both informed by science and ecologically sustainable.

Concerning part (c) of the question, Canada does not have legislation in place that would permit the mining of hydrothermal vents, polymetallic nodules or seamount crusts in areas under its jurisdiction. Pursuant to UNCLOS, to which Canada is a party, any eventual national legislation established for seabed activities in areas under national jurisdiction must be "no less effective" than international rules, standards and recommended practices and procedures.

Routine Proceedings

The Endeavour Hydrothermal Vents, or EHV, were designated as the first marine protected area under Canada's Oceans Act in 2003. The designation of the EHV as an MPA provides for the long-term protection of this biologically diverse and productive ecosystem. It also allows us to conduct further scientific research that will contribute to the understanding of the hydrothermal vents ecosystem and the numerous unique species of animal that rely on it.

Question No. 442—**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:**

With regard to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science, which began in 2021: (a) how is the government supporting research to better understand deep sea ecosystems; and (b) what programs has the government created or supported that aim to explore, map and understand the biodiversity of species associated with any seamounts, polymetallic nodules, and hydrothermal vents in Canadian waters?

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a proud supporter of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, or the Ocean Decade. The Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard is a member of the Ocean Decade Alliance, a global network of leaders to inspire and stimulate action. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, DFO, has established a dedicated Ocean Decade office to convene the Canadian ocean community and to stimulate a strong Canadian contribution to the Ocean Decade that is aligned with national priorities.

DFO is supporting research to better understand deep sea ecosystems through different activities. For example, DFO is conducting research and providing peer-reviewed science advice and expert input to support the establishment of new marine conservation areas. DFO scientists are collecting baseline data, managing data and information, identifying ecologically and biologically significant areas, and conducting biophysical overviews, including in deep sea ecosystems.

In addition, DFO is working with partners to better understand deep sea ecosystems and their biodiversity. For example, since 2017, DFO, the Council of the Haida Nation, the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council and Ocean Networks Canada have conducted several expeditions to the Northeast Pacific seamounts and have discovered 43 new Canadian seamounts.

Through the Canadian Hydrographic Service, DFO is mapping the seafloor and its features, including deep sea ecosystems. The department has developed a tool to identify seamounts in data collected. DFO's Marine Spatial Planning initiative publishes geospatial data on Open Maps (e.g., a map of the seamounts of the Northeast Pacific Ocean is available at <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/32215c2d-833e-40e0-b7f6-2e145312d674>).

This work to better understand deep sea ecosystems contributes to Canada's work under the Ocean Decade.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 440 and 443 to 446 could be made orders for return, those returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 440—**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:**

With regard to the Oceans Protection Plan (OPP) announced by the government in 2016: (a) how much money has been allocated to the departments of (i) Transport, (ii) Fisheries and Oceans, (iii) Environment and Climate Change, under the OPP, since 2016, broken down by year; (b) how much money has been spent under the OPP by the departments of (i) Transport, (ii) Fisheries and Oceans, (iii) Environment and Climate Change, since 2016, broken down by year and program; (c) how much money from the OPP has been allocated to the Whales Initiative, since 2016, broken down by year; (d) how much money has been spent under the OPP on the Whales Initiative since 2016; (e) how much money has been spent under the OPP on efforts to mitigate the potential impacts of oil spills, since 2016, broken down by year and by program; and (f) what policies does the government have in place to ensure that the funding allocated under the OPP is spent on its stated goals in a timely manner?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 443—**Mrs. Tracy Gray:**

With regard to government expenditures with Amazon since January 1, 2020, broken down by department or agency: (a) what was the total value of expenditures, broken down by year; and (b) what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) description of goods or services?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 444—**Mr. Adam Chambers:**

With regard to expenditures on public relations or media training, or similar type of services for ministers or their offices, including the Office of the Prime Minister, since January 1, 2019: what are the details of each such expenditure, including the (i) date of the contract, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) individual providing the training, (v) summary of services provided, including the type of training, (vi) person who received the training, (vii) date of the training?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 445—**Mr. Warren Steinley:**

With regard to government procurement and contracts for the provision of research or speechwriting services to ministers since January 1, 2018: (a) what are the details of all such contracts, including the (i) start and end dates, (ii) contracting parties, (iii) file number, (iv) nature or description of the work, (v) value of the contract; and (b) in the case of a contract for speechwriting, what is the (i) date, (ii) location, (iii) audience or event, at which the speech was, or was intended to be, delivered, (iv) number of speeches to be written, (v) cost charged per speech?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 446—**Mrs. Tracy Gray:**

With regard to expenditures made by the government since October 1, 2020, under government-wide object code 3259 (Miscellaneous expenditures not elsewhere classified), or a similar code if the department uses another system: what are the details of each expenditure, including the (i) vendor name, (ii) amount, (iii) date, (iv) description of the goods or services provided, including the volume, (v) file number?

(Return tabled)

*Points of Order**[English]*

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Joliette on a point of order.

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POINTS OF ORDER

DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF BILL C-19

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on April 28, the government introduced Bill C-19, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures, at first reading. Although the bill passed at second reading under time allocation on May 10, the printed version of the bill presented in the House and received in the lobby differs from the one on the House of Commons' *LEGISinfo* site.

Members may therefore have received two different versions of Bill C-19. The paper version contains 477 clauses on 421 pages and actually ends abruptly under the heading “Commission” at paragraph 68.2(b).

The virtual document contains 502 clauses on 440 pages and includes three schedules. That means pages 422 to 440, which include clauses 477 to 502, are missing. Either the wrong version was provided to opposition members when the bill was introduced in the House, or the wrong version is being provided to members and the public on *LEGISinfo*. I believe the correct version is on *LEGISinfo*, but I would like confirmation from the government on that.

The paper version clearly states that it is an advance copy that must be formatted and reprinted by Parliament, but still, it is missing roughly 20 clauses and 20 pages. We are talking about an omnibus bill of over 400 pages. We are accustomed to using the copies provided by the government, clearly for environmental reasons, but also because we have, and we want to maintain, confidence in the consistency of the documents tabled and printed in the House.

The opposition parties must simply trust the government on a number of occasions, including when bills are introduced, when budgets are tabled and when the business of supply is being considered. It is therefore important for us to check the content of the bill and ensure that there are no hidden surprises between the hard copy provided to the opposition and the one found on the House website.

When a government bill is tabled, it is customary for the government to publish the contents of the bill immediately after tabling it. However, if the paper version the opposition receives is incomplete, how can we comment on the bill? Could the government manipulate the information provided to the media? Which version of the bill should we now use for the committee study?

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Second Edition, states at page 728: “In the past, the Speaker has directed that the or-

der for second reading of certain bills be discharged, when it was discovered that they were not in their final form and were therefore not ready to be introduced.”

Are we at that point? I do not think so, but there has been a real mix-up involving the hard copies provided to the opposition and the printing of the bill.

On April 22, when the bill was tabled for first reading, the Deputy Speaker clearly stated, as is customary in the House, “Motion deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed”. I ask that the Speaker provide clear rules for ensuring that the printed copy provided to the opposition is complete when the bill is introduced in the House, given that this has a direct impact on our ability to answer questions from reporters.

• (1230)

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I want to thank the hon. member for bringing to your attention exactly what happened.

We, as Conservatives, experienced the same situation. The information that was received by us in the lobby was not complete, so it would obviously call into question whether we received the accurate information.

As the hon. member said, it is a 440-page omnibus bill, despite the fact that the government said it would never introduce an omnibus bill. We have and share the exact same concerns, not the least of which is its contents, whether in fact we have received the proper contents and whether we are able to disseminate those contents in our work at committee and in the House as well.

I will speak to the broader issue, which is that this is a pattern on the government side of not having the ability, for some reason, to manage providing this type of information in an appropriate way to the opposition.

I would add as well that, in spite of the information we received, which we deem as incomplete, and as the hon. member argued, we were only allowed five hours of debate in this place on Bill C-19, which amounted to a total of 11 speakers. Obviously, the privileges of the members in the House are paramount and we should be receiving exactly identical information, particularly on an important piece of legislation such as the budget implementation act, which is 440 pages. Several of those pages were missing from what the opposition parties received, and it was therefore incomplete.

I ask that you look at this judiciously, and come back with what I would expect to be a favourable ruling on the hon. member's point of order.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to add a few words in support of the point of order raised by the member for Joliette. I think he is right.

If it is true that there are differences between the copies of Bill C-19, then there is a major problem in terms of respect for this institution. On behalf of the Green Party, I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will make a wise and fair ruling.

• (1235)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: Following the point of order raised by the member for Joliette, I would like to provide clarification concerning Bill C-19, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7, 2022 and other measures.

The member noted that the paper copy of the bill obtained in the lobby differed from the version found on the parliamentary web site. It would seem that there are some pages missing. Consequently, he asked which version is the correct one. He asked the Chair for clarification concerning the rules.

The Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel was consulted, and I would like to assure members that the first reading copy that was signed by the minister and the Clerk contains all the clauses of the bill.

The problem seems to be with the reproduction of the advance copies available in the lobbies. The Speaker notes that these copies are provided by the government so that members can read the key provisions of the bill. After first reading, the bill is published officially, which might change the pagination and line numbers of the version used for the purposes of the House of Commons.

The copy placed in the lobby is therefore not the official version published under the authority of the Speaker. The version available on the LEGISinfo website is verified by the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel before it is put online.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thank you for your ruling and your clarifications.

However, I lament the fact that the courtesy copies we are given so that we can start studying bills cannot be relied on until they have been authorized and checked by the Speaker.

This seriously undermines members' trust in the government. According to the Speaker's ruling, we should not rely on the documents given to us by the government. I will take note of that and I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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[Translation]

ONLINE NEWS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, allow me to acknowledge the addition of a new member to my team, Jean-François Vachon, a journalist by training. He is very well known in Abitibi—Témiscamingue, especially for his work at the newspaper Le Citoyen and with the Rouyn-Noranda Huskies.

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He certainly adds value to my team. This will somewhat influence my speech, which will be interesting as it is about content in regional media. I would also like to acknowledge my friend Antoni Gilbert, who helped with the work done by my team.

Today we begin debate at second reading on Bill C-18, which requires digital platforms to negotiate agreements with news businesses. I would like to join my colleagues in saying it is about time.

However, I am in suspense because there is still much work to be done on protecting privacy on major digital platforms. This bill may be the third bill on that subject. Groups advocating for the protection of marginalized people and victims of fraud are very active, and their expectations are high.

I wonder how many people know how to get a photo taken down, for example. Great Britain is working very hard on that.

We are also starting to see impacts on competitiveness that are affecting SMEs, such as forced transfers of intellectual property in exchange for access to major digital platforms. I agree with the experts who told the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology that the Competition Act is out of sync with what is being done elsewhere in the world. Some think that this bill will deal with the web giants' major platforms once and for all, but more legislation will be needed.

With regard to Bill C-18, I am pleased to finally see a bill compensating news businesses when their content is lifted, in other words stolen.

Unfortunately, this new bill, which was largely inspired by the Australian model, faces a rocky path. Still, I must say that it is high time we put an end to the cannibalization and dismantling of our traditional media, particularly in the regions.

In regions that are far from major centres, such as Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, the Lower St. Lawrence and the north shore, maintaining regional and local news services is quite challenging. These territories are huge and often sparsely populated.

• (1240)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Barrett): I would ask the member to stop for a moment. We have a point of order from the member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, it is good to see you in the chair, but we have lost quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Barrett): I will consult with the Table.

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And the count having been taken:

Quorum has been maintained, and we will go back to the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see more members in the House and I will continue my speech.

In such vast territories, it is hard to cover local news properly. Imagine how much time it takes journalists to travel around, especially when they are alone.

The reality is that local media are not covering all of the news anymore. The media can no longer rely on ad sales, which are plummeting. The share of ad revenue that traditionally went to news organizations is dwindling year after year, and the big print and broadcast ad contracts are no longer going to news organizations, but rather to companies like Google and Facebook. News organizations are losing out on revenue streams, and many have been forced to close.

What is most alarming is that the lack of local news and feedback will hurt society as a whole. Knowing what is going on in the community is a fundamental part of democracy.

I can provide the figures for how advertising money is allocated these days. I will also give some arguments in support of taking a strong stance against giants like GAFAM.

The government has failed to impose regulations for far too long. If it thought that web giants like GAFAM would regulate themselves and be sensitive to our small communities, it was wrong. No matter what the web giants may say or do, their actions are motivated by greed, a bit like the oil companies, who care only about making a profit for their shareholders.

It takes courage to act. We saw what happened in Australia and the consequences of that. These companies have known our perspective on this for a long time, and they are well aware of the path they need to take. They no longer have a choice. There has been a lot of pressure for a long time. If we pass this bill quickly, they will no longer really have a choice. Either they get on board, or the government will get involved.

Why should ordinary people care about the passage of this bill? They should care because it affects them. We first need to realize that journalists make an invaluable contribution. Day after day, they do a tremendous job even though they do not always have proper funding. Their future is uncertain and, for them, every day counts.

Local media is increasingly important to our regional and rural communities. Local media and newspapers are the heart of the regional media ecosystem. Reporting on the stories of local people, or issues that affect them, requires journalists who are present in those communities, who live the community's experiences.

From sports and arts stories to investigative reports and the fight against corruption, local media issues are a particularly important part of the lives of people in these communities. Simply put, if web giants like GAFAM share news on their platforms, it is because they are getting something out of it. They are profiting handsomely,

and unfairly, off all the people who write the news. They are shamelessly exploiting the news.

We need to take matters into our own hands, because playtime is over. Web giants do not have the same journalistic rigour. To maintain a healthy environment with a variety of opinions and the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood, we must allow professional journalists to continue to do their work, and give media companies a chance to regularly show us the product of that diligent work. That needs to happen everywhere, not just in major cities.

Facebook and Google are not going to send a reporter to cover a Russell Cup win by the Ville-Marie Pirates or the Témiscaming Titans. They leave that to CKVM, TV Témis, RNC Média and TVA Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

Facebook and Google are not going to send a reporter to ask Rouyn-Noranda municipal authorities about construction delays for the aquatic facility. They leave that to the Rouyn-Noranda paper, *Le Citoyen*.

Facebook and Google are not going to cover all the Amos festivals. They leave that to MédiAT, CHUN FM, TV Témis and Abitibi-Ouest community television with Gaby Lacasse.

In Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Radio-Canada is the one that gets the local MP on air for an interview to keep him accountable and let people know what he is doing.

The media crisis hit print media in Abitibi-Témiscamingue hard. As recently as 2017, our paper, *Le Citoyen*, still had 15 or so reporters covering our territory. Now the local weekly has just five of them left, and the content has been affected too.

• (1245)

The 60-page papers that used to be on every doorstep have thinned to 20. The Témiscamingue paper, *Le Reflet*, stopped printing paper editions because of the drop in ad revenue. Even the *Énergie* radio station cut two positions; its newsroom now has just two reporters covering Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Take the RCM of Abitibi-Ouest, for example. A few years ago, there were two reporters permanently based there. Now there is just one. That might not seem like a big deal, but it means that a lot of what goes on in the 3,415 square kilometres and 21 municipalities that make up the RCM just does not get covered for want of time and staff.

Losing one reporter position might not seem like a big deal, but it is a monumental loss for small communities in Quebec. One less member of the media means articles and investigative reports do not get written. Events do not get covered. Voices are not heard. This affects the vitality of our communities.

That is why Bill C-18 is important. It is time for GAFAM to share revenues with local media. This money is important to boosting our regional media. It could help local media keep and perhaps even hire journalists, who can then ask us questions and report on the work we do here in the House of Commons. This is called accountability for all politicians.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage has provided an opt-in mechanism for GAFAM. Either they take a forward-looking approach and immediately begin reaching agreements with the various news companies, or the government will say that it will take care of them. It is up to GAFAM to decide.

I also welcome the fact that, with Bill C-18, the government wants to leave room for independence and transparency in the agreements. Once this is done, GAFAM will have to file the various agreements with the CRTC. The CRTC will be responsible for confirming that the following conditions are met: the agreements include fair compensation; part of that compensation is used to produce local, regional and national news content; the agreements guarantee freedom of expression; they contribute to the vitality of the Canadian news marketplace; they support independent local news; and they reflect Canadian diversity and hopefully Quebec's cultural and linguistic diversity.

If we look at the eligibility criteria for news businesses, only those designated as qualified Canadian journalism organizations under subsection 248(1) of the Income Tax Act will be able to receive compensation when their news content is lifted. Non-Canadian businesses that meet criteria similar to qualified Canadian journalism organizations will also be eligible.

The requirement to employ two journalists is another obstacle for some of the more remote communities in Quebec. Think about it. Some hyper-local media outlets rely on just one person to produce all the news. These media outlets would not be eligible for this program as it currently stands. This is an obstacle to the development of our local media outlets, which are capable of being nimble and proactive.

Since I have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-18, I would also like to draw my colleagues' attention to the fact that regional and community media will not see a difference or any clear improvement in their economic condition. I would like to know if the government is planning for additional measures. I would like to have answers to these questions.

News Media Canada, the voice of Canada's news media industry, has already stated that it would like us to review the eligibility criteria so that daily papers employing only one journalist are entitled to receive their share of the pie as well. This is a more accurate reflection of the reality of the media in remote areas such as Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Let us also look at other provisions of Bill C-18.

I see that the Minister of Canadian Heritage has included provisions to exempt the parties involved in these negotiations from certain conditions of the Competition Act and to require the parties to negotiate in good faith. The bill prohibits a platform from using such means as reducing or prioritizing access to a platform in retaliation or as a negotiating tactic. It allows news businesses to file

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complaints against the GAFAM with the CRTC if they notice platforms behaving in such a way. There are penalties and fines for the various entities subject to Bill C-18.

The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this bill.

We had been waiting for Bill C-18, and the bill to amend the Broadcasting Act, Bill C-11, for several years. When I read Bill C-18, we still did not know how it would be received by media industry groups. We are continuing our discussions, and we will certainly have ideas about how to improve Bill C-18.

● (1250)

There are many similarities between the Australian law and the Canadian bill. As in Australia, we expect that web giants like GAFAM will step up their efforts to influence, not to say pressure, parliamentarians and the media. I note that the government has been sensitive to the smaller players by allowing them to band together however they choose in order to negotiate, a provision that has been well received.

In Canada, the CRTC will manage the program. The money will go toward journalism, not the shareholders of a news company. I like that. The Australian law maintains confidential agreements and so does Bill C-18, but the government is giving the CRTC the role of reviewing them and checking whether they meet certain conditions that I mentioned earlier in my speech.

I want to explore some of the arguments I found by doing a little research. Let me begin with the good news. Media companies, at least some of them, are doing well thanks to some business decisions they have made. Some have even been able to hire new journalists and create additional positions. Others have gone ahead and brought in a subscription model, which does bring in some revenue. This is definitely not a cure-all, and it would still take a lot to convince me that media companies are able to keep their heads well above water.

According to a number of reports, roughly 18 Canadian journalism organizations have agreements with Meta that will provide nearly \$8 million in revenue over the next three years. However, there is a caveat. Facebook says that it has contributed to Canadian media through its News Innovation Test, and that is true, but all the investments went to major Canadian media organizations. Those funds never made it to the local media in my riding or in many other Quebec ridings. That is another reason this bill is important. Without it, local media will definitely be overlooked by GAFAM. This poses a real danger to our democracy.

I want to come back to the fact that questions are also being raised about the negotiation of agreements between media outlets and web giants like GAFAM. It may be easy for large consortiums to get negotiating power, but it is a whole different story for local media outlets that serve small communities.

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That is a concern for François Munger, the founder of MédiAT, who is worried that our local news creators will end up with next to nothing. I would like to remind members that the work of journalists in small communities is essential. I will do so by talking a bit about what makes local news unique and by quoting Mr. Munger, who had the courage to start his media company in 2015 in the midst of a media crisis. He said that he was starting a media company in Abitibi-Témiscamingue because he believed in it and wanted to keep his community informed.

The local news expresses local colour and culture in the community's language. It addresses issues that get residents thinking and even taking the often necessary action to deal with issues that will affect their quality of life. The local news also reports on accomplishments that deserve to be recognized. Overall, the local news serves as a watchdog for the government and businesses. It also serves as the people's watchdog in their dealings with those entities. The local news provides information about municipal borrowing by-laws and violations and often reports on legal proceedings. We can see how important it is. The local news is who we are.

The government will have to provide immediate financial aid for small media outlets that are struggling to survive right now. The measures in Bill C-18 will take another few months, and the media will not see one cent for at least a year. One possible solution would be for Ottawa to ensure that its ads are placed in these local media outlets that are struggling to bring in significant revenue.

It makes sense that Facebook needs content for its platform. If all the news content were cut from Facebook, there would be nothing left but viral content and entertainment. Evidently, I am not the biggest fan of influencers. To grow their user base and ad revenues, platforms such as Facebook need news. They have every interest in keeping the journalistic community alive and well.

Facebook needs to offer more engaging content, because the more eyeballs it can attract, the more advertising it can sell and the more revenue it will earn. Almost all of Facebook's revenue comes from advertising. Facebook and Google take in 80% of all online ad spending. That is where the real money is. About \$193 million of their Canadian revenue is derived from content that was created by journalists and that does not belong to these companies. That is the kind of money that our news agencies could expect to get back in compensation.

• (1255)

In conclusion, Bill C-18 is one of three bills from this department on the topic of modernizing our communications, and it is designed to address the dominance of multinationals. It would allow the media industry to get back to its roots and would support the industries that play a fundamental role in our democracy.

Our work is far from over, however, since the government has chosen to take small steps and will continue to do so. My Bloc Québécois colleagues have been keeping a close eye on this, and we are pleased to see that this bill includes the many proposals we made or included in our election platform. I must also say that I made promises to my constituents about these proposals, especially with respect to local and regional news media like TvcTK.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for d'Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his speech.

If I understood his comments correctly, the Bloc Québécois will be voting in favour of this bill, even though it does have some concerns.

I believe that the Conservative Party has the same concerns about small businesses such as small community newspapers, which do not have the same resources as large businesses that have already signed agreements with Facebook and Google.

I would like my colleague to tell us more about these small businesses, these small community newspapers, which work very hard for our communities and for democracy.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

Frankly, local and regional media are the key to democracy's survival. We know that, in this era of misinformation, it is essential to be able to count on them. In my work as a member of Parliament, I have the daily responsibility to respond as quickly as possible to these people, whom I wish to acknowledge here today.

We still have regional media in my riding, which means I have the opportunity and the privilege to do that. I invest time on this, because I know the sector is fragile. Just today, I gave a 20-minute interview to CHUN-FM, which is something I do every week. Every month, I participate in a program called *Un café avec votre député*, or “Coffee with Your MP”, on MédiAT, a media outlet in the RCM of Abitibi.

Every month, I spend time with the people from TV témis. Yesterday, I gave a 40-minute interview live from Quebec City about the work we are doing. We share information through the work of the media. Every two or three months, I have the opportunity to talk about my work for half an hour with Gaby Lacasse, who is a host at a community media outlet in Abitibi-Ouest. If we want to delve deeper into community issues, regional media is the way to go. It is essential.

I would even add that we need a space to be critical of the news. We need a forum on public affairs in the regions. Stakeholders need to be able to have their say, which is something we are lacking in Abitibi-Témiscamingue. Sure, there is *Club politique* on Radio-Canada, but we need forums for debate and discussion. In this regard, the government has a responsibility to increase its funding for local and regional media. Radio-Canada is important, but there are other stakeholders, and the regions absolutely need diverse news coverage.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we look at Bill C-18, we see it is very similar to Bill C-11. We know that these are very important pieces of legislation that need to be implemented into law as expeditiously as possible in order to protect, with respect to Bill C-11, Canadian culture and, with respect to Bill C-18, smaller organizations and news outlets.

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I am curious if the member can comment on the importance of that and making sure it gets done, and perhaps on the amendment that the Conservatives brought forward. They brought forward an amendment that would basically strip out this entire bill and send the issue to committee. Is that not what we are doing right now? Are we not debating this at second reading to send it to committee anyway?

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, transparency is important to me.

I am not sure about the strategy the government chose to go with. As I mentioned earlier, the government is choosing to take small steps. Why was there no thoughtful deliberation? Why did it not take the time to reflect on the future of the media industry in the next 10, 15 or 20 years? Social media platforms have been around for 10, 15 or 20 years and the government never stepped in or did anything meaningful. It just stood back while our regional news rooms were losing revenue to American or international companies. That is the problem.

I think there is rather broad consensus to act quickly on Bill C-18, unlike what happened last year, when the government did not take action and we lost two years because of an election and a lack of vision from the government, which was slow to respond to these issues.

I applaud the bill that we have now, and I want to say we must act quickly.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's speech, and I have to say I completely agree with him.

My colleague emphasized how important local media is to democracy. I would like to hear his thoughts on the sound management of public funds and accountability requirements. Maybe he could tell us about the Laval region, where there was virtually no local media. Mayor Gilles Vaillancourt took advantage of that situation to bend the rules for years.

Here is what I would like my colleague to comment on. Journalists who ask local and regional elected representatives questions improve both our democracy and the sound management of public funds.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, that is the key right there.

Journalists are democracy watchdogs. A lot of elected representatives do not like interacting with journalists. They are afraid of them.

I think the primary responsibility of elected representatives is to be accountable and to inform the people. We are lucky that accountability requirements exist.

There are other scandals too, such as the sponsorship scandal and the WE scandal. Fortunately, journalists work very hard to cover the work we do in the House.

I see this in the House. How could we raise all the issues in our speeches and our committee work?

Ultimately, if we really want to pressure the government to change things, we will need help from journalists and the platform they have. Media organizations evolve. Podcasts are a good example. Fortunately, or unfortunately, meaningful changes in our Parliament are often the result of ideas that come from journalists.

Consider the example of the prayer in the House of Commons, which we have debated. Is reciting a prayer to just any God still relevant? Obviously, the answer is no, but journalists covered the issue, and this social debate affirms these steps towards secularism, a fundamental issue.

There are so many examples showing that journalists help move our society forward. Our society needs journalists. I thank them for their work.

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his wonderful speech.

We are talking about Bill C-18, which is about privacy protections and ending the destruction of regional media. We really need our regional media. Better informing the public and ensuring better oversight of technology is about protecting democracy.

Can my colleague tell us a little more about how Bill C-18 needs to be improved and amended?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, with whom I have the chance to share several media outlets. She fully understands the urgency to act when it comes to funding regional media.

Here are some examples of amendments that could be made to ensure a long-term vision.

First, we must ensure that Canadian broadcasters are not prevented from accessing and broadcasting foreign content. There is still something interesting in that context.

Second, we must create measures that will encourage partnerships between Canadian broadcasters and foreign content owners, primarily the American ones.

Third, we must ensure that the news aggregators, such as Google News Showcase or Apple News, offer non-discriminatory access and fair remuneration.

We must also work towards bringing Canadian ad revenues back to Canadian and Quebec ecosystems.

Having a local outlook is very important.

I have delivered the bulk of my speech, but I would like to take advantage of my colleague's question to mention the importance of properly reporting international news. That too is part of safeguarding our democracy; it affects the way we look at things. We must avoid fake news, which we have far too much of in our society.

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• (1305)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his speech.

As an MP, one of my priorities is to tackle the increase in heinous crimes attributable to social media. That is not included in Bill C-11 or in Bill C-18, but the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the RCMP and other organizations have reported that there is a significant increase in crimes motivated by hate, racism and other unacceptable things.

I hope that my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue also has some ideas about how to reduce this threat to our society and our culture or how to put an end to it.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, who is quite right.

That is why I started my speech by speaking about the reality of hate speech and its consequences for people's dignity. I am thinking in particular of teenagers, who have to deal with important issues. It is also why I am saying that this bill does not go far enough, that it is incomplete.

We hope that something very tangible will be presented. For the time being, we are not completely satisfied. We will try again with the next bill. I am happy to defend the interests of Quebeckers with respect to these online issues.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this fundamental and very important discussion on how a federal, provincial or other government can support journalism and media outlets in our communities, cities, towns and regions across the country.

This is the kind of bill that makes the NDP say, “finally”. Finally, the government is doing something about this issue. It was high time. Unfortunately, as is too often the case with the Liberals, we had to push them for years before they agreed to do the right thing.

We saw it with the broadcasting bill, the official languages bill and with dental care and pharmacare, which are coming. We also saw it with the anti-scab bill, which is part of our agreement and is supposed to be introduced next year.

We always have to push them. In this case, is it too late for some media outlets? The answer is yes. The government is backpedalling, which is too bad. It is trying to salvage something from the wreckage.

Taking this approach and trying to shore up this fundamental pillar of our democracy—local, regional and national media—is the right thing to do. Unfortunately, that observation was made several years ago. Indeed, this crisis has existed for years now; newsrooms have been closing and jobs have been lost, and this has real consequences.

Democracy does not work without this fourth power, without this counter-power, this check and balance that is professional independent media. I will come back to the idea of what is a media outlet, what is a reporter, what is a journalist and what is real journalism versus propaganda or disinformation. This is so important.

It has long been said that there are three main pillars of power in our society: the executive, the legislative and the judicial. However, without the counter-power of journalistic work, there is no real democracy. It is important to establish this from the outset, so that we know exactly what we are talking about.

It is equally important to talk about web giants. They prey on journalistic work. They are simultaneously voracious and greedy. They are parasitic, in the sense that they will scoop up news and feed it to the news aggregators on their websites.

Many web giants do that. They literally steal real journalism, real articles and real news, and they put it on their websites. When people click, web giants cash in. They do not pay for that. They are essentially stealing other people's work.

Someone else does the essential work, and web giants do not pay a penny to take an article from a regional news source, from *La Presse*, *Radio-Canada*, *Le Devoir* or whatever, and put it on their news site. They do nothing. They have no newsroom of their own, and they steal other people's work without offering any financial compensation whatsoever.

At least Bill C-18 tackles the problem and offers a solution. I am not saying it is perfect or even as good as it could be. It can be improved, but it is worth exploring.

It is important that we, as parliamentarians, address this issue. It is important that we consider these concerns and look at what we can do to improve things so that we can keep this check and balance, this counter-power, in our democracy here in Quebec, here in Canada.

We need to protect the employees, the workers who are experts at reporting the news, digging into things, poking around, asking questions, contradicting us and sometimes even putting pressure on the government, opposition parties and all elected representatives. That is exactly as it should be, and it has to stay that way.

• (1310)

Unfortunately, we are in an ecosystem where selling news is not necessarily the most lucrative. We have seen a reduction, crumbling or erosion of the capacity of newsrooms to ask the real questions and cover what is happening in politics, but also in the economy, in society or in the cultural milieu, for example.

I think the government had to do something. We in the NDP have been saying for years that we needed to do something and support wages, newsrooms and businesses. Furthermore, the balance of power needs to be re-established between the web giants, whose aggregators pick up articles on which they have put no work, effort, human or financial resources whatsoever, and all those who are struggling to survive by asking the right questions and writing relevant articles that make society think and move us forward collectively.

We have heard a lot about local and regional news. It is absolutely fundamental. I asked my Bloc Québécois colleague a question a moment ago.

I have the example of Laval in mind, which is closer to me. For years, Laval did not have a real newsroom, a real media outlet capable of covering municipal politics. Laval is not far enough away from Montreal to have its own media ecosystem, its own newsroom or its own weekly newspapers. On the other hand, Laval is not close enough to Montreal for Montreal media to be truly interested in it. As such, for years, Laval's municipal politics were not really covered.

This situation allowed the former mayor of Laval, Gilles Vaillancourt, since charged and convicted, to embezzle public funds and commit unspeakable fraud that he profited from personally, as did his family and friends. This happened because there was practically no political opposition, no media coverage, no papers strong or independent enough and no radio stations capable of focusing on how contracts were awarded or public funds managed in Laval.

We witnessed what a media desert could lead to: impunity and no transparency. This also allows someone to think they are entitled to everything and they can do absolutely anything they want. It is important to have national journalists, but also local and regional journalists to monitor everything that is happening and all the fine people involved.

I think it is very important to point out that we absolutely must have reporters and resources abroad. These journalists can report on and explain to us what is happening abroad so that Canadians, but also elected officials, decision-makers and economic, social and political forces, are fully informed and able to react appropriately, knowing exactly what is happening in other countries around the world.

We saw this recently with the war in Artsakh, Armenia, with the exodus of the Rohingya from Myanmar, and with what is happening to the Uighurs in China. We absolutely need to know what is happening abroad. We need resources so that we can do that and so that we can have people on the ground who can tell us exactly what is happening.

I am going to take a few moments to show a little bias and say what a wonderful job I think that Radio-Canada foreign correspondents are doing. I tip my hat to them, and I think that there are a lot of people in Quebec and Canada who recognize just how important they are because they observe, analyze and tell us about what is happening abroad.

I cannot name them all, but I want to mention Marie-Ève Bédard, Tamara Alteresco, Anyck Béraud and Jean-François Bélanger, who, along with many others, are our eyes and ears in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Their work is absolutely essential to our understanding of the world.

● (1315)

As we are speaking about journalism, what happens abroad and the accountability that I spoke about earlier, I will take advantage of the forum given to me today to condemn and denounce the murder of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

Government Orders

She was killed while reporting on an Israeli army operation. She was wearing a helmet and bullet-proof vest with "Press" written on it. It was very clear that she was a journalist. For years, Shireen Abu Akleh was a revered star journalist who worked for Al Jazeera. She was killed.

The NDP condemns this murder, and we are asking for an independent investigation to find out exactly what happened and who was responsible for this act. I believe that many of my colleagues agree with our position.

There were many accounts on the ground. It is rather difficult to hit someone in the face with a stray bullet. Unfortunately, that is how Shireen Abu Akleh was killed. We are asking for this independent investigation, as are many other global organizations.

Yesterday, I moved a motion in the House to condemn the murder of this Palestinian journalist and to ask for an independent investigation. I am very sorry that this motion was not adopted. I believe it was the least we could do.

I am also concerned about what happened next. Israeli police raided the home where the family was gathered and tore down the Palestinian flags that were there. These people just learned of the death of their daughter, sister, friend, niece or cousin. It is absolutely appalling.

It did not stop there. Today, we saw extremely disturbing images from Shireen Abu Akleh's funeral in which Israeli police used batons on those carrying the coffin of the murdered journalist. They waded into the crowd, pushing people back, which nearly caused the coffin to fall. That is indecent and extremely violent. We want to know who did that and we are calling for an independent investigation.

Not only was this woman killed, but the police then showed up at the family home and were pushing people who were gathered for her burial. That is absolutely unbelievable. Who is responsible for that? Who ordered this assault on a grieving crowd, on the family and friends of this journalist who was recently killed while doing her job?

There are a lot of questions we need to ask about the safety of journalists all over the world and about their ability to do their jobs properly. There are also a number of questions we need to ask about the Palestinian territories illegally occupied by the Israeli army. Palestinian or foreign journalists must be able to do their jobs safely and report on the facts of what is going on.

We want to know what the consequences are for the military occupation of a territory, for stolen land, for destroyed homes and for illegal colonies being established very quickly. Thousands of new homes are being built on occupied territory in the West Bank, in defiance of UN resolutions. People on the ground have to tell us what is happening there. If they are killed, there will be no one left to tell us what is going on. The only version we will get will be the official version of government authorities. That is not what we want.

Government Orders

Journalists are being killed in Ukraine as a result of the brutal, illegal invasion by Vladimir Putin's Russia. This regime has killed journalists and political opponents in its own country. It is now targeting and killing journalists in Ukraine. We vehemently condemn these murders, as we should. However, when a Palestinian journalist is killed, there is radio silence.

● (1320)

People have to be respectful, equitable and consistent. Journalism is important everywhere: in Ukraine, Russia, Palestine, Israel, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, France, England, the United States, Canada and Quebec. It is important everywhere and for everyone. I think it is very important to say, loudly and clearly, that the NDP wants to support a free and independent press that can do its work safely. Journalists need to be able to do their work without being targeted by a regime that attacks them and sometimes even kills them or threatens their safety.

The bill before us today, Bill C-18, is very important because, as I said earlier, it seeks to rectify the plundering of journalists' work and news content. This has severely damaged our ability to tell our communities' stories. For years, the NDP has been working with journalists' federations and journalists' unions to bring this idea forward. Finally, it is happening. Is it too late? Not for those still in the newsroom, but sadly, there may be many who have already left the industry.

I want to share some numbers. In Canada, 450 news media outlets closed between 2008 and 2021. That is nothing to sneeze at. In addition, 78% of people access the news online, often through these major companies' aggregators. Also, a mere 13% of news companies' revenue comes from online advertising or subscriptions.

However, Google and Facebook took in nearly \$10 billion in revenue from Canadian online advertising in 2020. Google and Facebook combined account for 80% of the revenue. For years, the government stopped buying advertising in our weeklies and local or regional newspapers. Instead, it was buying advertising from Facebook and Google. Not only did this do nothing to aid journalism, but public funds were being used to pay these large foreign companies, often American, to promote the news that the federal government wanted to promote. It is absolutely unbelievable.

There were two ways the federal government failed to help newsrooms. It allowed them to slowly disappear as a result of the loss of revenue they were experiencing, and it also failed to provide direct support or assistance by buying advertising. Subscriptions and newsstand sales are not what make newspapers profitable, and that has been the case for years. It is the advertising revenue that makes media profitable. That said, ad revenues have changed. They are no longer generated by local radio stations, weeklies or dailies. They are generated by websites. These websites, most of which are owned by large media outlets, steal the work of journalists.

The Liberal government finally listened to reason and thought it might be time to address the problem, since we had lost over 450 newsrooms and hundreds of jobs. We looked at what was being done overseas. The Australian model forces negotiation between the media who produce the news and the web giants who use it, put it on their platforms and distribute it.

The possibility of collective bargaining is really important to the NDP. Local or regional independent media must not be left to face the giants like Facebook, Google and others on their own. They need to be able to come together to speak with one voice and get fair deals. That is really the crux of the matter and what is going to be extremely difficult to hear.

These agreements also need to be public and transparent, because it is important to be able to compare situations. It is important to know exactly what the web giant paid for the use of certain content, for a given percentage, for a given quantity of articles, for each year, in a given market and with a given audience. If that information is not available, everyone will negotiate blindly and it will be extremely difficult. Everyone will be at a huge disadvantage.

● (1325)

There needs to be an equitable power relationship, so these agreements need to include collective bargaining and transparency clauses. It is not enough to say that it is a trade secret, or some such thing. We must ensure that this is known and public, so that people can make comparisons and be fairly compensated for the use of their work.

[*English*]

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, toward the end of the comments by the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, he talked a bit about the ability of news organizations to band together and collectively bargain. Certainly, that is a part included in the bill, as well as changes to the Competition Act that would allow that.

We have heard commentary coming out of the Australian model from Australian organizations about small and often local organizations, such as local newspapers, that have been left out. They have not been able to negotiate deals. They are the ones I believe many are concerned about having the opportunity to do so. It was a recent Toronto Star article that highlighted the fact that small media enterprises would not be able to negotiate these deals.

I would like to hear the member's comments on the ability of small organizations to benefit from this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his extremely important question.

There are some consolidated media groups that have broad enough shoulders and deep enough pockets. I think they will be able to negotiate on their own with the web giants.

That is why the possibility of having a clear process for collective bargaining is extremely important. I think that all these small media outlets, such as regional or local radio stations and small weekly newspapers, have to band together. My advice is that they should not try to go it alone, because they will get crushed. Collective bargaining needs to be an option, and this bill paves the way for that possibility. They need to band together, join forces, find allies and negotiate collectively. If not, they will face a brutal fight, and we all know who will win in the end.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: That is all the time we have for this today. When we return, the member will have eight minutes remaining in questions and comments.

It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1330)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC), seconded by the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, moved that Bill S-223, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (trafficking in human organs), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, my grandfather used this expression not to “gild the lily”. That is, when something is already beautiful, there is no need to further dress it up.

We already have a consensus. I am looking forward to seeing this bill finally move into law.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

There being none, next on the speaking list is the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I should be here more often on Fridays, because I cannot believe I agree with absolutely everything the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has put forward. This is indeed a bill that has come before the House on a number of occasions. It has been passed unanimously by the House before. I, too, look forward to its swift passage through here and making this bill become law.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I am somewhat surprised that my colleagues' speeches are so short.

I will jump right in and say that the Bloc Québécois supports Bill S-223, the former Bill S-204, which should have passed in the last Parliament.

Private Members' Business

Bill S-223 explicitly makes it a crime to travel abroad to receive a transplanted organ that was removed without free and informed consent and obtained for consideration. Put simply, it prohibits individuals from engaging in a practice abroad that is prohibited in Canada.

The Criminal Code prohibits the exploitation of individuals, which includes organ and tissue harvesting. This bill provides an additional tool to thwart criminal groups and to combat organ trafficking, which speaks to the social and economic inequalities that still exist on this planet.

The Bloc Québécois hopes that Bill S-223 will be passed quickly, as the former bill was.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, allow me to thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for tenaciously sponsoring this legislation again. He should get an award for the number of times he has appeared on this very same bill.

In the House, we all recognize the importance of this bill. We have had several Parliaments debate it. I do not think there is any argument against this kind of an amendment being necessary to the Criminal Code and to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

I did have a number of comments I wanted to make, but in the spirit of what has already been said today, I would conclude by saying that the NDP absolutely does support this legislation. It is a shame that we did not see the former Bill S-240 pass through the 42nd Parliament quickly. If people remember correctly, that piece of legislation was held up, literally yards away from the finish line, because of the procedural shenanigans that were going on in the other place, when Conservative senators were trying to hold up Romeo Saganash's Bill C-262. That ultimately prevented the Senate from voting on the House amendments to Bill S-240.

That being said, we are here now with Bill S-223. I am proud to support this bill at second reading. We look forward to seeing it get to committee, back to the House and on to the Governor General's desk as quickly as possible.

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to second this bill, and I hope that we can pass this legislation quickly through the House.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now that the collapse of debate on this bill at this stage is secure, let me take a few moments to say a few thanks to all of those who have been involved in moving this important bill forward at this stage.

Of course, it is very important to start by recognizing the incredible life and legacy of David Kilgour. David Kilgour and David Matas were responsible for an initial groundbreaking report exposing the organ harvesting and trafficking taking place in China. David Kilgour brought this to the attention of the world, and he was a strong advocate throughout his life on this issue, leading to many other countries passing legislation on forced organ harvesting and trafficking. It was maybe a bit of a point of embarrassment that Canada, his own country, was behind some of these other countries in passing legislation.

Private Members' Business

David passed away earlier this year, so I am sorry he will not have the opportunity, at least from the vantage point of being on earth, to see what is happening. However, I believe, as I know some other members do as well, that he is still aware of what is happening and is heartily pleased by it.

I want to recognize as well the sponsor of this legislation, Senator Ataullahjan, who tenaciously put it forward in the Senate. She has been more successful than I have been. She got the Senate to pass it unanimously three times, and we have only passed it once unanimously in the House so far. As members know, in the legislative process, it has to pass in the same form in both Houses in the same Parliament. It has passed in slightly different forms in different Parliaments, but this is the same form of the bill that passed in a previous Parliament.

The bill has passed the Senate, so I think we can get this done, hopefully without amendment, because if we amend it, it has to go back to the Senate again and we would be into this whole procedure again. Hopefully the foreign affairs committee will be able to pass it without amendment. I want to again recognize Senator Ataullahjan for her tenacious work on it.

I think it is very important to acknowledge the communities that have been advocating for this. Members are aware that other members and I have often tabled petitions on Bill S-223. It is not just my office staff sitting there signing the same petition over and over again; it is members of the community who go out and collect these signatures. I know the Falun Gong community has been very active in advocating for this. Falun Gong practitioners in Canada are standing with members of their community who face organ harvesting and trafficking in China.

We have seen an increase in other communities being targeted. Uighurs, for example, are victims of forced organ harvesting and trafficking. I want to recognize the advocacy of the Uighur community and so many other Canadians: people from the medical profession, students and people from all walks of life. Whether they or their communities are directly impacted by organ harvesting or not, they have stepped forward to be a part of these efforts and a part of this advocacy.

I am also going to mention that apparently it is Trevor's birthday. He is a staff member on the Liberal side who played an important role in helping us move this forward. I think it is important to recognize all of the staff who are involved in supporting our work here, and I wish Trevor, whom I have never met in person but am sure is a lovely fellow, a very happy birthday.

It is so heartening that we have these moments in the House of Commons when we can come together across party lines in defence

of justice and human rights. Sometimes the rancour that exists on other issues gets in the way of us working together. I am a big believer that it is okay to fight hard when we disagree, but it is important to be able to bracket those fights and work together on issues that we do agree on. That is exactly what we are trying to do with this piece of legislation.

We do so because in these moments, we think of the victims and the people who have suffered horribly as a result of forced organ harvesting and trafficking. I think there is an imperative for us to put aside whatever we might feel toward each other some of the time and say that people who are suffering and victims who need our defence and support are far more important than anything else that is going on. I want to thank all members who are part of this effort.

It is not done yet. We are going to go to committee, hopefully get it passed very quickly at committee, send it back here without amendment for third reading and finally have a law in Canada that makes it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ without consent.

I will continue tabling petitions on this until we get the bill passed, but when it is passed, I commit to stopping at that point and tabling petitions only on other topics.

● (1335)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for his intervention.

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. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

● (1340)

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

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 18, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 1:40 p.m., there is no other business before the House. The House stands adjourned until Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:40 p.m.)

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