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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 3, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like the House to take note of today's use of the wooden mace. It serves as a reminder of the fire that took the lives of seven people and destroyed the original Parliament Buildings, except the library, on the night of February 3, 1916.

[*English*]

Among the items destroyed in that fire was the old mace. The wooden copy that members see today was subsequently made and used temporarily until the current one was given to us by the United Kingdom in 1917.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS MODERNIZATION ACT

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.) moved that Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today.

I would like to point out that the Nasdaq opening bell rang for the very first time in Ottawa, Canada, this morning. This is the first time in history that the Nasdaq opened in Canada. OpenText has just been registered in Canada, and I think this is a great moment for Canada and the Canadian industry.

I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the House. I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-34, an act to amend the Investment Canada Act, or the ICA, and move that it be read a second time and referred to a committee.

Before I talk about the legislative amendments in more detail, I would like to make a few comments about the act. As members know, the ICA is an important asset for our economy because it

helps make Canada a top destination for foreign investment by ensuring a stable and predictable system.

[*English*]

Ensuring that Canada remains attractive to businesses and investors through a clear and predictable regulatory regime is ever more important as we continue to attract significant new investment. I think colleagues on both sides would have seen that Canada has what the economy of the 21st century needs.

No matter which country I visit, it is understood that Canada is a great investment destination, particularly when it comes to clean technologies, critical minerals, and automotive and battery supply chains. In fact, Bloomberg ranked Canada second in the world for its battery ecosystem, ahead of the United States and just behind China. This is a great thing that we have achieved in a couple of months, I would say, and we should all be proud as Canadians.

I will continue to work tirelessly to attract more investments to Canada that will create well-paying jobs and spur economic growth, and I look forward to more big announcements in 2023.

[*Translation*]

Again, this law seeks to encourage economic growth and job growth in the country and provides for intervention only in cases where an investment would harm Canada's national security. I think all of my colleagues are aware of the importance of protecting Canada's national security. What is more, it also gives us the necessary powers to act quickly and decisively as needed.

Over the years, we have noted three major themes, which were addressed during the review of the act. Specifically, these are strategic and geopolitical concerns, the need for greater certainty and transparency for investors and the need to protect the economy and innovation in Canada.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Let me talk about modernizing the law in the current geopolitical context. Canada's interactions with the rest of the world are changing. Hostile state and non-state actors pursue deliberate strategies to acquire goods, technologies and intellectual property. They do so in ways that are incompatible with Canada's interests and principles. We also know that foreign investments can be used as a conduit for foreign influence activities that seek to weaken our norms and institutions.

The nexus between technology and national security is now clear, and I think we have recent examples of that. It is here to stay for the long run. Rapid technological innovation has provided Canada with new opportunities for economic growth, but it has also given rise to new and difficult policy challenges.

I will talk about modernizing the law and supporting investment in Canada. At the same time, we need to support a welcoming investment climate for beneficial investment. This means that the ICA's operations must be clear, transparent and, I am sure we would all agree, efficient. We know that regulatory certainty and the speed of reviews are important factors in attracting investments to Canada. It is all about predictability and having a very stable regime.

I will now mention trends in innovation that we are seeing now. Canada's foreign investment regime also needs to adapt to the speed of innovation. Intangible assets, such as intellectual property and data, have grown in importance in defining Canada's economic strength, and at the same time they pose new challenges in terms of how these are to be managed.

A good example of this challenge is quantum technology. Our government recognizes the value of the intangible economy, its growth and the relevant opportunities for Canadians across our nation. That is why, in January, I announced the launch of Canada's national quantum strategy, which will shape the future of quantum technologies in Canada and will help create thousands of jobs across our nation.

Quantum science and technologies are at the leading edge of research and innovation, with enormous potential for commercialization and game-changing advances, including more effective drug design, better climate change forecasting, improved navigation and innovations in clean technologies.

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting the continued growth of this emerging sector as it helps drive Canada's economy and supports highly skilled jobs and, I would say, well-paying jobs as well. To ensure we protect it, quantum science is already listed as a sensitive technology area under the ICA's national security guidelines.

- (1010)

[Translation]

The amendments we are proposing today are based on those themes. Our government has already taken steps to modernize the ICA by updating our policies to improve transparency and provide certainty to investors.

I will outline some of the developments from the past few years. In 2021, we updated the guidelines on the national security review of foreign investments. In 2022, in the wake of the unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, we issued a new policy on reviewing foreign investments originating in Russia. We also introduced a voluntary filing mechanism for investors wishing to obtain regulatory certainty, within the same statutory deadlines as a mandatory filing. Investors gain certainty with respect to their plans, while the government gains greater visibility and will have five years to review and adopt measures regarding an investment in the absence of a voluntary filing. Finally, a policy on investments made by foreign state-owned enterprises into critical minerals under the ICA was announced last fall. This is one of the most important measures.

[English]

How are we responding to the evolving environment that I just mentioned, which I think all colleagues would recognize in this House?

[Translation]

Canada remains an open economy that is the envy of the world. However, our country is increasingly targeted by hostile actors. We are seeing it more and more. This is a threat for our national security and Canadians' prosperity now and in the future. That is why our government is taking bold steps today to protect the Canadian market by developing our tools to provide better protection against current threats.

Suffice it to say that we are living in unprecedented times, when foreign investments are being examined more closely with respect to national security, not only here in Canada but around the world. Some of the reasons for this include the COVID-19 pandemic, the repercussions of climate change on security, global supply chain disruptions and changing geopolitical considerations.

Only by taking appropriate action today to address the threats of tomorrow will we ensure that Canada remains a top destination for foreign investors. Last year, we reached a new all-time high in total number of filings, which is consistent with the overall recovery of the Canadian economy. I want to reiterate that the ICA plays a key role in Canada's economic security, and I think that is a fact all parliamentarians agree on. This legislation has served Canada well, but it needs to be updated. It provides for the review of significant foreign investments to ensure that they are of net benefit to Canada. The ICA also provides for the review of investments that may be injurious to Canada's national security.

All investments, regardless of value or country of origin, including minority investments and investments to create new Canadian businesses, are subject to this review process. The proposed amendments do not affect the key aspects of the net benefit review. They provide for improvements to the national security review process by making it more efficient and, I would argue, more predictable.

[English]

The time is right to pursue modernization of the Investment Canada Act. That is certainly my belief, and when I talk to CEOs and investors around the world they understand that we need to modernize an instrument that has served our country very well.

Now more than ever, we need to make sure we are doing everything we can to foster an innovative and healthy economy. The global environment has evolved significantly in recent years, including in global competition, investment and technology. Under my leadership, our evolving policies and guidance have been addressing these developments as they arise. We have taken clear and decisive action on transactions when necessary to protect Canada's national security, and I can commit to the House that we will continue to do so. However, we cannot rest, and are not resting, on the success of our past actions.

The guidance and decisions issued over the past several years make it clear that some transactions, particularly those by state-owned or state-influenced investors, may be motivated by non-commercial imperatives that could harm Canada's national security. Allow me to repeat that these investments currently face enhanced scrutiny under the ICA. We have never hesitated and will never hesitate to take action to protect Canada's national security. That is our responsibility and we take it very seriously.

Canada's well-known excellence in emerging and sensitive technologies and critical minerals is an attractive target for hostile states. Through these amendments, we are making sure we have the right tools to protect those sectors along with our IP, personal data and critical infrastructure. The volume and complexity of foreign investment reviews are increasing, and this significant change provides a strong rationale for supporting ICA modernization. I hope every member of the House will support that, because it is working for Canada. There is nothing partisan or political about it. This is about protecting our national security and making sure we remain a destination for foreign investment.

Fundamentally, we believe that an effective regime must be robust, transparent and flexible to adapt to a changing world, and now is the time to make these changes. This new bill represents the most significant update of the ICA since 2009. Think of where the world is today and what it looked like in 2009. I put it to all members that we would all agree that it needs an update. We are making important moves now to review and modernize key aspects of the act, while ensuring that the overarching framework to support needed foreign investment to grow our economy remains strong and open.

● (1015)

[Translation]

Let us talk about the amendments set out in Bill C-34. We are proposing seven amendments to the Investment Canada Act.

Government Orders

First is the new requirement for prior notice of certain investments. That way, Canada will have greater oversight over investments being made in certain designated industries, especially when they give investors access to material assets and material non-public technical information, such as cutting-edge intellectual property and trade secrets, once the investment is finalized.

In my opinion, this is a necessary measure in a world where intangible assets are becoming increasingly important.

This will enable the government to prevent potentially irreparable damage. Investors will have to provide notice of investment within the timelines specified in the regulations.

[English]

I want to stress that we are taking a targeted approach here. An across-the-board pre-implementation filing requirement without regard to nuance of business sector, type of transaction or other relevant facts would have an unnecessarily burdensome impact on needed and beneficial investment into Canada without providing improvements to national security analysis. Our targeted approach will support transparency and certainty for investors, which is something we all want.

Second, the bill would make the national security review process more efficient by providing me, as Minister of Industry, in consultation with my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, the authority to extend the national security review of investments, whereas previously a Governor in Council order was required at that stage. This is about being efficient. This is about going at the speed of business, and this is about agility in light of different types of transactions.

Removing the additional step of getting an order by the Governor in Council would give more time to our interdepartmental experts in security and intelligence to complete their vital work, including the intelligence analysis assessing the national security risks of a transaction.

● (1020)

[Translation]

Third is amendments to penalties for non-compliance with Investment Canada Act provisions. The penalties were set decades ago and do not reflect the current value of transactions or inflation.

Government Orders

For example, under the current Investment Canada Act, the maximum penalty of \$10,000 per day that was established in 1985 will go up to \$25,000 per day per violation indefinitely. There is also a new penalty for investors who fail to submit prior notice, which I discussed earlier. They will be fined \$500,000 or the amount specified in the regulations, whichever is higher.

This update will make the penalties more effective deterrents.

[*English*]

Fourth, the bill introduces the authority for me, as Minister of Industry, after consultation with my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, to impose interim conditions on an investment. This would reduce the risk of national security injury taking place during the course of the review itself, such as through the possible transfer of assets, intellectual property or trade secrets before the review is complete.

[*Translation*]

Fifth, the act provides greater flexibility for mitigating national security risks by allowing me, again in my capacity as Minister of Industry and again in collaboration with my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, to impose binding commitments on investors. These commitments will need to demonstrate that they adequately reduce the national security risks that could arise from the investment in question.

I would add that this is a measure that is used fairly often in other countries, including our American neighbours.

Previously, undertakings to mitigate the national security risks related to a transaction could only be imposed by an order of the Governor in Council. With binding commitments that can be discussed and agreed upon at the departmental level, these can also be potentially modified or even terminated as needed.

[*English*]

Sixth, the bill would allow Canada to share case-specific information with international counterparts to help protect common security interests. This type of co-operation is so important when considering an investor who may be active in several jurisdictions seeking the same technology, for example. We would have more discretion to share such information, and of course it would be based on the evaluation of confidentiality and other concerns in doing so.

Canada's investment review regime is world-leading and we share information and collaborate closely with our allies, several of whom, including among the Five Eyes, have either updated or introduced new screening mechanisms responding to geopolitical threats.

[*Translation*]

Finally, the legislation introduces new provisions for protecting information in the context of judicial review of decisions. This change will enable the government to rely on sensitive information to defend its national security decisions, while protecting that information from disclosure. These new provisions will also allow applicants to participate fully in the process.

[*English*]

Our record as government makes it clear that where national security is concerned, we do not hesitate to take decisive action. Our assessment of risk keeps pace with evolving economic and geopolitical circumstances.

While the ICA provides broad authorities to intercede and address national security risk that can arise in foreign investment, these amendments build on that strong foundation and improve on the mechanics of the process around national security.

I hope that members will take this bill as seriously as they should, because the world is watching. We want to remain an attractive destination for investment, and this law would achieve that.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):

Madam Speaker, I know that the government has put in these policies and made some of these amendments here, but these are only as good as the minister's own scrutiny of transactions. In 2019, this minister's predecessor approved the sale of the Tanco mine in Manitoba to a Chinese mining business. That mining business now controls the only lithium-producing mine in Canada and the mine that produces most of the world's cesium. The minister did not ask them to divest, but he asked three others.

Why would he not implement a divestment of that particular investment, if he cares so much about state-owned enterprise interference?

• (1025)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague a lot and I think we can work together in making sure that this bill would better protect Canada.

When we make decisions in matters of national security, I think it would be comforting to the members and the public that is with us today that these decisions are made on the basis of advice from our intelligence agencies and experts. Obviously, my role as Minister of Industry, as well as the role of my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, is to make sure that we act on the basis of intelligence that we receive.

I would remind my colleague, and he will know very well, because he knows me quite well, that I never hesitate to take action. I blocked three transactions recently, where Chinese companies were trying to take equity interests in mining companies in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):

Madam Speaker, I want to commend the minister for his leadership. I say that because this was a request that the Bloc Québécois made in a supplementary report for the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, which looked at the Investment Canada Act. It is nice to see that the government wants to better protect our businesses.

Government Orders

However, in my opinion, national security goes hand in hand with economic security. It is important to protect our head offices, particularly in Quebec. The Quebec economy depends on SMEs and the Investment Canada Act sometimes becomes a weakness or an obstacle for the province. The threshold issue could have been addressed in Bill C-34, but obviously the minister decided not to go that route.

How can we ensure that our head offices are properly protected? How can we do a better job of that? Do we need to think about investment thresholds, particularly if we are on the verge of a recession?

In the context of COVID-19, we saw how an airline company can be devalued very quickly. Would the ability to rely on clear thresholds have been of net benefit to Canada?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, I will first thank my colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect. He works with us on industry files.

Members will recall that Bill C-34 concerns the part relating to national security. We know that the Investment Canada Act has two parts. The amendments we are proposing are actually amendments pertaining to national security.

As a Quebecker and as someone who is in close contact with SMEs across the country, I understand my colleague's point quite well. As a government, we must certainly do everything we can to keep head offices in Canada. We also have to attract more head offices.

I believe that my colleague will recognize that, with respect to batteries for example, we are creating a new industry in Canada, an industry that did not previously exist. We have attracted significant investments. As I was saying in my speech, Bloomberg ranked Canada second in the world for its battery ecosystem. We will continue to stand up for the interests of Canadian businesses.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand here today and talk about this bill. New Democrats, on this file, go back to 2003, with China Minmetals and state-sponsored takeovers of Canada's oil fields, where nobody really wanted to intervene at that time. Each year, there are thousands of files that are never even reviewed going through the lens.

I thank the minister for bringing this forward. My question goes to the point regarding the investments that we have had in the past, and some were not looked at, like smaller SMEs as noted beforehand, but also other industries. We have seen in the past that in this House we have had to fight to save Canada's potash industry with regard to MacDonald Dettwiler and others.

With the smaller SMEs and some of the innovation that is taking place, how can we, in Parliament, give this to a minister to decide if they are going to include the public safety minister? Where is the lens for the rest of Parliament in this legislation?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, my colleague and I have worked together for a number of years now.

We need agility. My colleague is very knowledgeable and he knows that we live in a world where a number of companies are trying to use different schemes to go around the law so they will not be subject to a national security review.

What we want is additional powers for the minister to make sure that we better protect our national security. This bill would achieve what the member just said: having more agility, for example, to make sure that, during the review, we protect intellectual property. Today, there is not even, in the law, a possibility for the minister to prevent the exchange of information while we do the review. When it comes to intangible assets, irreparable harm can be done.

I hope the member will support this bill, because we need more agility.

• (1030)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the minister spoke about the importance of innovation. While my question is not directly about the bill, it is related and I hope it is allowed.

One area where we need innovation is in telecommunications. The prices are going up for people in my community and across the country because of reduced competition. The minister will soon be making a decision about a proposed merger between Rogers and Shaw. We both know this merger is not innovative. Innovation would be giving consideration to what the Province of Saskatchewan has already done, building a national, publicly owned telecommunications network.

Will the minister give this idea consideration in lieu of allowing even less competition in the telecommunications industry?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, my colleague and I work very well together. I am happy to talk about telecoms this morning. I think the member and Canadians watching at home know that the principle I have applied since I became Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry is to make sure that we reduce prices for Canadians. The way to do that in Canada is to have more competition and at the same time to have innovation. We want a fourth national player because we have found that in our market this is the best way to make sure we bring prices down for Canadians.

Going back to Bill C-34, I hope the member supports it, because what the bill is asking for is to get to the modern economy. A colleague like him who understands so much about innovation will understand that a lot of it is about intangible assets. This law would give better tools, not only for me but for future ministers who will have to protect Canada's national security.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today is a significant day in regard to what is taking place with NASDAQ. When we look at all the economic indicators, Canada is doing relatively well. A lot of innovation is coming to our country.

Government Orders

There was something very significant that occurred today and I would like to hear the minister talk about that historical event.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne: Madam Speaker, that is one of the best questions I have heard in a long time. I am delighted.

The credit goes to all the men and women employees of OpenText. It is thanks to their talent, expertise and know-how that today we can celebrate a moment in Canada's history. For the first time in our nation's history, the NASDAQ bell was rung out of Canada. We did that here in Ottawa. We should all be proud because OpenText is becoming one of the largest software companies in the world. It just made a recent acquisition. There were hundreds of employees and the vice-chairman of NASDAQ. We were live in Times Square. It is not very often that we see Canada live in Times Square to celebrate the talent and expertise of our people.

It is a lot like Bill C-34, which would protect the IP, the intellectual assets and the know-how we have in this country. I think all members should be really proud. If they are looking for something to do today, they can give a phone call to one of the employees of OpenText to thank them for their good work so we could all celebrate as Canadians.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister told me he is going to Washington next week. I know there is a Chinese surveillance balloon going over the U.S., and I understand the government has withdrawn its terrible firearm amendments to Bill C-21. When the minister is there, if he spots it, maybe he could do something about it with an appropriate firearm.

After eight years, the government is finally getting around to making some administrative changes to the Investment Canada Act. Why is this important? Because foreign direct investment is increasing and causing us great problems in Canada.

I would start off by informing the House that, while we think these amendments are inadequate to deal with the things that are happening, we will be voting in favour, in principle, at second reading of this bill. These amendments improve the bill, just not enough. However, we will be seeking considerable amendments to improve this bill at the committee stage.

The minister went through some of the things the bill does, and I will start by commenting on a few of them. I think the preimplementation filing change required in certain industries when a deal is done, that the filing and notification go to Investment Canada, is good. It should happen after closing. I would have hoped the minister would make all investment applications subject to pre-filing. I do not know what the point is of looking at a foreign direct investment after it is closed; it is very difficult to unwind a transaction.

The minister spoke about the streamlining of the process to speed it up within the 45 days. We have some concerns about removing cabinet from that process, not necessarily up front, because I think that process to start it is an important one. However, when the review comes back from officials, either for or against it having a national security or net benefit issue, we believe that should go to cabinet in all cases. I know the experience during the Harper government was that when these things came back to cabinet, there was

robust discussion on every one, and this resulted in a better decision. Therefore, we think that the power to actually decide that at the end of the day should still rest with cabinet.

It does add the ability for the minister to create a list of targeted industries through regulation. We would like to learn a little more about what industries the minister is going to address. I think there are industries outside of the list. These include, to be parochial in my neck of the woods, seafood and other areas that are being targeted in the food sector by state-owned enterprises from less co-operative countries.

The interim conditions and all of that in the bill are a good addition to the bill.

We want to explore the area of the legal process appeal issues around secrecy for national security or commercial reasons a bit more at committee. We just want to make sure we understand that, in the future, we are not going to be blocking information the public should have. I think there are some transparency provisions in this bill that say if the minister rejects an acquisition, the reasons for this have to be fairly transparent and public. I do not believe there is a requirement to do that now.

However, there are some things we do not believe the provisions address. Let us start with the record of the current government regarding China's takeover of many of our important assets. The other thing the bill does not do, and I will talk about this in a few minutes, is deal with the sale not just of companies, but of the assets of companies.

In 2017, there was, and still is, a company called Norsat out of British Columbia, which also owns a company called Sinclair in Toronto. It was acquired by Hytera in China, which is partially owned by the Government of China, in the critical telecommunications business. Even though he was urged many times in the House, the minister of industry of the day refused to do a national security review of that acquisition. The minister has the freedom to say that he does not think it is a problem and he is not going to do it. Therefore, no national security review was done of that acquisition.

● (1035)

That is a problem because now we come to January 2022, when Hytera was charged with 21 counts of espionage in the United States in and then banned from doing business in the United States by President Biden. Yet eight months later, the RCMP bought radio frequency equipment to go into the communications system, giving the Chinese state-owned subsidiaries access to all the locations of the RCMP communications services. There was no public security review of that. These are the things that still fall through the cracks.

As I mentioned earlier, Manitoba-based lithium mining company, Tantalum Mining Corp., known as Tanco, was purchased in 2019. Again, the previous minister, not this one, refused to do a national security review of that acquisition. When this minister asked three Chinese state-owned enterprises to divest their Canadian critical mining assets, he did not even include this one, yet it is the largest producer of lithium and cesium in Canada, and all of it goes to China.

In 2020, we all know, the Department of Foreign Affairs bought X-ray equipment from a Chinese state-owned enterprise to go in all the embassies. I believe this minister may have been the minister at that time. No, he was not, but it was a Liberal minister, obviously, who said it was okay and did not back off on it until it was raised in this House.

In March 2021, as the minister referenced, the minister updated and enhanced the guidelines for national security reviews in the absence of an updated act, although an update could have been done. In January the minister did not even follow his own guidelines when he had a divestiture order that included neither the Neo Lithium Corp. nor the Tanco Corp.

In December, I mentioned Hytera and the Canada Border Services Agency. Of course this week we learned, although it is not an acquisition, that the scientific arm of the army of the People's Republic of China is doing research on artificial intelligence and supercomputing in our universities, our 10 biggest universities. They own the IP from that, and it is partially funded by Canadian taxpayers.

These are the things the bill does not address. It is a shameful situation that we are actually helping the largest surveillance state in the world, which used that technology not only on its own citizens but also to repress the Uighurs, and we actually helped develop that technology. Of course we know it uses that technology here. In 2017, China passed a national security act, and clauses 7 and 10 of that act require all citizens and all companies to spy on companies and people in the world. It is against the law for a company based in China to not spy and steal technology and information from companies abroad. We have allowed these takeovers to happen in the last eight years under the Liberal government.

There are several areas that we need to talk about for additional improvement. There was a really good House of Commons industry committee report, which our leader was the vice-chair of in the last Parliament. Most of the recommendations have been ignored by the Liberal government, even though government members put the recommendations forward. Not only is the Liberal government ignoring the recommendations that the official opposition put forward, but it is also ignoring the recommendations for improvement to the Investment Canada Act put forward by its own members of Parliament.

Recommendation number one in that report dealt with state-owned enterprises. What it asked for was that state-owned enterprises for all countries that we deem to be authoritarian or hostile to Canada have an automatic review. The way that is done is by reducing the financial threshold for the automatic review. Right now, that is \$415 million. A state-owned enterprise can come in and buy anything it wants in Canada for under \$415 million, as my friend

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from the NDP referenced in his question to the minister, without any scrutiny by the government.

• (1040)

Even in my own community, four fish-buying businesses were bought by Chinese state-owned enterprises on the south shore of Nova Scotia in the last quarter. That is important because those businesses set the price of what they get from fishermen. They set what the fishermen get. Through that process and through China's buying two international freight corridors, China now controls all lobster and the access to the departure of lobster from the Halifax airport. None of those transactions would be reviewable under this act. As a result, my lobster buyers would not truck their lobster to the Halifax airport, because China has taken it up. Rather, they would have to truck it to New York and Chicago to get our lobster to Asia. That is just a small part.

We know the Chinese enterprises are buying farms. They are buying up all kinds of key assets in this country, and none of that gets reviewed. Therefore, we would encourage and would be seeking amendments to this bill in committee to move that threshold for state-owned enterprises to zero in the act, requiring the minister and the department to follow that.

The government did not include any provisions that I can see in the net benefit for that issue of state-owned enterprises in foreign countries actually getting control of industries, let alone a particular asset. We are not looking at the concentration control, particularly of hostile actors going after that strategically. I know there is a provision in the bill that would allow the minister to create a list of targeted industries. We are a little skeptical that the list would be as comprehensive as it needs to be and would reflect a zero-dollar review, given the record of the current government over the last eight years. It has not even sought national security reviews of state-owned enterprises from China when it had the authority to do so on those acquisitions.

The bill does not include a provision to actually list countries. Other countries have looked at that. In addition to selected industries, the minister should have the authority, through regulation, to have a list of state actors and countries that we do not believe are advantageous for our economy or are actually a threat to our economy if they continue to try to buy not only our companies but the companies' assets. I will come to this in a minute.

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The bill would change the process, which I referred to earlier, of the involvement of cabinet. We would like to probe this a little more in committee, but I understand the need. The 45 days has not changed in the Investment Canada Act and there is obviously a need for speed. Therefore, the point that the minister has put forward here, which is that at the beginning of the process, the minister and Minister of Public Safety can determine when that goes in without having to go to cabinet, and this would speed up the process. We believe that is a reasonable thing, but we would want to explore that a little more in committee. However, it is on the other end that we have the problem because perhaps not all ministers of industry are as diligent as this one.

I do know, in the short time I have been working with the minister, that he is the most accessible minister I have had a chance to work with since I have been in the House, and he is co-operative. I know he understands and is concerned about what the opposition members think in terms of looking at amendments to the bills, and he takes our suggestions seriously. We want to look at this issue wherein a minister who was perhaps not as diligent would be less involved in making the right decision when it is determined to be a net benefit, or not, or when the research comes back and says it is a national security interest, or not. Whatever the recommendation from officials, we believe it should always go back to cabinet for discussion before the final decision is made.

The act does not attempt to change definitions of state-owned enterprises or look at the issue of what constitutes control.

• (1045)

One does not have to buy 50% of a company to control a company. Someone can buy small percentages of it, get a number of seats on the board or change management, which Hytera has done. It has changed management in Sinclair and Norsat. None of those things are really looked at very strongly in Bill C-34 and need a little more consideration.

One of the interesting things brought up by the industry committee at the time of that report, and I think my friend from the NDP was on the committee, was the issue of subsequent takeovers. A Canadian company may be acquired by a company or an industry that we think is okay, and it gets approved as it is not from a state-owned enterprise. Subsequently, though, down the road, that company can be bought by a state-owned enterprise. There is no provision in this bill to give the minister the power, when that happens, to automatically relook at whether, in that transaction, we should be forcing the divestiture of that Canadian asset from that future transaction of a state-owned enterprise down the road.

That is very important, because Russia and China are getting more aggressive at doing these things. They come in through the front door but also through the back door, and we need to be very vigilant about that.

The minister mentioned intangible assets. This is a big area. In 2009 it was not so much part of the economy, but it is big now. One of the ways our economy can be harmed is not just through the purchase of a company, but through the purchase or sale of some of its assets. It could be simply that it is not just the taking over one of our mining companies, but that one of our mining companies is selling a strategic mining asset, like a particular mine, to a state

player we are not comfortable with. It could be that a database gets sold. It could be that a particular artificial intelligence or knowledge-based patent we have and own in Canada gets sold. That company may still remain Canadian, but more and more companies are looking, when they develop these things, at those assets.

Probably the worst example in Canada is Nortel. When Nortel went into bankruptcy, it had the most patents, I believe, of any technology- and knowledge-based company in Canada. The Canadian liquidator's responsibility was to maximize whatever it could get for the assets. China quite regularly goes in and pays four, five or six times what a business is worth. That is what it did in my riding last quarter. It paid five times what the business was worth. It paid \$10 million for \$2-million-valued businesses, which is way below the threshold.

It took advantage of the Nortel situation, and almost all of those patents were sold by the liquidator to a Chinese state-owned enterprise that became Huawei, which is banned now in the United States. It took the government only five years to figure that one out. We helped create Huawei through our weak rules around foreign investment in state-owned enterprises in assets, and not just the companies, so we need to have more study and understanding. We can look at those in committee, and I know the minister is taking this seriously. I see him nodding there, so hopefully we can work with the government to improve Bill C-34.

Nonetheless, the bill is an improvement over the existing act and would give the minister and the industry some much-needed clarification. Therefore, for the most part, at this stage, we will be supporting this, but we will be seeking many more amendments in committee. I look forward to hearing from the very experienced member, the shadow minister for industry from the NDP, who has been in the House for a long time and has been on the industry committee for a long time, to see what he proposes, in terms of his speech but also his work in the House.

I will conclude there, and I look forward to the debate by all members in the House on this bill, which is very important for Canadians.

• (1050)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I was listening to the hon. member very carefully, I think he gave all the reasons we need to modernize the law on investment in Canada. A number of examples he mentioned would be addressed by this revamping of a law that was crafted in 2009, the last time we did that. I think I like it, because in a way he listed all the reasons we should be doing that. By providing more agility to the minister, we would be able to answer these questions.

Canadians are watching because it is Friday morning. Will the member and his party support our bill to protect the national security of Canadians? Will he support the bill?

Statements by Members

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I think I made it fairly clear that we will be voting for Bill C-34 at second reading. We want to see a number of improvements in the bill.

We are disappointed it has taken eight years to get this bill to Parliament and that a lot of the decisions the government made and let go in the acquisition of many of our assets by Chinese state-owned enterprises probably would not have happened if the amendments Conservatives seek in this bill were in place and had been in place earlier on in the government's tenure. There would not have been the flexibility of previous industry ministers under the Liberal government to ignore the public security threat.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I applaud the minister and my colleagues.

At the end of last year, we learned that the RCMP had allowed Sinclair Technologies, a company with ties to communist China, access to its security systems. We then were witness to a failure of regular surveillance mechanisms and a failure by the government to try to control access to our technologies by this company controlled in part by China. It took a long time before the government finally decided to end this contract.

My colleague is more familiar with Bill C-34 than I am. With the new amendments to the Canada Investment Act, is Sinclair Technologies the type of company the minister, who is not listening to us right now, should pay particular attention to?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, it is an important question, and I will answer it this way. There is a first stage to preventing what happened.

By the way, as the Minister of Public Safety said in committee this week, just because a piece of RCMP equipment is not connected in the data links of the RCMP communications, all the people who service it get access to all the RCMP locations of their equipment, can understand what the RCMP communications structure is and provide that intelligence back to China, as required under Chinese law.

The issue would have been stopped if there had been a national security review. This bill would do nothing on procurement. It would not have any ability to stop the RCMP and Canada Border Services from acquiring technologies from China.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the work that is done alongside the member in the fisheries committee.

We know that one of the big components of Bill C-34 is to promote economic security and combat foreign interference by modernizing the Investment Canada Act to strengthen the national security review process and to better mitigate economic security threats arising from foreign investment. When I think about threats to foreign investment, I immediately, as a fellow fisheries committee member, think of the threats to foreign investment in our fishing industry.

I am wondering if the member can share his thoughts on how this relates to, as just one example, Royal Greenland's takeover of processing plants in Newfoundland, and if it does not relate to that, what we need to do to move forward.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I really enjoy sitting on the fisheries committee with the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith. She brings a lot of good value to that committee, as does the member for Cape Breton—Canso.

That is an important question because this is below the threshold. The fisheries industry, which is a strategic food industry for Canada, is not, in any of the lists I have heard from the minister, generally listed as an industry that should be protected. Our food industry is below the threshold for review because these acquisitions are smaller companies that are way below the review, whether it is from China or the United States.

We are seeing more and more on the B.C. coast that many of the fisheries licences are owned by Chinese state-owned enterprises, and on the east coast we are seeing the processing side of things and the fish-buying things in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia being acquired by countries from all over the world, but primarily China.

I understand there is nothing in this bill that would stop those types of things coming. I would like to explore this a little more in committee. Perhaps the only thing would be, at this stage, if the minister put fisheries as part of the food strategic investments on his list.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

DAVID C. ONLEY

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to honour the late Hon. David C. Onley, the 28th lieutenant governor of Ontario, an iconic Canadian broadcaster, educator and disability rights advocate, and a long-time resident of Scarborough and Rouge Park. Onley contracted polio when he was just three, leaving him to use a motorized scooter throughout his life.

One of Onley's greatest wishes was for all people with disabilities to have the opportunity to fully participate in every aspect of society. He became Canada's first news anchor with a visible disability. In 2007, he became the lieutenant governor of Ontario and used his position to remove physical barriers to Ontario's 1.5 million people with disabilities. After leaving office, Onley continued to inspire and advocate for people with disabilities, namely as a senior lecturer at the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus, where he talked and inspired a new generation of advocates, including several of my current and former staff.

Statements by Members

I give my deepest condolences to his wife, Ruth Ann, and his sons, Jonathan, Robert and Michael. May he rest in peace.

* * *

• (1100)

CITIZEN OF CALGARY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, we often hear things like “one person cannot make a difference”, but today I would like to share a story about someone who proves otherwise.

Yvonne Hazeldean, an immigrant to Canada who ran analytical labs by day and raced cars by night, is a trailblazer who is quietly one of the most influential women in Calgary. Yvonne's persistence has elected dozens of candidates, and then that same persistence has held them all to task when it comes to doing what they said they would do. Yvonne's legacy proves that one woman can change the world. I know that I would not be standing here without her support. When I speak in this place, I often catch myself using mannerisms and the passion that she exudes.

Recently, she has experienced some very severe health challenges, so now it is my turn to lift her up, as she has done so many times for me and my team. On behalf of the entire Calgary community, we love Yvonne. She proved that one woman can change the world.

* * *

SENIORS

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the long-term care standards were released this week. We will have many opportunities to discuss this document. We must, however, hold fast to the unwavering belief that every senior deserves the right to live in dignity, safety and comfort, regardless of which province or territory they call home.

I am pleased that this government has made the largest investment in home and community care in Canada's history, an unprecedented \$6 billion. As chair of the national Liberal seniors' caucus, I ask that all governments work together to recognize that the unique and often diverse needs of aging persons is a critical pillar of all health care programs and decisions. This is our moment to place partisan politics aside and work collaboratively to support aging Canadians.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, six years ago, on January 29, a gun man entered the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City and murdered six Canadians. Two years ago, a Canadian Muslim family of four were killed in a premeditated hit and run in London, Ontario. These cowardly crimes have terrorized Canadians. Hate is growing from the far-right across Canada.

Police reported that hate crimes have increased 72% over the last two years. The Liberal government has been dragging its feet in fighting Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and all forms of racism and bigotry. New Democrats have been calling for concrete measures to

protect all Canadians. Canadians expect their political leaders to fight against hatred and to work with people and communities who are at the forefront of this fight.

New Democrats stand and mourn with the families of the victims of that horrific night. We reaffirm our unwavering commitment to stand up to Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, racism and, indeed, hate in all its toxic forms.

* * *

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Han Dong (Don Valley North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in 2016 the House officially recognized the first day of the lunar new year as the beginning of the 15-day spring festival celebration among the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese and other Asian communities across our country. This past Tuesday, together with 30-plus caucus colleagues and the right hon. Prime Minister, we held a lunar new year celebration on Parliament Hill.

For the first time in many years, over 500 guests attended the event, where we enjoyed authentic Chinese cuisine, traditional Korean dance and the lion dance, and exchanged best wishes. As a Chinese Canadian, I am so proud to have participated in such an important celebration on the hill, which showcased Canada's diversity and inclusiveness.

To all members of the House, *xin nian kuai le. Gong xi fa cai.*

* * *

• (1105)

HOUSING

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister's inflationary policies driving up prices and interest rates, the cost of living is crippling for many Canadians, especially those looking for a home. Rent has doubled, if one can find a place to rent. After eight years of the Prime Minister, mortgages have doubled as well. Nine out of 10 young people in this country who do not own a home believe they never will.

After eight years of a Prime Minister whose fiscal policy could best be described as “borrow lots, think later”, a lot of Canadians going to the bank this year to renew their mortgages are not sure if they will be able to afford their homes anymore. Even Liberal MPs are complaining about the cost of their mortgages to me.

Statements by Members

These are dark days, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. The City of Victoria is adding the missing middle. Ontario is pushing out NIMBY local politicians, and the City of Saskatoon guarantees a building permit in five days. The best news of all is that a Conservative government is just around the corner.

* * *

CONSERVATION HALTON

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the last year, the conservation authority in my riding, Conservation Halton, has planted close to 80,000 trees. It has restored stream habitat; managed 11,000 acres of land; hired over 800 young people to work in nature; maintained 116 kilometres of trails; and monitored aquatic and terrestrial habitat, as well as water quality, at 325 monitoring stations.

It has carried out 45 major environmental restoration projects and also protects Crawford Lake, which has rich indigenous history and one of the coolest meromictic lakes in the world. The over 1.3 million visitors to its eight parks last year spent three million hours in nature and walked over six million kilometres on its trails. It also taught more people ever to ski and camp, including programs for new Canadians. It donated over 400 annual park passes to local libraries, so anyone can borrow a pass and access its parks for free, and it also held its third annual Pride in Nature event to show solidarity with LGBTQ2+ community members, and so much more.

Despite all that, conservation authorities in our greenbelt are being threatened by the notion that we just cannot build homes without destroying nature. I reject that notion. The integrity of our greenbelt must be protected. Green spaces are our greatest asset, and I am proud to recommit myself to being a strong and effective voice for conservation and the greenbelt in Milton and across Canada.

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VALENTINE'S DAY VEGGIES FOR SENIORS

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Valentine's Day is almost here. It is a time to celebrate love and affection and a time to lend a hand.

Today I am grateful to represent a community full of incredible volunteers with big hearts. I want to give a special shout-out today to Square Roots Fairview-Clayton Park, Santa's for Seniors and Chebucto Links, which have come together to launch the Valentine's Day veggies for seniors program.

One might have caught this on CTV, but here is how the program works. One sponsors a valentine by sending five dollars to info@chebuctolinks.ca. Then its team identifies a local senior who could use food support and delivers a gift of fresh veggies and fruits to their door.

How thoughtful is that? For those who want to be a sponsor or refer a senior, they have until February 5 at midnight. Many thanks go out to the selfless folks who brought this wonderful initiative. This is community love and affection at its best.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, Canada is facing a crime wave. Since the Prime Minister was elected, violent crime is up 32%. Violent gang crime is up a staggering 92%, and in 2021 there were 124,000 more violent criminal incidents compared to 2015 when the Prime Minister was elected.

This is not a coincidence. Whether it is the Liberals' catch-and-release bail policies, eliminating mandatory jail time for serious gun crime or drastically expanding house arrest for such serious offences as sexual assault and kidnapping, the crime wave is a direct result of failed soft-on-crime Liberal policies.

The only way to defeat this violent crime wave is to defeat this soft-on-crime Liberal government and elect a Conservative government committed to standing up for victims and holding violent criminals to account to the fullest extent of the law.

* * *

BON SOO WINTER CARNIVAL

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is the wintertime, and Bon Soo Winter Carnival is here.

This year, Bon Soo is celebrating its 60th anniversary, making it one of the oldest and best winter carnivals in all of Canada. For the next nine days, there will be daytime and evening events, some timeless and some brand new, but all packed with fun and excitement for all families of all ages.

Come and participate in the Soo in some of the timeless favourites such as the polar bear dip, and if one can do it this year in this weather, one will get a special award. There are also new events such as the polar rush urban winter obstacle challenge and the coldest Canuck challenge, and there are many more to add to this. Plus there is the pancake breakfast, which everyone looks forward to.

There is no shortage of snow in my riding, so I invite each and every member of the House and everyone across Canada to come to the Soo and enjoy the best, and one of the oldest, winter carnivals. A special thanks to all the volunteers who make this winter carnival what it is today. I know the people in our area are really going to enjoy this year's winter carnival.

Statements by Members

● (1110)

LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of incompetence and corruption, Canada is broken. The trust in government is broken, and ministerial responsibility is broken.

After eight years, our military has been decimated. Military procurement is broken, and military recruitment is broken.

After eight years, violent crime is rampant. The bail system is broken, and the overwhelmed court system is broken.

After eight years, overdoses are killing thousands. Addiction support is broken, and safe supply ideology is broken.

After eight years of the Prime Minister and his cronies, Canada is broken. Canadians are being killed in random attacks. Canadians are being killed by dangerous drugs. Canadians are dying deaths of despair.

After eight years, we have gone from sunny ways to dark days. It does not have to be this way. Conservatives have a plan to turn the hurt Canadians are feeling into the hope they need. After eight years of division and wedge politics, we will bring Canadians together, united, strong and free.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the government's inflationary spending, Canadians are barely getting by, while Liberal insiders and high-priced consultants have never had it so good. After eight years, Canadians have been struggling to cope with 40-year high inflation.

After eight years, 1.5 million Canadians are visiting food banks in a single month, but after eight years, the government does not care.

Instead of helping Canadians, the government decided to hand out over \$100 million in contracts to its friends at McKinsey & Company, and that number keeps climbing. In fact, we still do not know the full amount awarded to McKinsey over eight years because the Liberal government refuses to say. However, we do know that, of the 23 contracts awarded, 20 of them were granted in a non-competitive environment and hand-picked by the government.

We need to know how much has been handed out to McKinsey and the influence it has on our government. Canadians deserve answers, and we will not back down.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for many families in Canada the tradition is to have multi-generational homes. How wonderful it is to visit a home where one not only sees the child and the parent but also the grandparent. This benefits not only the family, but also our communities. An elderly grandparent with their daughter's family, or a son with a disability

with their parents, are arrangements that can be an important way for them to take care of each other.

Our government supports multi-generational homes, and this year the multi-generational home renovation tax credit will be well under way. It provides up to \$7,500 in support for constructing a secondary suite for a senior or an adult with a disability. This refundable credit would allow families to claim 15% of up to \$50,000 in eligible renovation and construction costs incurred to construct a secondary suite. This is a great way to support families here in Canada.

* * *

NANAIMO AFRICAN HERITAGE SOCIETY

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to shine a light on the incredible contributions made by a constituent in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Shalema Gantt, and the organization she founded, the Nanaimo African Heritage Society, or NAHS.

For over 20 years, Shalema and those in the NAHS have created opportunities to celebrate and learn African heritage and the history and culture of Black people in Canada and on Vancouver Island. The society welcomes people of all ethnicities to experience, learn about and honour African culture, both local and worldwide. From the NAHS magazine to a variety of workshops, performances, rallies and other activities, NAHS strives to inspire and inform the public on issues of social justice, community stewardship and anti-racism.

February is Black History Month. This month and every month, I am grateful for the work of the Nanaimo African Heritage Society and all they do to share the rich heritage of African culture in Nanaimo.

* * *

● (1115)

[Translation]

BAIE-COMEAU BOCCE BALL CLUB

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am feeling festive today because the Club bouliste de Baie-Comeau is celebrating its 60th anniversary. Perhaps people are wondering exactly what "*boulisme*" is. Quite simply, it is also known as "*pétanque*" or "*bocce*".

What is remarkable about the Club bouliste de Baie-Comeau is that it brings together all generations. For instance, of the 200 regular players, 90 are young people. Last year, during the family tournament, one of the teams competing was made up of four generations of the same family. Let us face it, that is a rare occurrence in football or hockey.

That said, this is a memorable moment because it illustrates the unifying and intergenerational spirit that the club is trying to create. Under the guidance of its president, Francine Bélair, the Club bouliste de Baie-Comeau is the envy of many. Other clubs throughout Quebec and even internationally, by which I mean Canada, regard it as a model for its vitality.

I wish a happy 60th anniversary to all members of the club. As a gift, I promise them a game, but unlike my last three elections, I can already assure them that I will lose.

* * *

LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, in its eight years in power, the Liberal government could hardly have done worse.

Inflation is at a 40-year high, and interest rates have gone up nine times in the past year even though, just six months ago, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance said rates would stay low.

As a result, young people cannot afford to buy a house, rents have skyrocketed, and steadily rising food prices are hurting families.

By doubling the national debt, which will cost twice as much interest, this government has made it abundantly clear that it is not to be trusted.

Then there is the justice system, which is broken all across Canada. Repeat offenders can serve their time in the community rather than in jail. Violence has gone up 32% since 2015, and street gang violence has jumped 90% in that time.

It is time the NDP-Liberal coalition handed things over to a team that is qualified to lead the country: the Conservatives.

* * *

[English]

LEON DUBINSKY

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Cape Breton—Canso, I rise today to pay tribute to Leon Dubinsky, an extraordinary Cape Bretoner who we lost just a few weeks ago.

Leon Dubinsky was a pillar in the realm of arts and culture across Cape Breton Island. As an actor, theatre director and composer, he spent his entire life entertaining Canadians, and in particular Atlantic Canadians.

Leon is probably best known for his unofficial Cape Breton anthem *Rise Again*, a song of resilience and hope for those at home. It rose to the top of various charts, won multiple awards and went on to be recorded by the likes of the Rankin Family, Rita MacNeil and Anne Murray.

Taking inspiration from Leon's own lyrics, I know he will rise again in the face of his child, and I know he will rise again in the voices of his song.

Oral Questions

My thoughts and prayers remain with Leon's loved ones at this time. May he rest peace and may he rise again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of failed Liberal policies driving up inflation, Canadians are faced with high interest rates and higher mortgage payments and are seeing home prices double across the country. An average monthly mortgage under the Liberal government has more than doubled, going from \$1,500 to more than \$3,000. Home ownership is impossible and a pipe dream for nine out of 10 young people, as 35-year-olds are forced to continue to live in their parents' basements.

Let us be clear: Liberal inflation caused this mess. Will the Liberals apologize and take responsibility for pricing young Canadians out of homes?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our plan not only makes life more affordable for Canadians but is also fiscally responsible.

We have confirmed our AAA credit rating. We have recovered 121% of jobs lost during the pandemic, while the United States has only recovered 106%. We have maintained the lowest deficit and the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. That positions us very well to get inflation under control, improve affordability and make sure that we create good, sustainable jobs for Canadians.

* * *

● (1120)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of failed Liberal policies, Canadians have never had it so bad.

As the Liberals continue to fist bump each other for spending hundreds of billions of dollars of other people's money, the results are absolutely horrific. One in five Canadians is completely out of money. One in five Canadians is skipping meals. Not only did Liberal inflation drive up the price of everything, but they pile-driven Canadians by raising taxes on them.

Why are the Liberals so intent on taking more money from Canadians, leaving hard-working people and their families with less money and empty stomachs?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am getting tired of listening to the Conservatives talk down Canadians and the Canadian economy. They should be getting to work to support Canadians in their time of need.

Oral Questions

We made efforts throughout this pandemic to make sure that families could continue to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads. We made efforts to make sure businesses could keep their doors open and the lights on. Every step of the way, the Conservatives have opposed these measures.

We are going to be there for Canadians in their time of need because it is the right thing to do. The Conservative strategy to combat inflation is to take more money away from families. We will be there for them in their time of need no matter what it takes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that when someone has the floor, they should be listening to the answer. They may not like the answer, but they should listen to it. The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn was not interrupted during his question, and I would ask for the same respect when the answer is given.

The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, we will not take advice from the guy who broke the immigration system.

After eight years, the Liberals continue to deny any responsibility for the Liberal inflation they caused, causing pain to Canadians. However, there is a list of random Liberals who prove they are responsible. Tiff Macklem said inflation is homegrown. Mark Carney said inflation is a domestic issue. Bill Morneau admitted that the Liberals overspent. Even former Liberal finance minister John Manley said that Liberal spending is fuelling inflation.

Should we believe these random Liberals who continue to say that everything is rosy and fine, or should we believe the other random Liberals who say it is their fault for causing inflation?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would point out to the hon. member, who I had the pleasure of serving on the immigration portfolio with, that during the next year, we expect to welcome more than the double the number of newcomers to this country than we did the last year the Conservatives formed government.

At the same time, our strategy to support Canadians over the course of the pandemic, a once-in-a-century disaster, was successful in making sure that nine million Canadians received CERB so they could keep food on the table. The Conservatives opposed those measures. We introduced the wage subsidy that kept 4.5 million workers on payrolls so they could feed their families. The Conservatives opposed those measures. They did not just oppose them. Their leader held a press conference to say that these were “big, fat government programs” and that Conservatives would never support that. Canadians deserve better.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is quite ironic to hear the Liberals claim, day after day, that everything is fine thanks to their astronomical spending, because of which we are facing the worst inflation in 40 years.

The cost of food has skyrocketed, but it is not their fault. The cost of rent has doubled, but it is not their fault. Interest rates are

keeping families from achieving their dream of a first home, but it is not their fault.

Why, after eight years, does this Prime Minister have such a reckless attitude towards people who have needs?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I understand why the Conservatives are having a hard time connecting with Quebeckers. It is because their economic policy is all about austerity and cuts.

On this side of the House, we have implemented several measures to support Canadians and Quebeckers. We have increased benefits for our seniors. We introduced a new benefit to help families pay rent. We introduced our dental subsidy program for children. The Conservatives voted against these measures at every turn.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, we need to listen to the minister.

After eight years of listening to this government toot its own horn, we see just how out of touch it is with the lives of families.

Middle-class families are increasingly turning to food banks. We saw in the newspapers this morning that more and more Quebeckers are taking on second jobs to put food on the table. After working hard all their lives, seniors no longer have enough food to eat. Meanwhile, the minister keeps talking about everything this government has done to help.

The real question she should be asking is this: Why are so many people suffering after eight years under this Prime Minister?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is true that the global economic situation is very unstable right now. That is why we need to be there to support Canadians and Quebeckers. I do not understand how my colleague can claim to have compassion for Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet while voting against measures that will help them.

We will always be there to support Canadians.

* * *

• (1125)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, Quebec schools are feeling the full effects of what is happening at Roxham Road.

Since the beginning of the school year last September, the Quebec government has had to create 224 new classes just to accommodate the children of asylum seekers. That is 224 new classes, while we are in the midst of a shortage of teachers and specialists. That is 224 new classes, the vast majority in the Montreal area where schools are already filled well beyond their capacity.

There is a huge human cost to all this, which I will come back to, but first, will Ottawa commit to at least footing the bill?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is essential for us to meet our national and international obligation to protect asylum seekers. I had a meeting today with my counterpart from the Province of Quebec, Minister Fréchette, to talk about ways to collaborate in order to continue supporting asylum seekers and meet our national and international obligation on this issue.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, let us talk about the human cost.

There is a labour shortage in our classrooms. We cannot just ask our teachers to take in even more children who do not speak French and who are more likely to have special needs. The elastic is stretched thin and stretching it further would cut the quality of education offered to all children. Quebec does not have the resources to take care of all the asylum seekers from Roxham Road on its own. That is the reality.

When will the government finally suspend the safe third country agreement so that asylum seekers can be welcomed across Canada?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague is proposing a solution that simply shifts the problem somewhere else. It is not a good solution. It is essential to have an international strategy that is established in collaboration with the Province of Quebec.

[English]

We are going to continue to work with our provincial counterparts in Quebec, as we have done to support efforts to provide housing for asylum seekers and as we have done to support health care for asylum seekers. I have a meeting this afternoon with Minister Fréchette to discuss some of these issues, and I look forward to continuing our partnership to collaborate as we move toward a long-term solution with a modernized safe third country agreement with the United States.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians cannot get their sick children care because our hospitals are struggling with staffing shortages. Nursing vacancies are up by 494% since the Liberals took office. That is almost 29,000 unfilled nursing positions in hospitals and clinics across the country.

In the last election, the Liberals promised to hire thousands of health care workers. Incredulously, they have done the opposite. Why is the Prime Minister letting staffing shortages get worse and failing to protect Canada's universal public health care, which is so important to Canadians?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we share the deep concerns that Canadians have regarding the significant challenges that our health care system is experiencing, and we recognize that urgent actions are necessary to address the current health care worker crisis. In fact, in the health committee, we have just finished our study on the human resources challenge in health care.

Oral Questions

We are continuing to work with the provinces and territories to deliver real results for people through better access to family health teams, including more doctors and more nurses where there are not enough; better access to digital health information; better mental health care; and help to age with dignity. These are things Canadians need. We will always be here to support and stand up for our public universal health care system.

* * *

FIREARMS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, every community deserves to feel safe, and that is what Bill C-21 was originally intended to do: end handgun violence. Instead, the Liberals introduced amendments at the eleventh hour that would make it harder for indigenous people, farmers and hunters to support their families and put food on their tables. Today, the Liberals finally dropped the amendments that the Assembly of First Nations said would go against its treaty rights.

Will the minister apologize for the mess he made with these amendments?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are committed, and we promised Canadians that we would take action on gun violence. On the particular amendments the hon. member has referred to in Bill C-21, an important bill that would deal with gun violence, I will acknowledge there was not enough consultation. There were not enough conversations with indigenous peoples across the country. That is why we are committed in our committee to listening to the concerns and to making sure that our legislation is one that will protect public safety and keep Canadians safe. I look forward to working with the hon. member.

* * *

● (1130)

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years and over \$100 million spent, the government is still not admitting its close relationship with Dominic Barton and McKinsey, but close friends have dinner at each other's homes. Close friends embrace each other warmly when they greet each other.

Canadians know how close the Liberal government and McKinsey & Company are, so why does the government not just admit it and tell us how much it has spent on McKinsey & Company?

Oral Questions

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on Tuesday at the government operations committee, OGGO, this member and her colleagues came to try to prove two things. One was that Dominic Barton was a close personal friend of the Prime Minister. Number two was that Dominic Barton was involved in McKinsey getting contracts from the government. They failed abjectly.

Dominic Barton said he was not even a friend of the Prime Minister, he does not even have his phone number, he never socialized with him and he was never involved in McKinsey securing contracts from the government. That was failure by the Conservatives on Tuesday.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years, we know that the Liberal government has spent at least \$100 million on contracts with McKinsey, but it is still trying to hide how much it has spent on the total amount for contracts. Canadians are demanding answers. Therefore, on Monday, we are going to ask at committee, again, how much it has actually spent on contracts with McKinsey & Company. However, before then, I am going to give Liberals another chance today.

How much have they spent on contracts with McKinsey & Company and Dominic Barton?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member heard, Dominic Barton has been gone from McKinsey for years and is no longer a shareholder at McKinsey, so Dominic Barton's name should not be part of that.

Public Services and Procurement Canada is responsible for \$104 million of contracts with McKinsey since 2015. There are other smaller contracts that have been given by other departments.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government is very unsure and we get new numbers often. I expect that we will get a new higher number on Monday. However, we will be unsure if we can take the government at its word, because it continues to shovel money out the door to its insider friends at McKinsey. Public servants said that they have been treated to some colourful presentations, but not much else. After eight years of the Liberals, they are more than happy to keep shovelling that money, with no value to Canadians.

The question still stands, and we did not get the final and full answer: Can the parliamentary secretary tell us how much money they gave their insider friends at McKinsey?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the answer to that question is generally zero because there are no insider friends who got any money.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the question is this: Who is lying? The Prime Minister said that Dominic Barton was his friend. Dominic Barton said that he is not the Prime Minister's friend, and I do not blame him. I would not admit that was a friendship either.

McKinsey is a company that helped track down and punish Saudi dissidents, people who were critical of their government there. McKinsey is a company that helped supercharge the opioid crisis and that paid bonuses to pharmacists who were responsible for overdose deaths.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to be a friend of that hon. member because we can, across party lines, still agree on a lot of things, and I think that is important here. A lot of times we yell and scream at each other, and it is important to say that people are able to work together despite their differences.

With respect to the global question of that, we do need to look at our integrity regime to see if companies responsible for bad acts abroad should not be eligible for government contracts. That is one of the things that OGGO is looking at, and I look forward to working with the hon. member on that question.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, my thoughts this morning are with the 300 workers at Medicago who find themselves unemployed today because the Quebec City-based pharmaceutical company is closing its doors.

Two years ago, the Liberal government invested \$173 million of taxpayers' money in this company to develop a vaccine. The vaccine was produced, but it was not recognized by the WHO, and it never will be because cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris was one of Medicago's shareholders. The WHO never recognizes the work of cigarette manufacturers in this area.

How could the government be so negligent?

• (1135)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question.

We are currently working to save the jobs, the technology and the intellectual property. That is the priority today. We are in problem-solving mode.

Yesterday, I was in contact with the mayor of Quebec City and our colleagues in Quebec City. I was even in contact with the president of Mitsubishi in Japan. One thing is certain: We are in problem-solving mode to preserve the jobs, because the priority today is the people in Quebec City for whom this issue is top of mind. We want to work with them, and we will be in problem-solving mode for the next few weeks.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, if the government had been in "double-checking mode", it would not have to be in problem-solving mode today.

Oral Questions

In 2003, the WHO determined that companies partly owned by tobacco makers should not receive subsidies or recognition. This is exactly the situation Medicago is in. This agreement dates back to 2003 and was signed by the Government of Canada.

On December 23, the Minister of Health told the newspaper *Le Soleil* that he was surprised by the WHO's decision. That makes no sense, because the agreement dates back to 2003. There was no way this was going to be approved.

Medicago was awarded \$173 million. How much of that money went into the pockets of the Philip Morris company? Can we have any assurance that this money—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague, for whom I have enormous respect, as he knows, that we were in “prevention mode” at the time. It is important to remember that, at the time, there was not enough scientific data to know what kind of vaccine was needed to fight COVID-19.

Canada was one of the few countries in the world to invest in the various families of vaccines to ensure the health and safety of Canadians. As I said this morning, this is not the time for recrimination; it is the time for problem solving. That is exactly what we are doing.

Last night I talked to CEOs from across the country until almost midnight to try to find a solution and save the jobs, technology and intellectual property.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, employment insurance delays are longer than ever. Currently, one-quarter of EI applications take extra time to process, and more than half of those take over 50 days. That means people with no income are waiting 50 days.

Officials even advised people without jobs to use food banks or get their partner to support them. The kicker is that, while all this is going on, the minister has been cutting her employees' hours of work.

When will she do something about this fiasco?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[*English*]

When Canadians lose their jobs and when Quebeckers lose their jobs, we know that they rely on the EI system to be that first point of contact for them. We know that some people have been experiencing delays during this time. We have been working very carefully with those claimants to ensure that they get their payments.

With regard to the staffing issues, the minister said quite clearly yesterday that we are addressing this. We want to make sure that first point of contact for Quebeckers or for any Canadian calling an

EI call centre is that they get the service they need. We have committed to working with Service Canada to ensure that full employment is in place.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, what people are going through with EI right now is a fiasco. It is just like the passport crisis, only this time, the federal government's victims are not waiting to travel, they are waiting to buy groceries. Service Canada is more like “no-service Canada”.

This government is just lurching from one crisis to the next. It is over here putting out one fire while two more are breaking out over there.

When will the minister make sure Service Canada can actually provide services to people?

[*English*]

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the EI program is currently coming out of its annual winter peak period, and the department fully mobilized its workforce to get clients paid as quickly as possible. In 2022-23, the average wait time was 24 days for Canadians across the country, and 76% of EI payments were made within 28 days, which was within the standard.

We know people are waiting. We know it is a sensitive issue, which is why we are ensuring that claimants who are experiencing delays are getting the service they need.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the current Prime Minister, the bail system is broken. The Liberals implemented soft-on-crime catch-and-release bail policies that put violent and repeat offenders out on the streets and endanger public safety. Everyone but the Liberals seems to recognize what a disaster this has been. All 13 premiers, police associations and victims are calling on the Liberals to fix their broken bail system.

Why will they not?

● (1140)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians deserve to be safe and to feel safe. We all have a role to play in protecting communities.

The laws on bail are very clear. If the accused poses a serious risk to public safety, they should be denied bail. At our direction, federal officials have been working for months with their provincial and territorial counterparts to develop ways to keep Canadians safe. We need lasting solutions that are tough when they need to be tough, but also that address underlying issues like mental health, addiction and homelessness.

Oral Questions

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, the Liberals' catch-and-release bail policies have cost lives, including a young OPP constable who was murdered last December in the line of duty by a violent career criminal who was out on bail. Notwithstanding that he was facing serious charges such as assaulting a police officer, now a police officer is dead.

How many more lives need to be lost before the Liberals finally wake up and fix their broken bail system?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our hearts go out to those impacted by violence, and especially gun violence. As far as bail is concerned, there is no right to bail if someone poses a serious risk to public safety. There is, in fact, a reverse onus for bail imposed on the accused charged with certain firearms offences, including offences involving a firearm that are committed while subject to a weapons prohibition order. We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to ensure that bail is accessible, but at the same time it is limited to those who do not pose a risk to public safety.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, eight years ago, Constable David Wynn of the St. Albert RCMP was gunned down by a violent repeat offender who was mistakenly released on bail. The system failed. However, after eight years of the Prime Minister, a tragic mistake has become a matter of government policy of deliberately releasing violent repeat offenders on bail who kill innocent police officers and victims.

When will the Prime Minister acknowledge his failure and fix his broken justice system?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me be very clear on bail. The laws on bail are limited to those who do not pose a risk to public safety to be released on bail. If we look at the criminal justice system as a whole, we have a shared responsibility with the provincial and territorial governments. With respect to the federal government, we are responsible for the Criminal Code. The federal government is working with the provinces and territories to ensure that the administration of justice is strengthened. We will work with them in order to get to the right place on bail.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members that, if they do not have the floor, they should not be speaking, and there should not be debate going on back and forth while others have the floor.

The hon. member for Sturgeon River—Parkland.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, police officers, victims and the provinces are calling on the Prime Minister to fix this broken justice system. After eight years of the Liberal government, it has never been easier for violent repeat offenders to be released. If the Liberals do not believe it, the proof is in the pudding. Out of 44 gang-related homicides in Toronto in 2022, 24 were committed by those out on bail. The consequences of the Prime Minister's catch-and-release justice agenda are fatal.

After eight years of failure, when will the Prime Minister take responsibility and fix this broken justice system?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, sadly, there is no one among us who has not been subject to the effects of violence. All of us know people who are victims. Every single one of us shares an equal commitment to making sure that justice is served and that our communities are kept safe. The reality is that Canada enjoys one of the greatest reputations in the world for its justice system. We have one of the lowest rates of recidivism anywhere in the world.

The policies the Conservatives advocated were struck down by the courts again and again. They were tried in jurisdictions like the United States where even the father of that movement, Newt Gingrich, said they were an abject failure.

● (1145)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I send my regards to the family and friends of the late Dale Culver. They deserve justice. It is absolutely incredible that it has taken six years to charge five RCMP officers in his death.

An indigenous policing bill should have been introduced long ago, as the Liberals promised. It is clear they will only take incremental steps to ensure justice for indigenous peoples.

When will the current government pass legislation so indigenous peoples can keep themselves safe?

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the member opposite for her advocacy.

This is an important subject that we have to get right in Canada. As an indigenous person who lives in an indigenous community, I am aware of the complexities and also the need for indigenous policing legislation and indigenous policing commitments. That is why our government put almost \$1 billion in the 2020 budget to ensure that we are moving forward on indigenous policing. We are going to do so because we owe a debt to indigenous people across this country so they can be safe and secure in the places where they reside.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I raise my hands to the member for Nunavut.

Oral Questions

Living with a disability should not mean living in poverty, but for one million Canadians this is exactly what it means. The Canada disability benefit is at least a year away, and as Canadians wait for it, the cost of living continues to rise. The situation is dire as people skip meals and contemplate MAID. They need financial support now.

Will the Liberals provide a disability emergency relief benefit immediately to close that income gap?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her tireless advocacy.

In Canada, no person with a disability should live in poverty. That is why we are committed to creating the Canada disability benefit, a thoughtfully designed income supplement with the potential to seriously reduce poverty and improve financial security for hundreds of thousands of working-age Canadians with disabilities from coast to coast to coast.

I am pleased to say that yesterday Bill C-22 passed unanimously in the House. We look forward to seeing it move through the Senate.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know Canada has the great potential and talent to be a leader in new technology and innovation. Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry update this House on what our government is doing to improve Canada's competitiveness as an innovative nation?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today was a great day for one of our Canadian champions. OpenText, one of the largest software companies in the world, made its debut on the NASDAQ today. Not only that, but for the first time in Canadian history, the bell of the NASDAQ was rung from Canada, from here in Ottawa.

I would say to all Canadians and all members that if they know people who are employees of OpenText, it is thanks to their talent, know-how and expertise that we can celebrate, so send them a letter, send them a text message or give them a phone call. They have made all Canadians proud today.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight long years of the current government, crime has surged to a level not seen in decades. Not only are communities subjected to daily shootings and stabbings, but now they worry about random attacks in their subways. Rapists are let out on bail the same day the police take them down to the courthouse.

Public safety is not some graduate project for a criminologist; its implementation has deadly consequences if we do not get it right.

Instead of creating repeat victims, why does the current government not listen to the provinces and deal with repeat offenders?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as someone who lives close to the city of Toronto and uses the TTC, I am deeply concerned about the spike in violence on the TTC. The minister has spoken with Mayor Tory to express our support for him and the City of Toronto.

Our government has taken action on supporting law enforcement, on violence prevention and on mental health supports. Most recently, the minister was in Toronto to announce \$12 million in support, along with the mayor, to address many of the social determinants that can lead to violence, through the building safer communities fund.

We will continue to work with the City of Toronto and all communities to keep communities safe.

● (1150)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, in 2022, five Canadian police officers were killed in a deadly 37-day stretch. The president of the Police Association of Ontario has called this “unprecedented”. All the while, shootings continue in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Drugs, guns and contraband continue to flow across the border, and repeat offenders are out on bail, allowed to continue harming society unmitigated.

We know that the Prime Minister has been convicted of two ethics offences on separate occasions in the last eight years. Is that why the government is so afraid to deal with repeat offenders?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud of the record that we have on this side of the House when it comes to keeping communities safe. Whether that be investing in the border or replacing the money that was taken away by the Conservative government when it was in power, we are giving the tools to the Canada Border Services Agency to keep the borders safe to ensure that guns are not being smuggled across the border.

There is always more to do, and we will support law enforcement. We will support communities and we will do everything we can to ensure that Canadians are safe.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years with this Prime Minister, our cities are becoming less and less safe. The crime rate has increased by 32%. Murders committed by street gangs have almost doubled. This is all due to the soft-on-crime approach of this government, which has made it easier for violent criminals to be released on bail and has eliminated mandatory prison sentences for crimes committed with firearms.

When will this government take the violence in our streets seriously?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague has pointed out an extremely important problem that exists in Montreal, Quebec and across the country.

I would like to understand one thing. If my colleague is concerned about violence linked to firearms, why do the Conservatives systematically block measures that would make it easier to control firearms in Canada?

Our government introduced Bill C-21 to put a stop to handgun sales across the country, but the Conservatives are against it.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, this government is acting as though there is no problem. However, Canadians have been dealing with the direct impacts of this government's bad policies for eight years. Nearly half of the shooting-related homicides in Toronto last year were committed by one or more individuals who were out on bail. The last thing people want is for this phenomenon to spread across the country. The bail system needs to be reformed.

Will this government have the courage to do that? If so, will it vote in favour of our motion?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to answer a second question about gun violence. I am surprised that the Conservatives are asking this question.

The rates of violence against women and children have been on the rise for many years.

Why are the Conservatives against better gun control measures in this country?

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday Australia announced that it was removing the British monarchy from its banknotes. Charles III will be replaced by indigenous art. That is a modern and democratic example that Canada should follow. Banknotes are a subtle way for countries to present themselves to the world. Australia has chosen to honour its own culture and its own people. Canada continues to honour a foreign monarch and the authoritarian legacy he represents.

It is now 2023. Is it not time for change?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I took note of Australia's decision. It is definitely time to consider the future of the monarchy in Canada. People have very different opinions about this. The monarchy has served Canada very well to date. That said, it is always interesting to hear my colleague's position.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was talking about banknotes. I really think it is time for a change. Canada is going to have to replace its currency in any case. When the time comes to get new bills, does anyone really want to see King Charles on the banknotes?

It is not up to the Bloc Québécois to choose Canada's symbols, but we find it hard to believe that Canada cannot come up with something better after 150 years. Canada is a democratic country.

Why would Canada continue to choose a foreign monarch with a legacy of racism and violence against indigenous people, francophones and many other groups?

• (1155)

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question.

As members know, in 2018, the Canadian government launched a contest to put a woman on Canadian currency for the first time in our history. I am very proud that Viola Desmond was chosen and is now featured on the \$10 bill.

The government is currently considering options to replace the image on the \$5 bill. We are always looking to revitalize our Canadian institutions.

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*[English]***TAXATION**

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, inflation is at record levels. Grocery prices were up 11% last year. The Liberals' tax hikes make things worse, and they are planning more of them. The wind chill in Ottawa today is -40°C, but this is not as cold as the government's heart.

The Liberals caused this problem. When will they cancel the tax hikes?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, we have lowered taxes for middle-class Canadians twice. We have lowered taxes for small businesses twice, and it is important that the opposition understands that inflation is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We do not have interpretation.

It is working now. The hon. parliamentary secretary can restart his answer.

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Speaker, I would love to restart my answer because it gives me a second opportunity to talk about how we have lowered taxes for middle-class Canadians twice. We have lowered taxes for small businesses twice.

When it comes to global inflation, it is, in fact, global. It is too high in Canada, at 6.3%, but it is higher for our economic peers. It is 6.5% in the United States. It is over 9% in Europe. It is over 10% in the OECD. We should be encouraged that inflation is actually coming down in Canada. We have a strong fiscal framework that allows us to invest in affordability, in good, clean jobs and in making sure that we build an economy that works for everyone.

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GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have put B.C. families in an impossible position with their inflationary spending. After eight years of the Prime Minister, the prices of gas, rent and groceries have all skyrocketed. Half of Canadians are now worried they cannot properly feed their families. Meanwhile, the Liberals are dishing out multi-million dollar contracts to friendly friends.

When will the Liberal government stop lining the pockets of their friendly friends and start focusing on everyday Canadians?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always hope that we can certainly be friendly with our colleagues across the way.

I really find it difficult and challenging that the Conservatives seem to have this tactic of saying one thing but doing something else. They say they are really concerned about Canadians, but they vote against our measures for rental and dental assistance, or measures in terms of protecting workers. They voted against our measures in terms of cutting taxes for the middle class. They even wanted, in their campaign proposal, to cut the child care agreements in this country. They are not really there for Canadians. That is not so friendly.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, Canadians are having a hard time paying for everything, including imported vegetables. Life has never been so expensive. An innovative and environmentally safe agribusiness is ready to open in my community, but it is concerned about upcoming Liberal restrictions.

Why does the Liberal government have no problem spending billions of dollars on friendly consultants, but seems determined to make life more difficult and expensive for hard-working Canadians?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is working and Canadians are working. In fact, they are working in record numbers. Over 659,000 jobs have been created since the pandemic. That is what allows us to invest in making life more affordable by protecting and increasing retirement security for seniors, and by investing in dental care for children.

Oral Questions

I have good news on that front. I am happy to report today that over 152,000 children under the age of 12 have been able to go to the dentist because of the investment we made. That is lifting a burden off Canadian parents.

* * *

• (1200)

[Translation]

SPORTS

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for months now, we have been hearing horror stories involving various sports in Canada. Several years ago, our government implemented new measures to put an end to this scourge, which is undermining some amazing talent and, worse still, destroying lives.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport please explain how our government's many decisions are now bringing about change?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question and her support on a very important issue that our government is very involved in.

We are creating new structures to protect athletes and provide solutions to help and support them. A few months ago, we established the Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner, and 34 sporting federations joined it. We are doing everything we can to protect athletes, and we will always stand by them.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, Canadians are paying the price for his destructive policies. The farmers who produce our food are continuing to struggle.

A farmer from my riding recently showed me his latest gas bill for grain drying. The carbon tax and GST that were applied on top of it amounted to over \$1,100. However, with higher costs for producers in the field and for consumers at the grocery store, the Liberals do not care. They are going to go ahead and triple the carbon tax anyway.

When will they stop punishing Canadian families and the farmers who feed them?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we do care for farmers. I work very closely with farmers across the country, and we are the government that has invested the most in history in the agriculture and agri-food sector. We just signed the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership, and we have increased, by 25%, the cost-shared contribution to support our farmers.

Oral Questions

When the Conservatives were here, they were cutting in science, they were cutting in business risk management and they were cutting everything for farmers.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, on December 3, CTV ran a story with the following headline: “Transport minister confident in a smooth holiday air travel season”. However, as we all know, the chaos that Canadians experienced at airports last summer was repeated in December and January, with Canadians stranded at airports for days on end.

After eight years, what exactly is the Liberal government doing to prevent air travel chaos?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government understands how the delays and cancellations this holiday season were extremely frustrating for travellers. We expect all airlines to communicate with passengers and keep them informed of delays or cancellations.

We are always looking at ways to strengthen rights for passengers, and we will continue to ensure these rights are protected and that the Canadian Transportation Agency has the resources it needs to enforce these rights. As the minister, who was before us at the transport committee, committed to, we are looking to strengthen air passenger rights. We will continue to make sure that Canadians have a smooth—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Wascana.

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, in a vast country such as ours, efficient air travel to all regions is essential, but after eight years of the Liberal government, mid-size airports like Regina's are bearing the brunt of airline cutbacks and lack of competition, leaving people in those regions feeling like second-class citizens.

Will the government help Canadians who use mid-size airports, or will the government continue to leave them stranded?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government will continue to strengthen everything that Canadians require to have a smooth experience in travel. We continue to dialogue with our airports. The minister's office and the minister himself continue to meet with them and have that conversation.

We will always be there to listen to concerns and needs. We will deliver for all Canadians across the country.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, now, more than ever, Canadians rely on access to affordable, reliable high-speed Internet. It keeps us connected with loved ones, but also allows us to learn online while improving access to essential services and creating opportunities for our businesses to grow.

Can the Minister of Rural Economic Development update this House on the progress our government is making on achieving our goal of connecting 98% of Canadians by 2026 and 100% of Canadians by 2030?

• (1205)

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Whitby for his strong, unwavering advocacy for rural issues.

We know that investments toward high-speed Internet are transformational for improving the lives of rural Canadians, whether they are working from home, accessing health care and education or, frankly, keeping in touch. Today, 93.5% of Canadians have access to high-speed affordable Internet. In 2014, just 79% of Canadians had access. As my colleague said, we are well under way to meeting our commitment of having everybody connected by 2030. When rural Canada succeeds, all of Canada succeeds.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, deep seabed mining threatens ocean ecosystems. Rather than taking a stand on deep seabed mining like France, Germany, Spain and others, the Liberals prefer to support Canadian mining companies such as The Metals Company, creating industrial-scale mining sites on the deep seabed. Meanwhile, the lives and livelihoods of indigenous and coastal communities around the world that rely upon the health of the oceans may be threatened.

Will the government stand up today for the safety and protection of our oceans and demand a moratorium on international deep seabed mining?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's position is that the seabed and the marine environment require effective protection through rigorous regulatory structures, applying a precautionary ecosystem-based approach, using science-based and transparent management and ensuring effective compliance.

As the situation evolves, our government will continue to work with scientists and will work with international partners. We all want to do what is right for Canada.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the pandemic has been devastating for artists and the organizations that support them. Ticket sales for live orchestras, like the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony, are still an unsustainable 33% lower than before the pandemic. The government ended pandemic relief funds for arts organizations, but they still need our help.

After months of advocacy, the minister said he would monitor the situation and that is not good enough. Can the KW Symphony count on the government's support in budget 2023?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that the performing arts were the first impacted by the pandemic and will be the last to recover. We are aware of the situation the hon. member has brought attention to, and I know he has met with the Minister of Canadian Heritage on the file. We will work with this organization to find a solution to the issues it has raised.

The government has been there for our culture sector since 2015 after cuts from the previous Conservative government. We have been there from the start of the pandemic. We are there for our arts and culture sector.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

DOG IMPORTATION

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I am pleased to rise and present petition e-4122, which has received a whopping 20,000-plus signatures from Canadians. That is a significant number of signatures.

The petition refers to the government's dog rescue importation ban. It asks the government to work with affected dog rescues and animal rights advocates to ensure that government policy on dog importation keeps Canadians safe without increasing the number of animals in shelters or on streets globally, and to have some compassion and allow dogs into this country that could be reunited with very generous Canadians.

I present this petition on behalf of those 20,000-plus people.

● (1210)

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present a petition from concerned Canadians who note that the Russian Federation's illegal invasion of Ukraine has heightened concerns around the world about the threat of nuclear war for the first time in a very long time.

The petitioners point out that we have made many efforts over the years in nuclear non-proliferation and that particularly recently, we had a historic treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons that entered into force in January 2021. The petitioners also note the Government of Canada is not participating in the treaty and has

Routine Proceedings

even failed to show up as an observer to the negotiations and the first meeting of the parties.

These citizens and residents of Canada call on the Government of Canada to show a leadership role and look at our historic role in that regard. They call on Canada to join our allies, such as Germany and Norway, in at least participating as observers to the ongoing work of the treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition today on behalf of residents in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country. Due to the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, they are asking for a number of actions. They are calling on the government to, first, extend open work permit time limits set through the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel measures; second, extend working visa and student visa time limits through the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel measures; and last, offer a simplified path to permanent residency for Ukrainians who wish to stay in Canada.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition on behalf of residents from Kelowna—Lake Country and the surrounding area in relation to the government bill, Bill C-21, on firearms. It is quite lengthy, but I will go right to the asks of the government. They are asking for the government to, first, stop targeting law-abiding hunters, sport shooters and farmers with gun legislation; second, immediately withdraw the amendments tabled on November 22, 2022, at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security; and last, withdraw the existing bill, Bill C-21, and restart consultations with the firearms community, firearms owners and public safety experts.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if a revised response to Question No. 1113, originally tabled on January 30, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

[Text]

Question No. 1113—**Mr. Dan Albas:**

With regard to contracts that were cancelled by the government since January 1, 2019, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: (a) how many contracts have been cancelled; (b) what is the total amount paid out in cancellation fees or penalties; and (c) what are the details of all such cancellations, including, for each, the (i) date the contract was signed, (ii) date the contract was cancelled, (iii) vendor, (iv) value, (v) description of goods or services, (vi) reason for the cancellation, (vii) cancellation fee or other similar type of cost to the government?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

**NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS
MODERNIZATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets for his speech and for the work that he does on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. His colleague from Calgary Nose Hill got us thinking about the Investment Canada Act two years ago. My colleague from Windsor West remembers it well.

One of the recommendations that was made, which was mainly ignored by the government, sought for more transparency from the minister when making decisions under the Investment Canada Act.

I would like him to tell us whether such transparency is necessary when it comes to this act. What are the conditions being imposed on businesses in terms of investments in particular?

I remember when Rona was sold to Lowe's. The minister never disclosed the conditions. Today, Lowe's is no longer around and we have not seen any investments. The government did not do anything to protect our head offices.

What can be done to protect our head offices other than hoping for more transparency from the minister about what he is doing? Is the member in favour of more transparency?

• (1215)

[English]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his work over the years on the industry committee and that particular report. It is a very good report. I would encour-

age all members to read it. I support all of the recommendations in that report.

I think we can work together when Bill C-34 comes to the industry committee, to work on that transparency. Reasons why an acquisition is reviewed and reasons for accepting or rejecting it by the cabinet, the Governor in Council and the minister are things that should be published with the decision each time. That way, Canadians would be able to fully understand the rationale behind what sometimes look like very odd things, such as when we lose very important Canadian-headquartered businesses to other jurisdictions, particularly when they are, in the case of some acquisitions, countries not as aligned with our goals as we would like.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up with my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, who did a really good job on the report at committee. I want to congratulate the member here. He has come onto the industry committee just recently and has done a great job. I am really pleased he has actually researched the report. I wish that the government had done that as well.

I really appreciate the fact that we are actually going to bring some of these recommendations forward.

The takeover of Rona, and now Lowe's having some questionable ownership in the United States, brings an important example. I just want to reflect further on that, because when we think about national security, it is also about competition and about product availability.

With the closures of stores, especially with regard to pricing and other things, from wood and lumber to other things we require, we need to look through a different lens about what this means for Canada, because now we have lost an iconic entity.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, one of the things I mentioned in my speech, and hopefully one we can explore in committee, is this issue of whether the net benefit test is being used well enough.

We have a lot of corporate concentration in this country. We have oligopolies in many of our industries, and this is one of the reasons why we rank last by the OECD in productivity as a country. The OECD actually projects, going forward, that we are going to be the least productive of the 20 OECD countries in the world.

That is why this bill is so important, that we get to study not just the security issues but also the issues of net benefit and corporate concentration that we have in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured that you recognized me. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge your colleagues from Joliette.

I will not be sharing my time today, but I would like to take a brief moment to recognize the work of parliamentary interns. I was privileged to have Sonja Tilro on my team for several weeks. She has done an incredible job, and this speech will be one of her final contributions to my team. I would like to acknowledge this contribution, as well as that of all parliamentary interns, who are distinct assets who add value to our Parliament.

Government Orders

Today we have before us Bill C-34, a government bill that seeks to amend the Investment Canada Act. This is the first major amendment to the Investment Canada Act since 2009, when the government introduced a national security review process for foreign investments. There have been no other proposals since then, other than a few concurrence amendments when entering into trade agreements.

In essence, Bill C-34 increases the government's ability to better control foreign investments, but only those that could harm national security. It makes no changes to the economic benefit part of the act. The issue of truly modernizing the Investment Canada Act is being avoided yet again and major issues will not be addressed this time either.

Bill C-34 essentially makes seven changes to make the review process more effective. We are pleased to see that the work of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology was taken into account and inspired these changes, which are the following: new filing requirement prior to the implementation of investments in prescribed business sectors; authority for the minister to extend the national security review of investments; stronger penalties for non-compliance; authority for the minister to impose conditions during a national security review and so on.

The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-34, which, in our opinion, improves oversight of investments that may be injurious to national security. However, the current version of Bill C-34 simply does not include enough protection for our businesses in Quebec and the government has missed a golden opportunity to strengthen our business network and prevent our resources and capital from going offshore. To achieve this necessary energy transition, we need every economic tool at our disposal.

Is it still possible to add elements in order to better protect head offices and send a clear message that a multilateral agreement could be considered to meet the need, expressed by Quebec, of controlling the development of its economy and protecting businesses in the strategic niches it has created?

The Investment Canada Act was passed in 1985 and requires that the government ensure that important foreign investments are “to be of net benefit” to Canada before being approved. In 2009, the act gained a section on national security that gives the government the power to block a foreign investment if it is deemed to be injurious to national security. We are talking about investments in particularly critical sectors, especially those made by foreign governments or companies linked to those governments. Bill C-34, introduced on December 7, 2022, by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, has improved the reviews and increased the minister's powers, but only for investments related to national security.

My speech will identify a few elements that could be studied seriously by the committee when we get to that stage of the legislative process.

A few members are here today to read what is in the bill dealing with investment in Canada. What tools will allow development to occur with confidence while maintaining some control over foreign investment? How important is the protection of intellectual property? What commitments and conditions are we prepared to demand

of investors in order to promote the creation of wealth here, in Quebec?

We are preparing our future in the image of the Quebec model, and we simply want the federal government to recognize this. The federal government's foreign investment policy these past years can be summarized in two words: deregulation and permissiveness.

The policy provides for increased scrutiny when national security is at stake, but otherwise the floodgates are open. The fact is, all other foreign investments are approved virtually automatically and without review. Statutory review mechanisms, which the government readily insists on protecting in every trade agreement that it signs, are essentially rendered ineffective.

I want to come back to the work of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

• (1220)

In the Bloc Québécois' supplementary report, which was submitted at the same time as the standing committee's, we identified the main elements that are essential to strengthening Quebec's economic development model.

Let us talk about how the Conservative and Liberal governments have handled the threshold at which agreements must be submitted for review under the Investment Canada Act over the past 10 years.

In 2013, the Conservative government set the tone when it announced plans to raise the threshold at which the government evaluates whether foreign investments are actually beneficial. Then in 2015, the Liberal government sped things up.

Do these policies have a real impact? Yes. Over the course of that decade, things went off the rails. Every time we had a chance to study this issue in committee, witnesses sounded the alarm about the flaws in the current act. The threshold is not high enough, and too many agreements simply do not get reviewed.

The result is striking. Between 2009 and 2019, the proportion of foreign investments subject to review fell from 10% to just 1%. My colleagues heard that right. Under the current rules, 99% of foreign investments are now automatically authorized without a review. That is why the Bloc Québécois demanded that the department lower the threshold.

Government Orders

The Quebec model includes businesses that are much smaller in size and number. The department must lower the threshold in order to stop this transfer of our intellectual property and talent into the hands of companies headquartered outside of Quebec. This problem comes at a bad time. Over the past 30 years, the nature of foreign investment in OECD countries has changed. New investment is down, while investments in the form of mergers and acquisitions of existing companies are up.

We understand that we need to get on the same footing as our trading partners. If there is one thing the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us, it is that global supply chains are fragile and that it is unwise to be completely dependent on decisions made abroad.

The new review process is essentially the same as the one in the United States. Adopting it increases the chances of the Americans continuing to consider us as a reliable partner. That is a condition for being a well-integrated preferred supplier in their supply chains.

In a context where protectionism is on the rise among our neighbours to the south, which could seriously upset our economy, it is an important asset and the Bloc Québécois applauds it. The Standing Committee on International Trade is currently looking at the possible effects of U.S. policies in favour of the electrification of transportation that have the potential of excluding our companies that specialize in this, including electric vehicle batteries. In addition to the new guideline on critical minerals which is likely to diminish China's footprint in this sector, Bill C-34 is reassuring, which is a good thing.

Critical minerals and the electrification of transportation also raise important issues. As in other countries, there are good reasons to protect our businesses and encourage them to set up near the resources they need. We cannot blame other countries for taking the opportunity to get their hands on our businesses, provided a comprehensive and thorough review has been done.

The region of Abitibi-Témiscamingue is no exception. We are aware that our region will be coveted for its minerals such as rare earth, lithium, copper, nickel and gold. The region is full of critical minerals all the way to northern Quebec.

We also have one of the best universities, Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue or UQAT, which has international experts and top-notch programs. We want to play a leading role and really succeed in this field. For my part, I foresee the creation of a centre of excellence for critical and strategic minerals.

It is now time to create the necessary jobs and to undertake the long-term economic and industrial transformation towards a carbon-neutral future. The time has come to create a future where Quebec will be a global leader in clean technologies by focusing on essential minerals and the development of an innovative and sustainable ecosystem for the production of batteries, or what I call the green mine.

Bill C-34 is in addition to the new critical minerals guidelines that the government adopted on October 28, 2022, and that apply to 31 minerals that are critical for the sustainable economic prosperity of Canada and its allies. By supporting the new government guidelines for these 31 critical minerals, more strategic projects for resource regions will be developed.

• (1225)

This is a real opportunity to prepare our own future through the creation of technological goods and the electrification of transportation. I am referring to the minerals necessary for the production of technological goods and the electrification of transportation. There is a real opportunity to position Canada and Quebec as leaders in exploration, extraction, processing and production, and to make Canada a leader in the production of batteries and other digital and clean technologies, and to develop an innovative and sustainable battery industry ecosystem in Quebec and Canada, including making Canada and Quebec a world leader in battery manufacturing, recycling and reuse.

In those areas, an investment from a foreign government or affiliated company will be considered a disadvantage from the outset. It will be subject to national security review and will likely be denied, except in exceptional circumstances.

The burden of proof is reversed here. The investment is refused outright, unless the investor can demonstrate that it is truly beneficial. The government recently blocked three mining investment projects by applying this directive.

That said, Bill C-34 and the new Canadian critical minerals strategy should put the brakes on Chinese companies taking our resources. It should put a stop to our industries being so dependent on foreign resources.

Let us talk about security. While we are currently talking about the risks that Chinese companies represent to our security and our technological choices in telecommunications, it is just as important to assess the risk involved in foreign investors taking our resources away from our industries. By thoroughly and diligently reviewing the economic and security components of every investment, we can capitalize on those who would bring us prosperity and avoid those who would put us at risk.

It also makes it possible for us to keep pace with our allies, particularly the United States. It guarantees that we are considered a reliable, preferred partner in trade and in the development of critical mineral supply chains and that we can continue to be a part of the green future.

The amendments to the act make the national security review process more efficient by giving the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, in consultation with the Department of National Security, the power to make an order extending the national security review referred to in section 25.3.

In the past, an order from the Governor in Council was needed at this step of the process. By eliminating the need for an order from the Governor in Council, the partners responsible for intelligence security will have more time to complete the intelligence analyses, which are becoming increasingly complex.

The protection of our intellectual property is another important issue. The amendments to the act put in place a pre-implementation filing requirement for some investments in designated sectors. That will enable the government to have an overview of the investments made in sectors where the investor could obtain sensitive assets and information, intellectual property or trade secrets, for example, immediately after an investment is made.

Now the government will be able to prevent that kind of irreparable damage. Investors operating in designated sectors will have to submit notice within the timelines specified in the regulations. The bill also provides for better information exchange with international counterparts. Amendments to the act facilitate international information exchange and authorize the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to disclose information about an investor to allied countries to support their intelligence analyses and national security reviews if the minister deems it appropriate to do so.

Previously, information about a given investor was considered privileged and could not be disclosed. This amendment will enable Canada to better protect itself against investors that may be actively seeking the same technology in several countries or when there is a shared national security interest. That said, Canada would of course not communicate that information for reasons of confidentiality or any other reason.

The government's blind spot is the preservation of our economic levers. All these developments are good, but they are incomplete. The Bloc Québécois wants the government to do much more. Last year, according to the annual report the department's investment division tabled in Parliament in October, foreigners submitted 1,255 proposed investments totalling \$87 billion.

• (1230)

Of those 1,255 investment projects, only 24, or 2%, were considered to have national security implications and would have been covered by the new rules contained in Bill C-34. The remaining 1,221 foreign investments remain subject to the old lax rules and almost all were automatically approved without review. Only eight, or less than 1%, were reviewed to determine whether they actually provided a net economic benefit.

Over the years, the act has been weakened. The threshold below which the government does not even review the investment continues to rise. Virtually all investments pass through like clockwork without the government being given the authority, under the Investment Canada Act, to assess whether it is beneficial.

The current act, passed in the mid-1980s, assumes that full liberalization of investment is good, that just about any foreign investment is good, regardless of the loss of decision-making levers and head offices that it entails, the resulting weakening of Montreal's financial sector, the total dependence of our businesses on foreign suppliers, the possible land grab, the loss of control over our natural resources and so on.

Government Orders

By focusing solely on national security, Bill C-34 does not address Quebecers' and Canadians' gradual loss of control over their own economy. For that reason, we invite the government to table another bill to modernize the entire Investment Canada Act and not just the part on national security. National security is a good thing, but so is economic security. In particular, the government must lower considerably the threshold for the approval of foreign investments without review.

We must be open to foreign investment because it is a vector of growth and development that we cannot allow ourselves to ignore. Global competition is fierce. We have a significant competitive advantage. We are reliable and our carbon footprint is by far the best thanks to our hydroelectric power.

Furthermore, we all want to support our domestic corporations and to help them grow and create wealth for Canadians. Our goal is to protect our companies and head offices, which we know are important decision-makers.

I want to reiterate that Quebec's economy is and will always be open to the world. Openness toward foreign investment is essential for enabling Quebec to access major trade networks, which is crucial for guaranteeing the prosperity of our relatively small-scale economy.

However, we must be careful about opening our doors to investors. To date, the Investment Canada Act has not helped. We are encumbered by an investment act that has been watered down in many ways since the 1980s.

The total market liberalization that plagued the 1980s had a negative impact on the quality of our local economies and resulted in the weakening of financial centres like Montreal, the withdrawal of decision-making power and tools from head offices, land takeovers, and loss of control over our own resources.

As Jacques Parizeau wrote in 2001, even before China joined the World Trade Organization, “we do not condemn the rising tide; we build levees to protect ourselves”.

Since the Quiet Revolution, the Government of Quebec has gained significant economic and financial leverage enabling it to pursue a policy of economic nationalism—the intensity of which varies from one government to the next—that gives Quebecers greater control over their economy.

Unfortunately, as the Investment Canada Act was weakened over the years, the levee crumbled. We have to convince the government to insert new provisions into the act to shore it up.

Government Orders

This is a welcome development, but it is not enough. Major investments from corporations with ties to the Chinese government have shifted things. Canada is starting to realize that it needs better oversight over foreign investments and has to make sure they are beneficial before authorizing them. This bill signals an awareness that was a long time coming, and the Bloc Québécois is happy about that.

• (1235)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I look at Bill C-34, I see legislation that is in Canada's best interest. I think of our economy generally and Canada's dependency on international trade. There is a lot of investment coming into and going out of the country. This legislation is there to protect the interests of our nation from a safety perspective. However, it is also there to ensure that we continue to build our economic links throughout the world and have investments that advance our communities, no matter where they are in Canada.

Could the member provide his thoughts regarding whether the Bloc party intends to support Bill C-34?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for the question. I want to reiterate that the Bloc Québécois supports the bill, but it is also proposing some improvements, including to ensure that we can keep head offices in Quebec.

The issue surrounding thresholds is simple: What happens in the case of devaluation? We may be entering a recession, and that worries me. COVID-19 was especially worrisome for our businesses and flagship companies such as Air Transat, whose value dropped largely because of the loss of commercial flights. This had consequences, and if its value keeps falling and dips under the infamous threshold I was talking about earlier, it could be bought up by a foreign American, European or Chinese company. This means that its head office would move, and company decisions would no longer be made based on the best interests of the Quebec nation.

In Abitibi-Témiscamingue, we are having a major problem with flights from Rouyn-Noranda to other destinations. Air Transat once expressed an interest in offering flights to international destinations. Unfortunately, that never happened, but there is no doubt that if it were another company, it would not be interested in the future of regional aviation.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my esteemed colleague from Abitibi, who sits on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology and is the best at promoting his beloved region. I have many things in common with him.

I, too, am a member of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, and last year we witnessed the sale of a certain company, Neo Lithium, to be specific. The company, which now belongs to a Chinese group, does not have projects in Canada, but does have one in Argentina.

Will the bill help us hang onto our companies or our rare minerals that we want to develop, and that are highly abundant in

Abitibi? Will the bill prevent this type of thing, or, at the very least, reduce the potential impact of these decisions in Canada?

• (1240)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my fellow Quebecker, and I feel I can call him that because his presence at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology means that we talk even more about Quebec. I really want to highlight his always relevant contribution on issues related to economic development. He is an entrepreneur, as he likes to remind us.

I would like to remind him that my region is called Abitibi—Témiscamingue. It is important to be inclusive, and my constituents would be upset with me if I did not mention it.

With regard to the member's question, the sale of Neo Lithium did raise a lot of questions, first of all because the mechanism was not automatically triggered. It was an acquisition, but at the same time, the portion of Neo Lithium that was in Canada was an empty shell. The only thing Canadian about it was its head office. How could Canada's best interest have been protected? That said, some serious reflection is required regarding the importance of owning our resources.

We are living in a time of increasing resource scarcity. Strategic critical minerals come to mind, but this is true across a range of areas, so we need to be able to maintain ownership of our resources to further fuel our industries.

Take Lion Electric, for example. It would be absolutely fantastic if we could supply that company with lithium. However, if we send all of our lithium elsewhere—for example for Tesla vehicles because it is great to provide Tesla vehicles with Quebec lithium—we will be neglecting our own economic development. That raises a lot of questions for me.

I think that we need to make a major change in terms of our national economy. We need to start protecting our businesses.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you are doing a fantastic job. I had a tough time sitting in the chair. It did not turn out as well as it has for you.

To my colleague who sits on the industry committee, we did actually study this, as he noted in his speech in the previous Parliament.

We had an unnecessary election, which I think we can all relate to in different ways. The government never really responded to the thorough report that we wrote. The member was very articulate. He was also determined to raise the threshold issue through testimony and the report.

Does the member feel that the government and the minister should get a pass for this report? I do not believe so because the government called the unnecessary election. Because of that, we did not get the work we did through the full vetting process. I still think that is relevant to what we are dealing with today. Could the member reflect on that?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I will tell him again, even though I know that he has heard it before. The member for Windsor West is sort of a mentor to me on these issues. He has been a member of the committee for such a long time.

It was very shocking for us, as a very collaborative and productive committee, to see half a dozen studies die on the Order Paper. However, with the help of my colleague, I moved several motions to revive them. One by one, the studies were all reactivated in order to ensure that the government responds, which is fundamental.

Let us come back to my colleague's question. Thresholds seem very necessary to me. I spoke about them in my speech. We also need to remember one recommendation that the Liberals dismissed in their dissenting opinion to the report from our study on the Investment Canada Act. It was recommendation 5, which sought to ensure that the minister is more transparent when rendering a decision under the Investment Canada Act.

I could bring up the infamous example of Rona and Lowe's again. It is important because the government never revealed what requirements it imposed on Lowe's in terms of jobs, investment and maintaining stores or branches in specific regions. What were the requirements? Nobody knows, but what we do know is that the company will not comply with them.

• (1245)

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Abitibi-Témiscamingue for his speech. He talked about critical minerals.

Obviously, when China tried to get its hands on critical minerals, the answer was a categorical “no” for national security reasons. However, my colleague talked about the United States, and the U.S. army is also after critical minerals.

Yes, the United States is an ally, but should we still make sure we retain a certain degree of control over our critical minerals and keep the supply chain, or at least part of it, in our hands?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Jean for delivering such an accurate analysis.

Once again, I would like to highlight the work that is being done at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. As a result of the Neo Lithium study, we have undertaken a study on strategic critical minerals.

Even before the last election was called, I criticized the fact that Canada had no national strategy on strategic critical minerals. A strategy was then created based on the work of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

In my view, it is fundamental to ensure that processing can happen on site at the mine, in order to highlight the key role of the re-

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gion where the resource and mine are located. First of all, there are obvious savings to be had in terms of transportation costs, as well as an environmental benefit, but above all, it is the best way to protect our industries, particularly the automotive industry. We know there is a lot of back-and-forth involved. An automotive part can cross the border 50 times or so. However, if processing happens at the mine, it would ensure that our national economy is protected.

[English]

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to Chinese state-owned enterprises, could the member reflect on the threshold he believes might be reasonable? I believe the last committee in the previous Parliament indicated that a much lower threshold, maybe even zero, should be considered.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Simcoe North, a rising star in the Conservative Party. I am always interested in seeing his progress.

What is happening with China is worrisome. We know that China controls 80% of the lithium market.

If we want a strong domestic economy, since globalization is basically over, we have to be able to protect our domestic economy and ensure that our companies have the supplies they need, especially chips for building electric vehicles. We have to put ourselves and Quebec first.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to deviate from my original plan, to continue from the comments from the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue. He brings up an interesting aspect to the debate on the Rona experience. That is important in a couple of contexts I want to expand on, because it was a Canadian, Quebec-based iconic company. It still has remnants today, but it was a really good sensation for not only Quebec but also parts of Ontario and other parts of Canada. The member was very astute in reflecting on the lack of information and support we got in order to guarantee decision-making as it was taken over by Lowe's.

When we think about national security, sometimes we think about weapons, intelligence and all those matters. However, sometimes we forget that our national security also includes competition in the market and access to goods and services, which we undermine by allowing foreign takeovers like that. Now a private equity firm in the United States is basically in ownership of Lowe's. This gives more of a skewed and distorted representation, when what we had was actually a Canadian iconic company that was taken over. The decision-making process, as the member has noted, was never clear to all of Canada.

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On top of that, we went through the pandemic and people actually stayed at home and did renovations. We have softwood lumber shortages and we have had lack of competition in a number of different fields. We know this from the cellphone industry, for example, but we also know it through the oil and gas industry with a lack of refining capacity. The takeover of Rona is one that we need to look at and reflect on in a different way than just as a transaction.

We traditionally feel these things through the workers and those who are directly impacted at that moment, but we also have to be more complex in Canada because we are dealing with a number of oligopolies that control certain aspects of our market. Let us look at our grocery store chains, for example, where there is a lack of competition and where there was even collusion on bread pricing and fixing. We know that at the industry committee we also heard testimony that when the hero pay was ended, the grocers all talked to each other that week and decided within the same day to stop that payment to workers.

The reason I raise these things is that there is a deeper level of vulnerability in our economy because Canada is more susceptible than the United States and Europe to a lack of competition. We have a competition law that is vastly outdated. Therefore, New Democrats will be bringing amendments to Bill C-34 at committee that actually address some of these issues, and we are hoping that we will see support for that from other parties. The committee, I will note, is well led by a bipartisan effort and we have actually done some really good work. That is why I referenced earlier the work we got done in a previous Parliament and I will return to a bit later, but the process was basically usurped because of the election.

On top of that, the current minister puts forth a fair amount of legislation that has happened and is very busy. I give him credit for all of those things, but he has yet to address that in a comprehensive way. I hope that when he comes to committee to bring the bill forward, he will be prepared to deal with some of those questions, and I think he will be. We did not hear it today, but that is okay. However, the committee process will be very robust and I am looking forward to that. I am going to get into a few of those recommendations a bit later, but I want to emphasize that, just because they were in the last Parliament, this does not mean they are irrelevant. In fact, we have had to bring back a number of reports that were dealt with.

Bill C-34, officially the national security review of investments modernization act, is an act to amend the Investment Canada Act, and it actually goes back to the 1980s. It really dealt with the fact that many Canadian companies were being bought by U.S. firms and investment, and we had some of the hollowing out of Canada. There has been notation about the reviews, and right now, under the current process, about 99% are not even looked at or touched, so that has not worked at all. In fact, the act, in its modernization approach to it, has actually had a couple of amendments.

I first came to the House in 2002. Subsequently, in 2003, we did a review of China Minmetals and raised the fact that nondemocratic governments, that one being China, and state-owned companies were purchasing Canadian natural resources. What was ironic about this time period was that Canada, under Paul Martin and the Liberals, was divesting from Petro-Canada.

• (1250)

For those who remember Petro-Canada, we actually had a strategy and an investment in that, which was quite significant, but we divested it, shockingly. I could get into more details about that than are probably necessary here, but when Mr. Martin sold it, within six months we lost another \$4 billion. We could have attained more for the assets because it went up in the market after that. That is a side story.

It also led to some of the problems we have now with a lack of competition for refining, because Petro-Canada was allowed to close refineries, the most significant one being in the Burlington-Oakville area. We have a lack of competition because refineries now produce for everybody, and that is one of the challenges that we have in the oil and gas sector.

I wanted to note that because China Minmetals and other companies under the state-sponsored flag were buying up Canadian companies. Ironically, we were divesting as a country from assets that we actually had, which was unfortunate, I think, and still is to this day.

At any rate, that brought in a push for us to ask for the security screen for that, and it is not just for China. I want to be clear on this. We are talking about non-democratic governments in general, and that is what I have been referring to, which should have an additional screen on them.

Also, something that has been missed, and I am looking forward to an amendment on this and how to address this, is the issue of private equity firms, where we have iconic Canadian companies that have been bought up by private equity firms, where we do not even know who the real owners are of some of those companies. Again, this could affect competition and a series of things, so I am hoping that this bill can look at an amendment to deal with some of those things as well. There have been a lot of challenges that we have with the ownership rules and, again, 99% are not even looked at as they are under the threshold right now.

The other thing about this bill, and I do give the minister credit on this, as he has brought it to Parliament. There have been previous amendments to this bill, in 2009 and other times, that came as part of budget implementation acts. To be fair to the government, and to be fair to the minister, when we put something through a budget, it does not get the same scrutiny that individual legislation gets.

For those policy wonks out there, and I know it is a Friday afternoon and how this place works is probably very riveting, but when it goes through a budget, the budget does not actually have all of the committee work that happens with legislation. I think that is important to note and to give the government and the minister credit for that, because now this will be referred to the industry committee, which has a history of doing some really good work.

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It will get a full vetting process through this place and also through the Senate. Whatever comes out of the process we are going to go through here will get a full review, which is necessary. That is why it will be interesting, though. The challenge will be what will be admissible for amendments, what will be out of scope and what will be in scope. Those procedural things will start to work themselves through.

Again, this is the proper process to bring this through. We had warned about some of the weaknesses that we are dealing with today during the budget bill. When we talk and debate budget bills and those elements, they get washed over very quickly. That will not happen with this bill. It will have its proper due course and time in the House, in the chamber.

Again, as I noted, it will go through the other place, the Senate, and if they make any changes, then they will have to be approved by the House at the end of the day. Therefore, for the procedural elements, I think we will start on a much better footing than ever before.

That is why I am really still strongly advocating for the previous report that the committee did on the Investment Canada Act. It was over 70 pages. We heard a lot of witnesses. My friend in the Bloc did some excellent work on critical minerals, especially when we look at the province of Quebec, which has some very strategic assets for the province, and also with reflection to the rest of the country as well. We are going to be part of a strategy for auto and, as well, other types of battery modernization. That is critical.

There are a lot of issues to be dealt with and unpack there. I think one of the things that we look at in this bill is, again, the threshold. There are two areas that the act really kind of focuses on. The net benefit would be, if the takeover takes place, whether there will be an improvement in the Canadian economy and the workplace, and it is very subjective about that. That has been whitewashed many times before.

I will give another good example, and I am showing my age here again, with Future Shop versus Best Buy. Essentially, we had two consumer electronics marketing platforms in this country, and Best Buy basically bought up Future Shop, another Canadian iconic company, and we now have less competition, less innovation and less access for the public to access some of the services that are necessary.

● (1255)

I know we like to buy a lot of things online right now, but especially when it comes to the maintenance and repair of electronics, we still require certain services. Future Shop is gone now, which basically affects competition. I think that Best Buy's only competitor is really the online stores now; maybe Staples and a handful of other stores still compete with us. However, this was approved and we lost Future Shop.

The other case I want to refer to when we think about strategy, which is frustrating for me, is Zellers. If people remember Zellers, it was another iconic Canadian retail store. I put forward then, and I think the government needs to reflect on its approval of this takeover, that it had higher wages, a union, benefits, and at a time when the industry was losing money, a profit margin. Then the

American store Target was allowed to come in. Target took over some stores and closed others. It then exited the country. This was basically done to eliminate competition, and it eliminated jobs as well.

I do not know what it was like in other stores, but in Windsor, it was ridiculous when Target came in. I was a goalie in hockey, but I am retired now because of my knee and a lot of other reasons. Hon. members have also reminded me of my goals against the average. At any rate, Target had multiple aisles of just one hockey stick, so it was a false takeover. These are serious things because we lost not only those jobs but also competition in a market where we have seen diminishing retail assets. It was not just about the store; it was also an anchor for other malls and shopping centres. What I am getting at is that there are many ways of looking at this.

When we have this review in Parliament, it will be interesting to see what we get regarding the capability to expand the current form of the bill. I am not sure what is going to be ruled in or out of order for some of the amendments I have. However, it will be interesting, and I am sure my colleagues will have some of those things.

One important point about the bill, and I want to talk about a couple of things that I think are important, is that a notification process would be used. Therefore, the minister would get more of a heads-up about takeovers. For me, and I think it is also fairly safe to say for some of my colleagues from the Conservatives, the Bloc and perhaps the Liberals, we will probably want more reviews or access to reviews. In my opinion, that would provide a benefit for the process. This is also going to be important when we are looking at some of the more serious innovations that we have coming forward and certain companies.

One of the things that sticks in my craw is when we have Canadian taxpayers giving money to corporations, and because there are no rules, the corporations move the innovation out of the country.

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I will give a quick example. Former minister Bains, whom I enjoyed working with in this House and this chamber, gave money to Nemark, an auto manufacturer from Mexico in Windsor. Nemark had bought out a Ford assembly provision. It got money for the innovation for a transmission. This was the only Canadian facility. When this was announced, I asked what guarantees the government had that it was going to keep the work here. The government said that there was no problem and it was all taken care of. I asked how. The government said that it was done and not to worry, and that was the end of it. What ended up happening is that Nemark was a terrible employer. Not only that, but it did the innovation in the Windsor plant and then moved it to Mexico and closed the Windsor plant. We had to fight, including in court, to protect the workers' pensions and the money that was owed to them. I will not give the government credit for that, because it was horrible in this case; we had to take it to court as well.

I have seen enough of this in my community in the auto sector. I know this personally. My brother worked for Windsor Plastic Products. A foreign company took it over and took not only all its assets but also its money for the United Way and employment insurance. It basically took everything it could out of this country. We have seen this take place a few times. Nemark got the Canadian taxpayers' money and did the innovation. Now we are giving auto supports to other companies to compete against the product that was produced at our expense and is now built in Mexico. It makes no sense.

● (1300)

There has to be something in this act that is going to deal with some of these things. Maybe that is where we get more transparency with regard to any type of endeavours that the minister is allowed to do, so that the bill does have that, where the minister can put more specifics on it.

As noted earlier, some of the smaller companies we have can actually be some of the most critical. We spend a lot of money for SR&ED tax credits. They are for research, development and so forth. Those all have to become public if a Canadian company is going to be taken over by any foreign company, whether it is a state one, a non-state one or a private equity firm. I think we have the right to know if Canadian taxpayers' money has been used, whether through tax relief or innovation support, which are excellent and I support a lot of those things. There should be no shyness when one is going to the taxpayer to ask for support for a business. It has to be disclosed later on. There should be a full review. That is one of the things that can be reviewed publicly.

This legislation also creates another process for judicial review that will be behind closed doors because some of the information can be challenging for the government and the company to deal with as it involves security.

When I talk about security, I want to highlight the transition we are seeing right now in some of these small and medium-sized companies. I would like to see greater reviews on them because they deal with privacy and intellectual property. We are getting into artificial intelligence, for example, and we are actually subsidizing quite a bit of innovation on that front. I think there needs to be full disclosure for those things, to at least notify us that the money went

in there. Maybe we do not know all the types of products and services that are being done, if there is sensitive information, but at least it can be noted that they received taxpayer funding. I think that would give us more confidence when it comes to this issue.

When we think of these Internet-type services and other things that are taking place right now, we have had some referrals stopped. We had MacDonald Dettwiler, and I want to thank Peggy Nash, former member of Parliament for Parkdale—High Park, who did an amazing job in this chamber stopping that takeover. The other one we fought against, and thank goodness it was stopped, was for potash, another highly publicly subsidized company, but also a natural resource that is very important in Canada. When we think about the critical minerals in the upcoming years in the auto sector, we need to be mindful of that.

Microchips were referenced in previous discussions by members from the Conservatives and the Bloc. We used to be the producers for the world in the Mississauga area. Then we allowed this to be outsourced to Taiwan quite a bit, and now the United States is into massive subsidization. We are doing some investments now too. We need to make sure that we have a long-term plan for those things.

When certain industries get a certain amount of money from the public, we should be looking at some rules and regulations on time frames once they get significant public income. That should be reviewed and mandated to have a different threshold.

Other countries have been dealing with this issue as well. Japan has brought in some new legislation, as well as Australia and even India when it comes to its land borders with other countries and investments. They brought in some new rules, as did the European Union.

I do appreciate the fact that this is coming through the chamber this time. Many times during the budget debates, my responsibility for the New Democrats was to challenge the fact that the government was doing it through a budget process and it rubber-stamped it. We are in this situation for a reason. It is because we did not do the right thing.

This is a start to do the right thing. When this does get to committee, I look forward to a co-operative process and hopefully we can do some comprehensive reform.

● (1305)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way and I actually worked together in a previous Parliament on the industry committee. We tabled a report last Parliament with respect to this issue.

I would like to offer the member an opportunity to share with the House some of what we heard when we studied this in the 43rd Parliament that he would like to see implemented in this bill.

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Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I am so pleased that my former committee chair is here, who did a remarkable job. Our current chair is good, too. With all sincerity, the committee operates well, and she has a particularly good history with it, which includes this report that I referenced and that has her name on it.

We heard a lot of really good testimony, and that is why it is 74 pages long. There was a very robust approach to it. One of the recommendations was a simple one, and I think this is appropriate. Recommendation number two is as follows:

That the Government of Canada introduce legislation to amend the Investment Canada Act so that thresholds are reviewed on an annual basis.

A simple one like that could be done as a routine procedure for what we do. There are other more comprehensive recommendations. There were seven recommendations with a couple of subsections as well that have not been done. There were nine in total, and I look forward to working on those. Again, I thank the former chair for her work.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the speech by my colleague from Windsor West, who I enjoy working with on the industry committee, and the former chair who did marvellous work on it. It is a great report. My personal favourite is recommendation number one, which is that the state-owned enterprises be reduced to zero for review.

The Investment Canada Act focuses on the acquisition of companies. However, it does not focus at all on the acquisition of individual assets. These would be things like a mine sold by a company to a foreign interest; or a technology sold, without the company being sold, to an interest that may not be in Canada's best security interest or net benefit interest. I do not recall hearing about this. Could the member comment on that?

• (1310)

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, my colleague has been terrific on the committee so far.

This is something that we missed in the previous review, and it is appropriate for us to deal with this. I have referenced private equity firms, but there could be billionaires or others that are tinkering with different things. We could look at individual assets or innovation that is new.

I am looking forward to that, and I think the amendments are appropriate. It is refreshing, because we did not look at that in the previous report. That is why an annual review for thresholds is important, because this is an ongoing thing, especially with how things move so quickly right now.

I am looking forward to the member's contribution, and I thank him for adding that. Again, that is a new lens that we did not deal with in the past.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Windsor West for a speech full of good examples of things that have happened in the past. I would also reflect on the fact that, by a hair's breadth, we nearly lost Aecon Construction to the People's Republic of China. Again, that would never have had a security review if we had not started mentioning it in this place. This is progress.

I want to reflect and ask the hon. member for Windsor West if we do not want to also have a lens on. I know this is still in the philosophical framework of Bill C-34. It is still in the frame that we are better off when everything is traded all around the world and we have a massive globalized economy. Clearly, we are always going to have a globalized economy. However, in the wake of COVID, would it not be better to have many supply chains within Canada, to rebuild Canada's manufacturing capacity, to have the jobs here at home and to have food grown at home for Canadians?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, while I have floor, I will give a plug to the member and thank her for her hard work in putting together the all-party rail caucus. She deserves credit for that. She has been pushing this for more than six months, and we had the first meeting. I thank her for that initiative.

Also, I thank the member for mentioning Aecon Construction, which I raised several times in the House. It is interesting because it relates to me back at home. Aecon Construction was part of, and is still part of, the Gordie Howe project in the infrastructure along Canada's busiest border in my riding. That was actually going to be bought up by the Chinese government at that time.

Try to imagine this. I raised this several times. I worked with Congress and Senate members on the U.S. side. They did not want to have a bridge, which was billions of dollars and had the highest involvement in trade, built between Canada and the United States, that would be owned by the Chinese federal government or any other government. That was a non-starter and an important one.

The supply chain relates to that as well. During the COVID experience, we saw that there were contributions to some medicines that we had in the past and some new vaccines. We have lost control of that, so now we are actually in an embarrassing situation with one company that got Canadian money and is folding.

The member brings a really good point to that.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member for Windsor West has a huge track record in the House of Commons of actually ensuring that we protect Canadian jobs and stimulate the economy. We have seen under the Conservatives and under the Liberals the selling out of portions of our economy.

With the member for Windsor West's long experience and deep knowledge of industrial policy, what would he do when he became the minister of industry in an NDP government?

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Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, a couple of things come to mind right away, which also relate to the previous question and the so-called free-market economy. I do not know where this exists. There are a couple of points. First of all, trade always existed. We just created boundaries. My area was settled for 300 years, but prior to that, it was indigenous; in terms of its trading area, trade always happened. There is no doubt that we are always going to be trading. However, countries protect certain industries. When we look at the United States, which is always held up as the model of capitalism, they have the Jones act and the Buy American Act. They have different pieces of legislation related to procurement for the arms industry and the supply and manufacturing industry, all those things that are national and strategic. I want a national policy on manufacturing to be developed. We have done some of those things in the past, but we should at least match our competition in the world and be careful about how we have investments come in. We should also be careful about vulnerability with regard to where we invest public money and then have it actually go across a board.

• (1315)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to follow up on the question from my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets about individual assets ending up in the hands of foreign state-owned enterprises. I am thinking particularly of state-owned enterprises from nondemocratic nations, as the member for Windsor West mentioned. When we fund research chairs at Canada's research universities, at the end of the process, they end up owning an asset born of Canadian ingenuity. This does not go to national security necessarily, but it certainly goes to the strength of our economy.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the money that we have spent publicly for national research chairs, which is an investment in our education system, is another good example that we did not get into. We have a poor record of actually moving that type of research and innovation to market, so that is a separate story. This could be a good record, and I am looking forward to looking at this more. National security is very much an open field with regard to how that is being interpreted, so we will see what definition the minister has. However, I think I have a much more open perspective on that, as I noted in my speech. Consumer issues should also be looked at; I view these issues through a national security lens as well.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time.

I am pleased to speak to Bill C-34, an act to amend the Investment Canada Act.

Canada has a long-standing reputation for welcoming foreign investments and a strong framework to promote trade while advancing Canadian interests. In fact, Canada has one of the earliest and most robust screening processes for foreign investments in the world.

The Investment Canada Act was enacted 38 years ago, in 1985, to encourage investment in Canada that contributes to economic growth and employment opportunities. The act allowed the government to review significant foreign investments to ensure these benefits exist. The act was updated in 2009 to include a framework for national security review of foreign direct investments.

Bill C-34 would implement a set of amendments to improve the national security review process of foreign investments and modernize the ICA. Collectively, these amendments represent the most significant legislative update of the ICA since 2009. These amendments would also ensure that Canada's review process is consistent with our allies'.

However, in my view, there is another issue in foreign direct investment that should be looked into, and that is dealing with economic security. I believe this is not only an opportunity but also a necessity that we deal with foreign direct investment that results in economic stagnation of any sector of our economy, thus affecting our long-term economic security.

Let me explain this by first quoting a couple of sentences from the background that was published, which states, "The Act is designed to encourage investment, economic growth and employment". The background also states, "The Government of Canada has committed to promoting economic security and combatting foreign interference by modernizing the ICA to strengthen the national security review process and better mitigate economic security threats arising from foreign investment." For me, the keywords are "economic security". There is no mention of the words "economic security" in the bill tabled by the government that we are debating today. Probably the thought is that "economic security" and "national security" are considered as synonyms.

I will now explain the importance of economic security. Canada is growing. Our population is growing. Our economy and GDP are growing, and we need our economic sectors to grow and contribute to economic growth and employment. If any economic or industrial sector does not grow and does not contribute to economic growth due to foreign direct investment, then in my view this is a threat to economic security. Any stagnation or complete lack of economic growth in a growing economy will directly affect our economic security in the medium to long term.

I will give two examples where foreign direct investment in Canada has resulted in stagnation of economic growth, which in turn is a threat to our economic security.

The two industrial sectors that are prime examples of this are the steel and aluminum industries in Canada. All steel and aluminum sector companies in Canada are foreign-owned. Due to our encouragement of foreign direct investment, today both of these sectors, with 100% foreign ownership, have been reduced to a branch office of multinational companies that are dominating aluminum and steel industry worldwide. Due to this 100% foreign ownership, there has been no increase in production capacity in both of these sectors in Canada for the last 20 years.

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During the last 20 years, aluminum production has basically stagnated at about three million tonnes. While many new aluminum smelters are being set up in China and other countries, the installed capacity of the aluminum sector in Canada has stagnated. It is the same with the steel industry. During the last 20 years, the installed capacity has basically stagnated at about 15 million tonnes. Not only is there no growth in the production capacity of steel and aluminum, but due to 100% foreign ownership, Canada's steel and aluminum exports are limited just to the U.S. and Mexico. There are hardly any Canadian steel and aluminum exports to Europe or the growing markets in Asia.

• (1320)

Canada has signed numerous free trade agreements across the world. We have free trade agreements with Europe and Asia-Pacific countries. In total, we have free trade agreements with over 50 countries, but has the aluminum and steel sectors taken advantage of these free trade agreements to increase Canadian exports? The answer is absolutely no.

Therefore, my question is this: If our welcoming foreign direct investment leads to 100% foreign ownership in any entire industrial sector and this results in growth stagnation of that sector, is it not a threat to our long-term economic security? If 100% foreign ownership prevents Canadian industry from taking advantage of our natural resources and our expertise to export Canadian goods across the world, is this not a threat to our long-term economic security?

We need all sectors in our industry to add value to our natural resources and contribute to Canada's economic growth by increasing their capacity to produce. We need all economic sectors to build on our many decades of knowledge and expertise to contribute to Canada's economic growth by increasing Canadian exports across the world. I again state that if any economic or industrial sector does not grow and does not contribute to economic growth due to foreign direct investment, then in my view this is a threat to economic security. Also, any stagnation or complete lack of economic growth in a growing economy will directly affect our economic security in the medium to long term.

I call upon the House to take this opportunity to address this shortcoming in the Investment Canada Act. Other than that, I completely agree with everything else that has been proposed in the bill. There was a need to update and streamline the administrative process in light of a shifting geopolitical environment and a need for alignment with international allies and for better coordination efforts with allies.

The world looks a lot different now than in 2009 when the act was last amended. The global market has rapidly changed with shifting geopolitical threats. Canada's interactions with the rest of the world are changing. The government has seen a rise in state-sponsored threat activities from hostile state and non-state actors. They are attracted by Canada's technologically advanced and open economy and world-class research community.

The level of sophistication of these threats has also increased. Hostile state and non-state actors are deliberately pursuing strategies to acquire goods, technologies and intellectual property through foreign investments that will damage Canada's economy and undermine national security while controlling the supply chain

of critical goods. In fact, Canada has one of the earliest and most robust screening processes for foreign investments in the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this threat by creating vulnerabilities that could lead to opportunistic, harmful investment behaviour by foreign investors. They are looking to buy up vulnerable Canadian businesses. In response, the government has taken swift, concrete action to enhance scrutiny on inbound investments related to public health and critical goods and services.

The government again took action recently by enhancing scrutiny of investments involved in sensitive goods and technology, such as critical minerals, critical infrastructure and sensitive personal data. Through these amendments, the government is prepared to once again take action to strengthen the national security review while still allowing for positive foreign investments. Economic-based threats to national security are of increasing concern not just for Canada but for our allies as well.

• (1325)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this issue is really important to my colleague. I would like to know if there is anything else he thinks we should be also including in this bill to make sure this is as strong as it could be.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, in addition to the economic security issues I discussed, my colleagues brought forward others earlier in debate, like the purchase of intangible assets other than the company itself, and some issues that were brought forward by the member from Windsor on the lack of competition resulting in foreign direct investments. These are the kinds of things that need to be considered now. We know this act has not been looked at in, I think, the last 13 years. This is the first opportunity we have and we need to use this opportunity to consider all aspects that are directly related.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Nepean about state-owned enterprises from not-so-democratic countries, or hostile countries. It was recommendation number one of the industry committee's report from the last Parliament on this issue that the threshold for consideration as a national security or net benefit test under this act be reduced from the \$415 million to zero dollars, so that every transaction in every type of industry by a state-owned enterprise from a nondemocratic country would be reviewed. That is not in this bill. Would the hon. member support it being amended that way?

Private Members' Business

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, investment by state-owned enterprises from non-friendly countries obviously needs to be looked very deeply into. I am not sure whether we should have a minimum threshold, but as I said, every single investment by state-owned enterprises needs to be looked into.

At the same time, in addition to state-owned enterprises, I also want to highlight investment by global multinational companies in the steel and aluminum sector, as I mentioned, that have made direct investment. One hundred percent of the sector is foreign owned, which is leading to Canadian companies becoming the branch offices of these multinational companies and is curtailing the potential to grow Canadian exports around the world.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, we in the Bloc Québécois are still reeling from the sale of Rona to the American company Lowe's and all the negative consequences that followed.

In my hon. colleague's opinion, if Bill C-34 passes as is, will the interests of our economy be better protected with respect to potential transactions?

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, everything that affects Canada's competitiveness, growth, economic security or national security needs to be looked into. Let me be very clear. I am for foreign direct investment. I am for free trade. However, all aspects that affect our national security and economic security need to be looked into.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL STRATEGY RESPECTING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-226, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy to assess, prevent

and address environmental racism and to advance environmental justice, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 8, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 1:32 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:32 p.m.)

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