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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Day, we continue to be inspired by all women who show us what it means to be strong, brave and courageous, especially in the face of adversity. Today, let us acknowledge what women around the world have taught us: fighting for what is right and never giving up, from the bravery of Iranian women and the schoolgirls who were poisoned to the resilience of the Ukrainian and Canadian women in the armed forces and women's achievements in engineering, science, innovation and other sectors.

As we continue to remember these great women today, I also want to thank the women working in health care, especially in personal support care, and frontline workers. During the Prime Minister's visit to SEIU Healthcare in Richmond Hill two weeks ago, we heard heartbreaking, fascinating, encouraging and inspiring stories about the resilience and compassion of our personal support workers. They love their job, and the happiness they see in the faces of the people they care for makes them even more passionate about their job.

Today, and every day, we celebrate women, their courage and bravery, their compassion and kindness. I wish them a happy International Women's Day.

The Speaker: Before we continue, I just want to remind everyone that S.O. 31s are taking place. If members are talking among themselves, please leave the chamber. Each one of us is not talking loudly, but if we are all talking, it is drowning out the message, and we all want to hear what the message is.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

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SHELLEY GREGG

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we remember the life of Shelley Gregg. We say a loving farewell to a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and friend who cared so deeply for those around her.

Shelley knew how much it meant to give back to her community. She was always stepping up to volunteer. She gave back in many ways, but it was the Choc'laCure fundraising initiative that stood out. Her incredible work over 15 years raised millions of dollars for the Saskatoon Cancer Centre to purchase equipment that helped shorten wait times.

Shelley was a humble, fearless and inspiring leader. Her efforts and ideas have touched not just those who were fortunate to meet her, but also the patients, and their families, who were able to access better cancer care because of her volunteer work.

To her husband Jim, her sons Brett and Eric, and their extended family, I send our deepest condolences.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day. I am proud to be part of a government that has made, and continues to make, meaningful strides toward gender equality each and every day.

This is a government that has legislated pay equity, adopted Canada's first-ever federal 2SLGBTQI+ action plan, and introduced a national child care framework. This is a government that continues to work with survivors to end the national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and ensures that a gender-based lens is applied to everything we do. We have come so far in the fight for gender equality, but we cannot stop here.

Statements by Members

Today, and every day, we raise awareness against bias, and we acknowledge women making a difference in the world, big and small. We remind ourselves and those around us that all women, from all ages and all walks of life, have a place in every aspect of our country. Every woman counts.

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● (1410)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Day, we need to reiterate an unfortunate truth, and that is that women's rights are never guaranteed and we need to remain vigilant.

In many parts of the world, such as Iran and Afghanistan, there is a real gender apartheid, and it would be a mistake to use cultural relativism to rationalize it. Even in the United States, abortion rights have recently been compromised. We must not make the mistake of believing that we are immune to such backsliding in Quebec and Canada.

The best defence against backsliding is, of course, the political commitment of many strong women who are determined to stand their ground. We also need to fully support certain principles that protect the rights of women, bearing in mind that secularism is a friend to women, all women, anywhere in the world where such an approach is taken. Women's place is everywhere. The fight to promote and protect their rights is always being waged. It must be waged by each and every one of us.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day. I would like to take a moment to recognize the woman with whom I have shared my life for the past 29 years. I thank her for being who she is and for allowing me to be the man that I am.

I believe that every day is International Women's Day. That is why I want to pay tribute to the contributions of female nurses, teachers, mechanics, politicians, hockey players, police officers, engineers and those of all women who shape our daily lives.

Although advances have been made, gender equity remains a collective goal. As Gloria Steinem said so well, the human race is like a bird with two wings, men and women, and if one wing is broken, the bird cannot fly.

I invite my colleagues to join me in telling the women and girls around us about the positive impact they have on our lives.

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[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day, Canadians across the country come together to celebrate the incredible women who build this country and who have built it over the centuries. Whether it is fighting for civil

rights, like Viola Desmond, or leading Canada to gold medal glory, like Christine Sinclair, women have played an essential role in crafting our story.

I also think of lesser-known but equally important people, like Tracy MacDonald in Nova Scotia, who dropped out of high school but then returned and succeeded, and now dedicates her life to helping similarly disadvantaged women.

I think of the mother who had me, the mother who adopted me, the wife who agreed for some reason we do not understand to marry me, and of course the daughter who makes my life so much worth living.

Every day, in every way, there is more work to be done to improve equality and opportunity for women, but today is an opportunity for all of us to thank the women in our lives who built our country, and all around the world, for whom we must fight to advance opportunity and equality.

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GLENDALE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to acknowledge Hamilton's Glendale Secondary School on its designation as a language-friendly school. The Language Friendly School network has 23 members around the world, and Glendale Secondary School is the first secondary school in Canada and North America to receive this title.

More than 40 languages are spoken by the student body at Glendale, and a team of teachers, administrators and student leaders have made it their mission to ensure the school is linguistically and culturally welcoming. On February 21, International Mother Language Day, a Language Friendly School flag was raised in front of the school.

I congratulate Joanna Duong, Language Friendly School student ambassador; Marjorie Hewitt, head of ESL; David Schroeder, school principal; and all the staff and students at my alma mater, Glendale Secondary School, for their efforts to build understanding and connection through multilingualism.

Go Bears.

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● (1415)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every woman counts. On this International Women's Day, I would like to have the women in my life be counted. I stand where I am today because of women role models and male allies: my Erin Mills Women's Council's strong leadership toward the empowerment of women and the tackling of our most pressing social issues daily; my mother, my *bebey*, whose support has provided me with the opportunities and tools to succeed in giving back to my community; my BFF, Reema Zuberi, who is always keeping it real.

Statements by Members

Today, I reinforce my commitment to work even harder to ensure that women have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, and that everyone benefits from empowering women and empowered women.

Here is to strong women. May we know them. May we be them. May we raise them.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the world comes together in celebration of International Women's Day. On this day, we recognize the social, economic and political achievements of women. It also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.

These past years have had a disproportionate impact on women, including an increase in domestic violence and sexual assaults, job insecurity, and challenges of work-life balance for mothers, daughters, sisters and caregivers.

We continue to voice our concerns for those women whose voices have been shut down, intimidated and silenced, vulnerable women and girls who have been sexually exploited and trafficked, and victims of abuse and crime. We fight for equality and freedom of speech for those protesting in Iran, and we stand in solidarity with the women in Afghanistan. We remind women and young girls today, and every day, that their dream is within reach and they are able to make a difference in the world.

I wish them a happy International Women's Day.

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YOUNG WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, happy International Women's Day.

I am very excited that the Young Women in Leadership program that I started in 2017 is officially back in person. This program offers young women and gender nonconforming youth in Halton an opportunity to job shadow in a local business, agency, organization or government. The program will take place at the end of May, and our youth applications are open as of today until March 29.

This program also inspired Camp Molly, developed by Chief Monique Belair to inspire young women to choose the fire service. Those listening can visit my website or social media to learn more about how to apply to this empowering program. They can also share the news with a young woman in Halton who is between the ages of 15 and 25 years and curious about what their future might look like.

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HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “*Zan, zendegi, azadi*. Woman, life, freedom.” This is the call we hear around the world as brave Iranian women dedicate their lives to fighting for freedom, human rights and equality.

The revolution itself started by the actions of Jina Mahsa Amini, one brave woman in Iran, and that is the definition of extraordinary heroism. Since then, it has been carried out by women around the world, who are undeterred by threats of torture, imprisonment and death from the mullahs of Iran’s ruthless regime. After six months, the revolution’s heart beats strong.

On International Women’s Day we are reminded of the immense courage of the countless women who have committed themselves to causes like the revolution and freedom and liberty across the globe. We are reminded that strong, passionate, dedicated women can and will change the world.

May we know them. May we raise them. May we be them.

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FREEDOMS IN CANADA

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Communist countries like China and North Korea, the government determines what online media content people can and cannot see. The government determines what content is suitable for the country.

The Liberal government has brought forward Bill C-11, which would allow cabinet to tell the CRTC what the criteria for acceptable content are. It would also allow them to use algorithms to either allow the content to be seen by Canadians or bury it.

The Senate tried to bring amendments to exclude individual content from being censored, but the Liberal government has said it will refuse to accept these amendments.

Canada is not yet a Communist country, and Conservatives want to ensure that Canada remains the freest nation on Earth. In order to do that, we need to kill Bill C-11.

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● (1420)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are celebrating International Women's Day. We have come a long way. There are now over 100 women sitting in the House.

Statements by Members

Women around the world stand together, bound by a deep sense of gratitude to the brave women who faced adversity to defend our rights. Today, we can be proud to live in a country that allows women to work and care for their families, implements policies that give them child care, lifts women out of poverty and invests in shelters for women fleeing violence.

According to the World Bank, more than 2.4 billion women are not afforded equal economic opportunities. Women's rights are not just about money. Women's rights are about dignity and opportunity.

We must be vigilant, however, because global and national movements are threatening women's rights. They threaten the right to choose. This is about preserving the rights gained and extending them to all women. That is my wish on this International Women's Day.

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[English]

NATIONAL SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day.

As people struggle with the high cost of living, the poverty rate for single moms is the highest among all family types. The Vancouver School Food Network and Coalition for Healthy School Food are calling on the Liberal government for a funded national school food program in budget 2023. Rising food costs and greedflation have put an enormous strain on families, and too often, children go to school hungry.

The NDP's Bill C-212 would help families that are stretched to the max and having trouble putting food on the table. The Liberals ran on a promise of investing \$1 billion over five years for a national school nutritious meal program, but empty promises will not fill empty stomachs.

I am calling for a national school food program in budget 2023. I am also calling for a guaranteed basic livable income, a low-income CERB and CRB amnesty and the refund of clawbacks from Canada child benefit recipients. Let us end poverty and bring food security to all families and their children.

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[Translation]

ELSIE REFORD

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Rights Day, I would like to honour the memory of a woman who had a huge impact on the social and cultural identity of my part of the country.

Elsie Reford was the kind of philanthropist we could use more of. Known for her civic engagement, she was a co-founder of the Women's Canadian Club of Montreal. As the first women's club in Canada, it helped give women a voice in the early 1900s.

Born into the Montreal bourgeoisie, Elsie Reford became a prominent horticulturist in the lower St. Lawrence region. She

founded the very popular Les Jardins de Métis, an exceptional work of horticultural art and an internationally recognized jewel in our region's crown.

Today's date, March 8, was carefully chosen for the launch of a book about her life. *Elsie Reford: 150 Objects of Passion* tells the story of this passionate woman and of the passions that inspired her and made her story so fascinating.

We still have a long way to go, but I am grateful to Elsie Reford and all the women who laid the groundwork for our emancipation.

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[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about foreign interference into Canadian elections. However, instead of accepting the proposal from all opposition MPs for a public inquiry, the Liberals are offering a secret process at a secret committee, with secret hearings, secret evidence and secret conclusions all controlled by the Prime Minister. He is focused on protecting himself and not our democratic institutions.

Yesterday, at the procedure and House affairs committee, the Liberals filibustered for hours and then did not even show up to the committee meeting. All this was to prevent the Liberal chief of staff from testifying under oath. Canadians deserve to know what the Prime Minister knew, when he knew about it and why he chose to keep it from the public. Canadians deserve answers, a public inquiry, or better yet, a new Prime Minister.

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● (1425)

DIGNITY INTERNATIONAL

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Day, I would like to pay tribute to the women of Dignity International, a Canadian not-for-profit organization with the mission of empowering women, youth and families. Its 3,100 members can be found across Canada, with the majority located in Ontario. It has received numerous awards for its grassroots community support and development.

The organization established a presence in Kitchener a mere two years ago, and it has since grown to 104 members. It is an example of the tremendous work it is accomplishing in improving lives by reducing poverty among low-income families, people in shelters and homeless persons in community living. Through various outreaches in training, sports, food banks, empowerment skills for women, youth development and many others, this organization is making a real difference in the lives of so many. I wish to thank the women of Dignity International for their contribution, dedication and service in enriching our community and communities all across Canada.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said repeatedly that he had no knowledge of funds from the dictatorship in Beijing going to federal election candidates. Today, we learned that is not true. His department prepared a briefing that said a large clandestine transfer of funds earmarked for the federal election, from the PRC, in Toronto was transferred to an elected provincial government official via a staff member of a 2019 federal candidate.

Why did the Prime Minister say the opposite of what he knew to be true?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of foreign interference in our democracies and our institutions is extraordinarily serious. This is why, as a government, we have always taken it incredibly seriously, including by building and creating new mechanisms to oversee and to ensure that we can counter that interference and demonstrate to Canadians that they can have confidence in their institutions. However, on the specific question, as I and the NSIA both stated last fall, we have no information on any federal candidates receiving money from China, and that continues to remain the case.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is impossible, because not only did his own department prepare a briefing for him, which said candidates had received funds, so did his own security committee. I will quote Global News: “Global News also learned of an earlier, high-level warning about clandestine funding of China’s ‘preferred candidates’ that came from a bipartisan panel of parliamentarians two months before the 2019 election.”

That so-called bipartisan panel is the Prime Minister’s secret committee. It reports to him. He knew. Why did he say the opposite of what he knew?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said last fall, and as the national security and intelligence adviser stated, we have no information on federal candidates receiving money from China. That continues to be the case.

In regard to the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, I am happy to correct the hon. member and highlight that this committee actually publishes reports to Parliament

and to the public. This is something that is very clear. It is a committee of parliamentarians. They get top secret clearance so they can look at everything our intelligence committees do and then report back to Parliament.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stated another falsehood. He said it reports to the public; many of its findings are not reported to the public. Second, section 21 of the act that creates that committee states that its reports go to the Prime Minister. They have to go to the Prime Minister, and he is the one who decides what becomes public thereafter. Therefore, he knew, when that committee reported, that candidates received money directed by the dictatorship in Beijing, yet he has been saying and continues to say exactly the opposite. Why is that?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, parliamentarians can now go to the Library of Parliament or go online and see reports from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians that were released publicly to them. The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which the previous Conservative government opposed as an oversight body, actually allows parliamentarians to attain those top secret clearance levels to look into everything our intelligence agencies do and report back to Parliament, to me and to Canadians on how that is working.

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, section 21 of the act that creates that secret committee says, “Each year the Committee must submit to the Prime Minister a report of the reviews it conducted during the preceding year.” In other words, he did receive the report. He should stop playing word games. Nobody needs to go to the library. What we need to do is get to the truth.

The Prime Minister knew that his own security committee said Beijing had directed funds to candidates in preceding elections, yet he continues to say exactly the opposite. Is he saying the committee is lying?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to clear up the confusion around what the committee reports. Yes, the committee reports to me and to the government, but it also reports to parliamentarians and shares those reports. This is the way many committees function in our government, and they will continue to do so. In regard to the issue of whether federal candidates received money from China, as I have stated many times, we have no information on that.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all agree that the Prime Minister has seen the report. Well, this is what Global News says of the report: “Global News also learned of an earlier, high-level warning about clandestine funding of China's ‘preferred candidates’ that came from a bipartisan panel of parliamentarians two months before the 2019 election.”

China gave money to its preferred candidates. The Prime Minister admits that the committee reported to him on this fact. Why does he continue to state the diametric opposite of the truth in his answers in the House of Commons?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we all understand how important it is that Canadians have both confidence in our government's ability to counter foreign interference and confidence in the transparency and openness with which that happens. That is why, beyond the partisan to-and-fro that we necessarily see in this House, it is important to create an independent, unimpeachable, special rapporteur who is going to be able to oversee the entire landscape around national security to make sure that committees are doing their work and that the various bodies keep Canada safe.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is not strictly the NDP's duty to protect our electoral system. It is not the Bloc Québécois's duty to do that either. It is not the Conservatives' duty, and it is clearly not the Liberals' duty. It is the duty of all of us, collectively.

What the Prime Minister does not seem to understand is that the integrity of our democracy is under threat. We should all be concerned, and we must all be part of the solution.

All parties are calling for an independent commission of public inquiry. Why is the Prime Minister stubbornly refusing this inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, I am not at all opposed to it. I know very well that Canadians need to have confidence in our electoral system, in our democracy and in the institutions that are there to protect them.

That is why I am going to ask an independent special rapporteur to examine whether any structures need improvements and to make the appropriate recommendations. The rapporteur will also be able to reassure Canadians across party lines that everything is being done correctly.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whether the Prime Minister likes it or not, elections are not the exclusive responsibility of the Prime Minister or his party. They are everyone's responsibility. What is at issue here is democracy, not the Liberals. There must be no doubt in anyone's mind that every person sitting in the House of Commons was elected legitimately, without trickery and without interference. This means that there cannot be any secret meetings and no rapporteur chosen by the Prime Minister.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to have an independent commission of public inquiry, as everyone is calling for?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in the House agrees that it is important to rise above partisanship to protect the integrity of our democracy and its institutions. That is why we will choose an independent individual to ensure that the mechanisms proposed are the right ones.

Yes, we have heard from experts that a public inquiry would be the right thing to do, but we also heard experts say that that might not be the best way to get answers.

I believe that handing this over to an independent special rapporteur, an expert who could make a determination, is the right thing for all of us.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every day, Canadians' confidence in our electoral system is being eroded. Recent reports indicate that at least two times the Prime Minister was advised that Chinese government officials transferred money to Canadian political candidates. This is serious, and Canadians have started to wonder why it seems like the Prime Minister is hiding something.

Why does the Prime Minister not just launch a public inquiry, answer all those questions and give confidence to Canadians in our democracy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy, first of all, to repeat that we have no information on federal candidates receiving money from China. At the same time, Canadians are concerned about these various reports and allegations, because there are ongoing attempts at interference by China and other countries. That is why we are putting forward an independent expert to look at the entire landscape around foreign interference and the tools we have, and make a determination about how we can not just ensure that everything is being done to protect Canadians and democracy, but give Canadians confidence that everything will continue to be done.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems like the Prime Minister is more interested in protecting himself than protecting the electoral system.

[Translation]

Every day, new things come up. Every day, there are new allegations of foreign interference. This undermines confidence in our electoral system. Canadians want to know why there is such secrecy around this.

Why does the Prime Minister not launch a public inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some experts are saying that a public inquiry is necessary and would help provide some answers. However, other extremely credible experts are saying that a public inquiry may not help find the answers to restore Canadians' trust.

Oral Questions

We know that Canadians want to be reassured about the fact that all the right mechanisms are in place. We will ask an independent expert to look at everything we need to restore Canadians' confidence and start the process. It may be a public inquiry, a judicial review or another type of inquiry.

We know that there are mechanisms—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Global News reported, “Three weeks before Canada’s 2019 federal election, national security officials allegedly gave an urgent, classified briefing to senior aides from [the] Prime [Minister’s]...office, warning them that one of their candidates was part of a Chinese foreign interference network.”

Can the Prime Minister tell us who that candidate was?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians well know that issues around national security are extremely important to deal with, including by elected officials and parliamentarians. This was a point of significant disagreement between the previous Harper government and our party in opposition, which is why we committed to creating the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, where parliamentarians from all parties receive top secret clearances and are allowed to dig into everything national security agencies are doing. That is exactly what we have allowed for.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, has CSIS warned the Prime Minister, his staff, his party or anyone else that any member of his current caucus or cabinet may be part of a foreign interference network, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as all members in this House well know, our intelligence agencies and officials work very hard every single day to keep Canadians, including Canadians of all different backgrounds and including all parliamentarians, safe from the impacts of foreign interference. Their work is carefully scrutinized by a number of oversight bodies, including NSIRA and NSICOP, that allow parliamentarians and experts to ensure that CSIS and other intelligence agencies are doing everything necessary to keep Canadians and our institutions safe.

• (1440)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, has CSIS warned the Prime Minister, his staff or members of his party that members of his caucus or cabinet are part of a foreign interference network, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will know that issues of national security and foreign interference can often be highly sensitive, which is why we have created bodies like NSICOP and NSIRA and other mechanisms to oversee the important and top secret work that our intelligence agencies. We need to make sure they are doing everything necessary to protect Canadians and make sure that governments are held accountable for acting on information that they could have received from our intelligence agencies. These are processes we have put in place since 2015 that we will continue to work with.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is it yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we well know that issues of national security can be highly challenging to discuss as parliamentarians on the open floor of the House of Commons. That is why, over the objections of the former minister in the Harper government that objected to the creation of a national security and intelligence oversight committee, who is now the leader of the opposition, we went ahead and created a body that allows members of Parliament to get cleared to top secret levels so they can look into this question and all questions in a way that does not compromise national security.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is it yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, issues around national security have deep implications for the safety and well-being of Canadians and those who serve to keep Canadians safe, sometimes in extraordinarily dangerous positions here and around the world. That is why we have created bodies that allow parliamentarians to get top secret clearance so they can look directly at everything that is done without putting at risk the brave women and men who serve this country to keep all Canadians safe.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CSIS warned the Prime Minister's Office three weeks before the 2019 election that at least one candidate was identified as implicated in a foreign interference network. Is that member in the Prime Minister's caucus or cabinet, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have created formal processes where parliamentarians from all parties, including from the member's own party, can get top secret clearances to look into matters impacting national security and the safety of Canadians without putting at risk the women and men who serve in our intelligence communities here in Canada and around the world so they are able to continue to do their jobs of keeping Canadians safe. I know that no one in this House wants to put anyone who serves this country at risk.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during a press conference on Monday, the Prime Minister listed his protection measures against foreign interference: in 2017, he formed the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians; in 2018, he created election financing legislation to fend off foreign financing and, in 2019, he came up with a plan to protect democracy and set up a working group on the threats to democracy. It is a list of everything that did not work.

We all see that it did not work. Now it is time to listen to the opposition. What is the Prime Minister waiting for to set up an independent public commission of inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am waiting for the independent special rapporteur—meaning the independent expert who will be responsible for investigating the mechanisms in place free of any partisan politics—to do their work. The rapporteur will determine whether we need more mechanisms, not only to ensure that the government can do its utmost to protect our democracy and our institutions, but also so that Canadians can have confidence that everything is being done to protect our democracy, our elections and our institutions.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is understandable that the Prime Minister prefers to sweep the issue of interference under the rug. It is understandable that he does not want to hear it mentioned ever again and that he wants to move on.

However, it is not that simple, and it will take more than a secret committee and a rapporteur doing the Prime Minister's bidding. The Prime Minister is playing with public confidence in our electoral system, and that is not very good news. I invite him to listen to the opposition parties. Will he establish an independent public commission of inquiry into foreign election interference?

• (1445)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find my hon. colleague's comments to be rather disturbing, suggesting that experts may not be as well suited to protect our democracy as the opposition parties.

We are not claiming that one party is better suited than the others for protecting the integrity of our institutions and our elections. That is precisely why Canadians want us to rely on non-partisan experts to make recommendations and to ensure that everything is being done to ensure that they can have confidence in our processes.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, which staff members in the Prime Minister's Office did CSIS brief that there was a Liberal candidate implicated in a foreign interference network? I would like their names.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have addressed a number of questions along the lines of national security. I want to point out another issue that I know is preoccupying for Canadians.

Just recently, Conservative Party MPs knowingly dined with a far-right German politician. Christine Anderson and her party's far-right, xenophobic, anti-science, pro-Putin views are well known.

The member's carefully crafted condemnation that neither he nor his MPs will repeat publicly will not cut it. It is time he gave Canadians real answers and apologize.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Office was briefed three weeks before the 2019 election about a candidate who was implicated in a foreign interference network.

Which members of the Prime Minister's staff were present for that briefing? We would like their names, please.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is extremely important that, as a Parliament, as parliamentary committees, as a government and as Canadians, we look into the issue of foreign interference. That is why, at parliamentary committee, the ministers of democratic institutions and foreign affairs are scheduled to appear tomorrow. PROC has heard from Elections Canada, the director of CSIS, the chief of the CSE, the deputy commissioner of the RCMP, the deputy minister of foreign affairs and the deputy minister of international trade.

To quote the member for Carleton, “for hundreds of years, the principle of ministerial accountability has been paramount here in the House and in its committees.” We agree.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, if he believes that he should be responsible, then he should answer the question.

Which members of his staff were briefed by CSIS that one of his candidates was implicated in a foreign interference ring, and was Katie Telford, his chief of staff, among those briefed, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can well see that there are important partisan and political considerations overlaying all these exchanges in the House, which is why Canadians want us to be able to step back as a country and see what actually happened, who actually was doing their job to protect against foreign interference and was everyone doing the right things.

That is why pulling forward an independent expert to oversee the work that is being done to ensure everything that needed to be done was done and was done properly, and that it continues to be done, is going to be important, and that is what we are proposing.

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day, we must recognize that indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people experience higher levels of violence. They are murdered and go missing at disproportionate rates, but after eight years, the Liberals have barely implemented any of the calls for justice from the MMIWG2S report. Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people deserve better.

My colleague from Winnipeg Centre has urged the government to create a red dress alert to save countless lives. Will the Prime Minister do it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Day, and every day, our hearts are with survivors and families of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people. Addressing this ongoing violence requires living up to our goals as a country and all the calls for justice. We are taking a whole-of-government approach, supported by an over \$2-billion investment in concrete measures to keep people safe and a \$4-billion investment to support indigenous housing needs. We know there is more to be done, and we will continue to do it urgently.

• (1450)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we mark International Women's Day, we must address the ever-increasing coordinated and dangerous campaigns of hate targeting trans women across Canada and abroad for being who they are. Several hundred Canadian organizations and civil society groups are declaring that gender equity cannot exist without uplifting, celebrating and supporting trans women.

Will the Prime Minister hear their call for action and include trans people and trans women in the upcoming national action plan to combat hate?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that even as we celebrate International Women's Day today, trans women in particular are facing extraordinarily dangerous degrees of hate and violent acts. That is why we continue to re-inforce that everyone has the right to live free from violence.

Since 2015, we have taken real action to end gender-based violence in our communities by developing our first federal strategy to prevent gender-based violence and making historic investments to prevent and end gender-based violence. We know we have much more to do, including to protect trans women, and we will do that.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day, we celebrate the contributions, achievements and leadership of women and girls in my constituency and around the world, but we cannot forget that the fight for gender equality must also be driven by men and boys. Access to abortion is an issue that impacts us all, and we know how important access to this reproductive health service is.

Could the Prime Minister tell the House what the government is doing to ensure everyone has the right to make decisions about their own bodies?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Vancouver Granville for his hard

Oral Questions

work and his advocacy. Here in Canada, universal access to abortion is guaranteed and protected under the Canada Health Act, but we know that in Canada there are still those, even in the House, who would like to resurface the debate on the right to abortion.

This cannot be ignored, and we must remain vigilant. We will, on this side of the House, always unequivocally stand up for women's fundamental right to choose.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the 2019 election, the intelligence services warned the Prime Minister's Office that at least one of his Liberal candidates was part of a foreign interference network.

Is that candidate now part of the Prime Minister's caucus, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the national security advisor and I said last fall, we have no information that any federal candidates received money from China. That remains the case today.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat the question. Three weeks before the 2019 election, our intelligence services notified the Prime Minister's Office that one of his candidates was implicated in a foreign interference network.

According to our intelligence agencies, were any members of the Prime Minister's party or any of his ministers part of that network, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have answered that question many times. I know there are other important questions Canadians have for the Conservative leader.

Just recently, Conservative Party members dined with a far-right German politician. Christine Anderson and her party's far-right, xenophobic, anti-science, pro-Putin views are well known.

The Leader of the Opposition's carefully crafted condemnation, which neither he nor his MPs will repeat, will not cut it. It is time he gave Canadians real answers and apologized.

Oral Questions

• (1455)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, members of the Prime Minister's Office were present when our intelligence services warned his office that one of his candidates was part of the interference network.

Was Katie Telford aware, yes or no, of that warning? Did she inform the Prime Minister, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that Canadians have many questions about that. That is why we proposed mechanisms to allow independent experts to ensure that everything is being done.

Everything was done to protect our institutions and our elections from foreign interference. Obviously, this includes work done by parliamentary committees. That is why the minister responsible for democratic institutions and the foreign affairs minister will appear before committee tomorrow.

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has already heard from Elections Canada officials, the director of CSIS, the chief of the CSE, the deputy commissioner of the RCMP, the deputy minister of foreign affairs and—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister respects committees, why did he prevent them from doing their work?

He is currently obstructing a motion to have his chief of staff testify. Katie Telford was apparently informed by intelligence services of foreign interference in our electoral system.

Will the Prime Minister be transparent and let Katie Telford testify before the parliamentary committee, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been clearly established that ministerial responsibility is an important responsibility. That is why we are always willing to participate in the work of committees, including by sending the minister responsible for democratic institutions and the foreign affairs minister to committee tomorrow.

I want to quote someone: For hundreds of years, ministerial responsibility has been a key principle in the House and at committees.

The member for Carleton said that. We entirely agree with what he said several years ago.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if he thinks the minister should take responsibility, then why does he not take responsibility?

The Prime Minister has been aware of foreign interference in our electoral system since—

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt, but there appears to be a problem. We want to check to make sure there is interpretation.

It seems that there is no interpretation taking place on Zoom, so we will figure out what the technical issue is and then go from

there. In case anyone is wondering, one of the major computers has had to be rebooted. I ask for your patience.

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

Is the interpretation working?

[*English*]

Everything is fixed and the computer is plugged back in.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, today we learned that a briefing prepared by the Prime Minister's own department for the Prime Minister indicates that there was a large transfer of money, funds, for the 2019 federal election.

Is the Prime Minister aware, yes or no, of any money from the dictatorship in Beijing being sent to candidates, leadership candidates, the party or local party associations?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the national security advisor and I stated last fall, we have no information on federal candidates receiving money from China. That continues to be the case today.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to Global News, the Prime Minister's Office was informed in 2019 and 2022 about Chinese authorities interfering in our elections. Nothing was ever revealed; the information was hidden. Either the Prime Minister ignored it, which is dangerously negligent, or he was not informed directly, which means someone on his team was dangerously irresponsible.

Now the Prime Minister's solution is to appoint a secret committee. This is just more secrecy.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to create an independent public commission of inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know Canadians need to have confidence in our institutions and in the integrity of our elections and our democracy.

That is why we are going to choose an independent expert to look at the entire landscape around foreign interference in Canada and make sure the measures we have implemented since 2015 are doing the job we want them to do. The expert will also decide whether we need a public inquiry or whether we need other mechanisms to ensure everything is being done and to give Canadians confidence.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, another one of the Prime Minister's solutions is to appoint a special rapporteur, who will be happy to do his bidding, kind of like our leader's golden retriever.

We do not need a special report. What we need is a commissioner that all parties in the House agree on to head up an independent public commission on foreign interference in elections.

Why is the Prime Minister stubbornly refusing to set up an independent public commission?

• (1510)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those of us on this side of the House have confidence in the experts.

I think we have all heard some experts say we need an independent public commission, while others say a public commission would not be able to do all the fact-checking it would take to give Canadians confidence in our institutions.

That is why we chose to ask an independent, impartial expert to determine the best way to ensure that Canadians can have confidence in what was done.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just asked the Prime Minister if any parties, leadership campaigns or electoral district associations, that is to say parties and their local arms, received money directed by Beijing. He used the very tiny technical term, “candidate”, which only applies to a limited scenario 30 days before an election. He refuses to answer about whether his party or any other received money directed by the communist dictatorship in Beijing. We can assume that the answer, therefore, is yes.

How much did his party, and other parts of his party, get from the communist dictatorship?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on matters of national security, it is extremely important that we continue to give Canadians confidence that our experts and our officials are doing their jobs. However, it is also important to protect the women and men who serve in our security agencies and who do extremely dangerous work to keep Canadians safe. That is why we have created a committee where all parliamentarians from different parties can get top-secret clearance and look into these matters deeply, without compromising the safety of the people who serve this country.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is not interested in protecting the safety of the people serving this country. He is interested in protecting the Liberal Party of Canada. The question was regarding how much his party got in illegal donations funnelled from Beijing. I have asked the question twice now. He refuses to answer it. He distracts and he now claims that he cannot tell, because it would harm national security. Give me a break. It would harm his political career, once he tells how much the Liberal Party or its various arms received in money from Beijing. How much?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate and despicable that any member in the House would question the loyalty to Canada of any other member in the House. I understand the very real concerns that Canadians feel about foreign interference, and that is why we have created mechanisms to keep Canadians safe. To suggest that anyone in the House is not devoted to serving Canadians and to keeping safe those who serve Canada in dangerous positions is quite disgusting.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no drama lesson will distract from the question that I asked. The question was very clear: How much did the Liberal Party get in donations directed from Beijing? I have asked it multiple times. I find it incredible that the Prime Minister cannot stand up and answer with a zero. If he knows for sure it did not happen, and he has not been briefed to the contrary, he would say so right now. However, he is dodging the question. He is trying to engage in a dramatic distraction. Therefore, I will give him one more chance to answer the question: How much money did his party get from the dictatorship in Beijing?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see the Leader of the Opposition trying to backtrack from his heinous and disgusting accusations of disloyalty to Canada of anyone in the House, and I am pleased to see him back off from what was an absolutely despicable partisan approach. However, it does go to the point that Canadians need to have confidence that the answers they are seeking on foreign interference and on the integrity of our democratic institutions are being dealt with by experts. There are two ways of doing that. One way is by making sure that partisans and politicians of all parties get classified briefings on that, which the NSICOP does, and the other is to make sure independent—

* * *

• (1515)

[Translation]

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of women and girls in our communities today, there is clearly still work to be done to achieve full gender equality. We have seen a recent increase in anti-feminist and violent rhetoric. This rhetoric is dangerous and has a tangible, harmful impact on our communities.

Can the Prime Minister enlighten us as to where he stands on the issues that continue to hold back our women and girls who have so much to contribute to our communities?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure my colleague from London West that we on this side of the House will never accept the anti-feminist, violent and downright dangerous rhetoric that minimizes the contributions of women and girls in our society. Supporting women's rights takes more than just words here in the House. It must be backed up with concrete actions like combatting violence online and in our communities, encouraging the full participation of every woman in society and condemning the use of sexist and misogynistic tags on YouTube posts.

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

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue. It affects the lives of everyday people. Canadians of Chinese descent have been targeted for abuse in their own country, including right under the nose of the Prime Minister. There have been police stations set up by a foreign government in our country. He has done absolutely nothing about it. We need to know why he has done nothing about it.

Can the Prime Minister tell us how many diplomats from the Chinese embassy and consulate has he expelled since learning about these police stations? How many?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the selective partisan memory of the Leader of the Opposition is quite openly on display right now. It was just a few months ago when they were criticizing me for standing up directly to President Xi Jinping as I talked about the impacts of foreign interference in our country. I will continue to ensure that we are holding to account anyone who engages in illegal actions in Canada, including in foreign interference. We have never hesitated to take action where and when necessary, and we will continue to.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister will not answer how many diplomats he has kicked out, because the answer is zero. Even as they open police stations in our country, he will not answer that question. He will not answer whether members of his existing cabinet and caucus have been implicated in foreign interference. He will not answer whether his staff has been briefed about that interference. He will not answer even whether his party received illegal money directly from the foreign dictatorship in Beijing. He will not answer any of these questions, which is exactly why we need an independent inquiry that can compel his testimony. Will he call it now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the excessive partisanship we are seeing on this issue that is extremely serious and extremely important to Canadians is exactly why we have chosen to appoint an independent expert to make the determination on how we can best reassure Canadians and ensure that our government and our institutions are doing everything to protect our democracy. That is exactly what we are doing.

We have seen experts say that a public inquiry is necessary. We have seen other experts say that it would not get to the truth. That is why an independent expert will make that determination.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is blocking a public inquiry that would compel him to give answers. His members are blocking an investigation here at Parliament. He will not answer questions on the floor of the House of Commons. He even has a bill that would allow him to censor the Internet. It is almost as if he admires the basic Chinese communist dictatorship.

Will he tell us whether he still admires the basic Chinese communist dictatorship, as he so profusely said he did several years ago, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are clearly seeing, once again, that the Leader of the Opposition is simply not serious in his approach to reassuring Canadians

about institutions, about our democracy, about the integrity of our elections. That is why we are proposing significant and serious steps and mechanisms to make sure that, independently and with expert advice, the right answers are being sought and the right answers are being shared with Canadians. Those are not our answers. Those are not their answers. Those are answers determined by independent panels of experts tasked with protecting our democracy.

* * *

● (1520)

CHILD CARE

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that unaffordable child care has long been a barrier to enabling women's full participation in our workforce. Women should not have to choose between starting a family or starting a career. On this International Women's Day, can the Prime Minister inform the House of the progress made with the provinces and territories in making child care more affordable for the constituents of Scarborough—Agincourt and for all Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her question and for her incredibly hard work.

Women should not have to choose between starting a family or starting a career. In the Canada-wide agreements, provinces and territories committed to creating a combined total of over 275,000 child care spaces by March 31, 2026. To date, the creation of over 50,000 new spaces has been announced.

When accessible and affordable child care stops being a barrier, everyone in our society benefits. That is why we continue to move forward toward \$10-a-day child care for everyone across this country.

* * *

*[Translation]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the modernization of the Official Languages Act should be a historic moment. This is our chance to support French in this country and linguistic minority communities.

Despite the fact that it is their own bill, the Liberals are in chaos. They are taking contradictory positions, and several MPs are threatening to vote against Bill C-13.

Where is the Liberal vision? French is in decline in Quebec and in Canada. We must take action.

Rather than playing political games on the backs of these communities, can the Prime Minister assure us that his caucus will vote in favour of Bill C-13?

Private Members' Business

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are extremely proud of the work our team did on Bill C-13 to protect linguistic minorities across the country. We will always be there to protect official language minorities across Canada.

That is why we will continue to move forward. I would like to emphasize that it is also important, by the way, to stand up against the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause, an issue on which this member has unfortunately been weaker than the communities would have liked.

We will always defend linguistic minorities across the country.

* * *

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, foreign operatives have interfered in Canada's electoral system and our democracy. Media and CSIS documents have indicated that members of the Liberal Party and caucus were involved.

Money and instant on-demand supporters were used to get pro-China candidates elected and anti-China ones defeated. Cabinet and the PMO were well briefed on the extent of foreign interference, yet nothing was done.

Why is the Prime Minister eager to turn a blind eye to shady Liberal nominations, sketchy donations and having pro-Beijing MPs in his own caucus? Will his personally selected special rapporteur also be investigating the Liberal Party?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are rightly extremely concerned about foreign interference in our institutions, our elections and our democracy. That is why we are putting forward an independent top expert who will look at the entire landscape of interference and make sure that we are doing everything necessary and give Canadians confidence that the right processes have been followed, will be followed and that Canadians can continue to have confidence in their democracy and in the people they elect.

* * *

● (1525)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of Ms. Nusrat Ghani, Minister of State at the Department for Business and Trade for the United Kingdom.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Today is International Women's Day, and as the member for Scarborough—Agincourt asked her question of the Prime Minister

and he was responding, the member for South Shore—St. Margarets yelled at the member for Scarborough—Agincourt, “She deserves a participation medal.”

Undermining the presence of women in the House, especially on this day, is absolutely abhorrent.

Every woman has fought to be in this place and every woman deserves to be in this place, and I ask the member to retract that comment.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw the comment.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my comment is going to be very simple. We have all fought hard to be here. Regardless of gender, we have all fought hard, or the majority of us have, I should say.

I am listening to this and it is very dishonouring. It goes both ways, and I would like to say that, on International Women's Day, let us be respectful to all.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, 30% of the number of seats in the House are held by women. We are not there yet.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON CANCERS LINKED TO FIREFIGHTING ACT

The House resumed from February 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-224, An Act to establish a national framework for the prevention and treatment of cancers linked to firefighting, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: It being 3:26 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-224 under Private Members' Business.

Call in the members.

● (1540)

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

(Division No. 263)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bergeron

Private Members' Business

Berthold	Bérubé	Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Bezan	Bibeau	Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Bittle	Blaikie	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Blair	Blanchet	Lightbound	Lloyd
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Lobb	Long
Block	Blois	Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
Boissonnault	Boulerice	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Bradford	Bragdon	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Brassard	Brière	Maguire	Maloney
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe	Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Calkins	Cannings	Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
Caputo	Carrie	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
Casey	Chabot	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
Chagger	Chahal	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Chambers	Champagne	McLean	McLeod
Champoux	Chatel	McPherson	Melillo
Chen	Chiang	Mendès	Medicino
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Miao	Michaud
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	Miller	Moore
Cormier	Coteau	Morantz	Morrice
Dabrusin	Dalton	Morrison	Morrissey
Damoff	Dancho	Motz	Murray
Davidson	Davies	Muys	Naqvi
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Nater	Ng
d'Entremont	Desbiens	Noormohamed	Normandin
Desilets	Desjarlais	O'Connell	Oliphant
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	O'Regan	O'Toole
Diab	Doherty	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Dong	Dowdall	Paupé	Perkins
Dreeshen	Drouin	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Dubourg	Duguid	Plamondon	Poilievre
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Rayes	Redekopp
Ellis	Epp	Reid	Richards
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Roberts	Robillard
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Rodriguez	Rogers
Fergus	Ferreri	Romanado	Rood
Fillmore	Findlay	Ruff	Sahota
Fisher	Fonseca	Sajjan	Saks
Fortier	Fortin	Samson	Sarai
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Freeland	Fry	Scheer	Schieffe
Gaheer	Gallant	Schmale	Seeback
Garneau	Garon	Serré	Sgro
Garrison	Gaudreau	Shanahan	Sheehan
Généreux	Genus	Shields	Shipley
Gerretsen	Gill	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Gladu	Godin	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Goodridge	Gould	Singh	Small
Gourde	Gray	Sorbara	Soroka
Green	Guilbeault	Sousa	Steinley
Hajdu	Hallan	Ste-Marie	Stewart
Hanley	Hardie	St-Onge	Strahl
Hepfner	Hoback	Stubbs	Sudds
Holland	Housefather	Tassi	Taylor Roy
Hughes	Hussen	Thériault	Therrien
Hutchings	Iacono	Thomas	Thompson
Idlout	Ien	Tochor	Tolmie
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Trudeau	Trudel
Johns	Joly	Tumbull	Uppal
Jowhari	Julian	Valdez	Van Bynen
Kayabaga	Kelloway	van Koeverden	Van Popta
Kelly	Khalid	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Khera	Kitchen	Vecchio	Vidal
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Vien	Viersen
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Vignola	Villemure
Kurek	Kusie	Virani	Vis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Vuong	Wagantall
Lake	Lalonde	Warkentin	Waugh
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux	Webber	Weiler
Lantsman	Lapointe	Wilkinson	Williams
Larouche	Lattanzio	Williamson	Yip
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Zahid	Zarrillo

Private Members' Business

Zimmer Zuberi — 322

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Badawey Lawrence — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried
(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

ARAB HERITAGE MONTH

The House resumed from February 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-232, An Act respecting Arab Heritage Month, be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-232 under Private Members' Business.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 264*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dalton

Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dong
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gallant	Garneau
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genius	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Guilbeault	Hallan
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Johns	Joly
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lantsman	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Maloney
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz

Private Members' Business

Murray	Muys
Naqvi	Nater
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poilievre	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rood
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schiefke
Schmale	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shiple
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Sousa	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi — 322

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Badawey Lawrence— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from February 17 consideration of the motion that C-295, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (neglect of

vulnerable adults), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-295, under Private Members' Business.

● (1605)

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

(Division No. 265)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joneas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Doherty	Dong
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland

Fry
Gallant
Garon
Gaudreau
Genuis
Gill
Godin
Gould
Gray
Guilbeault
Hallan
Hardie
Hoback
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Jeneroux
Joly
Julian
Kelloway
Khalid
Kitchen
Koutrakis
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Kwan
Lalonde
Lamoureux
Lapointe
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)
Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod
Melillo
Mendicino
Michaud
Moore
Morrice
Morrisey
Murray
Naqvi
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Petitpas Taylor
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Redekopp
Richards
Robillard
Rogers
Rood
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia

Gaheer
Garneau
Garrison
Généreux
Gerretsen
Gladu
Goodridge
Gourde
Green
Hajdu
Hanley
Hepfner
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Kelly
Khera
Kmiec
Kram
Kurek
Kusmierczyk
Lake
Lambropoulos
Lantsman
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maguire
Martel
Mathysen
May (Saainich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McKay
McLean
McPherson
Mendés
Miao
Miller
Morantz
Morrison
Motz
Muys
Nater
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Plamondon
Powlowski
Rayes
Reid
Roberts
Rodriguez
Romanado
Ruff
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Scheer

Routine Proceedings

Schiefke
Seeback
Sgro
Sheehan
ShIPLEY
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Small
Soroka
Steinley
Stewart
Strahl
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Thompson
Tolmie
Trudel
Uppal
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi— 321

Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sorbara
Sousa
Ste-Marie
St-Onge
Stubbs
Tassi
Thériault
Thomas
Tochor
Trudeau
Turnbull
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Badawey

Lawrence— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

The House resumed from March 7 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology concerning the extension of time to consider Bill C-244.

● (1615)

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

*Routine Proceedings**(Division No. 266)*

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison	Hoback	Holland
Albas	Aldag	Housefather	Hughes
Alghabra	Ali	Hussen	Hutchings
Allison	Anand	Iacono	Idlout
Anandasangaree	Angus	Ien	Jaczek
Arnold	Arseneault	Jeneroux	Johns
Arya	Ashton	Joly	Jowhari
Atwin	Bachrach	Julian	Kayabaga
Bains	Baker	Kelloway	Kelly
Baldinelli	Barlow	Khalid	Khera
Barrett	Barron	Kniec	Koutrakis
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste	Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Beaulieu	Beech	Kurek	Kusie
Bendayan	Bergeron	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Berthold	Bérubé	Lake	Lalonde
Bezan	Bibeau	Lambropoulos	Lametti
Bittle	Blaikie	Lamoureux	Lantsman
Blair	Blanchet	Lapointe	Larouche
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Block	Blois	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Boissonnault	Boulerice	Lehoux	Lemire
Bradford	Bragdon	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Brassard	Brière	Liepert	Lightbound
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe	Lloyd	Lobb
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe	Long	Longfield
Calkins	Cannings	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Caputo	Carrie	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
Casey	Chabot	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Chagger	Chahal	Maloney	Martel
Chambers	Champagne	Martinez Ferrada	Mathysen
Champoux	Chatel	May (Cambridge)	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
Chen	Chiang	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	McKay	McLean
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	McDonald (Avalon)	McPherson
Cormier	Coteau	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Mendès
Dabrusin	Dalton	McLeod	Miao
Damoff	Dancho	Melillo	Miller
Davidson	Davies	Mendicino	Morantz
DeBellefeuille	Deltell	Michaud	Morrison
d'Entremont	Desbiens	Moore	Motz
Desilets	Desjarlais	Morrissey	Muys
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Murray	Nater
Diab	Doherty	Naqvi	Noormohamed
Dong	Dowdall	Ng	O'Connell
Dreeshen	Drouin	Normandin	O'Regan
Dubourg	Duclos	Oliphant	Patzer
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	O'Toole	Pauzé
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	Paul-Hus	Perron
El-Khoury	Ellis	Perkins	Plamondon
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Poilievre	Rayes
Fast	Fergus	Qualtrough	Reid
Ferreri	Fillmore	Redekopp	Roberts
Findlay	Fisher	Richards	Rodriguez
Fonseca	Fortier	Robillard	Romanado
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Rogers	Ruff
Fraser	Freeland	Rood	Sajjan
Fry	Gaheer	Sahota	Samson
Gallant	Garneau	Saks	Savard-Tremblay
Garon	Garrison	Sarai	Scheer
Gaudreau	Généreux	Scarpaleggia	Schmale
Genuis	Gerretsen	Schiefke	Sgro
Gill	Gladu	Serré	Sheehan
Godin	Goodridge	Shanahan	Shipley
Gould	Gourde	Shields	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Gray	Green	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sinclair-Desgagné
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Simard	Small
Hallan	Hanley	Singh	Soroka
Hardie	Hepfner	Sorbara	Steinley
		Sousa	Stewart
		St-Marie	Strahl
		St-Onge	Sudds
		Stubbs	

Routine Proceedings

Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi — 322

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Badawey

Lawrence — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 50 minutes.

I believe the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount has some news for us.

* * *

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER

Hon. Marc Garneau (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.): Mr. Speaker and colleagues, thank you for allowing me to address you today.

• (1620)

[Translation]

I am rising today to inform you that, after much deliberation and with an eye to the future, I have decided to resign from my role as member of Parliament for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount. I am very grateful to you for giving me an opportunity to address the House one last time after 14 years of service. It has been a wonderful 14 years. I spent seven years as an opposition member and seven years in government.

I am well aware that some of you wish I had spent more time on one side of the House than on the other, but my memories of my first seven years here are just as fond as those of my last seven years. I consider myself to have been extraordinarily privileged to have worked in the Parliament of Canada, to have served the people of Montreal, Quebec and Canada to the best of my ability, both in my riding and in this august chamber. I thank the Prime Minister for allowing me to serve Canada as a member of cabinet.

[English]

Members know that I am a by-the-book kind of guy. I have always respected the rules of this House and always obeyed its protocols, and for that reason I would never dream of pointing out that my family has joined me today for my final speech. It would be wrong of me to point out that my wife Pam, my daughter Simone and her husband Ozgor, my granddaughter Ela, and my sons Adrien and George are in the gallery, so I will not do it.

Those who work in this House and have families know all too well that political life is demanding on those families. My first thank you goes to my loved ones. I thank them for allowing me to engage in politics for more than 17 years.

[Translation]

I would ask my constituents to forgive me for leaving before the end of my mandate.

After the last election, I had the privilege of being appointed as the chair of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs and more recently as the joint chair of the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying. I am extremely proud of the work of these two committees. Last fall, I promised my family that I would leave politics after tabling in the House the final report on medical assistance in dying, which I did on February 15. It was very important to me to accomplish that task.

[English]

My colleagues know better than most that every member of Parliament is supported by a dedicated staff. We could not otherwise do our job, so I want to thank my staff, beginning with those who have worked in my constituency office in Montreal. Their constant presence gave me peace of mind, knowing that they were always there. They reached out to the community to let people know they would be there to serve them. They took thousands of calls from citizens seeking our help. Most of those calls were polite, although on occasion some were not quite so nice. On a few occasions, there were even threatening calls and people forcing their way into our office, something that does not happen in most jobs. I thank them for their calm under pressure. I simply could not have done it without them.

[Translation]

I also want to thank those who kept my office on Parliament Hill running smoothly. They organized my life and made sure that I was available for as many meetings as possible, that I was on time to fulfill my duties in the House and that I was properly prepared to chair my two committees. Their comments about my performance in the House, whether good or not so good, were always appreciated. I thank them.

As for my departmental teams at Transport Canada and at Foreign Affairs, I have just one word to describe them: incredible. They were always there for me, ensuring that I was up to date on my portfolio, that I was prepared for oral question period, press scrums and appearances before parliamentary committees. They did all that while reserving a few moments here and there to allow me to breathe. I thank them for their loyalty and for their service to our country, even when I made their job difficult sometimes.

Routine Proceedings

I also want to thank my many parliamentary secretaries. For those who do not know it, the work of a parliamentary secretary is extremely demanding. They have to be well versed on all the files. That being said, they always did a great job representing me. I thank them for their conscientious work and their dedication.

[*English*]

I thank those in the media for doing their job, especially those who took the time to do the necessary research and cover all perspectives on the issues at hand. I may not have been their easiest customer, but most of them were fair with me. We also got to know each other, and they have my respect.

Furthermore, allow me to thank the parliamentary staff, who make this House of Commons work so seamlessly and efficiently. They are incredibly professional in everything they do, from the pages who assist us to those who keep the building spotless and make sure that we are fed when we are on duty, to those tasked with our security, who put our safety ahead of their own, all the way up to the Clerk of the House. I am still in awe of those who can call out the names of every member in this House during votes. They all deserve our gratitude and admiration.

As members may know, I first ran in 2006 and was unsuccessful. I ran again in 2008 and was elected. Allow me to make a point about all those who run in elections. They never lose when they run for office. They are doing something that I consider to be noble and that requires courage. They are expressing their views on current affairs and exposing themselves to criticism; few people would deny that. So, no matter the outcome, they never lose in such circumstances. Democracy is always well served.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

I would also like to pay tribute to all the public servants with whom I have had the pleasure of working over the past six years as minister. I thank them for their excellent work and their loyalty to the values of our highly esteemed public service. I have always believed that the easiest task for a government is deciding what to do, and the hardest task is implementing those decisions.

I know this because, for most of my professional career, I was one of the people responsible for implementing the decisions made by my superiors. This responsibility rests on our public servants, and I believe they always do their best, even when we ask too much of them. We need to be more aware that they need to be given the time and resources required before being asked to implement the decisions we are making.

[*English*]

Switching to my fellow caucus members, I thank them for their friendship. I thank them for expressing their thoughts and feelings to me over issues that were of concern to them. I am not the most demonstrative person in the world, but I did take it all in, and I truly believe that through our exchanges, I became a better MP and a better minister. I also want to thank them for allowing me to express my views and for listening to them respectfully, even when they did not agree with them.

To those sitting across from me, I want to say that I enjoy the thrust and parry in this chamber. I have always viewed those members not as enemies but as adversaries, and there is a difference. I know that every single one of them comes here wanting to make Canada a better place. We might have different views about how to do it, and that is fine, but when all is said and done, there is much more that unites us than divides us.

Although I tried not to be too partisan, if I could avoid it, Hansard will probably make a liar of me, having preserved moments where I, too, failed at this, particularly in the early days of my political career. That said, I do believe that I did get better over time. All that is to say to my colleagues in opposition that I enjoyed the exchanges with them, even though I was, on occasion, on the losing end. Although I may not have shown it often, I have watched all of them, some for a very long time, and I like and respect them, because I know what the job of being an MP involves.

Before I finish, let me issue a challenge to everyone in this chamber. Arrive each day in this House with the firm intention of showing respect for colleagues and for this extraordinary place. Be dignified. We must remind ourselves that when emotions run high, as they do for all of us, those emotions need to be channelled in a positive way, whether when supporting something or criticizing it.

[*Translation*]

We all know that we are capable of dignified behaviour. We all know that we are capable of being critical without resorting to yelling at the top of our lungs. We all know that we want to be heard and even listened to when we ask a question or give an answer. God knows that the Speaker of the House reminds us of this often.

• (1630)

[*English*]

My challenge to members is to find their better angels and put away the anger and false indignation. Criticize by all means, but do it with respect and maybe even wit. Make Canadians proud of this House and the people in it.

[*Translation*]

I would like to end on an optimistic note and address the younger generations of Canadians. Even though Canada is facing many challenges, we live in an exceptional country, a prosperous, safe and diverse country that is a great place to live. Let us be proud of it and protect it, its distinctive features and the institutions that make it work, like this Parliament.

[*English*]

Nothing is perfect in this world, but I would like to think that I always did my best to try to make it better. Although my gaze will remain on the future, as it always has been, I hope the young people of this country will fashion that future and protect our democracy.

Routine Proceedings

Now it is time for me to go. It has been an honour serving my country alongside all members. I thank them and say farewell.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we just heard another excellent speech by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, who will be leaving the House after being a member for more than 14 years.

In his roles as MP, chair of the Quebec Liberal caucus, minister of transportation and minister of foreign affairs, he was always there to serve the people.

I believe that everyone in the House agrees that 14 years in active politics is no small achievement.

As the member mentioned, we all know that it is not always easy for the families. He was there for all of us, but now he will be there even more for his family. We thank them for lending him to us for so many good years.

I obviously also want to thank the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount for his work, and also for fulfilling his many roles with dedication and passion.

In fact, our friend and colleague has made many contributions to our country outside of politics.

[*English*]

The member of Parliament for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount devoted his life to serving Canadians.

Before entering politics, he served a distinguished career as a naval officer, retiring as a captain. In 1984, he became the first Canadian in space when he flew aboard the U.S. space shuttle Challenger, captivating the hearts and imaginations of Canadians who could now see themselves through him in the outer reaches of the final frontier. He went on to further flights, and then kept alive the dreams of other Canadians hoping to explore space in his leadership of the Canadian Space Agency.

Throughout his career, the member of Parliament for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount stayed true to his values. He always led from the heart, including in his most recent work steering the Special Joint Committee on Medical Assistance in Dying as its House joint chair. We will miss him as a colleague and friend here in this House.

Just as he said in his remarks, and as he has demonstrated throughout his long career, he always viewed colleagues across the aisle not as enemies but as worthy adversaries. When he says that we should all respect one another no matter our differences and our points of view, I know he means it.

Even in his last act here in the House, with his deeply moving parting words to the House, he continues to push us, as he always pushed himself, to do our very best in the very best of ways to serve Canadians.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

The member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount is a man of principle. He is a person who has always recognized the importance of serving our country. In fact, that is why he has always placed such a strong emphasis on education, to give young people the tools they need to serve and succeed.

As the first Canadian astronaut to go into space, he motivated generations of young Canadians by showing them that it is always possible to go higher and farther. He showed us that it is possible to achieve all our dreams.

As a politician, he demonstrated, on a daily basis, that it is also possible to do great things while keeping both feet firmly on the ground.

We all wish him the best in the future.

I want to thank my dear friend.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hope you will allow me to look directly at the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount.

I want to take a look back. Thirty-nine years ago, at the tender age of 14, I became fascinated by a graduate of the Royal Military College of Canada, a naval officer who was the first Quebecker, the first Canadian, to become an astronaut. I remember when the space shuttle *Columbia* was launched in 1981. I had drawn pictures of the shuttle in school. Three years later, a Quebecker became an astronaut.

In 1984, the space shuttle *Challenger* undertook its STS-41-G mission. Then, in 1996, the space shuttle *Endeavour* completed mission STS-77 and, in 2000, mission STS-97 was launched, again on the space shuttle *Endeavour*. That flight took the MP for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount to the International Space Station.

For me, his military career—he is a former member of the military, like me—and his career as an astronaut were marked by those moments. They shaped the way I will forever see the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, who, as the Prime Minister mentioned, mesmerized a generation of young people back in our day. I had a role model, a vision and a belief that we Canadians could also become astronauts some day. Let us not forget that, back then, there were only Americans and Russians. We never thought we could do that too, but yes. Someone here today proved it to us.

Let us talk about politics. Obviously, the shuttle landed on the dark side of the moon at some point. In 2008, our astronaut became a Liberal MP. We can forgive him for that because, for the past 15 years, I must admit that this man has been a great Canadian.

He has always been very respectful, as we saw in his speech. The opposition never had anything negative to say about the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount.

He is a gentleman and an excellent politician but, personally, I will always remember him as a great Canadian who made history.

Routine Proceedings

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning, we learned that the Liberal member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount is resigning effective today.

Obviously, we listened to his farewell speech and we saw that it is with great emotion and after thoughtful reflection that he is leaving political life today. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to thank the member for his nearly 15 years of public service on behalf of the people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount.

He served as minister of foreign affairs and minister of transport, which are both key positions. Regardless of what party we belong to or whether we agree or disagree, 15 years of public life is a feat that deserves everyone's recognition and respect. As my colleague said earlier, this shows that he is noble and courageous.

We wish the member many happy years with his family and loved ones and the best of luck and success in his future challenges.

Indeed, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount is no stranger to challenges. It is impossible not to mention that his commitment predates his foray into politics. Following his impressive academic career, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount served in the navy for a long time, which is in and of itself worthy of respect.

He was the first Canadian in space. For many people back home, we remember him primarily as the first Quebecker to go into space, which he did no less than three times.

Long before he entered politics, he was one of those men who made Quebeckers proud and allowed them to dream bigger, farther. We need to remember that; it is unforgettable. Being an astronaut will always be an infinitely more select club than being a member of Parliament or even a minister.

That being said, now I want to get a little dig in. The member is seated in front of us. The Bloc Québécois respects his keen intellect so much that we might say that we understand why he felt a duty to speak for the people of his riding, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, for whom language is a sensitive issue.

However, French is at risk in Quebec. Naturally, if French is at risk, our national identity is also at risk. We hope that in the coming weeks, months and even years, far from the political arena, he may have another calling. The future of our Quebec nation, the nation that he made so proud by opening the door to the highest levels of science and exploration of the universe for Quebeckers, is dependent upon the vitality of its language.

I want to wish the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount a happy retirement from federal politics, and I thank him.

• (1645)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is singular what the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount has achieved. We have had speeches from the Prime Minister, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, the member for Manicouagan and now myself on behalf of the NDP caucus. You have sensed, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, and I hope the member himself has sensed the tremendous respect and af-

fection we have for him. It is a singular achievement that after 14 years, every single member of this House loves the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount.

[Translation]

When we look at his career, we see just how significant his contribution has been. He served in our country's military, he was the first Canadian astronaut to travel into space, he worked hard as a minister, and he was an extraordinary MP. He led by example many times.

He made a contribution in every aspect of his life and, of course, beyond all else, he made a tremendous contribution to Canada.

[English]

There is a question that I think is in all our minds: How could it be that, after 14 years in the House of Commons, he looks exactly the same, as young as he did when he entered? Rumour has it that one day in space is equal to one month on earth and I think, ultimately, that is the secret that he looks as young as he does after 14 years.

We also know the point of view that he has offered in this House. He talked about respect, and I will come back to that in a moment, but above all, there is his wisdom. I think that comes from having perceived our small planet from space and understanding that the differences we have sometimes among one another are very small in relation to the importance of our country and of our planet.

• (1650)

[Translation]

Ultimately, that is his legacy to this House. He was also a gentleman, as the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles just said.

Beyond all else, he was respectful to all the members of Parliament. That is the challenge that we have just been given: We need to act more like the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount did every day. That is his message, that is the legacy he is leaving us, with all the work he has done as an MP. Every day, we need to be respectful of each other here in the House. That is something he did throughout his entire career.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, our leader from Burnaby South and all New Democrats across the country, I would like to extend our deepest congratulations to the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount on his retirement. We wish him a wonderful retirement. We want to thank his family and his employees for their service by letting him sit in the House of Commons and, above all, contribute as much as he did to our country.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to add my voice to those of my colleagues in recognizing the enormous contribution of the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount. All of us Canadians have had in our minds this extraordinary human being as a Canadian hero. I have had the great honour, which I cannot believe, really, to become his friend. I was elected in 2011, and the hon. member was the House leader for what was then the third party in this place. He always showed me such kindness and generosity.

I was the only member of the Green Party at the time. Of course, our caucus has expanded madly since then. It has doubled. I asked for his help time and time again, and he never held back. I have to say that it has been an amazing experience to be friends. The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby has made the point really clearly that everybody here loves this particular member of Parliament. It is a shock to know that he will not be sitting there when we come back after the next few times in our ridings. His departure is so sudden and so unexpected.

[*Translation*]

He will be greatly missed. He will be missed by every member who had the honour of working with him.

[*English*]

We say colloquially in English, “It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure this out”, but this is the only person in this place who is a rocket scientist, and he has figured many things out. I hope we will all live up to his parting words. The Prime Minister mentioned his “last act”, which put me in mind of another phrase. This member is a class act. He never showed disrespect to anyone in this place. He was never anything less than honourable, thorough in his work and fully dedicated to Quebec, to Canada and to this planet. In that, I want to say how very grateful I am for all his kindness and his willingness to help the occasional effort of this member and to try to put things right in this place for democracy, for Canada and for the planet. There really are no words to say how much I will miss this member. I am thankful for the chance to add my words.

● (1655)

The Speaker: Traditionally the Speaker does not refer to individual members. However, I must say that when the hon. member came to see me yesterday and gave me the bad news, or the good news for him and his family I guess, I thought back on the number of years we served together. I remember one time we were sitting somewhere over here, and he had just been elected. I was sitting in the same area. His comment was, “You never miss a chance to pick at the low-lying fruit.”

Mr. member of Parliament, you have been out of this world, and you are leaving a big, black hole in this Parliament with your departure. I do not think I can say much more than that, but I thank him for all his years of service. It has been wonderful both for Parliament and for the country.

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, Health; the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap, Seniors; the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, Carbon Pricing.

Routine Proceedings

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 25th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in relation to the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, March 2, regarding the study on foreign election interference.

While I am on my feet, I also want to give a shout-out to the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount. I have had the honour of sitting beside him. He truly is a class act.

In addition, for everybody paying attention, PROC will be meeting at 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

* * *

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON FLOOD AND DROUGHT FORECASTING ACT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-317, An Act to establish a national strategy respecting flood and drought forecasting.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a bill to address a problem that has caused severe environmental damage across different parts of this country and created enormous financial loss for individuals, insurance companies and governments at all levels. I am talking about flooding and drought, as well as the need to take advantage of the latest technological advances and opportunities to ensure that Canada has at its disposal the most accurate flood and drought prediction systems in the world.

My bill is calling on the government to create a national flood and drought forecasting strategy in co-operation with the provinces, indigenous communities and other relevant stakeholders.

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

* * *

● (1700)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-318, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (adoptive and intended parents).

She said: Mr. Speaker, the arrival of a new child is a precious time for all parents, and our system of parental leave benefits provides critical financial support to parents while they care for them. Adoptive and intended parents are, however, at a disadvantage under the current parental benefit system.

All families are deserving of equal access to parental leave benefits, so it is an honour to introduce my bill, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code regarding adoptive and intended parents. I want to thank my colleague, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, for her support and for seconding my bill today.

Routine Proceedings

Through a new 15-week EI period for adoptive and intended parents, this bill would ensure greater parity in the parental benefits landscape. It would also acknowledge the unique needs and complexities of attachment for adoptive families. Time is truly a precious commodity. I hope all members of the House will afford adoptive parents and intended parents the time they deserve with their child.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-319, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (amount of full pension).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to introduce a bill to improve the financial health of seniors.

This bill essentially contains two parts. The first part aims to eliminate the discrimination that currently exists on the basis of age. We are asking that all seniors receive the 10% increase in old age security starting at age 65, not just those aged 75 and over. The second part aims to raise the eligibility threshold for the guaranteed income supplement to \$6,500, without cutting it, for seniors who decide to remain in the workforce.

With these two measures, which increase both the basic amount and the working income of seniors, we aim to ensure that they can better cope with inflation. That is the least we can do to allow seniors to live in dignity.

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

* * *

[*English*]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-320, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (disclosure of information to victims).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George for seconding this bill. It is wonderful to see him. It is great to have him back in the House.

This is a very short bill, but it would make a lot of difference. It was inspired by a constituent of mine. Her name is Lisa Freeman. She lost her father to an axe murderer in 1991. I thought I would like to use her words when I spoke to this bill, so she wrote me a little note, and I would like to read it into the record.

She said that the significance of this bill is twofold to better meet the needs of victims of crime by providing them with timely and accurate information upon sentencing of an offender, thus avoiding the false comfort of misleading parole eligibility dates.

She continued that very often, families just like hers can be caught off guard when they are notified that an offender is eligible for forms of parole well before the 25-year mark of a sentence is reached. This bill will serve to educate the public to the reality of what life in prison with no parole for 25 years means in real time.

She also said that victims of crime and their families face many challenges when dealing with the justice system, and with the movement of this bill, not only does it provide transparency but a stronger voice for victims of crime.

I look forward to debating the bill in the House and its passing.

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

* * *

• (1705)

PETITIONS**OPIOIDS**

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising because people in my riding of Victoria are drawing attention to the fact that the overdose and toxic drug supply crisis is one of the most deadly public health emergencies of our lifetime, with over 20 deaths per day.

People are calling on the government to declare the overdose crisis a national public health emergency and take immediate steps to end overdose deaths. This would include working with provinces and territories to create a pan-Canadian action plan and ensuring that plan considers reforms that other countries have used, such as legal regulation of drugs, safe supply, decriminalization, and changes to flawed drug policies in policing. Petitioners call on the government to ensure this emergency is taken seriously with adequately funded programming and supports.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of 93 constituents from the Yukon in support of just transition legislation to address the climate emergency. This petition contains a number of specific policy recommendations to help us achieve the goals of transitioning to a green, equitable and inclusive economy with a substantial reduction in global emissions.

JUSTICE

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise in this place to draw the attention of, in this case specifically, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to the following: that the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Bissonnette* struck down section 745.51 of the Criminal Code, which allowed parole ineligibility periods to be applied consecutively for mass murderers. As a result, a killer and some of Canada's most heinous mass murderers will have their parole ineligibility period reduced as they are now eligible to apply for parole after only 25 years.

R. v. Bissonnette, along with other examples, is an unjust decision putting the interests of some of Canada's worst criminals ahead of the rights of their victims. Recurring parole hearings can retraumatize the families and victims of mass murderers, and the Government of Canada has tools at its disposal to respond to instances like this, including invoking the notwithstanding clause. Therefore, these petitioners from Alberta and across Canada urge the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to invoke the notwithstanding clause to override this unjust court decision.

ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to present a petition from concerned Canadians who want to see the end of first-past-the-post voting. They very specifically, in this petition, call on this place to consider the single transferable vote as the favoured approach to bringing in proportional representation.

They point out that it is a riding-centric proportional system that could be seen as a compromise between those who want a preferential vote and those who want to see a riding-centric vote, those who want to make sure that we have in this country, at last, a fair voting system. They point out that under single transferable vote, voters would be represented by someone from a local multi-winner riding and they would be able to hear their views represented at a national and local level.

There is a great deal of detail in this petition, so in an attempt to summarize it briefly, I will underscore that the petitioners call for the implementation of a single transferable vote with multi-winner ridings that would have between three and seven members each and that there would be single-winner ridings for areas such as the territories and Labrador. They also wish to use a weighted inclusive Gregory method for the transfer of surplus votes. It is a detailed, thoughtful petition.

• (1710)

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of over 17,000 Canadians who are demanding economic justice and ensuring that profiteering in the grocery sector is truly held to account.

The petitioners say that Loblaws currently owns a grocery store within 10 kilometres of 90% of all Canadians, has posted record profits while Canadians struggle to eat, has monopolized the basic necessities that Canadians rely on and has introduced a price freeze but has failed to live up to that promise. The petitioners note that the price of food is rising in Canada and more Canadians are rely-

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ing on food banks to get food for their families, and that in the middle of the pandemic, Loblaws cut its pandemic pay for workers.

Therefore, the undersigned 17,000 Canadians are asking that we open a parliamentary investigation into Loblaws for its pandemic profiteering, greedflation and continued price gouging of Canadians; open an investigation into the monopolization of Canadian grocery stores; and create legislation to prevent this from occurring again.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1715)

[*English*]

ONLINE STREAMING ACT

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (for the Minister of Canadian Heritage) moved:

That a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours that, in relation to Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, the House:

agrees with amendments 1(a)(ii), 1(b), 2(a), 2(b), 2(c), 2(d)(i), 2(e), 4, 5, 7(b)(i), 8, 9(a), 10 and 12 made by the Senate;

respectfully disagrees with amendment 1(a)(i) because the amendment does not refer to broadcasting undertakings that comprise components of the broadcasting system which may cause interpretative issues in the application of the Act;

respectfully disagrees with amendment 2(d)(ii) because the amendment seeks to legislate matters in the broadcasting system that are beyond the policy intent of the bill, the purpose of which is to include online undertakings, undertakings for the transmission or retransmission of programs over the Internet, in the broadcasting system;

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respectfully disagrees with amendment 3 because this would affect the Governor in Council's ability to publicly consult on, and issue, a policy direction to the CRTC to appropriately scope the regulation of social media services with respect to their distribution of commercial programs, as well as prevent the broadcasting system from adapting to technological changes over time;

respectfully disagrees with amendment 6 because it could limit the CRTC's ability to impose conditions respecting the proportion of programs to be broadcast that are devoted to specific genres both for online undertakings and traditional broadcasters, thus reducing the diversity of programming;

proposes that amendment 7(a) be amended to read as follows:

“(a) On page 18, replace lines 29 to 34 with the following:

“(a) whether Canadians, including independent producers, have a right or interest in relation to a program, including copyright, that allows them to control and benefit in a significant and equitable manner from the exploitation of the program;”;

respectfully disagrees with amendment 7(b)(ii) because the principle that Canadian programs are first and foremost content made by Canadians is, and has been, at the centre of the definition of Canadian programs for decades, and this amendment would remove the ability for the CRTC to ensure that that remains the case;

proposes that amendment 9(b) be amended by deleting subsection 18(2.1) because the obligation to hold a public hearing both before and after decisions are taken by the CRTC will entail unnecessary delays in the administration of the Act;

respectfully disagrees with amendment 11 because the amendment seeks to legislate matters in the broadcasting system that are beyond the policy intent of the bill, the purpose of which is to include online undertakings, undertakings for the transmission or retransmission of programs over the Internet, in the broadcasting system, and because further study is required on how best to position our national public broadcaster to meet the needs and expectations of Canadians.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few comments on Hon. Marc Garneau's retirement.

I was fortunate to serve as his parliamentary secretary when he was the minister of transport. It is funny, when I was appointed someone came to me and said, “Hey, you know, there are a pile of schools in this country already named after Marc Garneau.” It is unusual in this place to meet someone with such incredible history, such incredible service, who has already had schools named after him and had already been appointed to the Order of Canada before coming to this place. He engaged in a lifetime of service through the navy, as an astronaut through the Canadian Space Agency and in this place for 14 years. As was mentioned by many speakers, his absence will be felt significantly.

However, we are here today for Bill C-11, and this bill has had a long journey. In one form or another, we have been debating this bill since the fall of 2020. We have kept working hard and we never give up, because we know how important this legislation is.

Our goal has never changed. From the start, it has always been about making sure Canadian stories and music are available to Canadians. It is as simple as that. The stories and music are the beating heart of our culture, a culture we have always supported and promoted. We are not reinventing the wheel here. We would only be updating our laws to clarify that digital services and platforms have obligations to support our cultural sector.

It is kind of amazing that we would look to Canadian companies like Bell or Rogers and say that of course they have to support Canadian culture. However, some in this place would say that foreign tech giants have no such obligations.

We had an opportunity during the committee meeting to hear from Gord Sinclair of The Tragically Hip. He talked about how the Broadcasting Act helped his band, The Tragically Hip, which comes from a small town in eastern Ontario, to become well known and respected across the country. He spoke in support of the legislation so that there could be more Tragically Hips in the future.

The Broadcasting Act has helped Canadian culture to flourish and grow for more than 50 years. I mentioned The Tragically Hip, but we can think of all the bands and musicians we love, as well as the Canadian TV shows and films that have entertained us and found audiences all over the world, thanks, in part, to the Broadcasting Act. We want to ensure that the success continues to serve Canadians well, now and into the future.

So much about how we produce, engage with and access digital content has changed with the increasing dominance of digital broadcasting. We must act to ensure that Canadian artists, storytellers and Canadian culture do not get left behind. We must act to ensure that all voices have a chance to be heard and to ensure that Canadian culture reflects the realities of our diversity.

We know how important it is to get this right. That is why, from the start, our efforts to modernize the Broadcasting Act have been a collaborative effort. We have worked with and heard from Canadians to find the right solutions. We have held public consultations; heard from key stakeholders in the industry; listened to the ideas and concerns of artists, content creators and everyday Canadians; and worked across the aisle with members of all parties to help shape this bill.

Now, as we know, only one party in Parliament has decided that it knows better than Canadian artists, creators, producers and all the workers in our cultural sector. Conservatives, unfortunately, really went out of their way to protect the interests of web giants, just like they did during the committee study of Bill C-18. When Facebook came to testify, we saw Conservatives stand and act as the PR reps for the tech giants. They did not need to hire lobbyists, since they had, for free, Conservatives standing up and supporting them. I have to tip my hat because the Conservatives were pretty good at it.

● (1720)

They spent hours filibustering. The Conservatives filibustered when the minister was supposed to appear at committee. They filibustered when the CRTC commissioner was supposed to appear at committee after having demanded that the CRTC commissioner appear. They filibustered during clause by clause. They even filibustered their own motions. These committees do not need lobbyists representing them. As I said, they have the Conservative Party of Canada lobbying for them.

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I hear an hon. member on the other side heckling because I know he is so upset at his party for acting for companies like Meta and Google. It is the only conservative party in the world that stands with tech giant. The Republicans in the United States and conservatives in Australia or Europe do not. In those countries, political parties are united for their citizens against tech giants.

It is unfortunate that Conservatives here cannot see past partisanship and that they stand with Facebook, Google and TikTok. Shockingly enough, time after time at committee, we heard Conservative members stand and defend TikTok, defend their lobbyists, and stand with and deliver their talking points as if they were coming straight from lobbyists from TikTok. These companies do not need lobbyists; they have the Conservative Party.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge a collaborative effort by the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois. I want to thank everyone who made a contribution to the long development of Bill C-11. They have helped make this bill stronger and better, and they have done a great service for Canadians. I particularly want to thank our colleagues in the other place for their careful study of Bill C-11 and the amendments they proposed for consideration.

I am pleased to say that the government is fully supporting 18 of the 26 amendments brought about in the clause-by-clause study of Bill C-11. We are also accepting another two amendments with modifications. This is another testament to the truly collaborative work that has gone on.

I think it is important to highlight many of the things we can all agree on when it comes to Bill C-11 and the many ways we have all worked together to make it a better bill. In the spirit of collaboration, we should make it easier to support this motion.

I would like to turn to addressing the proposed amendments. As I said, the government has agreed to adopt 18 of them. There are only eight amendments the government respectfully disagrees with or proposes changes to. Let me take some time to explain the government's position on each of these amendments.

To begin with, the government respectfully disagrees with the proposed amendment to the definition of a "community element". This amendment does not refer to the broadcasting undertakings that make up the broadcasting system, and may cause interpretive issues in the application of the act.

The government also respectfully disagrees with the proposed amendments to compel online undertakings to implement methods, such as age verification, to prevent children from accessing explicit sexual material.

While we understand the importance of this issue and have forthcoming legislation on it, which I hope will address it, we oppose this amendment for the simple reason that it seeks to legislate matters in the broadcasting system that are beyond the policy intent of the bill.

To reiterate what I said from the start, our purpose with Bill C-11 is to include online services and platforms, and broadcasting systems. This amendment falls outside the scope of the bill.

Next, the government respectfully disagrees with the proposed amendment to clause 4 limiting regulation to sound recordings up-

loaded by music labels for artists. We disagree here because this would affect the Governor in Council's ability to publicly consult on and issue a policy direction to the CRTC to appropriately scope the regulation of social media services with respect to the distribution of commercial programs.

We need the flexibility to make sure that, whenever an online streamer acts as a broadcaster, they do their part to support Canada's cultural sector. That is really what this bill comes down to. It would also prevent the broadcasting system from adapting to technological changes over time, which ultimately is the very matter we are trying to address with the bill.

The fourth is that the government respectfully disagrees with amendment 6 because of concerns that it could limit the CRTC's ability to impose conditions respecting the proportion of programs to be broadcast that are devoted to specific genres, both for online undertakings and traditional broadcasters.

• (1725)

This could have the impact of reducing the diversity of programming on traditional airwaves, an outcome which goes against one of the primary policy objectives of this bill.

Regarding amendment 7, we are proposing that a change of wording be made to subsection 7(a) in order to better underscore the importance of supporting creators and to sustain and build on Canada's creative sectors.

The government also respectfully disagrees with subsection 7(b) which proposes that no factor is determinative in establishing Canadian content rules. The proposed amendment would impact the flexibility of the CRTC to determine the appropriate definition for Canadian content. Our position on this is simple; we agree with the fundamental principle that Canadian content is first and foremost made by Canadians.

Another change we are proposing is to amendment 9(b) concerning public hearings. Here the government suggests the deletion of subsection 2.1, which calls for a public hearing to be held after a proposed regulation or order is published. The CRTC consults interested parties before a regulation is developed, not afterwards. Requiring a second public hearing after decisions are taken by the CRTC during regulatory proceedings would entail unnecessary delays in the administration of the act.

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Finally, the government respectfully disagrees with amendment 11, which seeks to prohibit the CBC from broadcasting an advertisement or announcement on behalf of an advertiser that is designed to resemble journalistic programming. Here, again, our reasons for disagreement go back to the core objectives of the bill. The issue addressed by the amendment falls outside the scope of Bill C-11 and its policy intent, including online undertakings in the broadcasting system.

I have outlined the government's position with respect to the excellent and thorough work completed by our esteemed colleagues in the other place. We have agreed to the majority of the proposed amendments, and we disagree on just eight points. Overall, I see the collaborative efforts that have brought us here, and they were of great success.

We have arrived at this point, just shy of the finish line, thanks to the contributions and hard work of parliamentarians, public servants, industry experts, content creators and Canadians. Now is not the time to abandon the commitment to collaboration. We will continue to listen.

Should this bill receive royal assent, the Governor in Council would issue a policy direction to the CRTC on how the new legislative framework should be applied. This would require a notice period of at least 30 days, during which stakeholders and other interested persons may provide comments, concerns and recommendations regarding policy direction.

The CRTC would hold its own public processes prior to implementing the new broadcasting regulatory framework. This would provide a further opportunity for all stakeholders, including radio broadcasters, online streamers, distributors, artists, producers and industry groups to provide input.

As members can see, we will now continue to move forward together. We will ensure Canadian artists and storytellers thrive and prosper well into the digital age and that the beat of Canada's diverse culture is heard loud and clear, everywhere for everyone.

• (1730)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned that this is about making sure that Canadians are able to tell their stories and that culture is preserved.

Other lines that have been used in the past include that a level playing field is created. Yet, what we know is that there are these digital first creators or YouTubers, TikTokers, people on Instagram who are able to garner an audience for themselves based on showing off their talent, not just to Canada but to the world. These individuals are enjoying tremendous success.

This bill would actually stifle them. That is what they have reported. I am curious: what about their stories? What about indigenous creators? What about Black creators? What about those individuals who have gone above and beyond to use new media to successfully garner a global audience?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, digital creators are creators. They are artists. This is at the heart of what we are doing.

It is a bit unfortunate that this entire debate seems to suggest that these people are excluded from who the government wants to see

succeed. We want everyone to succeed. We want all artists to succeed.

We are just asking some of the largest companies in the world, which the hon. member mentioned are YouTube and TikTok, to contribute to Canadian culture. We would ask the same of any large Canadian company. Would we not ask the same of one of the largest companies from the United States or a major company from China? We would not ask them to contribute to Canadian culture?

It is truly shocking that we have gone through this debate and that the hon. member and the Conservatives would just highlight the talking points from the web giants.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for his speech. I also want to thank him for the very collaborative work we are doing at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. We went through some tough times, battled some strong headwinds during our study of Bill C-11. I congratulate him on his hard work.

Obviously, when we are working on a bill as important as Bill C-11, which will have a huge impact on Quebec's and Canada's broadcasting systems and cultural industries, all kinds of stakeholders want to have their say at various stages of the process. Just recently, the Government of Quebec spoke up to say that it has a few demands. There are things that are important to the Government of Quebec. I believe the parliamentary secretary is aware of some of those demands.

I would like to know if the order the minister issues to the CRTC will address the demands laid out by the Government of Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I would like to also thank the hon. member for his work on this file.

We heard from many witnesses across the board, from Quebec and the rest of Canada, about how important this legislation is, with the vast majority of them telling us how important it is to expedite this bill and get it through.

We will work with provinces, including the Province of Quebec. I know the minister understands the issue and, as always, he will work with the Government of Quebec and with other provincial leaders. It is something that he regularly does and will continue to do going forward.

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Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of my real concerns is the recent report that Google is blocking the news of Canadian new wires in order to put pressure on the government. This company has successfully avoided regulation for years, yet Google's subsidiary, YouTube, has been tied to massive vaccine disinformation in Brazil, anti-refugee violence in Germany and huge levels of violence in Myanmar and Sri Lanka through the algorithms that are pushing disinformation. I am concerned that we have Google's YouTube, which is the biggest news broadcaster in the world, pumping conspiracy, threat and violence through the algorithms, yet they would dare to block Canadian news services as a way of threatening our government.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague to comment on whether Google has made this threat to the Canadian government and what we are going to do in response.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I share the hon. member's concern about what Google is doing. It is taking a page out of Facebook's playbook when Australia attempted to provide regulation in the digital sphere. It thought that it could intimidate Australians to back down, but they did not.

Unfortunately, the difference between here and Australia is that political parties were united. It has been wonderful to work with the Bloc and the NDP on this. However, it is disappointing, because the Conservatives in Australia fought for Australians, and the Conservatives here are fighting for the tech giants.

• (1735)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is difficult to catch up here, as we are, looking at the government's response to changes made to Bill C-11 in the Senate. However, I am going through this carefully, and it seems there are a couple of places where the government has rejected an amendment that came from the Senate, because as suggested here, it is beyond the scope of the bill.

My experience is, in cases where the government thinks it is beyond the scope of the bill, that an objection would be put before a clause-by-clause process in the other place, and that would usually stop it from going forward. Perhaps the hon. parliamentary secretary could explain how this is, and explain whether the government would reconsider if these amendments are truly beyond the scope or if it has any discretion to accept these amendments at this point.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I am not sure what went through during the clause-by-clause debate on those particular amendments.

We are not saying they are bad ideas. They are just outside the scope of this particular legislation. The minister has said that we have, for example, online safety legislation forthcoming. Perhaps some of these proposals could be put forward in that legislation in a comprehensive way, through the appropriate scope and the appropriate legislation, but they are well outside the scope of this particular bill.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his hard work on this bill. It has been an extraordinary voyage. I, like most Canadians, feel as if these massive companies, like Google, Apple and

Facebook, have way too much power. They have way too much control over what we see. I am concerned, and I think a lot of my constituents are too.

I listened to my colleague's speech as he referenced the fact that Conservatives in other countries and other politicians around the country have found a way to come together for a common purpose to ensure these massive, extraordinarily successful organizations pay their fair share. I would like to provide my colleague and friend with an opportunity to talk about that kind of collaboration, where we have seen that collaboration elsewhere and how we are going to stand up for Canadians to make sure our culture and creations are preserved.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, The hon. member for Lethbridge talks about the success stories of digital creators, and there are many, but we heard through evidence that the vast majority of Canadians make nothing, despite the fact that they have enough followers to monetized on these sites. We just want there to be greater success for these stories. We want Canadians to have that opportunity. We want a level playing field in these discussions.

It would be shocking, if the hon. members from the Conservative Party rose and said Bell Media should have no obligations to Canada or Rogers Communications should have no obligations to Canada. However, when it comes to a foreign company, like TikTok or Google, the Conservatives say those companies do not have to have anything, even though billions of dollars are being made on Canadians.

It is truly unfortunate. We have seen, in Australia, in Europe and in the United States, bipartisan and multipartisan efforts. It is disappointing that we do not have the Conservative Party onside here.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. colleague has said that the Conservatives are taking the side of tech giants. However, there are legal experts, as well as other experts in the field, including former CRTC commissioners, who have serious concerns with Bill C-11. Who is really misleading Canadians? Is it that member of Parliament, those legal experts or the former CRTC commissioners?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, it is clear the hon. member did not pay any attention to what went on during the debate. We had numerous experts, and the vast majority of them were in favour of this bill. The Conservatives cannot call one expert and one former CRTC commissioner and say everyone is against the bill by hearing from those two people. There were dozens of witnesses who were in support of this: creators and artists.

It is unfortunate the Conservatives will just parrot the talking points of Facebook and Google.

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• (1740)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-11 is a piece of legislation that would impact every single Canadian who has a cellphone, a television or a computer in their home and who enjoys online streaming, viewing or listening to content that is online. That is how big this legislation is. That is how dramatic its impact would be. Permit me to provide an overview of what this legislation does, and then I will dive into the intricacies of the bill and hopefully explain why Canadians would be so impacted by it.

I am going to speak to Canadians. After all, the House is theirs and theirs alone.

Through this piece of legislation, the government is about to give itself the authority to control what Canadians have access to listen to online or to watch online. For example, instead of giving a viewer more of what they want on a platform such as YouTube, things would be ranked in a way that YouTube would be forced by the government to put things in front of us according to its definition of priority. It says it would be in accordance with how Canadian the content is. I will dive into that shortly.

YouTube would be forced to give more of what the government wants us to see, rather than more of what Canadians wish to see. This is problematic, because Canadians go online to access the things they are most passionate about or most interested in. They do not go online to have things pushed at them by the government. The government claims that the bill is about “supporting Canadian culture”. It says that it is about “levelling the playing field”. It is just not true.

Bill C-11 amends the Broadcasting Act by bringing the Internet under its provisions. In the early 20th century, the act was originally put in place to regulate TV and radio. It has gone through myriad iterations since then, but its result has always remained the same. It wants to ensure that Canada's two official languages are both respected by being given airtime and that cultural diversity is upheld. Those are noble goals. This was necessary because the number of TV and radio stations were limited. This finite resource needed to be managed. It needed to be overseen in order to ensure that the platforms were shared.

Unlike these two mediums, the Internet is boundless. In other words, anyone who wants to have a presence on the Internet can have one. The government does not need to regulate which content should be given priority and which content should be demoted, because there is space for all. The success of one individual or one creator online does not take away from the success of another. Everyone can achieve success.

If there was ever a level playing field, the Internet is it. Anyone who wants a website can set up a website. Anyone who wants a channel on YouTube can set one up. Anyone who wants to set up a TikTok account can have one. People have access to platforms within the online world that is boundless. It is quite incredible.

It could be argued that it has never been easier for Canadian content creators from all linguistic and cultural backgrounds to reach a global audience with the content they wish to showcase. If they wish to set up a YouTube channel, to set up a TikTok account or to

be on Twitter, they can. The traditional gatekeepers have been removed.

Creators used to have to put together media package. Basically, it was like a portfolio of sorts that showed off their skill, their talent, their ability and what they wanted to produce. They would then walk it over to CBC, to Bell Media, to Rogers or to Corus Entertainment, and would have to beg them to accept their package and to put them on the air. If one or all of these gatekeepers said no, then they were out of luck. They do not deal with that anymore. Now creators can succeed based on their own merit, rather than based on what these gatekeepers desire for them.

• (1745)

Today's creators do not function according to the same rules as in previous generations. That is part of what is so difficult for some to accept. We exist in a new space and we have new ideals, freedom and choice being two of them.

For the minister to say that this bill would somehow modernize the Broadcasting Act and provide support to artists is actually incredibly disingenuous. The minister fails to account for progress. Instead of meeting artists where they are at, and celebrating the tremendous success that they enjoy within the realm of freedom, the government is actually wanting to pull them back under an antiquated system where their content would be weighed and measured and creators would be made into winners or losers, based on what the government wants rather than what Canadians want.

I wish for Canadians to know that this bill would impact them in two damning ways: One, it would censor what they see; and two, it would censor what they say. With regard to what they see, if the Canadian government determines what gets promoted and what gets demoted, then that means only certain content is made available to me as the viewer. In other words, it is censorship.

Furthermore, this bill would censor what an individual can say or post online. Homegrown talent and creative content here in Canada would no longer succeed based on merit, as they do now. Instead, as mentioned, content would be subject to a list of criteria and we do not actually know what that is because the government will not be transparent about it. Through that, the government would direct that these criteria have to be weighed and measured to see if they are met by the artist, and then if they are, it would be deemed Canadian and if they are not, then it would not be. If it is Canadian, it would be discoverable. In other words, it would be bumped up toward the top of our screen. However, if it is not made discoverable, it would get bumped down to maybe page 400, 500 or 600 where nobody looks. This bill is censorship. Not only would it censor what we can see as viewers, but it would also censor what can be posted online by creators and individual users.

Content creators from across Canada, along with consumer groups, have been speaking out about this bill. They are calling it dangerous. Legal experts have called it a grotesque overreach of government. When speaking about this bill, Margaret Atwood, a fabulous Canadian author who is very famous here, did not mince her words when she called it “creeping totalitarianism”.

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I want to take a step back and say that there are two things that we can agree on. One, the Broadcasting Act should be updated; that is not what this bill would do. This bill would actually make the Broadcasting Act incredibly regressive, but anyway it should be updated. Two, Canada has a rich and beautiful culture and amazing artists; homegrown talent that absolutely we should look for a myriad of ways to promote and celebrate. How we do these things is where the disagreement comes into play. While the government claims that Bill C-11 is the best way forward, we would disagree. The best way forward is actually a path that preserves individual choice and opens doors to boundless opportunity. This bill would fail to do that.

It might serve us well to just take a pause and step back and figure out where this bill came from. This bill started out as Bill C-10 in 2020 and it has gone through a number of iterations since that time. However, one thing remains true about it: It is still a terrible piece of legislation. It is a terrible piece of legislation that would hinder what Canadians can see online and what they can post online. To put it simply, it would give the government control of our search bars. We think we are searching for one thing and that we will be directed in that way and in actuality, instead, based on algorithms that would be dictated by the government, we are actually sent to something different. That is what this bill would do.

What brought us here? What brought us to this bill's being put in place? There are two groups that are involved in that: the broadcasters and the traditional art unions or guilds. For the broadcasters, we have CBC, Bell and Corus media and they contribute a certain percentage to an art fund. A certain percentage of their revenue goes into that fund and then traditional artists are able to apply for some of that funding and use it for their projects.

● (1750)

Traditional broadcasters, of course, are less and less popular and are contributing fewer and fewer dollars, but they feel penalized by this, so they have gone knocking on the door of the government, saying they should not be the only ones contributing to the art fund, that the government should capture the large streamers as well. Further to that, these broadcasters have to show a certain percentage of their content as CanCon. CanCon does not always sell to their audiences all that well and so, to some extent, broadcasters feel hindered by this obligation. Again, they are watching as streaming platforms are not subject to this rule, so they have gone knocking on the government's door, saying it should really impose this rule on streamers as well.

Many artists are absolutely fabulous and should be celebrated and promoted. There are those traditional artists who belong to a union. They are not at fault, but the union bosses have knocked on the door of the government, saying because the revenues for traditional broadcasters are drying up, there is not as much money going into the art fund, they do not have as much available for their production of traditional art and, therefore, they want more money to be found somewhere, some way. The government then has said it could make the streamers responsible for contributing to the art fund, and so it is.

At the end of the day, Bill C-11 is all about maintaining status quo. It is about protecting the interests of large broadcasters. The

government claims, however, that it is about forcing large streaming platforms, such as Netflix and Disney, to pay into a fund that supports Canadian artists and that it is about protecting Canadian culture or levelling the playing field.

If the implication of the bill stopped there, the reality is that would be bad enough, but it actually goes even further. It goes so far as to include user-generated content, the content of ordinary Canadians and the stuff that they put on platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube or Instagram. It does not stop at large foreign streamers. It absolutely captures individuals, Canadians. In fact, the former chair of the CRTC, Ian Scott, made this very clear at committee, not only in the House of Commons but then further at the Senate.

I will talk about this point more in just a moment, but I wish first to comment on the false foundation on which this bill is founded. First, this bill is based on the deceptive notion that Canadian content creators or artists cannot make it on their own merit. How degrading. This bill is based on the premise that they need government to step in and help them, but they are saying otherwise. This bill is based on the lie that the government needs to step in and also make sure that Canadian content is put in front of our eyeballs because, otherwise, we would not choose it. Again, how degrading can one be to Canadian artists and their ability to produce great content?

The fact of the matter is these things are not true, and I would like to explain my reasoning. The heritage minister has claimed that this bill would capture \$1 billion from large streaming platforms. That is the amount that it would bring in, and that is meant to help further Canadian culture by helping to support these traditional artists. According to the government, it is forcing large streaming platforms to pay their fair share. At first blush, that might sound reasonable, but that is not actually what is happening here.

The government says that this money will save Canadian culture, but who says that Canadian culture actually needs saving? Who says that it is so fragile that it will fall apart without government intervention? Aside from all that, is Canadian culture not based on what Canadians determine it to be? The reality is the notion that large streaming platforms are not paying their fair share is a myth.

● (1755)

Investment in Canadian productions that would further our culture and tell our stories is not drying up, as the Liberals would like us to believe. On the contrary, huge investments are being made. It is just no longer being done through traditional broadcasters and the unions are not controlling it.

According to Wendy Noss of the Motion Picture Association Canada, who testified at the Senate committee, it spent more than \$5 billion across this country in 2021 alone. The government is saying it is going to get \$1 billion because of this legislation. This is one association and it is putting \$5 billion per year into this country, so one cannot tell me or Canadians that somehow investment in homegrown talent is drying up. It is just not true.

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If the money is being invested in talent, what is this bill really about?

An hon. member: Control.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, perhaps it is a bit about control.

Let me talk a bit more about this. This \$5 billion that was invested accounted for more than half of all production in this country and 90% of the growth this sector enjoyed over the last decade. That is significant. We are talking about an association, Motion Picture Association Canada, which hired, trained and provided opportunities for more than 200,000 Canadians, who are incredibly talented in the world of creativity. It supported more than 47,000 businesses. These numbers come from 2021 alone. That is a tremendous investment in telling Canadian stories, furthering Canadian culture and celebrating what is possible right here on home turf.

In fact, this is far greater than traditional broadcasters have proven capable of, so perhaps a little truth telling could go a long way and we could take delight in the tremendous success being achieved within our cultural sector.

We have to ask then, given this incredible investment, do we really have a problem? Do we really need this legislation? Is it true investments are not being made into Canada's production industry or that somehow culture is at risk? No. On the contrary, the sector is alive and well. It is simply the gatekeepers, the traditional broadcasters and the unions, do not control the outcome anymore.

Furthermore, this bill is based on the false notion that Canadian content cannot thrive without government intervention. As I have outlined, these production companies are hiring based on merit and their films are succeeding based on consumer demand. Do we really need the government then stepping in and mandating what percentage of content needs to be Canadian, as if the government were to not do that somehow Canadian content would not thrive? A \$5-billion investment tells me Canadian content seems to be alive and well.

The problem is that a great deal of truly Canadian content does not meet the government's imposed definition of what it calls "CanCon". Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, for example, is written by a famous Canadian author, is being filmed on Canadian soil, it stars Canadian actors and it employs Canadian producers, but it fails to meet the government's definition of CanCon.

• (1800)

It would be kind of funny, a bit humorous, to realize all that, except that it is incredibly damning to our cultural industry, which takes the humour out of the definition altogether and makes it antiquated and destructive.

Traditional broadcasters are forced to show a certain percentage of CanCon, and they feel stifled by this. Now the Liberals want streaming platforms and new media creators to come under the same rules, to wear the same shackles. Perhaps the government should consider taking the extra regulation off the traditional broadcasters instead of putting those same handcuffs on new media platforms. Perhaps instead of taking us back and maintaining the status

quo, we should be looking forward toward a great, vibrant, creative, free future.

Make no mistake. This bill is not about supporting Canadian culture and Canadian artists. It is about protecting big broadcasters and the interests of the government.

Everything I have talked about up to this point is significant, but what makes this perhaps the most egregious piece of Liberal legislation is the fact that it does not just go after large streaming platforms or regulate traditional artists working with the support of a big union or a guild, but it actually extends to user-generated content. In other words, it is about the things that normal, everyday, average Canadians would post online, or ordinary content. Auntie Betty's cat video would be captured by this legislation. Now the government will implore the CRTC to weigh all of this material according to this definition of Canadianness, and that content will either be allowed to stand online or be moved to page 900.

It sounds like a big job. I do not know exactly how the Liberals are going to roll that out, but they seem to be very committed to it. Why do I say they are very committed to it? Well, it is because they had an opportunity to make sure user-generated content was not captured by the bill. They had an opportunity to ensure the bill really was just about the largest streaming platforms.

The Senate made an amendment. In fact, even before the bill got to the Senate, the House of Commons offered the same amendment. The government rejected the amendment here, and then the Senate, after wisely giving this legislation a sober second thought and listening to witnesses, made the same amendment to make sure that user-generated content, ordinary content, was not captured by the bill. What we have learned today is that the government is not accepting that amendment, which is very telling. It tells us that the bill is far more about the government controlling what we can see, hear and post online than it is about anything else. If it were not, then why not accept the amendment?

The bill is about censoring Canadians, all Canadians. The bill would stagnate the progress that is being achieved by modern creators such as the woman who goes by Auntie Skates. She is a South Asian woman based in Toronto. She is in her forties and learning how to skateboard. She decided, in the midst of the pandemic, to start creating videos and bringing people in on her adventure, and she is going viral. The bill would stagnate that.

The bill would also go after homegrown comedian Darcy Michael. He proclaims himself to be a pot-smoking gay man. He talks about how he was turned away from traditional broadcasters, and now he is enjoying tremendous success on YouTube. The bill would target him.

Instead of modernizing the Broadcasting Act in a meaningful way to address the complexities of the digital world, this legislation would simply target the next generation of creators, the next generation of artists and the next generation that thinks outside the box and beyond the gatekeepers. This legislation would pull them back from the future and put them in the past.

• (1805)

This legislation would make sure that these individuals are again put under a regulator, a gatekeeper, that would determine whether their content is sufficiently Canadian to be discoverable or it has to be buried. That is shameful. In short, this legislation is about protecting the status quo rather than allowing progress.

The Senate committee heard from many witnesses with regard to this bill: creators themselves, subject matter experts and legal experts. The thing that was said loud and clear was that a step back needed to be taken and that the content created by individuals needed to be respected, that it needed to be left alone. The government has made it clear at every turn that it does not wish to make that change.

It is scary, and today we are seeing that. We are seeing creators across this country speaking out against this bill. We have seen it for months. Today, knowing that the nail is potentially in the coffin, they are all that much louder. They are concerned about their future.

The truth is that it is not just creators who are concerned, but all Canadians. All Canadians are concerned because at the end of the day, they want to be able to watch what they want to watch. We like on-demand services for a reason. Traditional broadcasters are phasing out for a reason. It is because they take choice out of the equation and Canadians like choice. Canadians are very concerned about the censorship that this bill brings in.

The government says that it wants to remove barriers for under-represented artists. That seems noble. Unfortunately, again, that is not true. That is not what this bill does.

This was made abundantly clear in the Senate. The committee heard from BIPOC and indigenous creators, as well as francophone creators, who all said that this bill would hold them back, that it would stifle the success that they enjoy. They talked about the tremendous success they are currently able to achieve based on their own merit in the barrier-free world known as the Internet. As my colleague from the Senate, Senator Leo Housakos, said so well, “What Bill C-11 does is put limits and barriers back in place and perpetuates a system of picking winners and losers by dictating, based on factors other than individual user preference and choices, what Canadians should post and what Canadians will see.”

At the end of the day, creators do not want this bill because it would hold them back. Viewers do not want this bill because it would control what they have access to online. Creators wish to succeed based on their own creativity and ability, and they are doing so phenomenally well. Most Canadian creators enjoy an audience that is 90% outside of Canada. In other words, they are reaching the world. Is that not celebration-worthy? Furthermore, it has been stated by experts that this bill is so much about censorship and

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control that it actually likens us to places like China, North Korea and Russia, which Canadians are rightly concerned about.

• (1810)

Canadians want to be able to go online and access the material they wish to access. If they wish to go on YouTube and be given the stuff they want to watch, they can do that right now. They appreciate being able to do that right now, but unfortunately, under Bill C-11, they would be given more of what the government wants them to watch, not more of what they want to watch. Does it not seem dangerous to members that we would be so regressive as a nation that under the government we would succumb to being like North Korea, China and Russia?

On behalf of Canada's amazing creators who have achieved tremendous success, based on their merit, on new media platforms, or who seek to do so, and on behalf of Canadians who value the freedom to choose what they watch and listen to online, I move the following motion. In response to the government's motion, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the first word “That” and substituting the following: “the order for the consideration of the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be discharged and the Bill be withdrawn”.

Kill Bill C-11.

[*Translation*]

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

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the member's speech, and I must say I found the first couple of minutes rather engaging and rigorous. It included an enunciation of principles. I did not agree with the propositions and the line of argument, but it had rigour. Then, of course, the member lost me when she started comparing Canada to North Korea. I do not think anyone lends credence to that kind of argument.

I also found there were contradictions in the member's speech. She said the cybersphere is limitless, where everyone has a voice, and that is absolutely true. One cannot suppress the Internet, so how can one even begin to think that it could be censored? Second, the member says that Canadian culture does not need support, that it should survive on its own and that it can survive on its own, yet if we look at all the feature films that make it to the Oscars, if we look at the end of the credits, there is funding from government agencies and there are tax credits to make sure the films are done here, and that is how we are supporting Canadian culture, too.

• (1815)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I suppose that perhaps the hon. member missed a good portion of my speech, so I will just remind him.

Private Members' Business

This bill would capture about a billion dollars per year. I will also remind the House that we actually do not have documents that prove that. That just seems to be some fictitious number that the government pulled out of thin air. We do not know where that came from. We asked. It has not been granted.

Let us just suppose that it is true and that it will result in \$1 billion extra being put toward arts and culture in Canada. I will remind the hon. member that one private company alone invested \$5 billion in 2021, supporting over 200,000 homegrown artists and more than 47,000 Canadian businesses. That is a whole lot more than what the government's wimpy \$1 billion will ever do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague from Lethbridge make very glowing comments on culture and artists in general. I think she may have wanted to clarify that she was talking about digital artists, digital-first creators, because they really are the ones my colleague defended throughout the work on Bill C-11.

I just wanted to know if her sudden affection for culture and artists extended to Quebec artists and francophone artists. I wanted to know if she stands by what she said in spring 2021 when she gave an interview to a local paper in Lethbridge.

She said that the bill in question addressed a very niche group of artists who are stuck in the early 1990s because they have not managed to be competitive on new platforms. According to her, they produce content that Canadians simply do not want. She went on to say that this group of artists comes primarily from Quebec and that they are incapable of living from what they create and are therefore calling for government subsidies. She also said that these artists were outdated.

I just wanted to know whether my colleague from Lethbridge stands by what she said in that interview at the time.

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I actually really appreciate the opportunity to extend a sincere apology. I used the word “artists”. All of that was not quoted exactly correctly, but nevertheless I will own the notion. I used the word “artists” and I really should not have. I regret that. Those artists are working hard to create fantastic content for this country, and I respect that deeply.

What this bill comes down to is actually the traditional broadcasters and the big union bosses. Unfortunately, I do not think those two entities are fighting rightly on behalf of artists, the tremendous work they are putting into developing themselves, and their incredible talent and ability to grow themselves and be successful based on their own merit. I do not think we give that enough weight. I wish we would. I wish we would—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to go to another question.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it appears to me that my hon. colleague from Lethbridge suggested, and I listened to all of her speech, that creators did not

need this bill and that Canadian culture did not need any help from the Canadian government. The larger aspect of what she said suggested that she would like to see the Canadian government relinquish the entire space of protecting Canadian content, relinquish Canadian content to the gentle mercies of Hollywood to decide that Dudley Do-Right represents Canada and that our own authors and creators here are not to be protected.

They need protection. The Writers Guild of Canada and the Canadian Media Producers Association have said that this bill, while flawed, is essential for the industry to thrive and maybe even to survive.

I put this to my colleague. Does she think she may have taken her argument too far?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, again, I would just remind the House who said that. A big union said that, at the behest of traditional broadcasters. Of course they want this bill. It supports them. It results in dollars in their pockets. It results in keeping them alive. Of course they want this bill.

Is it artists who are saying that they want this bill? Nope, they are not. Individual artists do not want this bill.

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• (1820)

[*Translation*]

PANDEMIC DAY ACT

The House resumed from October 17, 2022, consideration of the motion that Bill S-209, An Act respecting Pandemic Observance Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill S-209, an act respecting pandemic observance day—

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I respect your decision, but you never called my riding by name. You looked my way, and I—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I cannot call on a member unless they stand up to be recognized, and unfortunately the hon. member did not stand up to be recognized, so I recognized the hon. member for Montcalm.

The hon. member for Montcalm has the floor.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Clearly, this was just an oversight by the member. I believe, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to return to the individual who was supposed to speak, the member for Edmonton Manning, so he can continue.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I can look for unanimous consent, but I want to remind members that they need to stand to be recognized. If they do not stand, then I do not know that they want to speak and I cannot recognize them.

Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member for Edmonton Manning to do his speech first?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for the motion.

The text of this bill claims:

it is fitting that March 11 of each year be officially designated as “Pandemic Observance Day” in order to give the Canadian public an opportunity to commemorate the efforts to get through the pandemic, to remember its effects and to reflect on ways to prepare for any future pandemics.

Certainly, it is fitting that we take time to remember the effects COVID-19 had on our lives. More than 55,000 Canadians died COVID-related deaths. That is a sobering statistic. This number is more than die each year of heart disease and about four times the number of people who die accidentally each year.

We do not remember statistics though. We remember husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and grandparents whose lives were shortened by the disease. Each one was an individual. Each one was loved. Behind each death, there is an intensely personal story. Their loved ones remember them every day. They do not need the government to set aside a designated day for that purpose.

Do we need a pandemic observance day to give the Canadian public an opportunity to commemorate the efforts to get through the pandemic? Communities came together in innovative ways to deal with a situation no one had prepared for. It can be inspiring to think of the ways individual Canadians reached out to others for the benefit of all. It can be said that Canadians showed their resilience in the way they supported each other through that very trying period.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the Canadian people together. It was a shared experience that brought out the best in people. It also brought out the worst of the government's performance. The most memorable stories of the COVID-19 pandemic are not those of individuals coming together but of a government out of control, out of touch with reality and showing itself to be incompetent, corrupt or maybe both.

As the pandemic was unfolding, the government sent 16 tonnes of badly needed personal protective equipment to another country: 50,118 face shields, 1,101 masks, 1,820 pairs of goggles, 36,425 medical coveralls, 200,000 nitrile gloves and 3,000 aprons. In doing so, it left our country without sufficient supplies for our own medical personnel. Canada was unprepared for the pandemic. The government failed in its duty to protect the Canadian people. It apparently believed the virus was not going to come here. It kept that attitude despite the fact that it had been warned.

In 2004, the National Advisory Committee on SARS and Public Health presented its recommendations to the government. Canada

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was unprepared for the SARS outbreak, it said, “because too many earlier lessons were ignored.”

SARS made hundreds of Canadians sick and killed 44. It paralyzed a major segment of Ontario's health care system for weeks, and thousands were placed in quarantine. Overworked health care workers felt mental and emotional stress. Does that not sound just like the COVID-19 pandemic?

It was sadly obvious that the Liberals were unprepared for COVID-19. If they had paid attention to the SARS report, they would not have been giving away the very materials our health care system needed.

Given the Liberal track record, Canadians have no reason to believe the government will, as this bill suggests, spend any time reflecting on ways to prepare for any future pandemics, unless it is reflecting on finding ways to enrich its friends during a time of crisis. This will happen at the taxpayers' expense, of course.

As unprepared as they were, the Liberals did see some opportunities as COVID-19 cases mounted in Canada. This is something all Canadians should remember.

• (1825)

We can think back to March 2020, as the first COVID cases were being reported in Canada. After giving away the PPE equipment our health care workers needed to fight the pandemic, the Liberals decided that they needed sweeping new powers to tax and spend without parliamentary scrutiny. When that did not work, they shut down Parliament to avoid being held accountable.

Faced with a global health emergency, their first response was an attack on democracy. They did not want Canadians to be informed of what was going on. They did not want to have to answer questions in Parliament.

They hoped no one would notice when an organization with financial ties to the Prime Minister's and finance minister's families were chosen to receive millions of dollars of taxpayers' money through sole-sourced contracts.

The public service has considerable expertise and experience in administering government programs. Instead, the Liberals tried to funnel the money to their friends. When the wrongdoing by the former minister of finance was discovered, at least he was honourable enough to resign, unlike the Prime Minister, who has apparently never done anything wrong in his life.

Apparently, the Prime Minister has not even read the Ethics Commissioner's reports, which is perhaps not surprising. The pandemic has shown that the Liberals are, at best, ethically challenged. They do not understand the rules, even simple ones, such as that we do not give government contracts to our friends.

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After the Ethics Commissioner found that the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development had broken the rules, she apologized. However, she has not offered to repay the money that she had her department give to her friend.

There was also the former Liberal MP whose medical supply company was awarded a \$237-million contract for 8,000 ventilators, at \$10,000 more each than what is paid in the U.S.A. Once again, a contract was awarded without competitive bidding, this time to a company that had never made ventilators before.

The government spent \$1.1 billion for 40,000 ventilators. Most of them were not needed because COVID was not as bad as forecasted, and now they are just gathering dust in warehouses.

When Canadians remember the pandemic, they will remember the Liberals investing \$130 million of taxpayers' money in a vaccine that was being developed by a Canadian firm partially owned by a tobacco company. Was there no one smart enough to ask whether such a vaccine would be acceptable to the World Health Organization? Apparently there was not. It was no surprise to anyone, except perhaps the Liberal government, when the WHO failed to approve the vaccine because of the tobacco company involvement.

Canadians do not need a special pandemic observance day to remember the most out-of-control government spending. There was billions of dollars in handouts, no accountability and no determination as to whether the funds were really needed.

Canadians will have no choice but to remember the biggest government spending spree in our history because they will be paying off the debt for decades. My unborn grandchildren will be paying off the Liberals' debt. They will wish they had nothing to remember.

Canadians remember the incompetence of the government as the pandemic became endemic. As travel became possible once more, those lucky enough to get a passport endured chaos at the airports. The Liberal government could not even figure out how to make the system work.

Inflation rose to record levels, and the government responded by tripling its carbon tax instead of providing relief for Canadians struggling to make ends meet. Canadians will remember that every day; no special day is required. Canadians do not need a pandemic observance day to remember their loved ones, nor do they need this legislation to remember just how incompetent and corrupt the Liberal government was in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to speak on Bill S-209, an act respecting pandemic observance day.

This bill officially designates a day that has been recognized as a national day of observance since 2021. Indeed, the World Health Organization declared March 31, 2021, as a national day of observance.

March 11 was designated by proclamation as a national day of observance in 2021. The Quebec government chose to organize a national day of observance in 2021 and 2022.

This is an important subject, and it goes beyond any form of partisanship. We were all hit by the pandemic, regardless of where we lived or who we were.

The Bloc Québécois will support this bill since the goal is observance, which allows us to highlight and remember the solidarity, the generosity, the sense of duty and the resilience of all those who worked to get us out of the pandemic.

Additionally, it is an opportunity to never forget those who were affected in any way, shape or form by the pandemic, as well as all those taken by this disease.

I want to take this opportunity to extend my deepest condolences to all of the families who were left in mourning by COVID-19 and its disastrous consequences. Over 16,000 people died in Quebec, 45,000 in Canada and 6.5 million around the world.

In our societies, when we institute a day of remembrance, a day of commemoration, it is usually to mark the end of a socially harmful event. To build the future, we need to remember the past. That is why Quebec wisely chose “Je me souviens” or “I remember” as its motto.

Fortunately, it is human nature to try to turn a bad situation into something good, something ugly into something beautiful and something negative into something positive. That is a survival mechanism that has allowed us to be, to exist and to move forward again and again, hardship after hardship, and grow stronger. Humanity always emerges stronger from tragedy. We always find a way to do so.

When I was young, I read history books that talked about the epidemics and pandemics that ravaged humanity as though they were novels. Sometimes my grandparents would tell me about when they were young and about how they saw a staggering number of people dead in the streets from the Spanish flu. I would listen, shivering in horror, and tell myself that, thanks to modern medicine, that sort of thing would never happen in our time. Like many other people, I was fooling myself.

When the epidemic was declared in mainland China, who would have thought that it would transform into a global pandemic and that we would experience such tragedy and horror? Who would have believed it?

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Beyond the armchair quarterbacks who always know better than anyone else, after the fact of course, what should have been done, beyond all the shortcomings, blunders, the actions that did or did not succeed, which we are assessing because we must always learn from our mistakes, beyond all that, we need to simply celebrate the memory of those who passed away.

We must celebrate the courage and humanity of those who suffered, celebrate those who fought in their own way to get us through the pandemic and to let hope and light emerge from the bleak times in which we were living. We must remember all that.

It is during these pivotal moments in history, which are so brief but so intense at the time, that we see the beauty and the strength of our societies.

We also have a duty to note and highlight everyone's invaluable contributions to the fight against this pandemic.

● (1835)

That is why I immediately think of all the health care workers who, also struck by an unknown and devastating virus, stepped up to hold failing health care systems together with the sole purpose of saving lives, saving our loved ones, our friends, our neighbours, our spouses and partners. Health care workers are the ones who never stopped making a difference. Doctors, nurses, orderlies, ambulance attendants, cleaning staff, support staff, and so on. They have all been on the front lines, one battle at a time. We can never do enough to say “thank you”.

It is also important to acknowledge the work and dedication of our guardian angels, the asylum seekers who provided patient care at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and to whom our governments have committed to regularize their status. We owe them a great deal, and we must not forget them now.

Where would we have been without them, but also without the many other essential service workers, those without whom we would not have made it through this pandemic? They proudly held down the fort and ensured that our basic needs such as electricity, food and medicine were met, despite their own worries and fatigue.

Let us not forget to acknowledge the incredible resiliency of our young people and their extraordinary ability to adapt when they were asked to go against their very nature to protect the rest of our society. Even though we did not want to, we had to make them put their life on hold and they will never get back those moments that they missed. These young people suffered, but they have recovered and they now have even more lust for life than they did before. Despite it all, they remained strong and ready to fight. These young people are our future, a beautiful future.

I am talking about young people, but I also want to talk about our seniors, who suffered so much and who were the most hard hit by COVID-19. We asked a lot of our young people, but what can we say about the sacrifices that our seniors had to make? They, who were already vulnerable, were the main victims of this pandemic. They experienced social isolation, sickness and heartbreak. Today, when I see them recovering from the effects of the pandemic, when I see them smile with their resiliency that will become legendary, I am proud. I applaud them, and this day of commemoration will

make it possible to honour them for their outstanding courage and endurance.

In closing, it is also vital to talk about everyone's resiliency. I am talking about those who had to give up their activities and stop living life to the fullest, those who lost their jobs, those who lost their business, those who had to watch their business go under or their loved ones die, suffering and alone. These are all the sacrifices, great and small, that we need to remember on this day of commemoration.

We often say it, but this time we proved it to be true: If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.

● (1840)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in this place and represent the constituents of Edmonton Strathcona.

Today, we are talking about Bill S-209, an act respecting pandemic observance day, which is a bill to make every March 11 a day to remember the COVID-19 pandemic. I know all of us in this House remember the day that we were here in 2020 and it was announced that the House was rising and we were all going home. None of us expected at that point that it would be years before some of us came back, or that we would be dealing with the pandemic even to this day.

As I reflect on this bill and the need for it, it is very important, as members have said before me, for us to take a moment and remember all of the people who died. More than 5,600 Albertans have died from COVID-19 to date. I think it is also important to recognize that people are still dying from COVID-19 in this country.

In 2021, the last year that data was available, COVID killed more Albertans than heart disease, lung disease, strokes or Alzheimer's disease. More than 50,000 Canadians lost their lives across this country. Each one of those people had a family, had friends, had loved ones. It is a loss, and I think the opportunity for us and for all Canadians to acknowledge that and remember those people is very important.

Everyone we know has either lost somebody they loved or knows somebody who lost somebody they loved. I think about the grandparents who were lost, the friends and the families. In my own riding of Edmonton Strathcona, more than 100 people lost their lives, at least 50 of whom were in long-term care.

I think about what we have lost in our communities: the loss of wisdom, the loss of love and the loss of laughter. I think about Edmonton entertainers. As I have said many times, Edmonton Strathcona is the heart of the entertainment sector in Edmonton. Entertainers like Victor Bird and Ricky Lam will never again step on stage. They will never enchant audiences again.

I think it is also relevant to remember that it is not over. In fact, COVID-19 continues to take lives and continues to have long-term impacts on so many people.

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There is a woman in my riding named Kath. She is a powerhouse and an incredible individual. She works very hard to find homes for pets without homes through Zoe's Animal Rescue. She was incredibly active before she got COVID, and now she is facing fatigue and other symptoms and has to use a walker to get around. I think it is important that we have this moment to do this.

I also think it is important for us to take a moment to think about health care workers and teachers. Remember what we asked our teachers, educators and the staff at our schools to do, and what we asked nurses, paramedics, firefighters and doctors to do. Remember the danger we asked them to put themselves and their families in. I cannot help but think this is a wonderful opportunity for us to remember those sacrifices and what those people did to keep us safe.

It was not just those people. We also have to remember that in Alberta there were folks who put their lives on the line and lost their lives because we were not good enough at taking care of them. I do not know if members remember that at Cargill, the meat-packing plant in southern Alberta, workers lost their lives because they were not protected and we did not do enough to protect those workers.

• (1845)

That brings me to the next comment I want to make. The bill is an opportunity for us to remember all those whom we have lost and an opportunity for us to celebrate the heroes who helped us get through the worst days of COVID-19. It is also vitally important for us to learn so that, when we see a future pandemic, we do not make the same mistakes or do the same things wrong.

I am worried that we have not learned some of those lessons. I look at long-term care. The privatization of long-term care resulted in our loved ones, our cherished seniors in our communities, living in unbelievable conditions and dying because we have a system in place that privileges profit over the care of our loved ones. We saw what happened across the country in long-term care. None of that seems to have changed. We have not fixed those systems. If we had a pandemic tomorrow, I am not sure that anything would be different. That is very disappointing, and it is something we need to think about.

We need to think about how we provided support for people within our communities. I think the CERB was a lifeline. I remember people phoning my office desperate, and being able to provide that support was perfect. It was a lifeline for so many people.

It was not perfect, but we were trying to do what we could very quickly to get support out. We were pushing the government, and the government was trying to do things. However, as we look back on this, we have to think about the ways that it did not work for certain people. We have to think about the ways that we privileged certain groups.

Corporations were able to get money very fast, within days, but for people living with disabilities, it took much longer to get support. The House of Commons unanimously supported students not having to pay back their student loans during that time. That was a unanimous motion that I brought forward, which every member of the House supported, but the government never implemented it.

The other piece that is a worry for me is how we worked as part of a global community. I stood in this place many times and talked about vaccine equity and how we have a moral obligation to protect people around the world to ensure they have access to the same level of care as people in Canada did. It was not just a moral obligation because, of course, every single time we refused to share our vaccines with other populations, with other people in the rest of the world, variants developed. I do think that is an issue that we have.

We have not fixed the systems like the TRIPS waiver. We have not fixed things like Canada's Access to Medicines Regime. These are things that are still broken. Given another pandemic, I do not believe that the government has learned the lessons to make sure that we do not make the same mistakes.

As we go forward, a national day for pandemic observance should not only be a time to remember and honour, but also a time to plan and an opportunity to learn, because if we do not learn, if we do not take this opportunity, we are doing a disservice to the memory of those who lost their lives.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to debate Bill S-209, an act respecting pandemic observance day, although it would have been better if we had never gone through this dark period in our history and never needed to commemorate it.

I want to begin by acknowledging International Women's Day. I congratulate the women who broke glass ceilings, and I have a special thought for those who are no longer with us as a result of the violence they suffered.

I want to come back to Bill S-209. To give some background, the text of the bill designates March 11 as "Pandemic Observance Day". Bill S-209 was introduced in the Senate on November 24, 2021 by Dr. Marie-Françoise Mégie, a senator from Quebec, and introduced in the House last June.

It is important to note that the bill does not create a new statutory holiday. March 11 was chosen as a day of commemoration because it was on March 11, 2020, that the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. As we all know, this pandemic, which is still not over, has unfortunately created many victims. The current death toll is very high. There have been about 6.5 million deaths worldwide, including more than 47,000 in Canada and more than 17,000 in Quebec.

On March 11, 2023, Canada offered its condolences to the victims through statements from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health. Quebec also designated and organized days of remembrance in 2021 and 2022 to honour the victims of COVID-19, their families and their loved ones. Quebec also acknowledged the invaluable contributions of all the tradespeople and members of civil society on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19.

March 11, 2021, was marked by an invitation to observe a minute of silence at the stroke of 1 p.m. The white rose was designated as a symbol of remembrance, and commemorative ceremonies were held. The March 11, 2022, commemoration was more sombre and was marked by symbolic gestures such as the lowering of the Quebec flag to half-mast at the Quebec National Assembly and in several cities.

Memorialization is important, but we must also learn from this pandemic. Establishing a pandemic observance day is a response to the 27th recommendation of the Quebec ombudsman's special report, entitled "COVID-19 in CHSLDs during the first wave of the pandemic: Identify the causes of the crisis, act, remember".

This report focuses on COVID-19 in long-term care facilities. Here is the recommendation: "Propose that there be an annual day of commemoration for the COVID-19 victims and those who worked with them directly or indirectly, in order to remember what they went through during the first wave of the pandemic and the suffering and loss experienced by these sorely affected people."

The Bloc Québécois stands in solidarity with all those in Quebec and Canada who were directly or indirectly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. My Bloc colleagues and I want to take this opportunity to offer our condolences to families affected, and we want to respectfully thank health care workers.

As we know, the few pandemic years we just experienced were difficult for each of us. Obviously, they were even harder for some, including health care and frontline workers; people who lost a loved one or who had to care for or are still caring for a loved one; people who were harder hit by the COVID-19 virus.

Each day, we would wait impatiently for the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premier of Quebec to give their press conference. Often, they would announce new guidelines to slow the spread of the virus. Things changed quickly. This was uncharted territory for us. Luckily, our scientists provided explanations, they enlightened our debates, and they answered our questions and our concerns throughout the pandemic. We are lucky to be able to rely on them, not to mention the scientists who developed a vaccine at lightning speed.

• (1855)

In those days, we had to get used to wearing a mask and sanitizing our hands often. We had to gather in smaller groups, which impacted our birthday and holiday celebrations. We also had to isolate during lockdowns. It was a very difficult time for single people and couples who did not live in the same home or the same country.

I really feel for the young and the old. We know kids had to make big sacrifices. They had to isolate from certain family members and friends. They had to do school at home, which was not al-

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ways easy. We know how important it is for young adults to have in-person social contact during their school years. Students were less motivated to do well in school because of the pandemic. Being with parents and other family members 24-7 and, for many young people, not having access to a quiet place to study or a fast, reliable Internet connection also affected their motivation and their academic success during lockdown.

The pandemic also had an impact on young people's mental health, finances and ability to work. Teenagers were disproportionately affected by the psychological impacts of the lockdowns that were put in place to halt the spread of the virus. According to experts, they are coming out of this pandemic in pretty rough shape. Youth are experiencing higher rates of anxiety and often have symptoms of depression. We know that youth tend to get their information from social networks rather than from traditional sources.

In summary, young people have had quite a difficult time. They have experienced a great deal of sadness, isolation, loss of motivation and disruption in their daily routine. Despite the many problems they encountered during the health crisis, most young people have shown resiliency, and we can only be thankful for that.

I also want to talk about what seniors experienced during the pandemic. According to some studies, seniors who lived in retirement homes during the first year of the pandemic suffered more from the isolation than from COVID-19 itself. Seniors need social interaction and social support networks to stay healthy, maintain a sense of well-being and feel satisfied with life.

During the first wave, seniors were confined to their apartments or rooms. For several weeks, they were not allowed to eat in the cafeteria, walk around the residence or even receive visits from their loved ones. They were even prevented from taking their own cars out. Isolation and loneliness among seniors are common and have a negative effect on their physical and mental health.

I would like to talk about my mother, who passed away in 2020, during the pandemic. She was living in a residence because she had been losing her independence, and she was confined to her room. I could not even visit her, and she did not understand what was going on. I talked to her regularly on the phone. She was bored and often cried. She hated the isolation. She passed away, and her funeral was private because of the pandemic.

I could only see my children from a distance. I had to spend the holidays without them and could not celebrate their birthdays with them. We wondered if things would ever go back to normal. Who would have thought that one day the whole world would come to a standstill because of a virus?

Adjournment Proceedings

In closing, I would like to say that the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of Bill S-209, in part because this bill enshrines in law a day that has already been established as a day of commemoration since 2021.

• (1900)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Vancouver Centre has five minutes for her right of reply.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank those members in the House who spoke so passionately and eloquently in support of this bill. The bill was brought forward, as was said, by Senator Mégie, who is a fellow physician from the Senate. I then brought it to the House.

The need to remember is very important. With Bill S-209, we want to remember, and we want to learn. Remembering means that we learn from our mistakes. There are so many things we did wrong. We need to learn from them for the next time there is a pandemic, and there are going to be more pandemics because we are now a global world in which everyone travels. Everyone moves from place to place, and therefore disease can spread globally very rapidly. Therefore, we need to learn from our mistakes.

We also need to learn from the things we did well; we should maybe do them sooner or deal with them differently. A pandemic is all about science. Science is all about evidence. There is evidence in this pandemic that we need to learn from. That is one of the reasons for remembering.

The second reason for remembering is that we need to honour the frontline workers, the heroes in this pandemic. They went out there, gave their lives and suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. We now have a problem in our medicare system because all our frontline workers are burned out. They do not want to work anymore because they are so burned out by the trauma of going through this.

We also want to remember the victims, specifically all those people who died. We heard everyone speaking eloquently about the seniors, as well as about the youth, whose education was interrupted and who were alone and did not have anyone to turn to. We heard about all of the people who were not able to meet and the families disrupted. We need to remember that. We need to remember the 50,000 Canadians who died from this particular pandemic. We need to remember those things.

A day of remembrance is not unknown. We have Remembrance Day every November 11 because we want to remember World War II. This was the war we thought was going to end all wars, but it did not. As we are now living through the war in Ukraine, we remember what we should have remembered and should have learned to prevent some of these things from happening and to make sure they do not continue to happen.

Pandemics are like wars. They indiscriminately affect, kill and wreak destruction in their path. They do not pick and choose. Now that we are a world that is together, as my hon. NDP colleague said, we need to remember that we are now a global community. We are no longer isolated in our own little nation states.

The next time there is a virus, bacteria or something that is going to destroy us, we know it is again going to be a global pandemic. The World Health Organization remembers and recalls this pandemic. It is warning us about future pandemics to come. If we can learn, remember and honour, then this is what this pandemic remembrance day is all about.

I want to thank those who supported my bill from Senator Mégie.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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.

• (1905)

Mr. Chris Bittle: 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, March 22, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is kind of like *Groundhog Day*. I have come in here every week that we have sat this year to drag the government in here to talk about mental health and talk about this epidemic happening in our country.

It is not often that members will hear me quote the Bible in the House of Commons, but I want to talk about “The Parable of the Unjust Judge”, also known as “The Parable of the Importunate Widow” or “The Parable of the Persistent Woman”. According to Wikipedia, it is “one of the parables of Jesus, which appears in the Gospel of Luke (18:1-8). In it, a judge who lacks compassion is repeatedly approached by a woman seeking justice. Initially rejecting her demands, he eventually honors her request so he will not be worn out by her persistence.”

It is about what it takes to be persistent to get justice. Right now, we know that, in Canada, there is no parity between mental and physical health. In fact, there are a lot of people who are suffering and who are not getting the help they need. I will be back the next week the House sits to drag the government here, and I will continue to be in the House of Commons until we get parity between mental and physical health.

This is timely, because I got an email from a constituent of mine. He wrote me that his son is addicted to fentanyl. He cited that he is going to have to make a decision, because it is about \$300 a day for his son to be in treatment. His son wants to get help. Obviously, his family wants to support him, but the father has to make a decision on whether to sell his home and give his son a fighting chance to live, or abandon his son. We know he will have to make a difficult decision. I do not even have it in me to call him. I am hoping the minister will actually call him. It is an injustice. If his son fell, broke his back, neck or leg and was hospitalized, he would be taken care of. His father would not have to consider selling his home. He would get looked after.

This is an absolute disgrace in a wealthy country like Canada. We know that countries like Britain and France are spending about 12% of their health care budgets on mental health. Canada has still failed to deliver on its mental health transfer. It is \$875 million short, to date, of what it promised to spend. We still do not know the details of the bilateral agreements.

I am here to talk about a couple of things. I also want to talk about the frontline health workers who are working right now. It is really important that we think about them. It is in the minister's mandate letter to look out for those mental health workers. Right now, we know many of them are underpaid. I could spend all day talking about them. They are critical in delivering mental health services to people.

In fact, I was in the pool this morning and I met a woman who said that Ontario is spending about 3% on mental health. That is far shy of what my home province spends, which is about 9%. She said she is getting a 1% raise for the next four years, despite the fact that inflation is way higher. What does she get as a thanks? She gets a video from her executive director saying she has done a great job and she is appreciated.

This is absolutely abominable. We need to look out for our frontline service workers. I hope we will hear some answers today about the government and its promises.

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for his advocacy for Canadians' mental health and for giving me the opportunity to talk about this important issue.

[English]

Canadians must be able to access timely, evidence-based, culturally appropriate and trauma-informed mental health and substance use services to support their well-being. Our government believes mental health is health, and we have made mental health a key priority.

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[Translation]

We have already made unprecedented investments, including \$5 billion in bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories, close to \$600 million for a distinctions-based mental health strategy for indigenous peoples and \$270 million to support the Wellness Together portal.

In 2017, our government invested \$5 billion over 10 years to improve Canadians' access to mental health services, starting with an initial transfer of \$100 million, which will be increased to \$600 million annually until 2027.

• (1910)

[English]

The investment is being provided directly to provinces and territories via negotiated bilateral agreements to help them expand access to community-based mental health and addictions services for children and youth, expand integrated services for people with complex needs and spread proven models of community mental health care and culturally appropriate interventions linked to primary health services.

[Translation]

When the pandemic hit, we launched the Wellness Together Canada portal to give Canadians online access to information on mental health issues, mental health programs, instant support via text, and even confidential counselling sessions by phone, video and text with social workers, psychologists and other professionals.

[English]

We also fund the Hope for Wellness helpline, which offers crisis intervention services by telephone or chat. It is available in English, French, Cree, Ojibwa and Inuktitut.

[Translation]

On February 7, we announced an investment of more than \$198 billion over 10 years to improve health services for Canadians, including mental health services.

[English]

Today, we have announced agreements in principle with nine provinces.

[Translation]

We continue to work towards tailor-made agreements with each of these provinces to reflect the needs of patients and workers, agreements tailored to their population and geography.

We believe that mental health must be an integral and integrated part of Canada's public health care system.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

Section 3 of the Canada Health Act references mental health. Our government is fulfilling its commitment to transfer billions of dollars over the coming years to the provinces and territories to support mental health and addiction services through a combination of both increasing the Canada health transfer and through \$25 billion for 10-year FPT bilateral agreements. This will include mental health as one of four shared priorities and will further integrate mental health throughout the health care system and workforce.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, across the country, governments are turning to trusted community organizations to cope and to deal with services around connecting and recovery. The demands are complex and they are high. They have been exacerbated by the pandemic. These organizations are struggling with underfunding, rising costs and labour market shortages.

The national organizations are looking for a “caring for carers” investment in the mental health and frontline community service workers in this budget. I hope the government would look to that as part of its recovery agenda. In that, they are looking for \$100 million for evidence-based mental health supports for frontline community service workers, to expand immediate access to mental health and substance use health supports for staff, to fund research on best practices and to enhance organizational capacity building for psychologically healthy and safe workplaces.

I hope the government honours that in this budget.

Madam Speaker, we will probably see this when we get back, because the government has been failing on every promise it has made on mental health. Hopefully, it will deliver before then.

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, I, too, want to thank and congratulate frontline workers. I agree with my colleague that this situation is complex and critical.

Our government is delivering on its commitment to transfer billions of dollars to the provinces and territories for health and mental health care over the next few years. It will do so by increasing the health transfer and providing an additional \$25 billion through provincial and territorial bilateral agreements over 10 years.

[English]

The new FPT bilateral agreements include an integrated inclusive approach to mental health and family health services, to the health workforce, as well as data and digital tools. These investments would support the health and mental health needs of Canadians and would require provinces and territories to produce detailed action plans.

[Translation]

This approach is the most efficient way to integrate mental health and substance use services into the health care system, including primary care, and to ensure transparency and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

[English]

SENIORS

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this House as the representative of North Okanagan—Shuswap. It is such an honour to have this opportunity to circle back to a question that I did not consider got an adequate answer when asked the first time and seek a response that would give hope to seniors, those struggling under the inflationary policies of the government.

On February 16 of this year, I put the following question through the Speaker:

...after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister's inflationary policies, seniors cannot afford food. Barry told me that 40 out of 120 attendees at the mission he works at were seniors. People who used to donate to food banks are having to go to one because they cannot afford groceries.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for seniors going without food, or will the Liberals get out of the way so the Conservatives can fix what they have broken and restore seniors' dignity?

The response to the question was shameful, claiming that the government has been there for seniors. The way the government has been there for seniors has been to allow its out-of-control spending to contribute to inflation rates that we have not seen in 40 years. Food prices are climbing so fast that so many seniors are going to food banks because they cannot afford groceries.

Another example of how the government has not been there for seniors came to light last week for me while talking to a restaurateur at home in the Shuswap. While talking to this restaurateur, I asked if she had been affected by rising food prices. The owner took a step back and gave me a look. She did not have to say anything. I knew what the answer was. She went on to tell me how she had built a lunchtime clientele from scratch by building the business for seniors. She built that business around seniors who often preferred a meal out at lunchtime so they did not have to drive at night or it was better for their digestive system than eating at night. She told me that lunchtime seniors clientele was drying up because of increasing food costs and because of the costs that she had to pass on to customers, prices like a case of cauliflower that used to cost her business \$35 to \$40 per case now costing \$130 to \$140, prices like green beans being \$8 per pound, and these are wholesale prices. We are seeing even higher prices on grocery store shelves.

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For the government to say it has been there for seniors is truly shameful. What we have seen in the past eight years from the Prime Minister is that the price of a home has doubled and average rent prices soared above \$2,000 in our 10 biggest cities. Nearly half of all Canadians with variable mortgages will no longer be able to afford those mortgages in nine months. Canadians are grappling with 40-year-high inflation. A quarter of Canadians cannot cover an unexpected cost of \$500.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for seniors going without food, or will the Liberals get out of the way so the Conservatives can fix what they have broken and restore seniors' dignity?

● (1915)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really enjoy this new line from Conservatives asking Liberals to get out of the way so they can do the job. It is as though they have completely given up on the democratic process, and they realize that they are never going to get elected to the position, so they are just asking the government to step aside and attacking it that way.

Nonetheless, it is quite rich for the member to go on at great length about the fact that this government has not been there for seniors when I will read for members a number of the things, which have been repeated so many times in the House, that we have done. In advance of that, I remind those people who are watching that Conservatives voted against every single one of these initiatives that we brought forward. Therefore, to suggest that the government has not been there, but somehow Conservatives have had the backs of seniors is a no. Conservatives had much more interest in playing politics around these issues than in providing anything of substance.

However, the member is right that the rising grocery costs are a problem and inflation is a worry on everybody's mind. While we know that inflation is a global issue, making sure that Canadians can make ends meet is a priority. In this context, the Government of Canada has stepped in. We have ramped up supports for seniors.

In fact, we made history last July with the new permanent 10% increase to the OAS pension, the first in 50 years for seniors over the age of 75. Thanks to the increase, full pensioners will get more than \$800 extra over the first year. That will go a long way toward groceries. What is more, eligible seniors have not had to fill out any forms or take any action to receive the increase. They are automatically receiving it. Because all OAS benefits are indexed quarterly, they maintain their value over time as prices increase. This new historic measure is just one of the ways that we have seniors' backs.

Since 2015, as I alluded a few moments ago, we have provided a number of measures. Allow me to reiterate what those are. We increased the guaranteed income supplement for nearly one million low-income single seniors. We have restored the age of eligibility for GIS and OAS from 67.

Members might remember that the member's previous government increased the qualifying age. Imagine paying into these programs over one's entire working career and planning on retiring at age 65, and then suddenly, just before they get to the finish line, the

government of the day says it was going to move it to age 67. Well, we restored it to 65.

We also enhanced the Canada pension plan. We reduced income taxes through increases to the basic personal amount. During the pandemic, we provided seniors with one-time payments to help with extra costs. Finally, budget 2022 committed an extra \$500 to the Canada housing benefit and doubled the GST credit for six months.

As the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said on February 13:

Thanks to measures put in place by our government, hundreds of thousands of seniors have been lifted out of poverty, as have hundreds of thousands of Canadian children. We have done that while maintaining Canada's AAA credit rating and having the lowest debt and the lowest deficit in the G7.

● (1920)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, again we have a non-answer from the Liberal government. The Liberals claim to be helping. One-time payments will be swallowed up with half a month's rent because rent has gone up to \$2,000 in 10 of our major cities. Grocery costs are rising 10%, and I do not believe that is an accurate number. I just spoke about a case of cauliflower for a restaurant going from \$35 to \$40 to \$140 per case. Those one-time payments the parliamentary secretary talks about are going nowhere, and they are not helping seniors. The government continues to fail.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I will admit that, from time to time, I rise in the House and some of the words that come out of my mouth might not be to their satisfaction in answering the question asked by a member opposite. However, I would encourage this member to review my answer because I gave a very thorough one.

These are not one-time payments. We restored the age of eligibility for GIS and OAS from 67 to 65. We enhanced the Canada pension plan. We reduced income taxes. Yes, during the pandemic there was a one-time payment, but we did so many other things. For him to cherry-pick that one data point and not listen to my complete answer is very telling of where the Conservatives are on this issue.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the carbon tax is an absolute failure. We have to measure it by two metrics, and the first metric is whether it reduced carbon emissions. On that metric, it is absolutely clear it is a failure, because carbon emissions have gone up under the Liberal government every single year. That is strike one.

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The next thing is whether it is supposed to give more money back to Canadian families. The PBO report is unequivocal on this. When we factor in the cost of the carbon tax to the Canadian economy, most Canadian families actually end up behind on the carbon tax. If we factor in things like the cost of the carbon tax on farm families, we have an absolute and unmitigated disaster.

The carbon tax is a complete failure, and the Liberal government's plan is to increase it. It is not stopping climate change, it is not reducing emissions and it is financially hurting Canadians, and the government's decision is to increase it. Why is that relevant? I will give three statistics.

In my hometown of Orangeville, the number of seniors using the Orangeville Food Bank is up 415% since the government took over. That is the number of seniors who say, after eight years of the Liberal government, they cannot afford to feed themselves and now have to go to the food bank to help themselves out.

Twenty-five per cent of Canadian families are saying that if they get a \$500 expense, they cannot pay it. Think about that. That is one-quarter of Canadian families. What is going to happen? The carbon tax is going to go up, and it is going to make things even worse.

Forty-five per cent of Canadian families are within \$200 of not making ends meet. This is after eight years of a Liberal government. This is the wonderful world the Liberals have created.

They are going to say they have put in place programs, and they are going to list them off. They will say, "We did this to OAS. We did this to GIS. We did this; we did that." Well, despite all that, the trail toward poverty for Canadians continues, so everything the Liberals are doing is not working.

What will make this worse is increasing the carbon tax yet again. What does that mean? It means farmers will pay a higher carbon tax. It means food coming from farms will cost more. The tractor that ploughs the field will have a carbon tax. The truck that picks up the food from the farm to take it to the processing centre will have a carbon tax. Taking the food from the processing centre to the grocery store will have a carbon tax. Heating the grocery store will have a carbon tax.

The multiplier effect of the increase to the carbon tax is going to make things even worse for Canadian families. What the Liberals are doing is not working. Their programs are not stopping Canadians from not being able to make ends meet. Will the Liberals finally see the light? Will they finally say they are going to cut the carbon tax so Canadians can pay their bills?

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, allow me to show my colleague that our actions are working and helping Canadians. First, since it is International Women's Day, I want to recognize the achievements of Canadian women and reaffirm our government's commitment to eliminating systemic barriers so as to advance gender equality in Canada and around the world.

[*English*]

Our government is taking meaningful action to support women, and we can see the results. Our Canada-wide early learning and child care system is a good example. It is already delivering \$10-a-day child care in nearly half of Canadian provinces and territories and has reduced fees by at least 50% in all other jurisdictions, with work on track to reaching \$10 a day across the country in just three years. In addition, last year, labour force participation for working-age women in Canada reached a record high of 85%. This is something we can all be proud of.

[*Translation*]

That said, we understand that high inflation, a global phenomenon, is hurting Canadian families. Many Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. They have to make choices at the grocery store. They are struggling to pay rent or fill up their car.

Fortunately, inflation is gradually decreasing, and the OECD predicts that it will return to its target level by the end of 2024. Inflation in Canada, which was 8.1% in June 2022, is now only 5.9%. Although this rate is still high, it is lower than what we see in many comparable economies. For example, inflation is 8.6% in the euro-zone and 10.1% in the U.K.

[*English*]

There is also some good economic news. For example, more Canadians than ever are working. With 150,000 new jobs created in January, our 5% unemployment rate is now close to historical lows. There are 800,000 more Canadians working today than before COVID hit. That is 126% of COVID-19 job losses recovered, compared to 112% in the U.S.

Canada had the strongest economic growth, since the fourth quarter of 2021, in the G7.

[*Translation*]

However, we understand that many Canadian families, including seniors, still need help to make ends meet. To make life more affordable for millions of Canadians, we budgeted up to \$12.1 billion for new inflation relief measures, many of which will continue in 2023.

● (1930)

[*English*]

For example, our government moved forward with a permanent 10% increase to old age security for seniors 75 and over, which increased benefits for more than three million seniors and provides more than \$800 in the first year to full pensioners.

We also provided a \$500 payment to low-income renters who are struggling with the cost of housing.

[*Translation*]

Now that we have doubled the GST credit, a family of four that is struggling to pay its bills will receive up to \$1,401.

Furthermore, benefits like the Canada child benefit, the GST credit, the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement are indexed to inflation.

I also want to talk about the price on pollution. Pollution is having an unprecedented impact on Canadians across the country, and something must be done about it. It is an economic necessity. Our pollution pricing system is driving the development of new technologies and services. We see it every day in this country.

[*English*]

I would like to remind my colleague that our pollution pricing system is putting money back in the pockets of Canadian households and provinces where the federal fuel charge applies.

In 2022-23, through climate action incentive payments, a family of four will receive \$745 in—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I am sure that, with regard to the 415% increase in seniors using the food bank, those folks are going to be very happy to hear about the Liberal child care program.

Speaking of that program, most Canadian families cannot access it because there are just not that many spaces.

As for the other programs she has talked about, I said that those have already been announced and yet 25% of Canadian families are

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unable to meet a \$500 expense and 45% of Canadians are \$200 away from not being able to make ends meet, despite all of these programs.

When will they get it through their heads? It is not working. The programs are not actually stopping any of this.

What is actually causing it is the carbon tax, which is running up the price of everything. Cut the carbon tax and groceries will be affordable, heating one's home will be affordable and people will actually be able to make ends meet.

Do not talk about a program that has actually done nothing.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, we are putting money back into Canadians' pockets with the price on pollution. We are getting women back into the workforce with \$10 child care. This helps them make ends meet. We are also putting money back into Canadians' pockets with increases to the various benefits that I mentioned.

As we gear up for the 2023 budget, Canadians can rest assured that our government will continue to position Canada for success while ensuring that the most vulnerable receive the support they need, keeping our finances on a sustainable long-term path and protecting our environment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:33 p.m.)

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