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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 27, 2023

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1100)

[*English*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 7(5) of the Auditor General Act, the spring 2023 report of the Auditor General of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

SENATE AMENDMENTS TO BILL C-11

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order this morning respecting the government's Motion No. 2 concerning the Senate amendments to Bill C-11.

In my view, the notice of motion engages the rule of anticipation and cannot be proposed to the House later today.

Normally such a point of order should be raised when the motion is actually proposed to the House, but given that it is listed on the Projected Order of Business for consideration in an hour's time, the complexity of the issues involved and as a courtesy to you to find some time to prepare a ruling, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to rise as soon as the House opened this morning.

On March 8 and March 9, the House considered a government motion concerning the Senate's amendments, a motion which is now referred to as Motion No. 1 on the Notice Paper, to which my colleague, the hon. member for Lethbridge, has moved an amendment.

Flash forward to Friday evening, when today's Notice Paper was published, we see this new motion, Motion No. 2, from the Liberal government. They are both very long motions, so I will spare the Speaker and the House from hearing them each read out loud.

Suffice it to say, I studied them very closely to see what might be different between them. Lo and behold, the English versions of the motions are absolutely identical. When one refers to the French versions, one spots the difference, which is a single instance of a “1” and a “2”, in Roman numerals, being transposed. That is it.

Let me explain for the House briefly what that means. The Liberal government made a drafting mistake; it got its motion wrong. Now it wants a do-over. If one is a golfer, one might call it a mulligan. All this is on a policy Liberals are mistakenly pursuing on a bill they keep botching and on amendments they keep flubbing, and now a motion they cannot even get right, and those people want to control the Internet.

Setting that aside, I will get back to the procedural concern. The substantive effect of these two motions is identical. Indeed, the text in one official language is identical. The words used in the other official language are all the same. It is just two numbers that are transposed.

Having established these motions are, for all intents and purposes, identical, let me refer to page 568 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which explains the rule of anticipation. It reads:

According to this rule, which applied to other proceedings as well as to motions, a motion could not anticipate a matter which was standing on the *Order Paper* for further discussion, whether as a bill or a motion, and which was contained in a more effective form of proceeding (for example, a bill or any other Order of the Day is more effective than a motion, which in turn has priority over an amendment, which in turn is more effective than a written or oral question). If such a motion were allowed, it could indeed forestall or block a decision from being taken on the matter already on the *Order Paper*.

It goes on to say:

The rule is dependent on the principle which forbids the same question from being decided twice within the same session. It does not apply, however, to similar or identical motions or bills which appear on the *Notice Paper* prior to debate. The rule of anticipation becomes operative only when one of two similar motions on the *Order Paper* is actually proceeded with. For example, two bills similar in substance will be allowed to stand on the *Order Paper* but only one may be moved and disposed of. If the first bill is withdrawn (by unanimous consent, often after debate has started), the second may be proceeded with.... A point of order regarding anticipation may be raised when the second motion is proposed from the Chair, if the first has already been proposed to the House and has become an Order of the Day.

Though the government House leader might argue that questions about this rule do not come up often, there are a series of precedents through the years that are relevant to the issue before the Chair today.

Points of Order

Mr. Speaker Michener, on March 13, 1959, at page 238 of the Journals, held, in relation to the rule of anticipation concerning nearly identical pieces of legislation:

...I first considered whether the motion should be accepted to stand on the Order Paper at the same time. I am satisfied that this was quite in order, but I came to the conclusion that it would be quite improper to permit a second debate on identically the same subject matter as the subject matter of a debate which was already proceeding. In other words, the House is not going to occupy itself on two separate occasions under two separate headings with exactly the same business. That would not be reasonable, and I can find no support or authority for following such a course. Thus I have come to the conclusion that this bill must stand, as well as the other bill in the same terms, or at least in terms for exactly the same purpose, until the bill which was first moved has been disposed of either by being withdrawn, which would open the door for one of these other bills to proceed, or by way of being approved, which would automatically dispose of these bills because the House would not vote twice on the same subject matter any more than it would debate the same subject matter twice.

• (1105)

Mr. Speaker Lamoureux, on July 7, 1969, said, in a ruling found at page 1317 of the Journals, concerning a government motion to amend the Standing Orders, anticipating a motion to concur in a report of the former standing committee on procedure and organization:

I might say, having taken into account the arguments advanced by members of the opposition, that if the honourable Member for Grenville-Carleton had moved his [concurrence] motion I would have recognized that the rule of anticipation would have given his motion precedence...to the motion that is now before the House in the name of the President of the Privy Council. I would have so ruled...

A much more recent predecessor of yours, Mr. Speaker, considered the matter of two committee instruction motions that varied by a difference of just five words. The Chair ruled, on June 11, 2014, at page 6649 of the Debates:

Upon examination of the section of O'Brien and Bosc, upon which both House leaders have relied extensively for their arguments, it seems to the Chair that the key concept is the question of whether or not the motions are substantially the same.

Upon examination of both motions on the notice paper, it does seem that the motions are substantially the same and that the principles cited by the government House leader as to the practice of the House are persuasive to the Chair. Accordingly, we will not be proceeding with the motion at this time.

The rule of anticipation is a concept which is not unheard of in the current Parliament, or to you, Mr. Speaker, for that matter.

On May 11, 2022, the Deputy Speaker, at page 5123 of the Debates, ruled that Bill C-250, the private member's bill proposed by my colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, could not be debated and would be rendered pending, following the second reading of Bill C-19, a budget implementation bill that contained clauses similar to my friend's bill, because:

The House should not face a situation where the same question can be cited twice within the same session, unless the House's intention is to rescind or revoke the decision.

After Bill C-19 had received royal assent, you made a further ruling, Mr. Speaker, on September 20, 2022, at page 7341 of the Debates, to discharge Bill C-250. In doing so, you said:

...there is a long-standing principle to keep or avoid having the same question from being decided twice within the same session

A similar case can be found in your June 6, 2021 ruling, at page 6142 of the Debates, whereby Bill C-243, sponsored by the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, could not be proceeded

with following the second reading of a Senate public bill, Bill S-211. Bill C-243 has been listed on the Order Paper every sitting day since, under the heading "Pending Business".

To recap the current case, the government's Motion No. 1 concerning the Senate amendments to Bill C-11 was moved, as I mentioned, on March 8, and then became an Order of the Day. Therefore, Motion No. 2 may only be proceeded with if Motion No. 1 has been withdrawn, as the various authorities would observe. Otherwise, proceeding with Motion No. 2 would offend the rule of anticipation and cannot be proposed to the House, as forecasted, at noon today.

Mr. Speaker Casgrain's ruling on February 24, 1936, at pages 67 and 68 of the Journals, explains a possible way forward for the government concerning its Motion No. 1:

The adjournment of the debate, last Thursday on the second reading of Bill No. 2...meant that the question shall again be considered at a future sitting when the order for Public Bills will be reached. This is what is called, in parliamentary procedure, appointing a matter for consideration by the House. [Erskine] May...gives many precedents showing that the discussion of an appointed matter cannot be anticipated by a motion...There is sufficient similarity in the Bill and the Motion to confine them to one debate...The difference in details between the two propositions may be dealt with by moving amendments... but it is not sufficient to justify a duplication of the debate. It is a well known principle that the same question cannot be raised twice in the same session.

The difference between the government's Motion No. 1 and Motion No. 2 could be addressed by an amendment to Motion No. 1. It is that simple, really.

All the Liberal government needs to do is allow the debate to continue on the amendment moved by the hon. member for Lethbridge. Once that debate has eventually concluded and the vote taken, the government could, in the event that my colleague's thoughtful amendment is not adopted by the House, of course, once debate resumes on the main motion, move its own amendment to achieve the change Motion No. 2 contains, which would be up to the House to discuss and decide.

If you were to find my point of order to be well taken, Mr. Speaker, it would not be the first major procedural error the government has made in pursuing its flawed policy to control the Internet. On June 15, 2021, you ruled out of order many committee amendments made to Bill C-11's predecessor in the previous Parliament because the Liberals on the Canadian heritage committee had run roughshod over the rules and broke several of them in trying to rush the bill through Parliament before the opportunistic and unnecessary early election the Prime Minister called that August.

• (1110)

Now it seems that the Liberals are equally hasty in ramming their Internet control bill through the House once again. It is almost as if the government is in a rush to clear the decks for something to come.

Private Members' Business

I hope you will find in favour of my point of order, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to your response.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for his point of order. After consultation with the Clerk, as the hon. member knows, the next motion will start at noon and it does not give us a lot of time to come up with a resolution. I do have some information from last week when it came up. I will allow it to start at noon, but we will come back with a response as soon as possible to the hon. member's point of order, likely tomorrow at some time.

I thank members for their patience and understanding.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

GREENHOUSE GAS POLLUTION PRICING ACT

The House resumed from February 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-234, which may seem like a hijacking of the carbon pricing legislation, but in fact is not. This is an exceptional measure and the Bloc Québécois supports it. Pricing pollution to change behaviours is a good measure. It is smart to use regulation and taxation with the very specific intent to change behaviour and change the use of a combustible or a larger vehicle for something that is available.

In the case of agriculture, when it comes to drying grain and heating buildings in particular, these alternative solutions are not yet available nor economically viable at this time. A transition in these energy areas is not very likely for at least five years. When we tax with the view to change behaviour, but the behaviour cannot be changed, we essentially end up taxing for the sake of it. We end up increasing the cost of food and the cost of farming production while reducing farmers' margins when they are already so thin.

Farmers often wind up having to pay either for big corporations or domestic policies, with no control over the situation. Let us consider the 35% tax on Russian fertilizer. Everyone here is unanimous in wanting to support Ukraine and defend democracy. Everyone wants victory for the people of Ukraine and, ultimately, total and full protection of its territory, without giving anything away, not even Crimea, which has been occupied for much longer. However, who pays the price? Farmers in eastern Canada. They have no choice but to pay that 35% tax, which led to a hike in fertilizer prices elsewhere; however, it is mostly people in Quebec and eastern Canada who paid that tax.

The government says it will reimburse farmers and that these poor farmers matter to it, but it cannot even do that because the billing was a total mess. Some co-ops assumed the costs while others billed everyone, even if the fertilizer did not come from Russia. It is a total mess. Now, it is about to be included in a program for farmers. I hope that it will go to farmers who paid the tax. That is a lengthy aside, but everyone can see where I am going.

The government says that it knows that there are no alternative solutions right now, but that it must send a signal and that it will reimburse farmers. However, that is not what is happening according to what we are hearing from people in the sector. What people are telling us is that they are being reimbursed, but on a limited basis and that the process is very complicated because there are so many forms to fill out. The best way to help people in this situation is to create an exemption, which is what Bill C-234 would do.

It is also important to understand that Bill C-234 is in keeping with the spirit of the carbon pricing legislation, which already exists and exempts farming fuel. It is important that members of the House remember that Bill C-234 already provides an exemption for farmers. It seems that the government forgot to include "propane" and "natural gas" in that section. These terms will be included so producers who need to dry grain and heat buildings, such as poultry barns where significant changes in temperature must be made quickly, can continue to operate their farms without having their production costs skyrocket needlessly.

I would remind the House that the transition is not feasible at this time. Why am I saying the transition is difficult or not feasible at this time?

• (1115)

Take, for example, electricity. According to testimony we heard, there are electric dryers that could have comparable efficiency. However, that requires access to power. Three-phase power is not available in 80% of rural Quebec. I am not sure what the situation is in the other provinces, but in Quebec it is not available everywhere, so farmers do not have access to it.

We can talk about biomass. Experiments are already being conducted on biomass. This could have potential, but it is very costly and its development is still in the very early stages. It is okay and its development is off to a good start, but it is not quite ready yet.

Then there is geothermal energy. This is another great alternative, except that geothermal heating does not allow for large variations in intensity. Grain that is damp when harvested needs to be dried, which requires intense heat for a short time. It is unfortunate, but the energy sources capable of doing that are still pretty limited. That is the idea behind Bill C-234. The bill also addresses the exemption for the agricultural sector. I urge parliamentarians to always keep that in mind.

Private Members' Business

We will be talking about culture later. It is in some way a similar principle. We are negotiating free trade agreements and talking about the cultural exemption. We should talk more about the exemption for the agricultural sector. We need to give ourselves the power to protect key, sensitive sectors. Agriculture is the basis for everything.

Politically, farmers often have a hard time lobbying, because there are too few of them to have voting clout in the next election. We know how the four-year election system works. Perhaps this is an unwarranted judgment, but many politicians' decisions are geared towards the next election.

Someone told me something this week that struck me. I am trying to keep it in mind and use it: "There is a difference between politicians and statesmen. Politicians base their actions on the next election, while statesmen base theirs on the next generation." That is what we must do. We have a duty, all of us here in the House, to be statesmen and vote for measures that are good for our society and the common good. That is why Bill C-234 must be passed.

I would like to reassure environmental groups that we did things properly. Some people wrote us to ask us what we were doing there and to tell us not to vote for this because it creates a carbon tax loophole. In my opinion, we are not talking about a loophole here. We are talking about a temporary exemption.

The members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food are so reasonable that, two years ago, in 2021, we voted on a similar bill, what was then Bill C-206. Two years ago, we said that we were going to grant an exemption, but it is not true that alternatives will never be available. If we want alternative solutions to be developed, then we need to send a message to that effect and offer an incentive for such solutions. We therefore included a 10-year sunset clause. We did that in 2021.

In 2023, we are again dealing with the same bill, because we have a minority government that really wants a majority. We do not know when it might get the urge to call another election. Let us hope that we will have time to complete the work on our bills.

Two years later, I can say the members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food have been very consistent. To ensure that the duration is not extended, we included an eight-year sunset clause. Clearly, we work well together. I am proud of the members of the committee. Naturally, we do not always agree, but in general the members of this committee act as politicians should, in other words, they act for the good of the farming community and for the next generation, not the next election. There is a big difference there.

Passing Bill C-234 amounts to endorsing the principle of a fair and equitable transition for the people who feed us every day and who are currently facing a major challenge. That is the difference. I invite members to read Bill C-234 carefully before voting and then vote in favour of it.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always such a great honour to rise for the great communities

of Timmins—James Bay. Talking about agriculture is extremely important in a region so dependent on the agricultural families in beef, canola, rye and dairy. There is such great pride to see young farmers coming in to build up our region from the traditional lands in Temiskaming all the way up through emerging lands in Cochrane, Val Gagné and Matheson.

It is really important to point out in this discussion today, happening a week after the latest IPCC report, what we are facing globally in terms of the climate crisis. I know it makes my Conservative colleagues very uncomfortable when we talk about climate reality, because it is something they pretend does not exist. However, with respect to vulnerabilities on the planet right now, there is no industry more vulnerable than agriculture, because those businesses are dependent on weather and the vagaries of weather and what is happening with growing fires, storms, droughts and floods. These have caused enormous amounts of damage. One has only to look at British Columbia, which, in 2021 suffered \$17 billion in damages from the climate storms, the wildfires, the droughts and severe flooding. Agriculture took severe losses from all that.

Therefore, finding ways for agriculture to be part of the conversation about sustainability is fundamental because it is also recognizing that farmers and the agricultural community are thinking about sustainability all the time. It is part of the fundamentals of their business.

In Canada, about 250,000 farmers look after and manage about 68 million hectares of land. Through these farmers, over the last 20 years, we have seen incredible improvements in sustainability, soil management practices for crops and grazing, and rising standards that the farmers have pushed for in terms of water management. Furthermore, since 2000, Canada's agricultural soils have been sequestering more carbon than was emitted. That is the result of the sustainability commitments made by the farming community.

However, we have to look at it in a larger context because it has been reported that, since the 1960s, agricultural yields around the world are 21% lower than they would have been if we had not been dealing with erratic temperatures and the increase of over 1.1°C around the world. Even as we are working harder for sustainability, we are losing ground.

It needs to be said that the inputs in agriculture, including fuel inputs and the need for fertilizer, are all fundamental costs that are borne by the farming community and individual farm families. We also know there are significant drivers in some areas in terms of climate risk. We can look at nitrogen, for example. We know that, if there is better management of nitrogen, the losses in the environment will be only a fraction of what they are now. The latest study said that there could be a \$500-billion societal benefit for food supply and human health if we start to put in mitigation measures on nitrogen, which would cost in the area of \$20 billion.

Private Members' Business

Therefore, my question for the Conservatives, who only ever go on carbon tax and nothing else with a vision for dealing with the climate crisis, is this: Where is the commitment for investments in agriculture to deal with nitrogen mitigation?

My colleagues in the Liberal Party are more than willing to give billions of dollars to big oil, but farmers have to deal with the costs themselves. Therefore, nitrogen is something we have to talk about. It is 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Runoffs from nitrogen are causing algae blooms that have created dead zones in waterways. We all know this needs to be addressed, so let us start looking at investments in that.

In terms of the input costs for fuel, they are extraordinary costs that are borne by farmers. We need to start looking at how we can move toward more sustainability so that Canada's agricultural community will truly be the world leader.

● (1125)

The measure that is being brought forward is about a carve-out provision to ensure that the fuels that are being used are not covered by the carbon tax, and I think that is a reasonable solution. However, the Conservatives only have the one tool. They have one hammer, which is the carbon tax, and they pound on the table all the time. When I talk with farmers, they say they are looking at long-term ways they can make their farming operations sustainable with regard to the climate commitments that Canada and the world are looking at for the reduction of fossil fuels. They know that the more we burn, the more damage it is going to do to the land in the long term.

I look at the issue of tractors and diesel. There is the potential, if the federal government was willing to work with partners, to invest in technologies so that we could not only move more to batteries but also allow for automation because we cannot find workers on many of the farms to sustain what is happening.

I have heard Conservatives tell me that we cannot use batteries in diesel tractors. Have they ever been to a mine? There are 70-tonne trucks running underground that have moved from diesel to clean energy sources. What we are not seeing is a vision to support farming to be able to do that, because right now these costs are borne by farmers. Farmers are not in a position to shift their tractors to batteries. Financially, it is not possible. However, for example, with carbon capture, big oil companies are making record profits, but they are still coming for handouts and they are still expecting that the people of Canada will cover those costs.

To me, this is a fair question: Why are we willing to invest billions in the oil sector, which is already hugely profitable, when we are not willing to ask farming communities how we could start to move toward sustainability, and how we could remove our dependence on diesel and other fuels? That is a conversation we need to have, and it raises questions about the grid. We do not have a grid in rural Canada that could even carry electrification through batteries and other sources to get to farms. Farms are on their own.

We have the one tool before us right now. We need to deal with the high input costs of farming, of drying grain and of sustaining barns. These are big operations, and they are taking heavy amounts of cost in inputs. They cannot pass those on to the consumers. That

is the reality. These are mostly family-run farm operations that have limits in terms of how much of the cost they can accept.

I am more than willing to support this motion to get to committee so we can look at it. However, I am urging my colleagues, in light of the latest IPCC report, to get serious about addressing issues such as nitrogen, which is much more of a planet killer than carbon dioxide. We need to be looking to find the alternatives for fuels such as diesel.

If we are going to insist that every other sector of the economy shifts, then we need to be showing the shift in agriculture. Agriculture is a fundamental of sustainability. Agriculture is the area that takes the biggest hit, but the problem is that agriculture bears the costs of the transition, and agriculture bears the cost of the damage that is done to the economy by other sectors that do not do their part.

I would urge my colleagues from all parties to work together to put a vision forward with sustainability measures, with support and with conversation with agriculture. It is the farmers who understand environment better than anyone else, it is the farmers who understand how to run their operations, and it is the farmers who will have the solutions, ultimately, to make farming sustainable in the 21st century so that the world is sustainable in the 21st century.

● (1130)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I start, I want to extend my condolences to the Cossey family who farmed down the road from where I grew up near Chipman, for the loss of their beautiful Veronica, a much-loved, well-known and universally admired nurse, farm wife and community member from Lamont county.

I appreciate this opportunity to stand up for people like the Cosseys, for people all across Lakeland, and for hard-working farmers and agricultural workers across Alberta and throughout Canada, against the rising costs brought on by the NDP-Liberal costly coalition's carbon tax.

I thank my Conservative colleagues, the MP for Huron—Bruce who brought in this bill and the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South who introduced it as Bill C-206, which was agreed to before the Liberals called the unnecessary 2021 election. That put it back to square one and blocked crucial relief for farmers of the carbon tax on their farm fuels for the past two years.

I am proud to represent all kinds of farms, ag businesses and farming families across Lakeland, which is the fourth largest rural riding in Alberta. It is home to nine first nations and Métis communities, and more than 50 municipalities and summer villages. It takes almost an hour to drive from end to end. Lakeland's economy mainly relies on agriculture, natural resources and small businesses.

Private Members' Business

I hope colleagues from urban and suburban ridings can begin to imagine the distances, infrastructure challenges, equipment required and costs involved in the daily lives and work of the people and businesses across an area larger than 86 countries around the world, especially for those family farms and related businesses that make a living off the land and who feed the world using the highest environmental and production standards of any farmers on Planet Earth.

Where I am from, while a lot of us use Starlink now for Internet, we still cannot haul cattle or seed a crop with a Tesla, and almost none of the towns have public infrastructure and transportation. It is in those rural areas that Canadian farmers live and work to feed their neighbours and cities.

As one of the world's largest producers of canola, oats, wheat, flaxseed and pulse crops, and the fifth-largest agricultural exporter in the world, Canada's agriculture sector accounts for almost 7% of GDP and sustains the livelihoods of 2.4 million Canadians. It is vital.

Farmers are the backbone of Canadian rural communities. They work hard days and late nights to put food on our tables. Canadian farmers compete with each other and globally, so they constantly innovate for the most efficient production of crops and livestock to maintain, improve and steward the land, water and air on which their lives literally entirely depend. They strive to reduce costs and offer high-quality but affordable products. However, despite their generations of excellence in environmental stewardship and emissions reduction, the Liberals slapped them with an ever-growing carbon tax. Farmers now struggle to provide for their families, to maintain their businesses, to contribute to their communities and to pass on their way of life.

Constituents often share personal trials and tribulations, and my dedicated staff and I work as best we can to solve the problems we can impact. We all agree that some of the most heartbreaking conversations are in farmyards or in the constituency office where farmers, some whose roots stretch back so far they have awards that celebrate more than a century of their families' blood, sweat, tears and work, painfully say they have resigned themselves to hope that their kids do not try to take it on and that they pick a different path because the costs are insurmountable. It is no wonder, when some farmers will face \$150,000 a year in taxes just seven years from now if the Liberals stay on course.

Canadian farmers and ag-based communities have faced major challenges in recent years, as collateral damage in trade wars and diplomatic disputes has made the normal uncertain weather, growing conditions and global prices even worse. Back-to-back disasters have hit Lakeland with alternating harvests from hell and major flooding. Farmers lost a significant portion of their crops, with some being completely wiped out, and other farmers ran out of grazing area and feed for their livestock.

Farmers have clearly requested one thing: Axe the expensive and unfair carbon tax so they can continue to feed Canadians and the world.

Michelle, a farmer from Blackfoot, says that carbon tax hikes are "crippling". She says, "In my opinion, the Federal Minister of Agriculture is not taking this issue seriously."

Farmers already have to navigate challenging conditions, and carefully plan and save so they do not go bankrupt during bad years. When rural families have to watch their once-a-year paycheque burn, drown, rot, freeze on the field or get loaded for processing because they cannot afford to feed all year, or the costs for grain drying and heating barns are skyrocketing and too expensive, situations that are completely out of their control, the government should not use a tax to make it worse and take even more away.

Unfortunately, the Liberals' approach to farmers and farm families is mostly broken programs, endless platitudes and, at worst, layers of punitive policies and outright hostility to their way of life.

• (1135)

In 2016, the then ag minister said the Liberals would not exempt farmers from the carbon tax because "the impact is a very small percentage of operating costs". Frankly, that is just not the reality for farmers, ranchers and rural Canadians. Farmers need specialized, expensive equipment powered by fuels that have no alternatives to grow and harvest their crops, to irrigate and to heat barns and buildings.

The carbon tax will cost the average farmer \$45,000 a year overall, with estimates of \$36,000 a year for grain drying alone. The worst part is that the Liberals were warned, but they ignored the CFIB's analysis that farmers would already be paying an average of \$14,000 a year in federal carbon taxes when it was just \$20 in 2019. The Liberals hiked it 150% a year ago, and days from now the Liberals will triple that carbon tax compared to 2019. Let us talk about the worst April Fool's joke ever.

It is not just the Conservatives saying the carbon tax will cost more. The independent, non-partisan PBO confirms it is a net loss for most Canadians. The truth is that 60% of all households pay more than they get back. That will rise to 80% in Ontario and Alberta by next year. The average Canadian family will pay an extra 400 bucks, and more than 840 bucks in those provinces, in carbon tax this year after Liberal rebates. Farmers and ranchers of course will pay even more, but Michelle from Blackfoot is right. The Liberals do not care about the disproportionate damage of their carbon tax for rural Canadians and producers.

It is even more galling that the Liberals refuse to reverse course. Almost half of Canadians are \$200 away from bankruptcy, and food prices are skyrocketing so that Canadians are already skipping meals, turning down the heat or cutting out meat and veggies to make ends meet because of the Liberals' reckless tax and inflationary spending agenda. The Liberals' rebate program, which they claim is an offset, is really just a blanket return to producers that is entirely based on eligible farming expenses that needs a total of over \$25,000 to qualify. It ignores the distinct impacts of carbon surcharges on particular farms, sector productivity and competitiveness.

The carbon tax affects the entire supply chain. It makes it more expensive for farmers to produce food, and more expensive to ship it, which raises the cost of groceries for all Canadians. In many cases, farmers are so cash-strapped, they cannot afford any more capital-intensive innovations and technologies for productivity and sustainability gains. That is the exact opposite of what carbon tax proponents claim they want.

A chicken producer and mixed farmer, Ross, from Lakeland, recently said to me in exasperation that he doesn't know what the Prime Minister wants him to do: use coal or just quit farming. Obviously, a full carbon tax exemption for natural gas and propane, lower-emitting, more affordable and actually available fuels would make a real difference for farmers struggling to pay their bills. However, the Liberals do not listen to everyday Canadians, Conservatives or apparently even their own public servants. They impose policies with arbitrary and impossible targets without a second thought to how it will hike costs for everyone and hurt some even more.

Of course, the Liberal government's own studies long warned of the major added costs of the carbon tax for farmers and all Canadians. In 2015, Finance Canada said imposing a carbon tax would "cascade through the economy in the form of higher prices...leading all firms and consumers to pay more". That prediction came true. The Lloydminster Ag Exhibition Association also says the carbon tax is "crippling" and too much of a burden. Its bill is already \$30,000 a year in carbon tax alone. Its building got major energy retrofits, but the carbon tax still hiked bills 30% and taxed away any cost savings.

However, the Liberals are happy to add disproportionate costs to farmers, farm families and rural residents, even while the carbon tax causes everyone economic pain with no discernible environmental gain. That is not where their votes are.

Ultimately, all Canadians, farmers, workers, consumers, business owners, the middle class, people on fixed incomes, the working

Private Members' Business

poor, urban residents, all consumers and anyone who eats will pay the price. Conservatives will axe the carbon tax completely, but today we can at least exempt farmers from the carbon tax on fuels they cannot do without, for which there are no alternatives to affordably or immediately replace, and save them tens of thousands of dollars a year on necessary farming costs and operations.

I want to thank, again, our Conservative colleague from Huron—Bruce for giving us this common-sense opportunity to turn hurt into hope for Conservative farmers. I am proud of the agricultural sector in Lakeland and all across the country. I am grateful to all the farmers, producers, their families and their workers. That is why I support Bill C-234, and I encourage all MPs who claim to stand with Canadian farmers and ranchers to do the same.

• (1140)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to join the proceedings virtually to talk about Bill C-234, but let me start by saying it has been a difficult day for my family. This morning, we had to put down our beloved Bernese mountain dog, Sulley. If you would permit me, I would like to put his memory on the record in Hansard.

As all of us do as colleagues, I have what I call the "grand bargain" in terms of the partnership I have with my wife in order to be able to pursue this job to the greatest extent that I could. Back in 2019, when I first got involved in public life, that was the bargain, that we had to get a dog. My wife said that if I was going to be away participating in debates, she needed someone at home with her. Sulley has been with us ever since my first day in public life. He was a special dog. I know everyone who has an animal would say that, but with his demeanour, his poise and his presence, he is going to be missed. This is a small way in which I can make sure his memory is on the record and in Hansard for life.

It has been a difficult morning, but let me also reiterate the importance of working virtually. My colleagues know that if there is any opportunity for me to be in the House, I will be there, but this morning gave me an opportunity to be with my wife and my dog and also be able to speak to this really important bill. It is not without its challenges, but the virtual tools are extremely important for parliamentarians to be able to do their work.

Private Members' Business

Let me get to Bill C-234. This bill would expand existing exemptions under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act. When this government was developing its carbon price plan, there was considerable thought given to exempting on-farm fuels from the carbon price. Let me just say that I have had a front-row seat to this particular bill as the proud chair of the agriculture committee. We have had the opportunity to study it and to hear from witnesses, and that was one thing that was covered.

There are a number of existing exemptions for those involved in the greenhouse sector for on-farm fuel use. There is already no carbon price applied. However, at the time the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act was developed, it seems as though there was not necessarily a lot of thought given to grain drying and, particularly, to barn heating for livestock. That is exactly what this bill tries to do. It would extend to what a number of policy-makers feel was a small oversight at the time of the original drafting of the legislation that brought the carbon price into force.

At its core, carbon pricing is about changing behaviour and driving innovation to be able to get around what is a market signal around the price. Sometimes that is easier said than done. In the case of grain drying, we have heard repeatedly from witnesses who have knowledge on this subject that although there may be some techniques down the line and there is work being done, there is nothing commercially available to Canadian farmers at a scale that is needed right now to be able to meet that demand.

On barn heating, certainly it is a little less objective that there are no alternatives, but the committee unanimously amended this legislation to make sure that we were focused on just barn heating for animals. When we think about poultry barns, propane and natural gas are often used to make sure that even in the coldest winters the animals are protected and are in a comfortable temperature. That source is needed and although technologies are forthcoming, they are not readily available at this time.

That brings me to my second point, which is around the sunset clause. Parliamentarians are not saying that this is forever. This is an eight-year exemption sunset clause, which is anticipating that some of the technologies that carbon pricing, government policy, and innovation in the private sector alone are driving are going to make it perhaps more plausible by around 2030-31 that this bill will not necessarily be necessary and farmers can be making those important investments accordingly.

That brings me back to the point that it is difficult for farmers to be able to get around this carbon price, in the sense that there are not those technologies. Of course, we would all want to be able to do so, but if there are no readily available techniques to do so, it does have a punitive measure to a certain extent.

I am sympathetic to the government position, to a certain extent, because for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada, the carbon pricing regime is seen as a way to incentivize major transitional projects and investments to reduce carbon emissions, by economists and governments around the world. There are 46 other countries around the world that have some form of carbon pricing.

• (1145)

There are people, organizations and groups all seeking exemptions along the line. I can appreciate the concern from the government's side that if we give an exemption in one particular area it may create a cascading impact to suggest that more should be done for other industries. That may be the case, but on this particular issue, as it relates to the evidence we heard, the government is well within its right to move in this direction without necessarily opening the door to other exemptions where the technology may not be available. We are talking about something quite fundamental, which is input costs associated with farmers across the country, which plays into the price of food.

The government, to its credit, has sought to redress this issue. It was in what was formerly Bill C-8. What happens is that all the revenue collected under the carbon price at farm level is aggregated and then brought back to farmers on the basis of the size of revenue on the said farm, so there is a return model.

However, as has been noted in the debate, this does not take into account the actual elements of what a farmer may produce. For example, a dairy farmer may not actually be grain-drying and may not be incurring some of those costs, so there is no ability to return it on an equitable scale that actually takes into consideration the farmers who do not have the readily available tools, to be able to return that in a way that is not being punitive to certain industries.

This bill is the best pathway to be able to move forward.

The second thing is around the affordability of food. There have been lots of conversations about that. Our agriculture committee is studying the price of food right now. We have had the opportunity to hear from grocery CEOs, farmers and industry stakeholders. I do not think this should be overplayed, but even though it will not be a silver bullet in a moment when food prices are high, it will be a small step toward alleviating some of the costs that may be incurred, at a moment when there is not really an ability to actually innovate and drive the technological change we may want to see.

The member for Timmins—James Bay kind of suggested the government has no programs in place to help incentivize technological change and innovation on farm. I would disagree, respectfully, with the hon. member. This government has put nearly a billion dollars over the last two budgets toward just that: measures that help drive down emissions on farm. This government is supportive. This government has put money back to farmers to do exactly that. In this particular instance, it is about correcting a small miscue that would have happened back in 2018 when this legislation was originally drafted.

Mr. Speaker, you and I, both in the Annapolis Valley, share one of the largest agriculture ridings and concentrations of farms in Atlantic Canada. It is the largest concentration east of Quebec. With the federal pricing coming into effect in Nova Scotia by July 1, this bill has added importance for my constituents and the farmers in Kings—Hants. It is reasonable and sensible public policy, and I will be supporting it when it comes up for a vote on Wednesday.

Private Members' Business

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to this bill and the opportunity to memorialize our boy, Sullivan. I will leave it at that. I look forward to seeing members in Ottawa later this evening.

• (1150)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to hear about Sulley.

Continuing debate, I recognize the member for Huron—Bruce for his right of reply.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the agriculture critic, the member of Parliament for Foothills, for his great work on this bill. Although I think this is a better bill, the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South had a similar bill in the previous Parliament, and I want to thank him for his work.

I want to thank all the members of Parliament who spoke to this bill and brought up some great points, as well as the people on the agriculture committee, the farm groups and, most importantly, the farmers from all across the country who have contacted members of Parliament, including myself, to express how important this bill is, especially at this time.

If we think about what the member for Kings—Hants said, who is in a different party but understands the value of this bill, when we look at drying grain, there is no viable option. When we look at heating a livestock barn, whether it is for hogs, layer hens, broilers, turkeys or whatever it may be, there is no viable option at this time. It is fundamentally important and ethical for those farmers to be able to heat their barns and provide a climate for their livestock to grow and provide food on the plates at the tables of Canadians from coast to coast. In my mind, when we look at this bill, there is no carbon tax on farm for diesel or gas. What we are asking for is an exemption on propane and natural gas for them to dry their grain, or even for something like growing mushrooms in a building, which is a perfectly acceptable thing under this bill as well.

The Liberal government tried to address that with the rebate it brought in a couple of years ago, but it falls so short in providing reasonable compensation for farmers that it is really not acceptable. It provides \$1.73 per \$1,000 of allowable expenses, so if farmers have a million dollars of expenses, they will get \$1,730 back with the carbon tax rebate. Any members who have farmers in their ridings know that at harvest time in the fall, or with the monthly bills to heat or cool their barns, the carbon tax bill far exceeds the \$1,730 for which they qualify.

Another thing I would highlight briefly is that farmers are asked to be the government's line of credit. What I mean by that is this. If we look at the HST rebate that many farmers get, whether they file quarterly, semi-annually or annually, they are the government's line of credit regarding that. With respect to all the business risk management programs, they are the government's line of credit. Everything happens and then they file at the end of the year and maybe get a rebate. Once again, the program that the Liberals created also forces farmers to be their line of credit, so we are looking to alleviate that to cut costs.

I just have a couple of minutes to go, so the other thing I will say is this. If we look at the underused housing tax that has just come up here, it is another example of the government bringing in some-

thing without consulting farmers. This has caused chaos in the farming community. For farmers who own multiple farms and maybe have a home for their family, their adult son or daughter, or maybe their hired staff, that has created a whole pile of confusion. I know the Minister of Revenue is working to address it, but it is another example. There is a carbon tax on farmers, as well as an underused housing tax on farmers, when we should be supporting farmers. They are the fabric of this country. They put food on the table. They are the best and we really need to support them.

If we look at innovation, there has been so much innovation in the last century. Some things are great; some are not great. However, with respect to agriculture, if we look at emissions per horsepower and just use that as a target, and if we look at the old David Brown equipment from 50 years ago and compare that to what John Deere, Case IH or Kubota puts out today, there is no comparison. They have done a great job with respect to the NOx and SOx. On farm, the environmental farm plan, the nutrient management plans, cover crops, no-till drilling and strategic spraying, all these things are tremendous.

Therefore, we want to get this bill to the Senate. We want the senators to deal with it in an appropriate way, which we know they can do, and really make a big difference for farmers across the country.

• (1155)

I want to thank all members of Parliament for considering this bill. The vote is coming up on Wednesday. We want a recorded division on that vote so we can see each person in this House take their place and show their support for farmers one vote at a time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 29, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the House, I am quite prepared to begin Government Orders at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

• (1200)

*[English]***ONLINE STREAMING ACT**

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (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;

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. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to rise yet again on Bill C-11. I have had the opportunity on a couple of occasions already to address the House on what I believe is an important piece of legislation.

When looking at Bill C-11, members need to reflect on the Canada Broadcasting Act in terms of when we last saw substantial changes. We would be going back to the early 1990s. In fact 1991 was the last time we had a thorough debate in regard to the Broadcasting Act itself. I would suggest that members should reflect on 1991 compared with 2023.

Before I get into that, I just want to commend the Senate, having had the opportunity to go over the bill and giving it a great deal of effort. I want to compliment the senators on their efforts in bringing forward a series of amendments. Obviously not all the amendments are acceptable from the government's perspective. There are a number that we will not be proceeding with. I want to make very quick reference to a couple of the ones that cause a little discomfort, if I could put it that way.

I am thinking about amendment 2(d)(ii), which seeks to legislate matters in the broadcasting system that are beyond the policy intent of the bill. The purpose of the bill is to include online undertakings, undertakings for the transmission or retransmission of programs over the Internet in a broadcasting system.

Then if one goes to amendment 3, 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. It would also prevent the broadcasting system from adapting to technology changes over time.

There are a few amendments that we disagree with, looking at the scope of the legislation and wanting to keep the integrity and the intent of the legislation intact.

Some of the amendments that we would agree with include 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. These amendments that were proposed by the Senate are fairly well received.

Having said all that, as I indicated, I wanted to provide my compliments and thank the Senate for the thorough review of the legislation.

I know that for some of us, making the legislation stronger is of great benefit. We want to see that. We saw some changes or modifications that were talked about at the committee stage. It is important that we recognize why we have this legislation here in the first place. I referred in my opening remarks to Bill C-11 being all about updating the Canada Broadcasting Act.

I have had the opportunity to draw the comparisons from the previous 1991 technology to where we are today. For all intents and purposes, there is no real comparison. It is almost like two totally different worlds. Bill C-11 would put the system, the platform versus our traditional broadcasting, on a level playing field. Not to support Bill C-11 is to say that it is okay to continue in the fashion that we are currently going, where there is an unlevel playing field for those traditional broadcasters versus what is happening with on-line platforms.

Government Orders

• (1205)

If we take a look at 1991, and I have referenced this in the past, we used a telephone line for Internet, and we actually called into it. We would hear the buzzing and so forth, and ultimately a double click that said we were now online. The type of computer technology used at that time had a fraction of the speed and the capacity of what we use today. In fact, things such as Disney+, Crave, Netflix, Spotify and YouTube were virtually non-existent back then, so the Canadian Broadcasting Act did not reflect the technology and the advancements that would come in the years beyond 1991.

The legislation would put all those platforms on a level playing field because we recognize that Canadian content really does matter. One only needs to look at those traditional media outlets and the impact the Broadcasting Act and Canadian content have had on the traditional media forms: the CTVs, the CBCs, the radio programming that is out there and so forth. I suspect that if we looked at many of the stars we have today and in the past, they would recognize that Canadian content mandates ensure that Canada is better reflected in what is actually being produced and promoted. This is not only the case here in Canada, but the mandates also, in a very real and tangible way, enable Canadians to become sensational hits outside of Canadian borders.

I can tell members that at the end of the day, some of the programs I watched when I was growing up existed, in good part, because of the Canadian content laws. If we did not have them back then, I do not know to what degree we would have had some of the programs or the success we have witnessed.

In the Liberal Party, we recognize our arts community as an industry that not only provides jobs and opportunities but also reflects our heritage in many ways. Who we are as a nation is often seen in the types of programming that come out of Canadian content. This is something that should be encouraged. On many occasions, I have used the example of Folklorama, because I really believe Folklorama embodies so much, in terms of our heritage, that it is worth mentioning again.

Once a year for two weeks, Manitoba, and in particular Winnipeg, comes alive with our celebration of diversity and heritage. I attend some of the pavilions. There are roughly 50 pavilions. There are 24 or 25 that are one week long, and then the following week there are another 24 or 25 pavilions. By touring the pavilions, one may see some amazing talents. There are performers who will act, sing and provide all forms of different services in the production and hosting of these pavilions.

I would go deeper by saying that when I see some of these young singers or performers, it is not just during that one week. It becomes a venue for them to ultimately showcase their talent. However, we will see that they are actually practising, rehearsing and often getting other gigs, if I can use the word “gigs”, throughout the year.

• (1210)

Many of these performers, actors and singers will often get to the next level where they will participate in the film industry, or we will hear them on the radio. These are types of things that we should be encouraging.

On Saturday night, I was at the Canada Life Centre, where the Winnipeg Jets play, and we had some guests from the Philippines: Moira DelaTorre and company. It was a super-fantastic show. Thousands of people came to witness it. Prior to that show, some incredible local talent was highlighted.

I say that because events such as that, the Folklorama events and many types of events take place in arts and performance throughout our communities and virtually in every region of our country. We have the potential to support those events by getting behind Bill C-11. If they understand and appreciate our heritage and the potential industry and how it can deliver for Canadians, all members should be getting behind Bill C-11. It does not take too much to reflect on some huge international success stories.

I would use the example of *Schitt's Creek* to counter what the member opposite is saying. Some of the actors originate from some good Canadian content in previous years. Many of these actors and singers get their opportunity to contribute, especially in their earlier years, in part because of Canadian content and if not directly then indirectly. I can say that *Schitt's Creek* is a wonderful production here in Canada, and many people can understand and appreciate values that are being espoused here in Canada. The program is recognized worldwide because of all the awards that it has received.

One can talk about endless numbers of actors, singers and performers who have made it big on the world stage. A lot of that would not have been possible if not for directly or indirectly ensuring that we have Canadian content. That is why I believe members need to reflect on the importance of Bill C-11 with respect to leveling the playing field.

I would also like to mention the jobs that are created. If not every week then every other week it seems that there is some form of production taking place in Manitoba. In other provinces and territories, it may be more so or less so. All I know is that there is a healthy industry there to support a growing industry as a whole. Within that, there are jobs that are contributing in a very real and tangible way. Therefore, Bill C-11 would do more than just promote Canadian content; it would also ensure a healthier and more vibrant industry. As a direct result of that, some of the small centres are actually seeing productions being carried out. I think of a program like *Corner Gas* from the Prairies.

• (1215)

These are productions, I would suggest, if not directly, then indirectly, that are provided the opportunities because of issues such as Canadian content. There has been some movement toward Canadian content from different platforms, but nowhere near enough. When we think in terms of what the legislation would do, it would be a modernization of 1991. It says that one has an obligation to contribute.

Government Orders

More specifically, what would the legislation do? It would bring online streaming services under the jurisdiction of the Broadcasting Act. It would require online streaming services that serve the Canadian market to contribute to the production of Canadian content. It would prioritize support for the content from francophone, indigenous, LGBTQ2+, racialized and other equity-seeking creators. It would ensure online broadcasters showcase more Canadian content. In essence, it would modernize outdated legislation and bring the system into the 21st century. This is what the legislation would do and, for whatever reason, the Conservative Party is voting against the legislation.

Let me tell colleagues what it is that the legislation would not do. The Conservatives will try to give a false impression by trying to ratchet up hard feelings toward Bill C-11 or by providing support for misinformation about the legislation.

This is what the legislation would not do. It would not impose regulations on the content that everyday Canadians post on social media. There is one Conservative member who is anxious to get up. I can tell by the comments she has consistently been making. Such members do a disservice to Canadians when they try to say anything other than the fact that it would not impose regulations on the content that everyday Canadians post on social media. To say otherwise is not true. It would not impose regulations on Canadian digital content creators, influencers or users. It could not be more clear than making that statement, yet we still get members of the Conservative Party who will say that it would.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: You know what would make it more clear? Keeping the Senate amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We are in the first round of debate here. Of course, the hon. member has an unlimited time to present his thoughts. The next speaker will have the same amount of time to get her thoughts out as well. I am more than happy to allow her to ask the first question when that time comes. I just want to make sure that the conversation stays calm in this chamber.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

● (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will get back to what the legislation would not do. It would not censor content or mandate specific algorithms on streaming services or social media platforms.

When I sit down and the member opposite stands up, she will give all sorts of contradictions to some of the things that I am saying here, yet we know for a fact that it would not do that. One can ask why and I will pose that question after I finish talking about what I think is probably the most important thing that this legislation would not do. It would not limit Canadians' freedom of expression in any way.

Last time I spoke on this legislation, I think earlier that day I got an email from one of my regulars. We all have regulars. This individual, I suspect, may not be overly sympathetic to me or my party. He was being very critical. He said that Bill C-11 was going to take away his freedom and he was not going to be able to communicate the way he wants to communicate in terms of the Internet, or be

able to express himself. He said we were putting limitations on this particular individual.

We all know that is not the case. What happens often is that an opposition party, and over nine times out of 10 it is the Conservatives Party, will oppose legislation. There are key things that it likes and it will amplify those. In this case, it is trying to give the false impression that Bill C-11 has an impact on a person's freedoms. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I take great pride in the fact that a Liberal government many years ago, before I was elected for the first time in 1988, brought in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We are the party that guarantees rights and freedoms. When we look at what Bill C-11 is all about and the work that has been done on this legislation, it is not like it is new. This is legislation that has been debated now, in one form or another, for years.

It has been debated for years, yet the Conservative Party is still stuck on wanting to raise money. It likes to say the government is attacking Canadians' freedoms and their ability to speak. Then it says if people agree and want to donate to its party, please do. The fundraising will hopefully come to an end on this issue.

Even members of the Bloc are relatively supportive of the legislation. In fact, I think the Quebec legislature actually passed a unanimous resolution supporting the legislation. The creators and the individuals who are so impacted, not only today but yesterday, are thinking about the future and are supportive of the legislation.

This is legislation that would make a positive difference in every way if we stick to the facts. If we want to talk about rumours and false information, it could be an endless debate as the Conservative Party of Canada has clearly demonstrated.

● (1225)

As the next speaker who stands up will clearly demonstrate, it will be all about how big government, in co-operation with the Bloc, the NDP, the Green Party and most Canadians, is trying to limit our freedom of speech and ability to upload documents onto the Internet, whether it is a cat file or whatever it might be. That is the type of thing we have to deal with.

I ask my Conservative friends to give it a break. Let us look at the facts and move on. This legislation went through the House before the last election, when it was first brought in, and then after the most recent election, it was brought back in. It went through second reading, and there were interesting debates and discussions during the committee stage. It then came back here for report stage and third reading, and ultimately passed on to the Senate, which has had the opportunity to take a look at the legislation. It brought forward a number of amendments, and the government has agreed to a number of those amendments.

It is time we pass this legislation. There is no justification to do otherwise outside of the Conservatives' desire to raise more money on false information. There is no justification. If we want to support the industry and level the playing field, now is the time for us to support it. Let us get this legislation through the House of Commons.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made quite the accusations against this side of the House. He was, of course, borderline unparliamentary in his language.

Nevertheless, he makes a few false points. He says that in the legislation, the government does not go after user-generated content. That is interesting to me because we heard from legal expert after legal expert, content creator after content creator and witness after witness, both at the House of Commons committee and at the Senate committee, that in fact the legislation in its current state does.

The Senate heard those concerns and it tried to fix the legislation in that regard by taking a part of clause 4 out. It would have removed user-generated content. However, the government has decided to make sure the amendment is not accepted. Further to that, the government has decided that the amendment to remove clause 7 is not accepted.

Let me explain the impact of this. Clause 7 gives cabinet the ability to direct the CRTC with regard to this legislation. That means there is obvious opportunity for political interference, which, under any government, whether this government or successive governments, is wrong and should rightly concern Canadians. Further to that, user-generated content, under clause 4, absolutely is scoped into this legislation. The government had an opportunity to accept the amendment from the Senate, but it has decided not to.

If we put those two together, we can quickly see that cabinet does in fact intend to direct the CRTC to regulate Facebook videos or cat videos, as the member says. Does he have anything to say in response to that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, well, Amazon has a great sale on tin hats.

At the end of the day, I—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, but the hon. member across from me just referred to me as if I was wearing a tin hat. I referred to amendments brought forward in the Senate that are on paper. To refer to me as if I am some whacked out individual wearing a tin hat is totally inappropriate and an attack on my character, which is inappropriate in this place. I would ask for him to show some decency and offer an apology.

The Deputy Speaker: With a follow-up to that point of order, we have the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, if the member had called her a whacked out individual, in no uncertain terms that would be unparliamentary. However, there is nothing unparliamentary about a sale on tin hats. I think it would be a real threat to freedom of expression if parliamentarians were not allowed to talk about sales on tin hats.

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting into debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comments that have offended the member.

Government Orders

Members will notice that the member was saying “if this” and “if that”. If all of these combinations of things occur, then something could happen. Well, the minister, me and many others here on the floor and inside the committee have made it very clear that this is not the case.

The member talks about clause 4, so I will note that the minister's intention has always been clear to exclude the content of Canadians and social media creators. Some online platforms only act like broadcasters right now. Those are familiar streaming services like Netflix, Crave and Disney+. Other online platforms consist entirely of user-generated content. They are clearly excluded in proposed section 4.1.

The member knows this, yet she, along with others, continues to say it. That is why I say it is a form of misrepresentation of what the legislation is doing. We are not in any way doing what the member is suggesting. It is just wrong.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am astounded by what I am hearing. I am not the one responsible for this file. Speaking of which, I want to acknowledge my colleague from Drummond.

This is the second version of this bill. It is not about changing everything. It is about ensuring the promotion, protection and development of our artists and creators. I myself come from the cultural community.

If we are talking about \$70 million in losses each month, it is because someone here has not understood the importance of culture, because it is over \$1.5 billion.

What are we waiting for when we know that there will be a review in five years as set out in the sunset clause? It has been overdue since 1991.

I would like my colleague opposite to tell me why the official opposition is digging in its heels and stubbornly fearing freedom of expression so much.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member puts quite well trying to understand the official opposition and the obstructionist role it is playing as we try to modernize Canada's Broadcasting Act. As I said, the essence of the legislation is to ensure there is a level playing field and that there is Canadian content. Canadian content, in the past, has been clearly demonstrated to be very effective. One only needs to look, from a historical perspective, at how successful it has been at elevating, encouraging and developing local artists of many different forms in different regions of our country.

Those who support our arts community should get behind this legislation. The member brought to my attention that the economic costs of not doing so are very real and tangible. Let us show the arts industry that we genuinely care. We have had all sorts of discussions over the years, so let us get on with it and pass the legislation.

Government Orders

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the frustrating elements of dealing with Bill C-11 is that, on the one hand, the Liberal member, whom I do not think mentioned Facebook or Google once, is talking about *Corner Gas*, a television show I have not seen in 15 years, as though it is the cutting edge of Canadian technology. I think we should focus on what is at hand. On the other hand, we have the Conservatives claiming that taking on some of the richest corporations in the world and making them pay into the system is going to lead to the son of Pierre Elliott blocking people's access to cat videos. That is their position.

I know if we blocked access to cat videos, it might cause a lot of problems for the Conservative backbenchers, who have a very short attention span during question period, but I want to ask my hon. colleague this. Number one, is the government trying to ban cat videos? Number two, what about Facebook or Google threatening to ban access to Canadians' use of online journalism? That is the question. We have never heard the Conservatives have a problem with Google telling Canadians they are not going to be allowed to read online news articles, because they are being blackmailed by the tech giants. Is the government going to stand up for Canadians' right to access information, not just cat videos but news content that Google or Facebook is threatening to block?

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am personally a dog person. Between cats and dogs, I like dogs. However, whether it is cat or dog videos being uploaded on Facebook with their owners, it is great to see and is encouraging. In no way, as I have pointed out and tried to make as clear as possible, is this bill going to put any sort of limitations on individuals.

At the end of the day, Bill C-18 deals with a good part of what the member was referring to. That is the online news act, which would ensure that big companies, such as the Googles and the Facebooks, pay their fair share. All we are asking for, whether it is in this legislation or Bill C-18, is to ensure that we are levelling the playing field and that everyone is contributing a fair share. In this case, it is about Canadian content.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the fact that we are debating Bill C-11 in a political context and in terms of what my constituents see as a barrage of false information about it taking away freedoms is very distressing. However, it is also not perfect legislation.

I want to tell my hon. parliamentary colleague, the parliamentary secretary, that I absolutely could not agree more that this bill does not affect freedom of expression. That is protected in the Broadcasting Act and in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, likewise, I do not understand why the government removed Senate amendments that make it very clear the bill would not affect user-generated content. I am concerned about that because I think it needlessly confuses the situation. We need to pass Bill C-11 to protect Canadian writers and Canadian artists in a context where their access to work has been declining rapidly because of online streaming services.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what we have seen over the last number of months is a great effort by a large number of people to ultimately see if there are ways we can improve the legis-

lation. We have had recommendations at the committee stage, between second and third reading, and now today we have amendments proposed by the Senate, most of which we are accepting. Where there are changes that go outside the scope of the legislation, we are recommending that we do not accept those changes. However, all in all, I think we have a good piece of legislation here, which has been made even better with some of the amendments proposed by the Senate.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, imagine for just a moment someone going into a bookstore. As soon as they walk in, there is a guide, and they are allowed to go through this bookstore only with his or her help. Now, in this bookstore, there are yellow books, purple books, blue books, green books and red books, and the red books are the only ones that the guide will take that person to. The yellow books, the green books, the blue books, the purple books and the pink books are all there, seemingly available to the consumer, but the guide is not permitted to take them to look at those books. The guide is only permitted to take the consumer to the red books. Of course, in theory, we have this entire store with all of these lovely books, but at the end of the day, the guide will only take the consumer to the red books.

A person might ask to go through the bookstore on their own without the assistance of the guide, as he seems rather ridiculous, but no, that is not an option. They must go through the store with this guide because that is the rule of the store. This is the Internet under the Liberal Government of Canada if Bill C-11 passes. The Internet will be guided through a Liberal government's lens. The Liberals will determine what content Canadians can and cannot see.

Now, in theory, there is this big, wide open Internet with all of this content. However, the vast majority of that content will be bumped down in priority or, in other words, made undiscoverable, and the red content will be made top priority and moved toward page one. This is where Canadians will be pointed to. When they go on YouTube and want to find information they care about, watch videos they are passionate about or explore topics they want to learn more about, the government will make sure they are pointed toward videos that the government has curated for them to watch. That is what Bill C-11 is all about.

An individual might say they will use their search bar to look for things they wish to watch. No, they will not, because the government will take control of their search bar and direct them toward the things the government wants them to watch. That is how the Internet will be curated. That is how it will work.

Legal experts came to our committee at the House of Commons and also appeared at the Senate. At the House of Commons, we heard from several who likened the bill—

• (1240)

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting the member, but the interpreter is indicating that there is an earpiece close to the microphone. This is causing sound problems. The earpiece needs to be moved further away from the microphone.

Government Orders

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that, with Bill C-11, those who enjoy online streaming platforms such as Netflix or Disney+, or videos on a platform such as YouTube, or maybe even just scrolling through Facebook looking at people's pages, these individuals would be impacted in the kind of content they could access and watch. Bill C-11 would determine the type of information that is put in front of them. Bill C-11 would determine the content that is put in front of our eyeballs.

When I say by Bill C-11, what I mean is that, according to clause 7 of the bill, it would be cabinet who could determine, through the CRTC, what Canadians can see, post or hear online. Again, it would be cabinet, based on clause 7, who would be given that authority. That is scary. It is scary for any government in power because it would mean that cabinet, which is partisan, would be directing what we can see, say or post online. Instead of giving a viewer more of what they want, YouTube would be instructed to give more of what the government wants. Again, this is very scary for most Canadians.

The government will claim, as the hon. member just before me did, that this bill is about supporting Canadian culture or levelling the playing field, but that is not true. Bill C-11 would amend the Broadcasting Act by bringing the Internet under its provisions.

In order to understand the effect of this, we need to understand why the Broadcasting Act was put in place in the first place. In the early 20th century, the Broadcasting Act was put in place to regulate TV and radio because those are finite commodities. There are only a certain number of radio stations or TV stations, so in order to make sure both official languages were represented within these platforms, the government determined they should be regulated so French language and culture would be protected and would be given space within these spheres.

Further to that, there was a definition given to Canadian content. We call it CanCon. There was this determination that a certain percentage of the content would be Canadian, or CanCon. The goal was to protect our culture, to make sure not only that it was American content making its way to Canada but also that Canadian content, things produced here, and there is a whole host of other criteria used, would be given space.

That is within the realm of TV and radio, which is limited, but now we are dealing with a space that is infinite, that is unlimited, which is the Internet. Anybody who wants a website can have a website, no matter their language of choice. Anybody who wants to have a YouTube channel can have a YouTube channel. Anybody who wants to have a space within TikTok, Instagram, etc. can have a space. We are no longer dealing with a finite resource.

The government does not need to regulate what content should be prioritized and what content should not be because we are no longer dealing with limitations. There is space for everyone.

I would plead with the government to perhaps look back on the record of what former prime minister Jean Chrétien had to say to this. In 1999, he faced a similar question about the Internet and whether it should be regulated. After undergoing a thorough investigation and a public inquiry, the determination was made that it

should not be. He determined the Internet was so different than TV and radio that to treat it the same would actually stifle progress. After numerous public consultations, because there have been many done since Chrétien, here we are willing to function in a regressive way rather than maintaining the progressive stance that was taken by Jean Chrétien.

• (1245)

I will read what the directive stated in 1999. It said, "The commission [the CRTC] expects that the exemption of these services [Internet] will enable continued growth and development of the new media industries in Canada, thereby contributing to the achievement of the broadcasting policy objectives, including access to these services by Canadians."

In other words, the determination was made that the Internet would not be within the scope of the Broadcasting Act and that it would not be regulated. The reason for that was because there was a belief that innovation, advancement and growth would take place if it were left alone. There was a belief that that opportunity would be seized by all sorts of people from all sorts of regions with all sorts of backgrounds and different linguistic ways.

I would invite the government to consider its regressive stance and pull this legislation. On the Internet, everyone has a spot to showcase their talent. On the Internet, every single individual in this country has an opportunity to thrive, should they wish to.

Most people in this country have a smart device. One needs nothing more than that to showcase talent and make a name for oneself. The gatekeepers have been removed. In fact, it has never been easier for Canadians to succeed. It has never been easier for creators from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds to reach not just a Canadian audience but a global audience as well.

For this legislation to build walls around these individuals and keep them hemmed in within Canada is so egregious that it is hard for one to even fathom the reason for such legislation. Why would we punish our young creators? Why would we punish the next media content creators? Why would we insist that a regressive form must be kept and that progress should not be celebrated? It baffles me, but I am not the only one. It baffles Canadians from coast to coast, whether it is legal experts speaking out on this topic, digital-first creators speaking out or Canadian consumers who simply want a choice.

The fact is that the gatekeepers have been removed. A creator used to have to put together a pitch or a package and bring it to a gatekeeper, such as CBC, Corus Entertainment, Bell Media or Rogers, and they would have to plead with them to accept their package, to accept their idea and to accept their creativity. That used to be the way it was done.

With the Internet, we have now entered this magical space where creators, innovators and thought leaders get to put their content out there and allow the Canadian people themselves to determine whether they like it or not, whether they want to watch it or not. We have removed the gatekeepers. It is incredible.

Government Orders

Instead of celebrating how amazing that is, the government is hell-bent on putting legislation in place to make sure that we maintain these old, antiquated ways. Why is that? Is the very nature of the arts not something that should propel us into the future? Is it not something that should have forward momentum? Is it not something that should be creative and innovative in nature? Is that not the whole point of the arts? Why would we hem these individuals in?

For the minister to say that this bill somehow modernizes the Broadcasting Act is incredibly disingenuous, as I have laid out. The minister is failing to account for the tremendous progress that has been made and the creativity that has been allowed to flow.

For example, let us take Justin Bieber. He went big in approximately 2013. The way he went big was because he put out a few songs on YouTube and he got discovered. He did not have to put together a big media package, though he could have. He did not have to depend on gatekeepers to either accept him or reject him. Instead, he could put his talent out there. His talent was discovered, and we know that he went big. He is a Canadian artist we are proud of.

• (1250)

There are many more like him who are aspiring. By putting a bill like this in place, by putting Bill C-11 in place, we are saying to the new generation not to bother. We want to subject that next generation to the same rules that we subjected artists to in the 1970s. Forget progress. If one wants to engage in progress, perhaps one should consider moving to the United States of America, South Korea or the U.K., but in Canada Bill C-11 puts this massive banner up that says we are opposed to innovation, progress and celebrating artists.

Bill C-11 ultimately will do two things. First, it will censor what we can see online because the government will dictate the content that is there. Second, Bill C-11 would determine the extent to which creators are allowed to thrive. In other words, the government will go through and pick winners and losers. Some content creators will be deemed Canadian enough and other content creators will not make the cut. If they make the cut, they will be promoted. If they do not make cut, they will not be promoted.

There is nothing progressive about censorship. That is exactly what this bill is about. It is about censoring Canadians and what they can see, what they can hear and what they can post online. It is about censoring artists, whether they have access to an audience and to what extent that access is granted.

When speaking about this bill, Margaret Atwood, who is an extremely well-known Canadian author, did not mince her words. She was pretty direct about it. She called it “creeping totalitarianism”, which is pretty damning. Those are not my words, but Margaret Atwood's.

To understand this a little bit more, we have to go back to the origin. We have to go back to the origin of this bill. We have to talk about the motive because I think that is very important for Canadians to understand.

This bill, we know, started out as Bill C-10 in 2020. It has gone through a number of iterations since then, but the worst parts of this bill remain intact. In fact, one could argue that it is actually worse than ever, in part because it has had opportunity to change. The government had an opportunity to hear from witnesses. The government had an opportunity to hear from experts, and the government made a decision to ignore those voices. The government has had an opportunity to respond to the Senate amendments, which were very thoughtful and reasonable, and the government is making the decision to disregard most of those amendments. One could argue then that the government is actually wanting this bill to be as egregious as possible.

What brought us here anyway? Why is the government so hell-bent on Bill C-11 going through the way that it is? The evidence would say it is because of broadcasters wanting to maintain power and wanting to hold money. There are these large broadcasters, CBC, Bell, Corus Entertainment, etc., and they are limited by CanCon rules. A certain percentage of the content shown on their traditional streaming platforms has to be Canadian content.

Of course, this acts as a limitation to them. Those are their words. That is what they have said. They do not view that as an opportunity to show more Canadian content. They testified at committee that they view it as a limitation because they are limited. They have to show a certain percentage of Canadian content, CanCon. They say these other streaming companies should have to do the same because they want it to be the same. Further to that, these broadcasters have to pay a certain percentage into an art fund. This art fund can then be drawn from by Canadian artists who are producing CanCon and used for that material production.

• (1255)

Because these traditional broadcasters have to pay into this fund and the larger streamers do not, the broadcasters went knocking on the Liberals' door and said they wanted legislation to be brought in to place to “level the playing field”. They wanted the Liberals to go after the streaming platforms, make sure they are showing a certain percentage of Canadian content and make sure the government is taking a certain percentage of their revenue and putting it into the art fund.

At first glance, that might seem reasonable, except that when we dig into it further, we realize the broadcasters and the big art unions are simply gatekeeping. They do not want to celebrate progress. They do not want to look forward to the future. They do not want new artists to succeed. They simply want to gatekeep. They want control or power, and they want money.

I want to talk about the foundation on which the bill is built, because it is a false foundation and it has to do with those who came knocking on the Liberals' door for the legislation. The bill is based on the deceptive notion that Canadian content creators or artists cannot make it on their own merit and that somehow they need this special fund in order to make a go of it. YouTubers, TikTokers and other online creators are proving this notion wrong each and every day. They are succeeding without drawing from the art fund. They are succeeding without the government mandating that Canadian content must be watched. They are succeeding because they have incredible talent to watch and incredible talent to offer, and Canadians find themselves drawn to it.

There is the idea, though, that, in order to succeed as artists in Canada, people need monetary support and that it is the government that should provide this monetary support. Furthermore, there is other misinformation being spread by the government, which is that people will not choose Canadian content unless it is forced in front of their eyeballs, and that a certain percentage of what is offered on television, radio or the Internet must be Canadian, or people will not watch it. How degrading is that? It is as if our artists do not have the ability on their own to produce content that people might want to consume. It is as if the government must rush in and rescue these poor Canadian artists because, without government intervention, they will not succeed. That is a lie and a crux. It is not the case.

Canadian artists are incredibly talented individuals who can make a go of it all on their own.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, we listened to 18 minutes of disinformation and conspiracy theory. Then the member said that the bill is a lie. I think she has to withdraw that comment, given the disinformation we have had to sit through. We sat through it respectfully.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: I made my own statement.

The Deputy Speaker: As much as we possibly can, we do not want the use of that word, but I am also going to make a suggestion to the people who are having side discussions while the member is trying to present as well, which is probably not respectful either.

I would suggest we all sit, listen and get ready for the question and answer component of the debate.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

● (1300)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, with regard to money, the heritage minister claimed this bill would capture \$1 billion from large streaming platforms. To this day, he is not able to provide how this \$1 billion figure was arrived at. We would actually still love to have that document if at all possible.

However, the government says it is just forcing the large streaming platforms to pay their fair share. That is how the \$1 billion is going to be brought in. At first blush, perhaps that seems reasonable. Perhaps these foreign streaming platforms should just pay their fair share. The government says this money would save Cana-

Government Orders

dian culture, as if it is dying. I would be curious to know who says it is dying. I would be curious to know who says it needs to be rescued. Who says it is fragile? Who says it is on the verge of being extinct?

Aside from all of that, and most importantly, is not Canadian culture what the Canadian people determine it to be? The last I knew, the Canadian population was actually growing. I think Canadian culture is probably alive and well. Do members not think so also?

It does not matter, because neither the minister nor his department has been able to show me the document that shows that the \$1 billion would somehow be extracted from the foreign platforms and then infused into the Canadian art scene.

The reality is, though, that it does not matter. It is insignificant. The reason it is insignificant is that, as much as Bill C-11 might produce the \$1 billion, the way things are right now is much better. Investment in Canadian production is not drying up, as the government would like Canadians to believe. That is a false notion. In fact, investment in Canadian production is better than it has ever been, without government intervention.

Huge investments are being made, and let me go over that for just a moment. Wendy Noss, of the Motion Picture Association—Canada, testified at the Senate committee and stated that the association spent more than \$5 billion. That is five times more than what the government is hoping to bring in through this legislation. That is one company, by the way, spending \$5 billion. I will say that one more time just for the hon. member, so that he gets it: The government is claiming it will bring in \$1 billion, but already there is private investment being made to the tune of \$5 billion. That is \$5 billion in 2021 alone.

The government would rather have its way, shutting down private investment, suppressing that, in order to bring in a government-dictated \$1 billion. How regressive can one be? How punitive can one be? The government claims to support artists, and yet it is going to do this. It is actually going to shut down the industry. It is actually going to punish the industry that is pumping \$5 billion into the creation of content here in Canada in one year alone, by one company. That is not progress; that is incredibly regressive.

Let me be clear; this \$5 billion actually accounted for more than half of all the production in this country, and 90% of the growth in the sector over the last decade. Holding that up against the government-dictated art fund, the government-dictated art fund fails in comparison. Do we want more government legislation, or do we actually just want freedom to reign? I think we want freedom to reign.

We are talking about a production company that hired, trained and provided opportunities for more than 200,000 of Canada's most talented creative workers. More than 200,000 is far more than the art fund has ever propped up. We are talking about more than 47,000 businesses that were supported in 2021 alone. Again, this is far more than the government-run art fund has ever supported in one year.

Government Orders

● (1305)

We can have government-dictated funds or we can have private-flowing funds; one is far more successful than the other. Therefore, we have to ask the following question: Is the problem that investments are not being made in Canada, in its production industry, or that our culture is somehow at risk of disappearing? Or is there something else?

I would argue that the sector is alive and well, as I have proven, and I would argue that Canadians are alive and well and, therefore, so is our culture. Thus, there must be something else. I have alluded to it, but let us explore it further, shall we?

We have a government that loves to support the big gatekeepers, big unions and big bosses that like to keep power, control and money in their hands. We have a government that is more interested in those individuals, who comprise several thousand people, than it is concerned about the vast majority of Canadian consumers who enjoy the content online and the freedom to explore what they will, or than it is concerned about the tens of thousands of creators putting content out there and reaching global audiences. The current government says to forget them. It says it wants to serve the several thousand union bosses and uphold the power, control and money that the broadcasters want, and that this is its focus. It is shameful.

The bill before us is based on the false notion that artists cannot thrive without the government. However, in fact, we know they can, that they do and that they will.

Part of the problem is that the government insists on using an antiquated definition of what Canadian content is. It is a whole host of criteria that make no sense at all. There can be a film like *Canadian Bacon* that does not make the cut. There can be a more recent production, *The Handmaid's Tale* written by Margaret Atwood, a famous Canadian author, which is being filmed on Canadian soil, stars Canadian actors and employs Canadian producers, but fails to make the cut. As much as the member opposite might want to point to *Schitt's Creek*, the title tells my audience what I think of that.

Perhaps there is an opportunity, then, to consider a different way. Perhaps, instead of applying the shackles of a certain percentage of CanCon and a certain percentage of revenue needing to go toward this art fund, we can actually just release all from those shackles. Perhaps, instead, the level playing field actually needs to be set higher rather than lower. Perhaps it is actually about allowing broadcasters and the Internet to exist freely. Perhaps it is actually just about creative merit. Perhaps it is just about tailoring content to an audience that wants to watch what one produces. Perhaps it is actually just about letting private production companies make tremendous investment into our nation and our artists and helping them thrive. Perhaps it is about being progressive. Perhaps it is about being futuristic in our thinking, as the former prime minister, Jean Chrétien, had in mind when he said he would not regulate the Internet.

Everything I have talked about up to this point is extremely important, but there is one point I have not yet touched on, and it is even more important. That is the fact that this bill would capture user-generated content. The current government had plenty of opportunities to make sure that was not the case, and it did not take those opportunities.

When I talk about user-generated content, I am talking about one's Uncle Joe's videos on Facebook. I am talking about those videos on YouTube of kids doing stupid stuff. I am talking about—

● (1310)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am hearing a lot of chatter in the back corner. I would be more than happy to put members on the question list when questions and comments do come, but let us just respect the hon. member who is speaking.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, he said that they were going to go after my Uncle Joe's videos. He does not do crazy conspiracy videos. He is not a Conservative; he is okay.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I want to make sure that we have respect for one another in the chamber when members have the floor and are speaking. Again, chatter does get a little high in the chamber sometimes, so I would remind folks that lower voices do carry more.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, everything I have talked about up to this point is significant, but the one point I have not talked about is user-generated content. Make no mistake, the government had every opportunity to ensure that user-generated content or ordinary content was not scoped within this legislation, yet the government refused every opportunity it was given.

When I say ordinary content or user-generated content, I am talking about the videos that are put on Facebook. I am talking about Uncle Joe's video, Aunt Cathy's video, mom's video or a member's video. I am talking about the amateur YouTube channel that is set up in order to put out some crazy ideas or maybe do some stunts and perhaps capture an audience. That is what some Canadians wish to do. They think it is fun. It brings them joy. Perhaps they are hoping to make a go of it and make it big.

I am talking about those individuals who are taking advantage of this free space called the Internet, who are putting something out there, saying to Canadians that they can like it or not like it, but they are presenting it to them. If Canadians love it, these individuals go big. If Canadians or the global audience do not love it, then usually it does not go too big. Regardless, those individuals have the right to put it out there.

Bill C-11 would revoke that right. It would revoke that ability. It would move their content down in the system and make it undiscoverable, which means the government will be determining who wins and who loses. It will be determining what content does or does not get. It does not matter if it is from a large streaming platform or simply from an individual using Facebook. That is crazy.

Government Orders

Witnesses at the House of Commons committee and at the Senate committee raised this issue. Whether it is the content creators themselves, or Canadians, or legal experts or consumer groups that are incredibly concerned, there is massive concern around this scoping in of user-generated or ordinary content. In fact, some legal experts went so far as to say that it likened us to places like North Korea or China, where the government monitors, surveys and controls what can be posted online. That should be very concerning for everyone in the House. This is not Canada. This does not ascribe to the values that we call Canadian.

We have the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for a reason, because we at least in theory value freedom, choice and opportunity. However, when the government determines that it is going to regulate what can be posted, seen or heard online, then we are no longer functioning within that realm of freedom. At that point, we are not only taking away from consumer choice, but we are also stagnating the success of these many digital first creators and individuals who wish to make a go of it and capture an audience online, and not only for the present generation but for the next generations to come, those individuals who would come after us and wish to seek success online. The government will have already determined their future.

I am talking about the homegrown comedian Darcy Michael, a self-proclaimed pot-smoking gay man. He told us at committee that he was turned away by traditional broadcasters, but is now enjoying tremendous success on YouTube.

I am talking about a South Asian woman from Toronto who goes by the name Aunty Skates. She is in her forties and she decided to take up skateboarding during the pandemic. She thought it would be cool to bring people on her journey with her so she started posting videos, including some funny clips. People loved it; they still love it. She has done extremely well for herself. She was able to quit her job in finance and is now able to make a go of it on YouTube. She is able to invest in her family, in their quality of life, and she is enjoying it tremendously.

The freedom of the Internet and the opportunity to advance oneself within this space without needing to worry about gatekeepers has been quite magical for many. Moms have been able to stay home and enjoy a better life-work balance. Youth have been able to use their creative imaginations and skills behind a smartphone to capture an audience, and many have gone viral. It is amazing.

● (1315)

It is unfortunate that we have a government that does not take the opportunity to celebrate these individuals. It is unfortunate that we do not have a government that takes this opportunity to celebrate innovation and forward thinking, the momentum that is being gained within this space. Instead, we have a government that is insisting on regulating the Internet and bringing it back into the ages of radio and television.

I would be curious to know who in this place pays for a cable package. It is probably very few of us. Why? Because we do not want what we see to be controlled for us. Instead, we like on-demand streaming because at the end of the day we want to watch what we want to watch when we want to watch it. For the govern-

ment to bring the Internet under this umbrella of the Broadcasting Act, which incredibly outdated, is wrong.

At the end of the day, Bill C-11 would do two things. It would censor what Canadians can say so that homegrown talent and creative content in Canada would no longer succeed based on merit. Instead, content will be subject to a set of criteria that bureaucrats in Ottawa, which can be directed by cabinet, will use to determine its level of Canadianness. This will favour traditional art forms, of course, over the new creative content that is coming out. As a result, we heard at committee that many cultural groups, including BIPOC Canadians and indigenous Canadians, would be hurt.

Furthermore, Bill C-11 would censor what Canadians are able to see or, in other words, what consumers are able to access online. This legislation would effectively make the government a regulator of the Internet. The search bar would be conditioned to follow a set of algorithms that are predetermined by the government. Therefore, when Canadians go searching, they will not find the things they freely wish to find, but, rather, the things that the government wishes to show them.

On behalf of Canada's amazing creators who have achieved tremendous success on new media platforms or who seek to do so now or in the future and on behalf of Canadians who value the freedom to choose what they watch and listen to online, I move the following amendment:

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 withdrawn."

● (1320)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the member, the only positive thing I can take from her comments is the fact that once again the Conservative Party is showing great contrast between what the government is trying to do versus what the Conservative Party wants.

We in the Liberal caucus understand and appreciate the arts community and how the Canadian Broadcasting Act has done absolute wonders for our industry, for actors, actresses and creators, in many different days. The modernization of this legislation is absolutely critical. After all, since 1991, a lot of things have happened. As I mentioned earlier, Netflix, Spotify or Crave were not there. The need to modernize is there and is very real.

The Conservatives want to march us back. The question is how far back they want to go. Will the member stand on her principles and make very clear to Canadians that the Conservative Party's intent is to get rid of the Canadian Broadcasting Act in order to level the playing field in the name of so-called misinformed freedom?

Government Orders

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, only a Liberal could skew the facts so much to accuse the Conservatives of somehow taking us back. Let us be really clear here, because the bill we are discussing today, Bill C-11, is a Liberal bill. Bill C-11 would take the Internet, this infinite, magical, innovate, forward-thinking space, and put it back under the Broadcasting Act, which was last updated in 1991 and originates from the 1920s. If that is not backward thinking, I do not know what is.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned because I listened to my Conservative colleague's speech. I have to honestly admit that if I were a poorly informed individual who relied strictly on the member's speech, I would be really scared. I would be really worried. I would think that I would no longer be able to express my views on the Internet, on Facebook. I would even be afraid to post on social media.

People need to inform themselves to discern what it really means, what Bill C-11 really is, by considering both the old and the new version. So many people brought their concerns to us. We received emails from groups of people who were worried. When we asked experts, they all told us that it was clear from reading the bill that there is no censorship.

I am therefore concerned about what the Conservatives are doing in the House of Commons, in Parliament, a place where we should elevate the debate, try to inform people, provide the facts, go further and rise above the fray. What we are actually seeing is the opposite. The Conservatives are going so low they have hit rock bottom.

We heard from the member for Winnipeg North that the Conservatives are using their opposition to Bill C-11 to fundraise. I would like my colleague to tell us how much money the Conservatives have raised with their campaign of fear against Bill C-11.

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member has left out of his statement is the fact that the Quebec government, under Premier Legault, has written an open letter to the Liberal government pointing out that it is censorship. That is an interesting fact that the hon. member might want to include next time, because his premier would like to see the bill looked at in committee. The premier is very concerned that Bill C-11 would put the CRTC and cabinet in charge of dictating what French culture is. I believe that is called “censorship”, is it not?

Further to that, Premier Legault is concerned that the CRTC and cabinet would control the extent to which the French language and culture is given space online. Quebec actually thinks that it should have the power to determine that for itself. Why does Quebec think it should have the power to do that for itself and is concerned about Bill C-11? Because it is censorship and because the Liberal government has the intent of censoring what content is and is not available online and to what extent that content is French and upholds French culture.

Therefore, in fact, it is censorship, and I would invite that hon. member to speak to his premier and understand those concerns better.

● (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, it is a bit painful to listen to my Conservative colleague, who is showing just how little she knows about how broadcasting, cultural creation and the CRTC work in this country.

Why does she think it is appropriate for Rogers, Videotron and Bell to contribute to the creation of culture, television and film in Canada, but then she defends Google, YouTube, Amazon and Apple and has no problem with them not paying, not contributing to cultural production? Why is she siding with the web giants? Why does she want to continue to exempt them from having to pay their fair share?

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to repeat a part of my speech. I do not know if the hon. member caught it, so I will just clarify for him.

Right now, we have just one production company in this nation that is responsible for 50% of all production in Canada. Furthermore, it invests over \$5 billion, supporting over 200,000 jobs and over 47,000 Canadian businesses. The stats that I just listed are from 2021, and things only got better in 2022. Let us imagine that.

Let us take his question, then, at face value. He is saying, well, what about Rogers, Videotron and Bell? Let us add CBC to the mix, shall we?

What the government plans to do is get about \$1 billion through its legislation. It thinks that this will match what these large broadcasters are putting into the fund. Do we want \$1 billion or \$5 billion? We could have \$1 billion through this legislation or \$5 billion without it.

I am not a mathematician but I have the ability to quickly do the math on this one. It shows that if we allow freedom to reign, we are five times better.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her hard work in standing up for freedom.

The Senate looked at this with its sober second thought, and it came up with an amendment that tried to protect people's individual content and to exclude that from the scope of the bill.

Why does the member think that the Liberal government will not support that amendment?

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, to enter the mind of the Liberal government is something beyond my ability. Certainly, I wish I could, at times, although I suppose that would be a scary place. I am not really a fan of horror movies. Nevertheless, the question is a thoughtful one, so I will give it a thoughtful answer.

Government Orders

The Senate brought forward some really great amendments on Bill C-11, and I wish to comment on two of those in particular.

The Senate removed clause 7, which gives cabinet the ability to direct the CRTC. This allows for partisanship to enter the bill. That is a scary thought for any government. It does not matter who is in power, whether the Liberals, the NDP or the Conservatives.

There should never be partisanship introduced into a bill like this. However, clause 7 allows for that. The Senate tried to remove it; the government put it back in. That should be very telling to Canadians as to what its intent is.

Second, the Senate took clause 4 and changed it in order to protect user-generated or ordinary content that people would put online. The Senate removed that and protected users.

The government made sure that it changed that and gave itself the power to regulate individual user-generated content. Again, I think that is very telling in terms of what the government intends to do with this bill.

I cannot suppose why it would make those decisions except that it wants to hold the power; direct what Canadians can see, hear and post online; and make sure that it maintains its thumb on the Internet, and in doing so, censors what Canadians can access.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to say I will be sharing my time with my very distinguished and dynamic colleague from Shefford.

Let me make a few things clear. Bill C-11 deals with culture, not censorship. Bill C-11 deals with national identity and pride. Culture is the essence of who we are. This bill does not promote censorship, it promotes and showcases our culture. I would even say that it seeks to showcase our cultures: Canadian culture, Quebec culture and indigenous cultures.

The bill seeks to give more visibility to culture. This is not about telling people they can no longer listen to certain content. Since the beginning of the debate today, we have been hearing all sorts of things. In fact, we have been hearing these things for two years, since Bill C-11 is the former Bill C-10. We hear things about cat videos, for example. Let us be serious.

The threat does not come from censorship because of Bill C-11. The threat comes from the platforms that have changed the world of telecommunications. That is the threat.

We are working on Bill C-11 to review an act that was amended for the last time in 1991. Must I remind you that, in 1991, we did not all have cellphones in our pockets? It was a completely different world, which is why we need to review the act.

The cultural community is asking for this, as is everyone else. We are not just being asked to pass the bill quickly. Quebec's cultural community is asking us to hurry because it needs this legislation. They are losing \$70 billion a week. On reflection, that may be a bit high. I will have to check the figures later in my notes. Let us say that, every week we delay the passage of this bill, they are losing a lot of money. Let us protect our people.

What does Bill C-11 do? It ensures the protection and promotion of original content. For us, that means French-language content, which is what concerns us. Of course, it also ensures the protection and promotion of original Canadian productions in English and indigenous languages and productions created by certain visible minorities. If we want to protect Canadian content and boost visibility, we need to bring in incentives. We are not talking about banning people from posting on Facebook and saying what they want. This is not about imposing choices, it is about raising their visibility. It is about ensuring discoverability.

Let us consider how small the percentage of French-language production in North America is. If we rely only on the number of times videos are viewed by users, French-language content will not be suggested very often. That is the problem. It is not about playing with algorithms. It is about giving the CRTC the power to talk to these companies and see what they can do to give local culture more visibility. It is a matter of promoting and showcasing our culture.

Let me draw a parallel here. When we look at platforms, we see that there is very little French-language content and that needs to be fixed. When we look at the boards of directors of Canadian and Quebec companies, we see that women are under-represented. In both cases, we need to take action to fix the situation. Obviously, we do not want to prevent anyone from applying, but we want to make sure that the positions are accessible to women and that women receive those kinds of job offers. The same thing applies to culture.

• (1335)

With Bill C-11, we want to improve the visibility, and therefore the profitability, of our local French-language productions and put in place a mandatory contribution to the Canadian and Quebec broadcasting system.

A mandatory contribution is more than just running old television shows. We want the platforms to participate in the creation of real local content. An American movie filmed in Vancouver is not local content. We certainly benefit when American filmmakers shoot in Vancouver. We support that. However, local content is something local produced by local artists who represent us. That is what culture is.

When racialized people say that they watch television and do not see themselves, that is a problem. These people should be able to see themselves and identify with the characters. That is why we are trying to increase representativeness. It is the same thing.

We simply want to expand the coverage of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, to all media we interact with. We need first-run French-language content.

Government Orders

With this bill, we are telling the major American platforms that stream content in Canada and invade our markets that we are relatively happy because that is a good way to disseminate information, it gives more people greater access to information. Furthermore, streaming does not restrict access to cat videos; then again, it invades our market. That is where we have the right to say, as a state, that we have a culture to protect.

I often talk about the agricultural exemption in the House. This morning, I talked about the agricultural exemption. We cannot act without protecting our culture. It is important. We have the right to tell the people who come and make money in Canada that we are happy to welcome them and that it is a good thing, just as we have the right to tell them that we would like to recognize ourselves in our media. We are not asking them to ban certain content, but to showcase local productions that represent our people. That is the idea.

There is another very positive element in Bill C-11. It makes no sense that, in 2023, we are revising a broadcasting act from 1991. That is a major oversight.

The bill includes the obligation to review the act at least every five years. To those who have concerns, I would say that we are capable of being intelligent and implementing a reasonable policy. After the law is in effect for a few years, we will review it all to see how things went and what the impacts were. That is the important part.

I want to spend the last few minutes of my speech emphasizing that the Quebec and Canadian cultural community wholeheartedly supports Bill C-11.

I just found the figure that I mentioned earlier. I should have said “millions” rather than “billions”. I thought that seemed like a lot. According to the former Canadian heritage minister, we would lose \$70 million every month. I do not know whether those numbers were validated, but I am assuming that they were.

This important bill is one of three related and highly anticipated bills in this Parliament. As parliamentarians, I would like us to quickly pass them. There was Bill C-11 to promote our local content. There is also Bill C-18, which will complement it. Communications platforms will pay something to use news content in order to encourage our journalistic community. That is important. Finally, there is a third bill on online hate, which we need to regulate.

Once again, this is not about censorship, but about living together, being reasonable and creating a world where the Internet is a bit more representative of who we are. We need to see ourselves on television every once in a while, see ourselves reflected in the programming so that we do not forget who we are. I said television, but it is the same thing for the things we watch on a computer screen.

Let us stop wasting time and pass this essential bill.

• (1340)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I look at, and that the member made ref-

erence to, is the fact that the Broadcasting Act has not been updated since 1991. Things have changed. Virtually none of those platforms existed then in any form, whether Netflix, Spotify or others. This legislation would modernize the act, thereby allowing us to enhance Canadian content and ensure there is a fair playing field. Could the member provide his thoughts in regard to the advancement of technology, which has enabled the Internet to be as successful as it has been? The government has a responsibility to bring in this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I am starting to get worried. I keep agreeing with my colleague from Winnipeg North when I am in Parliament.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, seriously, he is absolutely right. In 1991, we received typed copies of university research. Today, we are living in a completely different world. That is why it is important to include in the bill a provision to ensure that a review is done every five years. Just because the bill states that a review absolutely needs to be done every five years does not mean that we have to wait five years. If after a year or two of implementation, we realize that there is an unforeseen effect, we will adapt and change the bill, but that requires flexibility and parliamentarians with goodwill. Unfortunately, we do not always have that.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard that the Premier of Quebec sent the Minister of Canadian Heritage a letter to say that he was concerned about the fact that the bill would infringe on freedom of expression. Is the hon. member also concerned?

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I did not see the letter in question, but I doubt that the Premier of Quebec said he was afraid of censorship in the bill. I think that the Quebec government's concern is the same as that of all national governments, that is, to ensure that culture continues to exist, to make sure we can buy local. We talk about buying local when it comes to food, but it is also important for culture. We are our culture. We need to be represented on all the different platforms.

I am talking about Quebecers, but I also mentioned indigenous and racialized people in my speech. People need to be visible. That is why we need to move forward with this bill, because it will spark a discussion. However, we need to be careful about the misinformation we are hearing. In this discussion, we are giving the CRTC the power to talk to companies about how they think local content should be showcased. That is the issue.

Government Orders

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if my colleague is surprised that he agrees with the Liberals once in a while, he may also agree with the NDP. This is a big day. We are in unanimous agreement. As he said, Quebec francophone culture needs to be present and supported so that it can flourish. I do not understand why the Conservatives from Quebec are unanimously opposed to Quebec's cultural community, our creators and artists, who say they need this bill to modernize the act. What does the hon. member think about the position of the Quebec Conservatives?

• (1345)

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed with it. At the same time, the hon. member is right about one very important thing: Today is a big day. To reassure him, I would say that we agree with the NDP more often than he thinks. The only point we often disagree on is which government should be in charge of dealing with social issues. We could have a lively discussion about that over a few pints of beer.

With respect to the Conservatives' position, it is disappointing, and it is disappointing to hear the misinformation I was hearing earlier. I am asking the members to be reasonable and to look at the bill in front of them, instead of saying things that will attract attention on social media.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I humbly rise today following my wonderful colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé's speech about this bill, which is important for Quebec culture and is central to the very mission of the Bloc Québécois. I would also like to commend my colleague from Drummond for his superb work on this file.

Broadcasting is without a doubt the most effective tool for spreading culture, and it helps define our national identity. Given the rapid development of information and communication technologies, the Bloc Québécois obviously supports the idea of modernizing the Broadcasting Act, which has not been updated since 1991. Back then, I was still listening to music on cassette on my yellow Walkman, and I was only just beginning to take an interest in CDs. I had scarcely even heard of the Internet. The Bloc Québécois contributed substantially to improving the previous version of this bill, the infamous Bill C-10.

I will briefly address the new version, Bill C-11, in my speech. First, I will talk about protecting and promoting original French-language content. I will then discuss the misinformation circulating about the bill. I will conclude by discussing the importance of the bill for local media.

First, let me mention a few crucial aspects regarding the protection and promotion of original French-language content: the discoverability of Canadian programming services and original Canadian content so that there is more original French-language content, proportionally speaking; the promotion of Canadian programming in both official languages, as well as in indigenous languages; a compulsory contribution to the Canadian broadcasting system should a company be unable to use Canadian resources for its programming; the presence of first-run French-language content in order to ensure that platforms like Netflix have new French-language programs,

not only old shows; and a sunset clause ensuring an in-depth review of the act every five years.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage promised us that the Bloc Québécois's amendments would be included in the new version of the reform, and indeed they are almost all there. Since nothing can be left to chance in such a bill, we are making sure that we can course correct in the event that changing one simple word has a major impact on the effect of the clause. We have to keep in mind that we want a piece of legislation that will not be obsolete as soon as it is passed. Technology is developing very quickly, and we need a long-term vision to ensure that the act does not become outdated after just a few years. Flexible legislation is important.

From day one, the Bloc, backed by Quebec's entire cultural sector, was the party that worked the hardest on improving Bill C-10 and getting it passed before the end of the parliamentary session. During the last election campaign, making sure that Bill C-10, now Bill C-11, was passed was even the first item on our election platform under arts, culture and heritage. Quebec's and Canada's cultural sectors have been waiting for decades for this act to be updated. The cultural sector made a simple demand just a few days after Bill C-11 was introduced. It asked us to ensure that this bill passed quickly, because the sector had waited long enough.

Essentially, the objective of the bill remains the same: to apply the Broadcasting Act to the web giants by forcing them to contribute financially to the creation and discoverability of Canadian cultural content. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, will receive new powers that will allow it to determine which online services will have to be regulated and what quotas will need to be met.

Bill C-11 will help better regulate video streamers such as Netflix, Apple TV+, Disney+ and Amazon Prime Video, but also companies that specialize in streaming music online such as Spotify, YouTube and Apple Music. Bill C-11 will require these companies to contribute to Canadian content when commercial items such as albums are downloaded and distributed on their platforms.

The exclusion clause, namely clause 4.1, addressed earlier, has been revised. Now creators, users and social media influencers are exempt from the legislation. It still needs to be taken into account. The money a creator earns from their content is immaterial in the eyes of the new legislation. So-called amateur content on social media would be exempt. The legislation focuses specifically on commercial products.

Government Orders

The CRTC will also have the option to impose conditions associated with discoverability and the development of Canadian content. The bill will not touch the algorithms that can influence the recommendations made to users. The department says it wants to focus instead on discoverability outcomes and not intervene directly with respect to web giants' algorithms. Quebec, francophone and Canadian content must be much more accessible on platforms. Ottawa is trying to give the CRTC the power to hold discussions with each of the digital companies to determine how much they could contribute to Canadian content based on their business model.

● (1350)

Second, I would remind members that the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc supported and tried to improve this bill that the Conservatives were against from the outset. They engaged in a smear campaign and tried to find all kinds of far-fetched flaws. They really used their imagination. In Parliament, they used a variety of stratagems to slow down the process, both in committee and in the House. They took the House hostage under false pretenses, claiming that the bill infringes on freedom of expression.

However, since 1991, there has been a provision that forces the CRTC to respect freedom of expression. This provision has always been respected, and there is nothing to indicate that that will change. Pierre Trudel, a law professor at Université de Montréal who is an expert on the CRTC and information technologies, reassured us of that. He categorically stated that the freedom of Internet users is not at risk. There is no thought police on television, and there will be no thought police online.

Given the popularity and growing use of online platforms, there is no doubt that the legislation needs to be reviewed. According to ADISQ statistics on the music consumption habits of Quebec francophones over the age of 15, 50% of users follow YouTube's recommendations when choosing their playlists. When it comes to streaming services, 26% of users choose music suggested by the platform through playlists, and 17% follow recommendations. This is based on their past listening habits. These figures illustrate the importance of making Quebec and Canadian francophone content easily discoverable to users on online platforms in order to give it a boost.

Solutions do exist to address the algorithms. One option to consider would be for Spotify and Apple Music to offer a lot more francophone playlists.

Part of the CRTC's mission is to ensure the proper functioning and development of the Canadian broadcasting system. In doing so, it must respect freedom of expression and the other foundations of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Third, both Quebec's and Canada's broadcasting industries are in crisis. According to an August 2020 report from the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, or CAB, local television and radio broadcasters were projected to face a revenue shortfall totalling \$1.6 billion between 2020 and 2022. According to the CAB, 50 radio stations were at risk of shutting down within four to six months of the report's release, and another 150 could go silent within 18 months, resulting in 2,000 job losses, or 24% of 2019 employment levels. The report added that at least 40 of the 95 private and local television stations in Canada would cease operations by 2023.

The most vulnerable operations are AM stations, independent stations and other private radio and TV stations in smaller markets across Canada. Radio and television revenues have been declining for several years, and COVID-19 exacerbated these disconcerting trends.

We know that the Internet has revolutionized the way Quebecers, particularly young Quebecers, consume their favourite TV shows, movies, radio stations and music. Consumption trends have drastically changed. The online broadcasting market is dominated by foreign players. We need to take that into account.

Young Quebecers are especially likely to skirt the traditional broadcasting system. The vast majority of young francophones aged 15 and up frequently listen to music on YouTube. We therefore need to ensure that they are offered francophone content.

A study conducted by CEFRIO, a research and innovation organization, found that over eight in 10 Quebecers used a social media site in 2018, an increase of 16% compared to 2016. It is clear that the Internet is changing usage and listening habits.

Since I have only about a minute left, I just want to give a few statistics from the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office. Canadian content production decreased by an average of 12.4% per year between January 2017 and December 2020. It is important to remember that media outlets are currently in crisis, mainly because they have lost their advertising revenue to web giants.

In conclusion, the Yale report was clear: Canadian content is important. It said that if we do not tell our own stories, no one else will. That really made an impression on me. That was why the report set out a suite of recommendations on financing Canadian content with public funds, imposing spending requirements on foreign online broadcasters, and strengthening CBC/Radio-Canada.

One last thing before I wrap up: Last night, I met with Martin Gougeon from the Théâtre de l'Ancien presbytère. He is an artist who has made it his mission to promote our francophone culture to young students. I have also met with local media representatives many times. They are all unanimous. Quebec's cultural and media communities want this. Let us pass Bill C-11. Enough dawdling.

● (1355)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

As a Canadian, but also as a mother of two sons who are growing up in a rapidly changing world that is increasingly online, I want them to see their identity, their values and their country represented.

What is at stake if we do not pass Bill C-11?

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple. Artists in my community have explained to me how this will affect the music industry in particular. At this point, Quebec francophone artists are losing market share and revenue.

Every day that Bill C-11 does not pass is another day that artists have to fight to keep our culture and the French language alive, and another day that artists will lose money and will struggle more financially.

It is as simple as that. This bill will help our artists to continue producing content in their language. The same is true for indigenous languages.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is my question: The senators tried to make an amendment to eliminate individuals from this bill.

Does the member support that amendment?

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, in my speech, I said that Bill C-11 is clearly focused on commercial interests.

What I am hearing the Conservatives say is that we want to restrict free speech. Their talk about individuals is no different from the misinformation they spread about cat videos.

Worse than that, what I am hearing from Conservative MPs is that Bill C-11 is designed to cater to Quebec's spoiled little francophone artists. That is Quebec bashing, and it is insulting to our artists.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. It is high time we pass Bill C-11, for the cultural sector and for our local artists and craftspeople who tell our stories.

I would like the member to take a minute to reassure us, and reassure everyone, Quebecers and Canadians alike, that, despite the Conservative propaganda, when it comes to freedom of expression, we are still going to be able to post pictures and videos of our cute cats and dogs on YouTube, and we are still going to be able to say whatever we want.

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I believe I said in my remarks that a professor at the University of Montreal who specializes in CRTC issues made a strong case that, no, we are not at the point of needing an Internet police force.

More than that, if restricting freedom of expression is the same as trying to get an adequate proportion of francophone content on digital platforms, then I want more francophone content. If that is the one and only thing that Bill C-11 is designed to do, I do not believe it is infringing on freedom of expression. It is better representing the diversity of our cultural milieu.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with the speech given by my dear colleague from Shefford.

I just want to say a word in English.

[English]

When the member for Lethbridge was speaking, she talked about “the big unions”, as if artists are represented by big unions. I think

she may think that is true, but there is no collective bargaining among artists. There is a group called The Writers' Union, a volunteer association of people who try to write for a living. There are no union bosses in the artistic community.

Does the hon. member for Shefford agree that the member for Lethbridge is confused on this point?

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree that the member for Lethbridge did not fully understand the situation.

I apologize for getting so worked up, but what I saw earlier was the member for Lethbridge putting on a show. She is not the one I want to see putting on a show. I want to see homegrown francophone artists putting on their shows.

For that to happen, young people need to be able to discover their content online. It is simple math. If they cannot access the content online, young people will not go see their shows, and I will no longer be able to see shows put on by francophone artists.

I do not want to watch this show anymore. I want to see a real show.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

CANADIAN FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, over the next two days, members in this place will have the great honour of meeting some of the finest Canadians they will ever know. Members of the International Association of Fire Fighters are here for their 30th legislative congress. They will be meeting with all of us with the agenda they bring forward for their safety and taking care of all of us.

They demand that we get rid of the forever chemicals, the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, that contaminate their gear. They demand we do better at firefighting at our airports.

It is an honour to meet with them. We welcome them to Ottawa and thank them for their work every single day.

* * *

RAVJOT SINGH CHHATWAL

Mr. Shafqat Ali (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, the death of a seemingly perfectly healthy 43-year-old affected many in the Brampton community, including me. He was one of my most beloved friends. Coming without warning, with no chance to say goodbye, the news of his death was shocking and heartbreaking.

Statements by Members

Ravjot Singh Chhatwal was a hard-working division chief in Brampton's fire and emergency services, where flags flew at half-mast to mark his passing. A proud Sikh, Ravjot was a role model and a champion for equity, diversity and inclusion. He was a community builder, ever-helpful, kind-hearted, caring and thoughtful, winning friends with his infectious smile and sense of humour.

I hope members will join me in offering our condolences to Ravjot's family, friends and co-workers.

May his soul rest in peace.

* * *

RARE DISEASES

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, about one in 12 Canadians has a rare disease, and sadly, most of them are children.

Forty per cent of patients do not have access to appropriate drugs for their condition. On average, it takes 3.7 years and three wrong diagnoses until they even know what disease they have. When they do find out, it takes two years, on average, for public reimbursement for their medicine. That is if they are fortunate enough to have it covered or even available here in Canada.

There are people working hard to make a change. This includes two passionate and tireless advocates here today from New Tecumseth, Madi and Beth Vanstone, who are working hard with the Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders to improve access to rare disease drugs.

The government needs to do more to address the needs of rare disease patients, and I am happy to lend my support. Let us all get behind Canadians struggling to access basic care for their rare diseases.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian deserves to get the health care they need whenever and wherever they need it, but right now our health care system is not living up to that promise due to outdated technology, lack of access to family doctors and long wait times. Hence, many Canadians are feeling left behind.

I am glad the federal government has announced \$199 billion in additional federal funding to provinces to improve health care for Canadians. When we sign the agreement with the Province of Ontario for this additional funds transfer, we should ensure that we deliver real results for Canadians. The agreement must make sure Canadians have access to family doctors, insist on real plans to reduce wait times and get people good mental health care.

* * *

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

LE VENT DU NORD

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to

mark the 20th anniversary of Le Vent du Nord, a Quebec folk band. This music group is known for its depth, passion and generosity. They interpret traditional Quebec songs and are also inspired by them to compose original songs replete with poetry and historical references.

We know how difficult it can be to make a living in Quebec's cultural sector, and so it is important to point out that the group, composed of Nicolas Boulerice, Simon Beaudry, André Brunet, Réjean Brunet and Olivier Demers, has been performing and touring for all these years.

In 20 years, they have produced 11 albums, given more than 2,000 concerts on four continents and received many honours, including two Junos and three Félix awards at the ADISQ gala. They have not only become star performers in the traditional Quebec music scene, but also a driving force behind it, as they promote and showcase Quebec music abroad.

Congratulations for thrilling Quebec and the rest of the world for 20 years. I greatly admire them.

* * *

ATHLETES FROM BOURASSA

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the Canada Games that took place in February, the riding of Bourassa was in the spotlight. As an example, the young athletes from the Centre d'excellence en karaté du Québec, under the leadership of its president, François Persico, won half of the medals for Quebec.

I am proud to introduce these four young people, aged 14 to 17, who are participating in Quebec's Sport-études program, and to whom I had the privilege of presenting a certificate of merit for their athletic achievements. They are Abdessalam Kerdoussi, who placed in the top seven in sparring, Mohamed Cherif Ilbouche, who won a bronze medal, Maroua Mokdad, who won a silver medal, and Anton Gurin, a young Ukrainian who just obtained permanent residence in Canada and who won the only gold medal for Quebec.

I want to offer my heartfelt congratulations to all these young people who have done us proud.

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[*English*]

CANADIAN FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, firefighters from across Canada are in Ottawa this week for the 30th Canadian Legislative Conference of the International Association of Fire Fighters. As a retired firefighter and former president of Markham local 2727, I know first-hand just how important these next few days of advocacy will be for firefighters and their families.

In the coming days, MPs from all parties will hear about the increase in occupational illnesses like cancer among firefighters, including the need to remove PFAS from firefighting gear, now being linked to cancer and other serious health effects. There will also be a discussion for federally regulated airports in Canada to meet ICAO standards. Under the leadership of president Ed Kelly, the IAFF is laser-focused on protecting the health and safety of its 334,000 members and their families, both here in Canada and in the United States.

On behalf of our Conservative team to my former colleagues in Markham, to the Barrie and Innisfil firefighters and all firefighters who have come to Ottawa this week, welcome. We hear them, we respect them and we are here for them and their families.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to show my support for the people of Iran, following several troubling reports. In the past three months, over 50 schools in Iran have reported cases of schoolgirls impacted by alleged poisonings, followed by much concern over the effects that this will have on their education and their future. Despite lacking information on the details of these despicable attacks, due to the substantial number of journalists recently detained by the regime, many citizens, especially women and girls, continue to show unwavering bravery and work to protest their current environment.

While the Iranian regime continues to ignore the rights of its citizens amid these despicable reports, we recognize that it is imperative for everyone to take a stand to protect the fundamental rights of women and girls and all citizens in Iran. Canadians across the country continue to support the families that deserve true justice, and we pray for all those affected.

* * *

BENTO DE SAO JOSE

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to salute a hard-working and inspirational Portuguese Canadian, *Senhor* Bento De Sao Jose, who passed away on March 1, 2023. *Senhor* Bento was a pioneer who opened doors for many immigrants in the early 1960s. He will be remembered for his courageous spirit that took him through a war in Africa before making Canada home.

He will fondly be remembered for his never-ending enthusiasm for the social well-being of our community and the entrepreneurial drive for commerce and social improvements. He found opportunity in Toronto in 1963 and with a bright and savvy mind forged a successful car dealership and service centre. Many of us bought our first car from Bentos.

He was a brave leader who also engaged in politics to elevate our community and leave a positive impact at all levels of government. He has been recognized by Portuguese authorities and Canadian veterans with many honours of merit and medals. His achievements will forever be applauded. His greatness will never be forgotten. Always in our hearts, rest in peace, *Senhor* Bento.

Statements by Members

• (1410)

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the past 20 weeks, Canadians have heard over and over again about the help from the Beijing Communists that the Liberal Party has received in multiple elections. Conservatives have asked hundreds of questions in the House, but the Prime Minister has told us much of nothing. We have asked questions at committees, and the Liberal members have done everything they can to delay, distract and undermine the need for a thorough investigation into this topic.

At the beginning of this month, 67% of Canadians supported an open and public independent inquiry that would help provide serious transparency in this matter. All opposition parties voted in favour of the motion to launch such an inquiry, but, as always, the Liberal MPs voted against it. Canadians are losing trust in our political institutions and democracy.

I call on Canadians who watch this to call, email and visit their local Liberal MPs, reminding them that they are in this House to represent them and not to blindly serve the self-interests of the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party.

* * *

GRADUATION CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to rise in honour of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour's Marie Jones.

In her forties, while raising multiple children, Marie attended Dalhousie University in the Master of Arts program, focusing on education. Her cutting-edge research focused on how the testing and streaming of students at that time was prejudiced against children living in poverty.

Unfortunately, just before she could complete her degree, Marie's eldest son, David, became seriously ill. Marie left her studies to research, advocate and care for him. He passed away a decade later.

Despite adversity, Marie continued to give back, from caring for elderly relatives while she raised her kids to teaching those who needed her help and advocating for music programs and increased funding for long-term care homes. Nothing stops Marie Jones.

Statements by Members

I am honoured today in Canada's House of Commons to announce that, at the age of 92, Marie Jones has finally been awarded her master's degree from Dalhousie University.

Let us congratulate Marie.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in greater Vancouver, the dream of buying a home or even renting an affordable place has become a nightmare under the Liberal government. The Liberals do not care. They will not take any responsibility for the mess they have created. Reckless spending and the irresponsible doubling of our national debt have lit an inflationary fire.

After eight years under the Prime Minister, the price of housing has skyrocketed. To compensate for the spending, the Bank of Canada has raised interest rates 1,700% in just one year. Families will be forced to spend thousands more when mortgage renewal comes.

Whether one is a renter, a first-time homebuyer or a homeowner, Conservatives will fight to ensure housing is affordable. A change of government cannot come soon enough.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has been leading the Liberal government for eight years and is now being propped up by a costly coalition with the NDP.

For an entire generation of young Canadians, the cost of living is at an all-time high, and the hope of building a life like their parents is fading little by little every day.

In Canada, home ownership was an attainable dream for young people prior to 2016. Now, the Liberal Prime Minister's inflationary spending is making that dream impossible to achieve.

Fully nine out of 10 young people believe they will never be able to afford a home because mortgage payments have doubled in the eight years since this Prime Minister was elected.

More and more people, from the very poor to middle-class families, are turning to food banks because their paycheques no longer cover rising food prices.

The 2023 budget must put an end to inflationary spending. The 2023 budget must make it possible for Canadians to take home more money with each paycheque. The 2023 budget must lower prices by cancelling tax increases. The 2023 budget must remove government barriers to housing construction. The 2023 budget must bring common sense back into this House.

• (1415)

RENDEZ-VOUS DES AÎNÉS FRANCOPHONES D'OTTAWA

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of representing a community of active and engaged seniors in Orléans.

That is why I was proud to attend the monthly breakfast hosted by the Rendez-vous des aînés francophones d'Ottawa, or RAFO, on March 19 to announce \$99,450 in financial aid under the community spaces fund.

The RAFO, which has over 600 members, was able to do major renovations to make its building more energy efficient and provide a better environment for its members.

I would also like to honour and recognize in the House three outstanding women in Orléans who all celebrated their 100th birthday this year. Congratulations to Thérèse Gagnier, Germaine Dumoulin and Henriette Comeau.

I wish these women a happy birthday.

* * *

[*English*]

BATTERY RECYCLING

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we electrify our energy systems, batteries will become more important. However, they have lifespans, and recycling will become an even more critical part of our future.

I am proud to say that the city of Trail has become one of the biggest battery recycling hubs in North America. One company in Trail, Retrieve Technologies, which is now part of Cirba Solutions, has been recycling all kinds of batteries for years. If people bring their used batteries to any recycling centre in British Columbia, they will end up at Retrieve, producing valuable products such as cobalt cake and lithium salts.

Next door is KC Recycling, the biggest lead acid battery recycling facility in western North America. Lead acid batteries are the batteries in all gas-powered cars and trucks in the world. They are completely recyclable. Much of the lead from KC goes directly back into the Teck smelter in Trail.

All batteries can be recycled, and the city of Trail is leading the way to the circular economy of the future.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LOUISETTE DUSSAULT

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my friend, actor, director and producer Louise Dussault took her final bow and left us last week.

In addition to her multiple roles and productions, she was active as the president of the Conseil québécois du théâtre and worked for the Commission internationale du théâtre francophone. She contributed to the success of great Quebec works such as *Les belles-sœurs* and *Demain matin, Montréal m'attend* by the great Michel Tremblay.

Devoted to Quebec, she was part of the women for sovereignty bus. I remember her magnificent interpretation of *Panis Angelicus*, which she dedicated to me and sang in her beautiful soprano voice when she sponsored the island collective project Les Marsouineries de L'Isle-aux-Coudres.

What about the 750 episodes of *La souris verte* that won the hearts of children in Quebec? For six decades we have been singing:

Ten sheep
 Nine sparrows
 Eight groundhogs
 Seven rabbits
 Six ducks
 Five ants
 Four cats
 And three chicks
 Two weasels and one mouse.
 [We love our] green mouse.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister's inflationary taxes and deficit spending, it no longer pays to work in Canada.

One in five Canadians are skipping meals, and many are going to food banks just to survive. February marks the seventh consecutive month of double-digit food inflation. Rent and mortgage payments have doubled under the Liberal Prime Minister, and the dream of home ownership is quickly becoming a nightmare for many young people in this great country.

A Conservative government would bring home powerful pay-cheques with lower taxes, so that hard work would pay off once again; bring home lower prices by ending inflationary carbon tax and deficit spending, which drive up inflation and create higher interest rates; and bring homes to Canadians that they could afford by removing government gatekeepers, freeing up land and speeding up building permits.

Enough is enough. It is time to make Canada work for those who do the work.

* * *

● (1420)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to welcome members of various organizations, such as Reena, the Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence, Community Living Toronto and many more, to Parliament Hill. They are

Oral Questions

joining us to advocate for affordable housing and support for Canadians with developmental disabilities.

It is essential that we provide support for those with developmental disabilities through programs like the national housing strategy. In this way, they can be fully included in our society with dignity, individuality, independence, personal growth and community inclusion.

Reena provides support across North York and the GTA, including a third intentional community, the new Frankfort Family Reena Residence. It will provide affordable housing for an additional 154 individuals.

I would like to thank these amazing organizations for joining us and for all the transformative work they do in our communities, empowering those with developmental disabilities. In this country our strategy is nothing without us. We see those in the developmental disability community, and we care about them. They enrich our society and our communities each and every day.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, there is a war on work with his taxes and other clawbacks. Workers can lose 88¢ on each additional dollar earned. There is no common sense in that. It is the opposite of a report card: The harder people work, the more they are punished.

Will the Prime Minister end his war on work by cutting taxes so that hard work pays off once again?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, we have put success for the middle class and all those who work hard at the heart of everything we do.

That is why we delivered a Canada child benefit that lifted 435,000 children out of poverty. To date, we have created over 50,000 child care spaces by cutting child care fees in half. We have helped over 230,000 children have access to dental care, and we have added over two million jobs to the economy, increasing the participation of women by over 3%.

The Conservatives voted against many of these measures. On this side of the House, we will continue to meet the needs of workers—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we voted against is the Prime Minister's war on work, with higher and higher taxes and clawbacks that punish people for working hard. In fact, a worker can lose as much as 88¢ on the next dollar that he or she earns. There is no common sense in that. Why would people work more just to give it over to the Prime Minister?

Will the Prime Minister reverse his antiwork taxes and give Canadians a break, so that hard work pays off and Canadians can bring home powerful paycheques?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the moment we first got elected in 2015, we put success for the middle class in this country at the heart of everything we do. This is why we delivered a Canada child benefit that lifted hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty and why we have invested in clean energy and new jobs that have helped Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We have also delivered a Canada workers benefit that the Conservatives voted against, which is supporting low-income workers and continuing to be more generous.

We moved forward on supports for dental and rental for low-income Canadians that the Conservatives directly voted against.

We will continue to be there for all Canadians, including workers.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only place he has been is in the pockets of Canadian workers, taking away their money. He has raised taxes on paycheques, raised taxes on gas, raised taxes on home heating, raised taxes on food and raised taxes on small businesses. What does he want to do this Saturday? He wants to raise taxes again.

Inflation is at a 40-year high. After eight years under the Prime Minister, Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat and house themselves.

Will he show a little bit of restraint and commit, in tomorrow's budget, to no new taxes?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated, every step of the way, that we are there to support workers. We are there to support Canadians, and that is exactly what we did when we lowered the small business taxes to record levels and even allowed larger growth for small businesses while continuing to benefit from those. We have continued to step up on supports for workers and continued to step up on supports for families.

That has created economic growth that has benefited everyone, as opposed to the trickle-down that the Conservatives still push, with tax breaks for the wealthiest. We have continued to grow the economy in meaningful ways for everyone.

* * *

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the trickle-down is his. He wants to take away everybody's

money, centralize it in his own hands and promise that it will trickle down through his mighty bureaucracy and all the prodigious interest groups that gobble it up. There may be a few little drops that get down to the people who actually earned it in the first place.

When I first said that deficits would cause inflation, all the experts disagreed. Now they all agree with me.

In fact, even the finance minister has now come around to my view, admitting that deficit spending causes inflation. That is why people are paying more than at any time in 40 years.

Will he cap government spending and put an end to the inflationary deficits tomorrow?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can tell that the Leader of the Opposition is still hoping and waiting for experts to endorse his plan to opt out of inflation by buying cryptocurrency, something that would have erased the savings of Canadians.

The fact is that tomorrow, we are bringing forward a budget that is focused on affordability and supporting Canadians. It is going to be delivering health care results for Canadians right across the country and creating great jobs for the middle class in a clean and growing economy. Those are the focuses that we have been laser focused on over the past many years, for Canadians. We will continue to step up and be there to grow the economy and support all Canadians.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the worst part of his inflationary policies is in the price of housing. We see that now Vancouver is the third-worst housing bubble in the world. Toronto is the 10th. They are worse than Manhattan; Singapore; London, England; and countless other places. The average required down payments, rents and mortgage payments have doubled under the Prime Minister. His inflationary policies have made life worse, and his gatekeeping friends prevent housing construction.

Will the Prime Minister announce in tomorrow's budget serious penalties for the gatekeepers that drive up housing prices so that hard-working Canadians can have homes they can afford?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know Canadians are struggling with the cost of housing, whether it is a young family looking to buy their first home or a student looking for an affordable apartment near campus. That is why we have taken action on so many fronts, from helping Canadians save up for their first home to investing in building and repairing more homes, including supporting local governments to fast-track the creation of 100,000 new homes. We are providing support for low-income renters, which the Conservatives voted against, and ensuring houses are used as homes, not investment vehicles, by curbing unfair practices that drive up prices, including banning foreign homebuyers and putting in a federal anti-flipping rule.

* * *

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about Chinese interference. We have not forgotten about it. The Prime Minister has not managed to sweep it under the rug.

On Thursday, the House of Commons voted in favour of holding an independent public inquiry into Chinese interference. The Bloc agrees, the NDP agrees, the Conservatives agree and 72% of Canadians agree. Even the member for Don Valley North agrees. Even the Liberal member against whom the most serious allegations have been levelled is calling for a real commission to investigate.

When will the Prime Minister understand that his only defensible option is an independent public commission of inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue and one that should never be partisan. That is why we appointed an independent expert, our former governor general, David Johnston, to identify any gaps in our system. This special rapporteur will make public recommendations that could include an official inquiry or some other type of independent review, and we will implement his recommendations.

Two national security organizations will conduct separate reviews of foreign interference in our elections. They are capable of getting to the bottom of this.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I forgot that the Prime Minister is not the only one who does not want an inquiry. His Liberal buddy Jean Chrétien feels the same way. Interference is not a big deal to Mr. Chrétien as long as the Chinese ambassador or consul general were not walking around with envelopes stuffed with cash. In other words, as long as there are no envelopes full of cash, there is no need to launch an inquiry into our democracy.

Is that still the Liberal standard for ethical behaviour? Is the Prime Minister comfortable with the fact that his only ally against an independent public inquiry is the man behind the sponsorship scandal?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious how badly the Bloc Québécois wants to turn this into a partisan issue, which it is not. Rather, it is an extremely seri-

ous issue that must be dealt with in an impartial and independent manner.

That is why we have asked an extraordinary Canadian, someone who has demonstrated his loyalty and service to his country, to oversee all the processes necessary to get to the bottom of this matter and assure Canadians that we are doing everything possible to counter foreign interference. That is exactly the serious approach that Canadians deserve, rather than the partisan attacks being levelled by the Bloc and Conservative members.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, millennials in Canada are feeling the squeeze of inflation more than the rest of Canadians. As a CBC article reports, the trustee in insolvency has concluded that Canadian millennials have been dealt a bad hand, and it is true. If we look at it, they have student debt, bad credit card debt and postpandemic tax debt from collecting CERB. In fact, it means that more and more millennials are filing for bankruptcy.

In the interest of generational fairness, will the Prime Minister confirm today that there will be measures in the budget to give young Canadians a break?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the moment we first took office in 2015, our focus has been on supporting young people and supporting all Canadians. We recognize, for example, that millennials are struggling with the cost of housing, whether it is a young family looking to buy their first home or a student trying to rent an apartment near campus.

That is why we have been taking action on so many fronts. On housing, we have been helping Canadians save up for their first home. We have been investing in building and repairing more homes, including by supporting local governments to fast-track the creation of 100,000 new homes. We are providing support for low-income renters, which the Conservatives voted against, and we are ensuring houses are used as homes, not investment vehicles.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is obviously going up. It is becoming more and more difficult to make ends meet, particularly when it comes time to buy groceries.

We learned that the government plans to announce a grocery rebate in the budget. I want confirmation today that this rebate is what we have been asking for for a long time, namely the doubling of the GST credit to help people.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that all of my colleagues on both sides of the House are eagerly looking forward to seeing what we are going to do in tomorrow's budget to be there for Canadians, but, like everyone else, they will have to wait to find out all of the measures that we plan to put forward.

I can say, however, that we will be there to help with the cost of living. We will be there for young people, seniors and all workers with measures that will help them get through these difficult times, while ensuring that we make progress on improving our health care systems for Canadians and creating good jobs for the middle class in a greener, more sustainable and growing economy.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister's high taxes and higher government spending, 50% of insolvencies and bankruptcies are on the backs of our millennials, despite them only taking up a quarter of the population. They are borrowing into record deficits just to get by. The dream of home ownership is dead for nine out of 10 young people, who will never get into a home thanks to the Liberals. They will make it even harder when they jack up their failed carbon tax on April 1.

Will the Prime Minister today commit to no new taxes in tomorrow's budget so Canadians can get into housing?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since forming government, our government has reduced poverty in this country by 56%. That is 2.7 million Canadians, mostly seniors and children, who are better off because of our government. We have done that by increasing investments in affordability. These are investments in things like child care, dental care and health care. We are well positioned for the future, with our debt-to-GDP ratio and our deficit lower than those of any other country in the G7. Canadians themselves have produced over 830,000 jobs since the start of the pandemic.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the record of the most expensive housing minister in Canada's history. This genius spent \$89 billion to give Canadians double the cost on mortgages and rents, and now it costs double just to save up for a home. These geniuses have also made the cost of everything going into a house double, like gas, groceries and home heating, and they are going to jack that up even further with their failed carbon tax on April 1.

Again, will they commit to no new taxes in tomorrow's budget, yes or no?

● (1435)

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members to use their language judiciously and try to respect and not mock or criticize each other.

The hon. Minister of Housing.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess when one does not have much of a housing plan, one resorts to gimmicks, buzzwords and attacks against one's fellow colleagues.

What we have done from day one is focus on all Canadians in different spectrums of the housing sector. Whether it is getting people off the streets, building permanently affordable housing for those experiencing homelessness, building more deeply affordable housing for the most vulnerable, making sure we are increasing the supply of new rentals, and, yes, building more home ownership options for first-time homebuyers, we have done all of that, despite the party opposite voting against each and every measure.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of owning or renting a home in Canada has doubled. The cost of heating that home has doubled. The cost of getting groceries in Canada has gone up by double digits. Despite the inflation that Canadians are paying and the surge in revenue it is creating for the government, its unnamed sources are conditioning Canadians for more spending and higher deficits in tomorrow's budget.

I have a simple question. Will the Prime Minister tell Canadians today that tomorrow he will not raise taxes on them?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to remind the member opposite that it was our government that reduced taxes for the middle class not once but twice, and reduced taxes for small businesses not once but twice.

While inflation is a global phenomenon, we in Canada are very well positioned to take care of it. We have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. We have the lowest deficit in the G7. That is going to allow us to continue to invest in Canadians, in good, sustainable, clean jobs, and in making life more affordable.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have never paid higher taxes. More intervention, more bureaucracy, more spending and more debt have created less productivity, less growth and less for Canadians struggling to pay their bills. In this country, we have record credit card debt, record food bank usage and record levels of stress and anxiety on people's finances. It seems the Prime Minister's response is to raise taxes, as he plans to do on Saturday.

The budget is tomorrow and millions of Canadians who are out of money all want to know if the Prime Minister will commit to no new taxes.

Oral Questions

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very excited, as is the member opposite, for the release of the budget tomorrow. It is going to be an opportunity for us to continue doing what we have been doing, which is making life more affordable for Canadians by lowering taxes for middle-class Canadians and lowering taxes for small businesses, which has allowed us to grow. Despite the fact that we have the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, we are delivering programs like child care, health care and dental care to make life more affordable for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): As you know, Mr. Speaker, a new era was ushered in eight years ago, one where government budgets balance themselves. However, the reality is that, thanks to this Prime Minister's mismanagement of public funds, the cost of a mortgage has doubled since 2015, food has never been more expensive and Canadians have record credit card debt.

Canadians know full well that they need to pinch pennies to pay their bills. Will the Prime Minister commit to no new taxes?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's question. As he knows full well, inflation has continued to decline in Canada over the last eight months. We have the lowest deficit and debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

We were able to manage Canada's finances responsibly over the last few years. We were there for Canadians in those tough times to help them make ends meet.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the parliamentary secretary was in the same twilight zone as the Prime Minister when he said that budgets balance themselves. What we must recognize is that this attitude is why the number of personal bankruptcies in Canada increased by 13.5% in January 2023 and why business bankruptcies rose by 39.1% in 2022.

Canadians are suffering financially. Will the Prime Minister commit to not imposing any new taxes in tomorrow's budget?

• (1440)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my Conservative colleague that our programs and support helped businesses get through the pandemic and helped Canadians keep their jobs. The government spent \$8 out of every \$10 during the pandemic to save our economy and Canadians' health.

We are there for Canadians during this difficult period of global instability by making sure Canadians can make ends meet.

SENIORS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the budget, I would remind the House that in 2021, this government created a class of vulnerable seniors. It increased the old

age security benefit, but only for people aged 75 and over, leaving seniors aged 65 to 74 out in the cold.

Tomorrow's budget is the perfect opportunity to end this discrimination between those who are old enough and those who are not old enough to deserve a decent quality of life. Inflation makes no such distinction. Will this government finally correct the injustice it has created?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has introduced robust measures to support seniors in Canada. Unlike the Conservatives, who raised the retirement age to 67, we kept it at 65. On top of that, for the most vulnerable seniors, we increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10%, and we increased old age security by 10% for people aged 75 and over.

We are there for seniors in this country, and we will be there in the future.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—C te-de-Beaupr — le d'Orl ans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the budget, there is not a word about employment insurance. Wait times have ballooned across Quebec. Unemployed people wait in vain for months without service, without any answers and without benefits. That goes for people who are eligible, but many workers in our regions who do seasonal work are not even entitled to anything. The federal government is leaving them in limbo. First, will the budget provide answers to this bureaucratic fiasco? Second, will employment insurance finally be reformed to include all of these workers that Ottawa is leaving behind?

[English]

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, EI is currently one of the oldest and most complex systems across the Government of Canada. That is why we made a commitment to fully modernize the system. In the past two years, the minister has led more than 35 virtual national and regional roundtables with workers, employers and academics.

EI reform is a priority. We are on it, and we will get it done.

[Translation]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Ms. Monique Pazu  (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government promised to end fossil fuel subsidies by 2023. It is now 2023, and tomorrow just happens to be budget day. I am sure everyone can see where I am going with this. My question is quite simple.

Oral Questions

Can the Minister of Environment confirm that the budget will not include a penny, not a single penny, not one cent in new subsidies to the oil industry, either direct or hidden?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. As she probably knows, we eliminated international subsidies for fossil fuels at the end of last year. That is billions of dollars that we are now investing in clean technologies. We have also committed to eliminating all fossil fuel subsidies by the first half of 2023, and we will get there.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent survey showed that only 2% of Canadian farmers believe Liberals are doing a good job supporting agriculture. That should not come as a surprise, as the Liberals are increasing the carbon tax on April 1 and imposing their farm-killing carbon tax on Atlantic Canadians on July 1. The food price index says that when the Liberals triple their carbon tax, it will cost an average Canadian farmer \$150,000 a year. There are very real consequences to these carbon tax hikes. They are driving up costs on farmers, which is then driving up food costs for Canadian families.

Will the Prime Minister commit to no new taxes?

• (1445)

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, our government is there to support our farmers. We have been the most generous government in helping them make this transition to an ever more sustainable agriculture.

We know that our farmers are doing everything they can to ensure the future of their farms so they can pass them on to their children. I can guarantee that we will continue to support them.

We are supporting them through the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership, which represents an investment of \$3.5 billion. That is an increase of \$500 million to help our farmers.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Liberals are providing is increases in taxes. They have to understand there are very real consequences to those tax hikes, and Canadians are paying the price.

Pasta is up 23%. Lettuce is up 20%, and apples are up 16%. The Liberals want to drive food costs even higher by increasing the carbon tax on April 1. All this will do is drive more Canadians to the food bank. The Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto saw its visits quadruple in March, and the staff at that food bank said the numbers they are seeing are startling and “horrible”.

Will the Prime Minister commit to no new taxes on Canadian families so they can afford to put food on their own tables?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been sitting in this

chamber for the last seven and a half years, as many of my colleagues on the other side have as well, and what I remember is that we have put several measures on the floor, which helped Canadian families, that the Conservatives voted against. Whether it was with the middle class tax cut, the reduction of taxes for small businesses or the increase to the Canada child benefit, which gives nine out of 10 Canadian families more money tax-free and lifted 450,000 children out of poverty, and that the Conservatives voted against, we have been there for Canadians.

We will continue to be there for Canadians. We just hope the members opposite, if they are sincere—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are struggling in this inflationary environment. Borrowing costs and bankruptcies are both up. Most economists agree that we are on the verge of a recession, and the government's response is to increase taxes on April 1, which will hurt small business owners. The carbon tax increases inflation and has a significant effect on small businesses. They cannot pass on those costs to their customers, and the government is indifferent to these effects.

Will the Prime Minister commit to no new taxes for small business owners in tomorrow's budget?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question allows us to outline the important initiatives we have taken over these last seven and a half years. We have put in place measures that help alleviate the burdens that are on small business owners in this country. On two occasions, we have lowered taxes for small businesses, the same entities that member is advocating for, and on both of those occasions he and every member of his party voted against those measures.

What we also did at the height of the COVID pandemic was implement a series of measures targeted at wage supports and loan supports for those very same small businesses. Surely, that is something we could have all gotten behind, yet again, the voting record of the party opposite speaks for itself.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have known for a long time now that CERB debt incurred by desperate people at the height of the pandemic would disrupt Canada child benefit payments, which people rely on to feed and clothe their children. The Liberals are quick to say not to worry about it and that they will deal with it on a compassionate, case-by-case basis.

How is it compassionate for families to be surprised by an \$800 shortfall in their monthly revenue? How is it compassionate for parents, now worried about their rent cheques bouncing, to have to sit on the phone for days just for a chance to beg CRA for relief?

Real compassion requires a policy of CERB debt amnesty for low-income Canadians. When is the government going to do it?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic hit, we acted quickly to get recovery benefits into people's bank accounts without delay. To achieve that goal, we planned to verify eligibility in the back end after the fact. This approach kept workers attached to their jobs and positioned our economy to come roaring back.

Lower-income workers and groups most impacted by the pandemic were able to benefit from all of our programs. We did the right thing. We will continue to have the backs of low-income Canadians and workers.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals secretly negotiated a deal to shut down the entire Canada-U.S. border with an invisible wall. This will only drive persecuted asylum seekers on a more dangerous pathway.

Seidu Mohammed, an LGBTQ man, nearly died crossing irregularly to Canada in the dead of winter. His asylum claim was found to be valid, and he got his Canadian citizenship just this year. If this policy applied then, he would have been sent back to Ghana to face discrimination and violence for being who he is.

Why are the Liberals taking a page from Trump and denying—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate an announcement that we made Friday. We have finally updated the safe third country agreement, the agreement that applies to the entire Canada-U.S. border. On top of that, we will be welcoming 50,000 people from America to promote safe and orderly migration. This is a major victory for Canada.

Oral Questions

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the Armenian-Canadian community in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt and beyond are concerned by the rising tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. It has now been more than 100 days since the start of the Lachin corridor blockade. There is a growing humanitarian crisis and Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh are fearing that the conflict may soon escalate.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs please inform the House about our government's efforts on this important issue?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her important question. I share the concerns of Armenian Canadians, and Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. We continue to call on Azerbaijan authorities to reopen the Lachin corridor. We need to prevent the worsening of the humanitarian crisis.

Canada supports the 2020 ceasefire agreement, including the return of Armenian prisoners of war. It is important that the ceasefire, which is supported by the E.U. monitoring group, be respected.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, the Governor of the Bank of Canada warned that the recent pause on interest rates was dependent on limited government spending. Excuse my skepticism, but Conservatives know of, and Canadians have witnessed, record uncontrolled deficit spending.

Will the government, in tomorrow's budget, commit to no new spending, or will it continue its reckless tax-and-spend policy, risking higher inflation and more interest rate hikes?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our plan is not just making life more affordable for Canadians, it is also to be fiscally responsible. Canada has reconfirmed our AAA credit rating. We have recovered 126% of jobs lost during the pandemic, while the United States has only recovered 114%. We have the lowest deficit and the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. This positions us very well going into the next budget to get inflation under control, improve affordability and create sustainable clean jobs.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives know that every dollar the government spends is another dollar out of Canadians' pockets. That is a dollar that could have been spent on groceries, as Canadians line up for food banks. That is a dollar that could have been spent on a down payment on a new house. Instead, Canadians are struggling to pay their rent.

When will the government finally give Canadians a break and reduce the taxes on carbon, beer, wine and spirits? Will the government finally commit to no new taxes in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing Canadians listening at home know is that one dollar invested by this government will provide opportunities across the country. Canadians have seen that in biomanufacturing, for example, as we have Moderna in our country.

Canadians are seeing that we are attracting the likes of Volkswagen to our country to build our ecosystem and the battery ecosystem. Canadians are seeing we have record investment in this country, and one thing they trust is that we will continue investing in their future because that is what we need for the economy of the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this inflationary Prime Minister, I would encourage him to listen to what Guy Parent, who has worked as a trucker for the past 30 years, had to say about the carbon tax. He said, "The automatic reaction of the companies that have to pay the tax is to pass it on to the customer. It is the customer who will have to pay. That is how the inflation game works."

According to the truckers, all Quebecers will be affected, and according to them, a large number of products, such as commodities, fruits, vegetables and even televisions, will now cost more.

My question is simple. Will the Prime Minister commit to scrapping this new tax tomorrow?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to my hon. colleague that the federal carbon tax will not apply in Quebec because Quebec has its own cap-and-trade system.

My department will be happy to provide him with all of the necessary information so that he can give his constituents the right information.

• (1455)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truckers who transport the food we eat here will pay more in carbon tax starting April 1. That is not an April Fool's joke; it is the truth.

On April 1, the carbon tax is going up. On April 1, the tax on wine, alcohol and spirits is going up. People are going to pay more for everything when they are already stretched to the limit.

My question is simple: Tomorrow, will the Prime Minister cancel all new taxes on Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to remind my hon. colleague that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has made it clear that eight out of 10 Canadians currently receive more money from federal carbon pricing—where it applies—than it costs them.

Therefore, 90% of the carbon pricing is recycled. The remaining 10% is being invested in programs to help small, medium-sized and large businesses reduce their consumption of oil, coal and natural gas.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after six years of repeatedly asking for Roxham Road to be closed, after repeating hundreds of times that asylum seekers should not be greeted by RCMP officers, after saying over and over again that the influx far exceeds Quebec's capacity, we see that Roxham Road is finally closed.

That is good news. It should have been done a long time ago. Now, as we know, before we celebrate, we need to read the fine print. The devil is in the details.

When will the government share the new safe third country agreement with the United States in full and with all the details?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I hope that he heard President Biden's speech in the House on Friday.

Once again, Canada and the United States just announced an update to the safe third country agreement. That is great news, because this new agreement will allow us to better manage refugee claimants from both our countries and ensure that our refugee system is caring and compassionate. This is a shared responsibility, a responsibility that Canada is taking.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I was here for the President's speech. We understand that the Liberals are proud of their accomplishment and that they are happy. We are happy, too.

However, there are still many unanswered questions, and many people are wondering, starting, I imagine, with Mr. Pierre Guay, who owns land near Roxham Road and is a generous Liberal Party donor. Mr. Guay signed leases estimated at \$28 million for land and premises that Ottawa will no longer need since Roxham Road is closed.

Will the government break those leases and recover millions of dollars or will it give a very generous gift to a good Liberal donor?

Oral Questions

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member of the Bloc Québécois that, every time he asked questions in the House, he asked us to suspend the agreement.

Let us be clear. I would like to confirm that with my colleagues today. The Quebec government strongly supports our new agreement. If the Bloc Québécois has some concerns about what is happening in Quebec and to Quebecers, I invite him to perhaps join Quebec in supporting the new agreement, which was updated.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, whether it be our seniors on fixed incomes fighting the ever-rising cost of living, or families experiencing punishing fuel and grocery costs or our farmers, producers and transporters who literally keep our land, grow our food and haul our goods, Canadians are being crushed by soaring input costs, including the ineffective and punitive carbon tax.

Canadians from coast to coast are desperate for some relief in the budget tomorrow. Will the Prime Minister get off their backs and commit to no new taxes?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet another day, another Conservative stands up and pretends to care about seniors. Just in case that member forgets how many times the official opposition has forgotten about seniors and voted against them, let me remind him. On GIS for single seniors, the Conservatives voted against an increase. They voted against increasing the OAS for those 75 and over. They voted against providing rent relief for vulnerable Canadians.

Those members stand up on a regular basis, and I am looking forward to seeing how they vote on the budget when we do more things for all Canadians, including seniors.

• (1500)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Prime Minister, former bank governor, Stephen Poloz, now says that Liberal deficit spending drove up inflation. The current bank governor said the same thing last fall. If he will not listen to us, maybe the Prime Minister will listen to the bank governors.

Inflationary Liberal spending and taxes drive up the cost of everything. People cannot afford to eat or even heat their homes. To make matters worse, now the Liberals are going to triple the carbon tax.

I have a simple question. Will the Prime Minister commit to no new taxes?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that inflation has been challenging for Canadians. That is why we are focused on a legislative agenda that makes life more affordable for Canadians. However, it is important for members op-

posite, everybody in the House and Canadians across the country to understand that this is a global phenomenon.

Fortunately, inflation has been coming down. It is down to 5.2%. It is much lower than our peer economies, such as the United States or in Europe. It is actually positioning us quite well to invest in further measures that will make life more affordable, but will also make an economy that works well for everybody.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, reckless spending, record debt and tax increases is a result of eight years of this Prime Minister. With the cost of living climbing higher and higher and the economic outlook more bleak than ever, many Canadians are at their breaking point.

In tomorrow's budget, the government should reassure all Canadians that it will stand behind them, exhibit some fiscal responsibility and help restore stability in the country.

Will the Prime Minister commit to cancelling the planned carbon tax hike and no new taxes in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the member is not talking about the record of our government for eight years.

Just this morning, there is a company right here in Ottawa, Ranovus, \$100 million of investment in the top semiconductor in the world. We are becoming the silicon valley of the north. Not only are they going to be the most powerful, but they are going to be the greenest in the world. That is how investment is translating into jobs and jobs into growth. That is the way forward.

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are almost halfway through tax season. As MPs, it is our responsibility to help our constituents, especially members of vulnerable populations, file their income tax returns so they can receive the benefits and credits they need.

Could the Minister of Revenue inform the House of what we can do to help them?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Châteauguay—Lacolle for her excellent question.

Oral Questions

I want to point out that during this tax season every riding has several free tax clinics, which help hundreds of thousands of vulnerable Canadians file their tax returns every year. I invite my colleagues to promote these clinics to help their constituents obtain the benefits and credits to which they are entitled.

I also want to take the time to thank the volunteers for the fantastic work they do in their communities.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a shortage of affordable housing across Canada for which seniors are unable to qualify. After eight years of this Prime Minister, housing has become unaffordable and rent has skyrocketed. Shirley is already struggling to pay for the 11% increase in grocery prices and cannot afford to pay for her rent.

Will the Prime Minister listen to our seniors, show some compassion and commit to no new taxes?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, seniors are actually a priority population in the national housing strategy. We have invested billions of dollars to make sure that vulnerable groups, including seniors, have access to safe and affordable housing that meets their needs. In addition to that, seniors are eligible for the Canada housing benefit in addition to the top-up that the Conservative members of Parliament voted against. Not only did they vote against that help for seniors, they actually played procedural games in the House to delay that help that seniors needed to pay the rent.

* * *

● (1505)

TAXATION

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us imagine being \$200 away from bankruptcy. After eight years of this Prime Minister, most Canadians, in fact half of all Canadians, do not have to imagine it because that is their reality.

The cost-of-living crisis is destroying families across the country. Housing has doubled under this Prime Minister, and the out-of-control food costs are forcing people to skip meals. Andrea wrote to me and said, “We normally skip lunch, even my three kids, because I just can't afford three meals a day right now.”

We have a chance, right now, today, and it is long overdue, for the Prime Minister to show compassion and to actually support Canadians. Will he today commit to no new taxes—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Families.

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take my hon. Conservative colleagues at face value when they say they care and want to show compassion to Canadians, but when they have had the opportunity over the past eight years, every single time they have voted against Canadians. Whether it was the Canada child benefit that has helped lift 450,000 children out of poverty, they voted against. Whether it was lowering taxes on the middle class that

helped millions of Canadians across the country, they voted against. Whether it was the Canada workers benefit that helped low-income Canadians stay in the workforce, they voted against. I would like them to show that compassion—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything is getting more expensive. Successive interest rate hikes have doubled mortgage payments in Canada. One family in four will have to pay \$1,065 more for groceries this year. The cost of heating, energy, food and even alcohol will continue to increase with this government. After eight years, this Prime Minister's policies are only making things worse.

Will the Prime Minister commit to no new taxes in tomorrow's budget, yes or no?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people will have to excuse me for not revealing the details of the budget now. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will present the budget tomorrow. I am delighted that everyone in the House is so excited about our upcoming budget.

In the meantime, I would like to say how hard our government has worked to ensure that we will always be there for Canadians.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we continue to face increasing global uncertainty, our relations with our friends across the border are now more important than ever.

Last week, we welcomed the President of the United States, Joe Biden, to our nation's capital, where he addressed Parliament. Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs update the House on the outcomes of this historic visit and our respective governments' commitments with our closest friends and neighbours?

Government Orders

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, President Biden's visit last week provided an opportunity to make very important announcements: historic investments in our Great Lakes; expanding the safe third country agreement to cover the full border; additional commitments to NORAD to protect our skies; and creating good jobs, including union jobs, on both sides of the border.

When it comes to our closest friend and ally, we can count on this government to get the job done.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs has been clawing back pensions from women RCMP veterans. These women experienced extreme brutality while protecting our country, and the government is denying what they are owed as directed by the Merlo Davidson lawsuit.

The New Democrats have been calling for these clawbacks to stop and, after months, finally the minister agrees. These women deserve action.

Will the minister apologize to these women, stop the clawback and reimburse the money they are rightfully owed from their pensions?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the work that the ombud and her office is doing to provide recommendations to government and thank her for highlighting this issue.

The women who came forward and disclosed their experience in Merlo Davidson did so with incredible courage. We will contact the veterans who have had their disability pensions reduced by the Merlo Davidson settlement to give them an opportunity to submit additional information for recalculation, and correct the payment if appropriate.

* * *

● (1510)

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, something pretty shocking happened in this place last week. I refer to the statement made by the hon. member for Don Valley North.

I am pretty scandalized that anonymous smears from CSIS end up destroying reputations with no real opportunity to respond. It is not like CSIS ever gets anything wrong. Just ask Maher Arar.

What the heck is going on here? Will an inquiry find out who in CSIS thinks it is okay to leak to the media? It is wrong.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said from the beginning that our government takes these issues of foreign interference very seriously.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. minister, from the top, please.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, our government has said that we have consistently taken these issues of foreign interference seriously. We have put in place a series robust steps.

We also think this discussion merits a non-partisan fact-based focus. That is why we think the appointment of the Right Hon. David Johnston offers all of us an opportunity to look at the issues, to have a fact-based conversation about what additional steps our government could take. That is the best way to ensure that this process has integrity, and that is the process we are going to be following.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

The House resumed from March 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-26, An Act respecting cyber security, amending the Telecommunications Act and making consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:12 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-26.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

[English]

● (1525)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 287)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney

Government Orders

Block	Blois	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
Boulerice	Bradford	MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Bragdon	Brassard	Maguire	Maloney
Brière	Brock	Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins	Masse	Mathysen
Cannings	Caputo	May (Cambridge)	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
Carrie	Casey	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Chabot	Chagger	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Chahal	Chambers	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Champagne	Champoux	McLean	McLeod
Chatel	Chen	McPherson	Melillo
Chiang	Chong	Mendès	Miao
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)	Michaud	Miller
Cooper	Cormier	Moore	Morantz
Coteau	Dabrusin	Morrice	Morrison
Dalton	Damoff	Morrissey	Motz
Davidson	DeBellefeuille	Murray	Muys
Deltell	d'Entremont	Naqvi	Nater
Desbiens	Desilets	Noormohamed	Normandin
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	O'Connell	Oliphant
Dhillon	Diab	O'Regan	O'Toole
Doherty	Dong	Patzner	Paul-Hus
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Pauzé	Perkins
Drouin	Dubourg	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Duclos	Duguid	Plamondon	Poillievre
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ehsassi	Powlowski	Qualtrough
El-Khoury	Ellis	Redekopp	Reid
Epp	Erskine-Smith	Rempel Garner	Richards
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Roberts	Robillard
Fast	Fergus	Rodriguez	Rogers
Ferreri	Fillmore	Romanado	Rood
Findlay	Fisher	Ruff	Sahota
Fonseca	Fortier	Sajjan	Saks
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Samson	Sarai
Fraser	Freeland	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Fry	Gaheer	Scheer	Schiefke
Garon	Garrison	Schmale	Seeback
Gaudreau	Gazan	Serré	Sgro
Généreux	Genuis	Shanahan	Sheehan
Gerretsen	Gill	Shields	ShIPLEY
Gladu	Godin	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Goodridge	Gould	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Gourde	Gray	Singh	Small
Green	Guilbeault	Sorbara	Soroka
Hajdu	Hallan	Sousa	Steinley
Hanley	Hardie	Ste-Marie	Stewart
Hepfner	Hoback	St-Onge	Strahl
Holland	Housefather	Stubbs	Sudds
Hughes	Hussen	Tassi	Taylor Roy
Hutchings	Iacono	Thériault	Therrien
Idlout	Ien	Thomas	Thompson
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Tochor	Tolmie
Johns	Joly	Trudeau	Trudel
Jowhari	Julian	Turnbull	Uppal
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Valdez	Van Bynen
Kelly	Khalid	van Koeverden	Van Popta
Khera	Kitchen	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Kmiec	Koutrakis	Vecchio	Vidal
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Vien	Viersen
Kurek	Kusie	Vignola	Villemure
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Virani	Vis
Lake	Lalonde	Vuong	Wagantall
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Warkentin	Waugh
Lamoureux	Lantsman	Webber	Weiler
Lapointe	Larouche	Williams	Williamson
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Yip	Zahid
Lawrence	LeBlanc	Zarrillo	Zimmer
Lebouthillier	Lehoux	Zuberi — 321	
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)		
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert		
Lightbound	Lloyd		
Lobb	Long		
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Nil	

NAYS

PAIRED

Members

Dzerowicz
Simard

Gallant
Wilkinson— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER OF CANADA

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 536 of the Canada Elections Act, the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the by-election held in the electoral district of Mississauga—Lakeshore on December 12, 2022.

[Translation]

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

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to seven petitions.

These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 104 and Standing Order 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 31st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House.

[Translation]

If the House gives its consent, I move that the 31st report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be concurred in.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

Routine Proceedings

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

• (1530)

[English]

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order or usual practice of the House, later today,

(a) the ordinary hour of daily adjournment be midnight;

(b) after 6:30 p.m.;

(i) no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair;

(ii) if the House has not already completed its consideration of the motion for second reading of Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, it shall complete it pursuant to the order made on Wednesday, March 22, 2023, and thereafter proceed with the resumption of debate on the motion considered earlier today respecting 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;

(iii) when no Member rises to speak on the motion respecting Senate amendments to Bill C-11, or at midnight, whichever is earlier, the debate on the said motion be deemed adjourned and the House be deemed adjourned until the next sitting day; and

(c) the debate pursuant to standing order 38 not take place.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I want to beg your indulgence, because I know there is normally not debate on motions. I just want to make sure something is very clear, because this morning I raised a point of order on the admissibility of the motion, and Conservatives will agree to this motion as long as the Chair views it as the scheduling of debate and as long as it will in no way prejudice your ruling on the admissibility of Motion No. 2.

Because the phrase “notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House” is in this motion, I just want to make sure the Chair views this very clearly as a scheduling motion and not as something that would touch in any way on the point of order I raised earlier today.

The Speaker: That is a fair question. We are working on it as we speak, and it is in process. In no way will the debate affect the ruling.

Could all those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion please say nay? It is agreed.

[Translation]

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

(Motion agreed to)

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS**

GATINEAU PARK

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting an important petition today asking the government to amend the National Capital Act to give Gatineau Park the necessary legal protection to ensure its preservation for future generations.

[*English*]

This petition was initiated by the Ottawa Valley chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, or CPAWS. On behalf of nearly 600 residents, I would like to recognize the hard work of John McDonnell, the executive director, and Paul Lemoine, chair of the board, who are on the Hill today.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present two petitions.

The first is a petition signed by people across the country, calling on the government to enact just transition legislation. The Prime Minister and his government say all the right things when it comes to taking care of our environment. The problem is that their actions never match their rhetoric. They promised to plant billions of trees, but instead gave billions to big oil.

I hope the government will finally start listening to people, including those who signed the petition, and bring in just transition legislation that, among other things, reduces emissions by 60%, ends fossil fuel subsidies, creates good green jobs, respects indigenous sovereignty and ensures that the just transition is paid for by the billionaire class through the establishment of a wealth tax.

SENIORS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, the other petition calls on the government to stop punishing single seniors for the mere fact of being single. Petitioners call on the government to offer tax benefits to single seniors equal to those in place for senior couples, acknowledging as well that there is a particular gendered impact, and it is single women seniors who often pay the price.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, petitioners are asking that the House consider the current ecological, social and economic crises and the way in which they are interconnected; that the importance be recognized of making decisions based on scientific evidence; and that it find ways to ensure that the environment and sustainability matter in the decisions we make.

Petitioners particularly want us to focus on the challenge of environmental education across society, relying on indigenous knowledge in the way we understand the decisions we have to make. Petitioners ask, therefore, that the House of Commons take a leadership role in enacting a Canadian strategy to support educators, communicators and community leaders, as well as governments, to focus on healthy and sustainable paths to a sustainable, survivable future.

• (1535)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to table today. Both deal with private members' bills that Conservative members have proposed.

The first is about a private member's bill I have put forward: Bill C-257. Petitioners want to see this legislation adopted. Bill C-257 seeks to combat political discrimination by adding political activity or belief as a prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. This would align the federal Human Rights Act with most of Canada's provinces in this regard. Petitioners want to see the House support Bill C-257, which would ban discrimination on the basis of political belief or activity and would also defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express their political opinions.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition is in support of my colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South's Bill C-281, the international human rights act.

Petitioners note the importance of Canada's defending human rights and adjusting legislation to ensure the government is accountable to Parliament in the ongoing fight for justice and human rights. Petitioners call on the House to quickly adopt Bill C-281, the international human rights act.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1208, 1212, 1216, 1218, 1221 and 1224.

[*Text*]

Question No. 1208—**Mr. Kevin Vuong:**

With regard to the \$20 million federal grant provided to Toronto's Harbourfront Centre in August 2021 for upgrades and repairs: (a) was there a public consultative requirement for the centre to facilitate public engagement and inclusion in the formulation of the centre's repair and reconstruction planning and updates on activities; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, was Canadian Heritage advised on when the consultations were held and, if so, when did these consultations occur; (c) what specific projects did the federal government's grant initially support; (d) what projects were subsequently replaced by the centre's decision to add new projects and was any part of the grant allocated for the construction of retail commercial outlets; (e) did Canadian Heritage approve any of the subsequent project objectives, and, if so, which ones; and (f) on what date was Canadian Heritage informed by the centre of the change in plans related to eliminating the existing public skating rink and did Canadian Heritage approve this change?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), as an independent not-for-profit organization, Harbourfront Centre is responsible for setting priorities for its ongoing infrastructure projects and making its own decisions accordingly. There is no public consultative requirement as part of the contribution agreement between PCH and Harbourfront Centre.

With regard to part (b), there is no response.

With regard to part (c), as part of the recovery fund for arts, culture, heritage and sport sectors under budget 2021, \$20 million was awarded to Harbourfront Centre for capital infrastructure work done over two years, from 2021 to 2023. This funding sought to address urgent capital improvements and repairs to update performance spaces and venues; address health and safety elements to welcome back artists, visitors, audiences and staff; provide greater accessibility throughout the site; achieve reductions in energy and water use targeting future zero-carbon levels; and allow for continued urgent capital repairs. The contribution agreement for these funds was signed on August 18, 2021.

With regard to parts (d), (e) and (f), following an interim report from Harbourfront Centre on October 4, 2022, an amendment was made to the agreement to reflect changes to the schedule and project list, signed November 10, 2022. These updates respect its contribution agreement requirements and fiscal responsibility towards the project and represent good stewardship of public funds.

Question No. 1212—**Mr. Dane Lloyd:**

With regard to the government's reaction to reports that United States National Guard troops have been handing out bus tickets to migrants in New York City for travel to Roxham Road: (a) has the government made any representations with officials in the United States, including New York City municipal officials, to stop this, and, if so, what are the details of those representations, including the (i) date, (ii) government officials who made the representation, (iii) title of the official in the United States who received the representation; (b) what assurances, if any, has the government received that the handing out of bus tickets will stop; and (c) what is the government's estimate on the number of individuals who have crossed the border at Roxham Road after receiving these bus tickets?

Ms. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, insofar as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, is concerned, the answer is as follows. With regard to part (a), engaging with United States officials is not the exclusive purview of IRCC. As of February 6, 2023, IRCC officials had not made any representations with U.S. officials.

With regard to part (b), engaging with U.S. officials is not the exclusive purview of IRCC. As of February 6, 2023, IRCC had not received assurances.

With regard to part (c), the collection of information on asylum seekers at Roxham Road is outside IRCC's purview. IRCC does not collect or use data on means of arrival to ports of entry as part of the asylum claim process, as it is not considered part of the determination decision-making process.

Question No. 1216—**Ms. Leah Gazan:**

With regard to the National Research Council buildings located at 435 and 445 Ellice Avenue, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, that were declared surplus in 2012: (a) where is the government in the process of selling these buildings; (b) are any federal employees still working at either building, and, if so, how many are working at each; (c) are there any non-federal government tenants who rent space in these

buildings, and, if so, who are the tenants; (d) are there any non-federal government employees currently working in either building, and, if so, how many and who is their employer; (e) has there been any agreement reached with the Public Health Agency of Canada or the Manitoba Métis Federation and are there any other interested parties; and (f) what is the current cost to maintain each of these buildings?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), the Ellice Avenue property of National Research Council Canada, or NRC, was declared surplus in 2012, and the NRC began the process of selling the property in 2013. This process included consultation with indigenous communities and has involved various interested parties over the years. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the spring of 2020, the Public Health Agency of Canada, or PHAC, identified new and urgent requirements for laboratory space and entered into a collaboration with the NRC on life science and pandemic-related work. This collaboration included work at the Ellice Avenue property. The NRC is committed to supporting the Government of Canada's life sciences and biomanufacturing strategy, as well as pandemic response and preparedness. The past and current collaborations in support of the work of PHAC will be critical in achieving outcomes in these areas.

With regard to part (b), there are 71 federal employees working at 435 Ellice Avenue and 80 federal employees working at 445 Ellice Avenue.

With regard to part (c), the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority rents space at 435 Ellice Avenue.

With regard to part (d), there are 70 employees of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority working at 435 Ellice Avenue.

With regard to part (e), given the new and ongoing government needs for laboratory facilities in Winnipeg, the NRC has decided to retain the property. The NRC continues to explore possible leasing arrangements for the office tower portion of the property.

With regard to part (f), in the 2021-22 fiscal year, the operating costs for the NRC properties at 435 and 445 Ellice Avenue totalled \$1,585,992.

Question No. 1218—**Mr. Damien C. Kurek:**

With regard to requests made under the Access to Information Act and Privacy Act (ATIP), since January 1, 2020, broken down by entity subject to the ATIP: (a) how many requests did not receive an extension but still took longer than 30 days to process; (b) how many requests took longer to process than the time noted on the initial extension; (c) how many requests did the government consider to be abandoned by the requestor; (d) what measures does the entity take to ensure that individuals processing ATIP requests make every possible effort to ensure that the requestor actually wants to abandon their request, as opposed to automatically assuming a request is abandoned after not receiving a response from the requestor to a follow-up inquiry; and (e) how many extensions of more than five years have been issued?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to questions (a), (b), (c) and (e), the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, or TBS, collects data for each fiscal year from each institution subject to the acts on the number of requests received, closed, outstanding, carried over, abandoned and responded to according to the legislative timeline of 30 days and extensions taken, broken down by length of time taken: 30 days or less, 31 to 60 days, 61 to 120 days, 121 to 180 days, 181 to 365 days or more than 365 days. It collects data on the amount of time required to close requests: 0 to 30 days, 31 to 60 days, 61 to 120 days or 121 days or more. It also collects data on the number of requests that were closed beyond legislated timelines where an extension or no extension was taken.

TBS publishes a summary of this information annually in the access to information and privacy statistical report, as well as datasets that contain all the statistical data reported by all institutions, broken down by institution, at <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/access-information-privacy/statistics-atip.html>. The information requested in parts (a), (b), (c) and (e) can be found, calculated and compared from year to year based on the published datasets. Institutions also individually report this information to Parliament in their annual reports on the Access to Information Act and Privacy Act, which institutions table in Parliament and publish online each fall.

The latest available data is for fiscal year 2021-22, from April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022. Data for fiscal year 2022-23 is expected to be collected by the end of September 2023 and published by December 31, 2023.

With regard to question (e), the dataset for the supplemental statistics for the 2021-22 fiscal year is also included at the link provided above, which includes information regarding requests that are still open as of March 31, 2022, divided by the year they were received. Therefore, all requests received in fiscal year 2015-16 and before under the column “Open Requests Within Legislated Timelines” are guaranteed to have been issued an extension of longer than 5 years.

TBS proactively makes the information sought in the above question publicly available every year towards the end of the calendar year.

With regard to question (d), TBS provides policies and directives as guidance to all institutions on all aspects of access to information and privacy. However, access to information and privacy, or ATIP, offices are responsible for ensuring that when processing requests, every possible effort is made to ensure that the requester really wants to abandon their request before closing it.

The definition provided to institutions for an abandoned request is as follows. A request is considered abandoned when the requester formally withdraws it, the required fees are not received within the timeline specified by the institution in a notice or the requester does not respond to a notice indicating that the request will be closed if they do not provide clarification within the specified timeline.

In order for a request to be processed, the requester must submit a request for access to a record “in writing to the government institution that has control of the record and shall provide sufficient detail to enable an experienced employee of the institution to identify the record with a reasonable effort”, as prescribed by section 6 of the Access to Information Act, accompanied by an application fee of five dollars, as prescribed by paragraph 11(1)(a) of the Access to Information Act and paragraph 7(1)(a) of the access to information regulations. Should these conditions not be met, institutions write to the requester seeking either the additional information or the application fee, setting a deadline for these to be provided. If the requester does not provide the missing information or fee in the prescribed time, the request is abandoned.

Question No. 1221—**Mr. Stephen Ellis:**

With regard to the government's \$173 million funding for Medicago announced in 2020: (a) does the government or the Mitsubishi Chemical Group own the intellectual property developed as a result of this funding; (b) what measures, if any, did the government take to ensure that the intellectual property developed from the funding would remain in Canada; (c) did the government receive any long-term job commitments from Medicago or Mitsubishi Chemical Group in return for the \$173 million, and, if so, what are the details of such commitments; and (d) did the government receive value for money in exchange for the \$173 million, and, if not, what corrective action is being taken?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to part (a), in projects supported by the strategic innovation fund, or SIF, the Crown does not have an ownership interest in intellectual property resulting from the project, nor will the Crown acquire new rights in existing intellectual property owned or licensed by the company. Strategic innovation fund contribution agreements require companies to own the background intellectual property or hold sufficient background intellectual property rights to enable their projects. Additionally, companies must hold sufficient rights to permit the use of the intellectual property resulting from their projects' activities. The Government of Canada's efforts with parent company Mitsubishi are to protect the company's world-leading intellectual property science and retain top talent by assisting the workers impacted by the announcement.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to part (b), the SIF of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, or ISED, provides funding to projects that, one, have a strong research and development capacity or resources to develop new technologies and unique inventions; two, will build a strong intellectual property portfolio or broaden the scope of an already strong intellectual property portfolio; and three, can commercialize the intellectual property portfolio in Canada with strong public benefits. The Government of Canada makes strong efforts to protect and retain intellectual property in Canada. Recipients of the strategic innovation fund, including Medicago Inc., are required to take appropriate steps to protect the intellectual property resulting from activities supported through the program, including retention of project intellectual property in Canada. A recipient may be in default of its agreement if it fails to fulfill any of its contractual obligations, including intellectual property obligations. ISED will continue to work with Medicago and Mitsubishi on protecting their world-leading intellectual property science, retaining top talent and ensuring that all obligations under the agreement are fulfilled, including remedies.

With regard to part (c), the Medicago COVID-19 project announced 75 jobs created and 275 jobs maintained.

With regard to part (d), in October 2020, the SIF supported Medicago's virus-like particles vaccine and biomanufacturing capabilities in Canada based on the expert advice of Canada's COVID-19 vaccine task force, or VTF, and following robust due diligence, which included technical, market and financial reviews. This support was in order to build pandemic preparedness in the uncertainty of a public health crisis and to retain intellectual property in Canada. The supported project led to the successful development and regulatory approval of the only Canadian-based COVID-19 vaccine and the first plant-based vaccine in the world.

Question No. 1224—**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:**

With regard to the Canadian Sport Helpline: (a) how many calls, texts or emails has the line received since its inception, broken down by month; and (b) how many times was each sport or organization the subject of the calls, texts or emails in (a), broken down by sport or organization?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the data is the property of the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada, an independent organization from Sport Canada. As a start, the "Pilot Project Evaluation Report" of the Canadian sport helpline and investigation unit can be found on its website, at http://www.crdsc-sdrcc.ca/eng/documents/Evaluation_of_Safe_Sport_Initiatives_-_Final_report_31_March_2020.pdf.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1207, 1209 to 1211, 1213 to 1215, 1217, 1219, 1220, 1222 and 1225 to 1227 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 1207—**Mr. Tom Kmiec:**

With regard to the International Mobility Program (IMP), since January 1, 2016: (a) what are the top 10 employers, in terms of the number of applications received by the government from the employers, for the IMP, and how many employees have each of the top 10 employers sponsored through the IMP; (b) for each employer in (a), what is the overview of the jobs that each has sponsored, including the (i) type of business, (ii) job titles and work description, (iii) wage ranges; (c) how much money was collected by the government in (i) 2021, (ii) 2022, from compliance fees related to the IMP; (d) how many separate employers were the fees in (c) collected from; (e) what is the number of employers currently ineligible for the IMP as a result of non-compliance; (f) how many investigations were conducted by (i) the Canada Border Services Agency (ii) Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, related to violations of workers' rights or other suspected infractions of companies which used the IMP; (g) of the investigations in (f), what were the results, including, for each finding of wrongdoing, the (i) company's name, (ii) date the wrongdoing took place, (iii) description of the wrongdoing, (iv) punitive action taken by the government; (h) what was the total number of applications received each year under the IMP; and (i) what was the total number of applicants who arrived in Canada through the IMP each year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1209—**Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to PacificCan funding programs, broken down by federal electoral district in British Columbia since the agency's inception: (a) what are the details of all projects that received funding under the Regional Innovation Ecosystems program stream, including the (i) business or organization name, (ii) total amount of funding received; (b) what are the details of all projects that received funding under the Regional Quantum Initiative, including the (i) business or organization name, (ii) total amount of funding received; (c) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Economic Development Initiative, including the (i) business or organization name, (ii) total amount of funding received, (iii) official language minority community that the funding supports; (d) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Community Economic Development and Diversification program, including the (i) business or organization name, (ii) total amount of funding received; (e) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Strategic Partnerships Initiative, including the (i) Indigenous community name, (ii) total amount of funding received; (f) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Strategic Innovation Fund, including the (i) name of the project, (ii) total amount of funding contribution, (iii) total investment leveraged, (iv) number of jobs created and maintained; (g) what is the total amount of funding delivered through past programs, including through the (i) Canadian Experiences Fund, (ii) Steel and Aluminum Initiative, (iii) Western Innovation Initiative, (iv) Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program; and (h) what is the total amount of funding delivered to each federal electoral district in British Columbia in (a) through (g)?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1210—Ms. Rachel Blaney:**

With regard to Pacifica COVID-19 relief and recovery funding, broken down by federal electoral district in British Columbia and fiscal year since the agency's inception: (a) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Canada Community Revitalization Fund, including the (i) name of the community, (ii) name of the project, (iii) total amount of funding received; (b) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Jobs and Growth Fund, including the (i) name of the business or the organization, (ii) total amount of funding received; (c) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Tourism Relief Fund, including the (i) name of the business or the organization, (ii) total amount of funding received; (d) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Aerospace Regional Recovery Initiative, including the (i) business or organization name, (ii) total amount of funding received; (e) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Regional Air Transportation Initiative, including the (i) name of the airport, the air carrier, the organization, the business, or the public institution, (ii) total amount of funding received; (f) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Major Festivals and Events Support Initiative, including the (i) name of the eligible festival or event, (ii) total amount of funding received; (g) what are the details of all projects that received funding through the Canadian Seafood Stabilization Fund, including the (i) name of the fish and seafood processor, (ii) total amount of funding received; and (h) what is the total amount of funding delivered to each federal electoral district through the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1211—Mr. John Nater:

With regard to the government's executive vehicle fleet and travel expenses incurred by chauffeurs or drivers of those vehicles for travel outside of the National Capital Region (NCR): what are the details of all trips where travel expenses were claimed, including the (i) name and title of the minister, deputy minister, or high-ranking government official driven on the trip, (ii) date of departure from the NCR, (iii) date of return to the NCR, (iv) destination, (v) total expenses claimed, (vi) breakdown of the expenses by type (air transportation, accommodation, meals, etc.), (vii) reason for the trip?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1213—Mr. Mark Strahl:

With regard to the Minister of Transport's trip to Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt in December 2022: (a) what were the total expenditures related to the trip, broken down by type of expense and who incurred the expense (minister, exempt staff, local embassy, etc.); (b) what was the minister's itinerary on each day of the trip, including who attended each item on the itinerary; and (c) what are the details, including the summary of terms, of any agreements which were signed during the trip?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1214—Mr. Stephen Ellis:

With regard to the government's financial dealing with Medicago: (a) how much funding has the government provided to Medicago since 2018, broken down by date of payment and program or procurement order under which Medicago received the funding; (b) of the money in (a), how much does the government project will be recovered; and (c) what action, if any, has the government taken with Medicago or its parent company, Mitsubishi Chemical Group, to recover the amounts in (a)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1215—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to government expenditures on appearance fees, speaking fees, hosting fees, or other similar type of fees, since January 1, 2019, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation or other government entity: what are the details of all such expenditures, including, for each, the (i) date of the event, (ii) description of the role (keynote speaker, master of ceremony, etc.), (iii) name of the speaker, (iv) location of the event, (v) event description, (vi) size of the audience or the number of attendees, (vii) amount paid?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1217—Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay:

With regard to the Prime Minister's residence at Harrington Lake, including the surrounding property: (a) what are the total expenditures related to all renovations, upgrades, construction, or other projects at the residence or property since November 4, 2015; (b) what are the details of each project, including the (i) cost or esti-

mated cost, (ii) start date, (iii) completion date or the expected completion date, (iv) project description; (c) what was the total annual budget to operate the residence and property since January 1, 2016, broken down by year; and (d) what is the breakdown of (c) by type of expense (utilities, landscaping, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1219—Mr. Dean Allison:

With regard to requests made by the government to social media companies to take down, edit, ban, or change in any other way social media content, posts, or accounts, since January 1, 2020, broken down by department, agency, or other government entity: what are the details of all such requests, including (i) who made the request, (ii) the date, (iii) the social media platform, (iv) the description of the original content, including the name or the handle associated with post, (v) the description of the change requested, (vi) whether the social media company abided by the government's request?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1220—Mr. Frank Caputo:

With regard to staffing at the RCMP's Operational Communications Centres (OCC): (a) what was the job vacancy rate (i) nationally, (ii) at each OCC, broken down by location, as of February 7, 2023; (b) how many calls from the public to the OCCs went unanswered or received a busy signal, broken down by month and location since January 1, 2022; and (c) how many hours was each OCC (i) understaffed, (ii) not staffed, broken down by month since January 1, 2022?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1222—Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille:

With regard to both small and mid-sized projects components of the Enabling Accessibility Fund, since its creation: what projects have been funded, broken down by (i) province, (ii) applicant, (iii) amount awarded, (iv) year of the project completion?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1225—Mr. Damien C. Kurek:

With regard to furniture and office equipment delivered to the personal residences of ministers and ministerial exempt staff, including in the Office of the Prime Minister, since January 1, 2020: (a) what are the details of all such items delivered to the residences of ministers, including, for each, the (i) minister, (ii) amount paid or the financial value (iii) cost per unit, (iv) description of the items, including the brand and the quantity, (v) vendor, (vi) contract or file number; (b) what are the details of all such items delivered to the residences of ministerial exempt staff, including, for each, the (i) name of the minister the staff member worked for, (ii) amount paid or the financial value, (iii) cost per unit, (iv) description of the item, including the brand and the quantity, (v) vendor, (vi) contract or file number; and (c) are any of the items in (a) or (b) expected to be returned to a government location at any point in the future, and, if so, what are the details of any such plans?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1226—Mr. Gérard Deltell:

With regard to Medicago, Philip Morris International and the government's investments in Medicago: (a) what are the details of all memorandums, correspondence or briefing materials sent to or received by any minister, exempt staff, or government official in any department or agency in the Health portfolio or the Innovation, Science and Economic Development portfolio, since January 1, 2020, about Medicago or Philip Morris International, including, for each, the (i) type of document, (ii) date, (iii) sender, (iv) recipient, (v) title, (vi) subject matter, (vii) summary of contents, (viii) file number; (b) on what date was the government made aware that Philip Morris' minority ownership stake in Medicago's parent company would make its products ineligible to receive authorization from the World Health Organization; and (c) did the government do anything to hedge its investments following the realization in (b)?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders***Question No. 1227—Mrs. Dominique Vien:**

With regard to the announcement by the government on August 1, 2019, that it would be providing \$250 million in repairs and upgrades to Reserve armouries and training facilities across Canada: (a) how much of that money has been distributed to date, broken down by the location of each armoury or training facility that has received funding; and (b) at each location in (a), what specific projects or repairs are being done with the funding and what is the expected completion date of each project?

(Return tabled)

[*English*]

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (for the Minister of Public Safety) moved that Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is truly an honour to begin debate today on Bill C-41. This legislation aims to address important aspects of the deepening crisis in Afghanistan and responds to Canadian humanitarian aid agencies and their pleas to be able to deliver relief to a country on the brink. This work stems from the cross-party collaborative efforts from the Special Committee on Afghanistan and the important recommendations put forward by members of that committee.

I am proud to have been a member of this committee, but this work is also thanks to the non-governmental organizations and humanitarian aid agencies that advocated and testified at committee for a pathway forward to deliver aid to Afghanistan. The testimony we heard was haunting. The Afghan people have persisted through four decades of war, and since the forceful capture of the country by the Taliban, the world has witnessed the erosion of fundamental rights and the steady deterioration of social and economic systems. This has created the largest humanitarian crisis in the world.

Drawing on testimony from the committee, I want to remind the House that Afghanistan was a country that was reliant on foreign aid before the takeover by the Taliban. The committee's report states the following:

The World Bank had assessed that Afghanistan's economy was "shaped by fragility and aid dependence." Grants were financing some 75% of total public expenditure and were responsible for around 45% of Afghanistan's gross domestic product in 2020. With the abrupt return to power of the Taliban, Afghanistan—whose currency reserves held abroad were frozen—experienced a significant fiscal contraction at the same time as it essentially became cut-off from the international banking and payments systems. That occurred because the Taliban have long been subject to sanctions in relation to terrorism.

The overall result for the country has been "near economic and institutional collapse, including an inability to provide most basic services and pay civil servant

salaries." The net effect for the Afghan people is that prices have increased, livelihoods have disappeared, and household resources have been exhausted...

To encapsulate the enormity of this situation, John Aylieff, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific at the WFP, said: "Today, millions of people in Afghanistan— young children, families and communities—stand at the precipice of inhumane hunger and destitution." Of the 23 million people who required food assistance, nearly 9 million were "one step away from famine," while some 1 million children were "at risk of perishing this year from acute malnutrition."

The population of Afghanistan is 40 million people, and 23 million people require food assistance.

What I have described is but a small sample of the testimony we heard. It was clear that Canadian aid agencies were ready and willing to help, but they were unable to do so. According to Michael Messenger, CEO of World Vision Canada, that organization had "two containers full of packets of ready-to-use therapeutic food...to treat children facing the severest forms of malnutrition...[that] can literally bring children back from the brink of death by starvation." The committee report goes on to say, "The organization could not ship them to Afghanistan, despite the pleas from their team on the ground. Each container can help more than 900 children."

I am proud of the report from the Special Committee on Afghanistan and am pleased this legislation is in line with recommendations 10 and 11, which called upon the government to ensure that registered Canadian organizations have the clarity and assurances needed to deliver humanitarian assistance to meet the basic needs of the people of Afghanistan without fear of prosecution for violating Canada's anti-terrorism laws.

Canada has a long and rich history of fighting for human rights and delivering life-saving assistance abroad. Over the last 20 years, many Afghans experienced improved access to health services and education and were able to participate in efforts to build their democracy. This occurred in no small part thanks to the efforts of Canadian organizations providing aid in support of a generation of leaders, many of whom were women, who were building a better country for all Afghans.

● (1540)

The purpose of this bill is to address the fact that Canada's current legal framework has limited the ability of Canadian aid organizations to provide assistance to the people of Afghanistan due to potential Criminal Code liability. Although the Taliban has taken over as the de facto national authority of Afghanistan, it remains a listed terrorist group under Canada's Criminal Code.

The Taliban maintains close links with several terrorist groups, and the combination of a weak state and a collapsing economy gives terrorist groups a fertile ground within which to operate, but we must put in place needed reform to address the needs of the Afghan people and to facilitate the assistance they so desperately need. We will find a balanced course of action that will also seek to preserve the integrity of Canada's counter-terrorism financing measures.

Government Orders

The proposed bill maintains strong counter-terrorist financing measures while presenting an authorization regime to provide protection from criminal liability for the delivery of humanitarian aid and other activities by Canadian organizations. Terrorist financing remains a criminal offence. Authorizations would only shield applicants from criminal liability for providing an unavoidable benefit to a terrorist group associated with activities that serve a specified purpose, subject to strict terms and conditions. An authorization would not shield efforts to deliberately leverage the authorization to provide a benefit to a terrorist group beyond what is incidental and covered by the authorization terms and conditions. Such activities would remain criminal.

We recognize that terrorism is a global threat that requires a concerted international response. Canada's terrorist financing regime is contained in the Criminal Code and, because of this, aid agencies were restricted in delivering aid as it could be interpreted as providing indirect financial support to the Taliban, which is a criminal offence. This authorization tool would facilitate the delivery of certain activities, like humanitarian assistance, human rights programming and immigration services, in geographic areas controlled by terrorist groups. This means that Canadians holding an authorization and providing these services would no longer be at risk of committing a terrorist financing offence, and foreign citizens, like the people of Afghanistan, would be able to receive the assistance they need in their country or by resettling to Canada.

I have already heard anecdotally that some aid organizations are ramping up their operations in anticipation of the passage of this legislation so they can scale up their work in supporting the people of Afghanistan.

Further, the proposed authorization regime is not restricted to Afghanistan, in order to enable the Government of Canada to respond to similar situations elsewhere in the world, now and in the future.

Under this regime, the Minister of Public Safety would consider applications that have been referred by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and/or the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, who would first need to be satisfied that certain conditions were met. This includes, among other things, that the proposed activity aligns with a permitted purpose and responds to a real and important need.

Once the application has been referred, the Minister of Public Safety would conduct a security review that must assess the impact of granting the authorization on terrorist financing. Factors to be considered include, among others, whether the applicants or those involved in activity implementation have links to terrorist groups or were investigated, charged or convicted of terrorism offences. Those assessments would be led by Public Safety and undertaken by the national security agencies, such as CSIS, the RCMP and CSE, where required.

The issuance of an authorization would ultimately take into account an assessment of benefit, need and capability of the applicant against the assessment of risk of terrorist financing. Any eligible person or organization in Canada, or Canadian organization outside of Canada, could apply for an authorization. This could include Government of Canada officials, as well as persons associated with

or acting on behalf of a registered or incorporated Canadian organization. The updated Criminal Code provisions would also set out permissible classes of activities that would achieve certain purposes.

● (1545)

In the current situation in Afghanistan, the delivery of aid and other forms of international assistance inevitably benefits the Taliban through taxation and other fees. This regime would allow Canadian organizations, including Government of Canada departments, to work within the defined scope of an authorization to achieve their goals without risk of running afoul of the law.

Simply put, the changes contemplated in Bill C-41 would allow our aid agencies to go back to what they do best: saving lives.

I know this is an issue that has touched the hearts of all who served on the Special Committee on Afghanistan. We were able to set aside partisan differences and work together to present our report. The bill responds to that report. I was heartened to see this place provide unanimous consent to a motion last week that will ensure that the bill is fast-tracked through the parliamentary process.

I began my speech by outlining the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, but it is not only food insecurity that threatens the lives of millions of Afghans. Health care is in crisis. Women and girls are facing human rights violations that are unthinkable. Afghanistan has one of the highest rates of those living with a disability in the world, after decades of war and land mines. Families have sold their daughters just to survive.

To be honest, the conditions in Afghanistan are beyond comprehension for all of us sitting here in Canada. Sadly, they are a reality for millions of Afghans living under the Taliban regime. Groups like Islamic Relief, World Vision, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, Red Cross, CARE Canada and so many others are ready to provide aid to some of the world's most vulnerable, but they need us to act.

In 2019, The Asia Foundation released a model disability survey of Afghanistan, which found that nearly 80% of adults in Afghanistan have a disability. As a result, many of the households in Afghanistan have become women-led. With the current regime in place, women have been forced out of the economy and out of schools, leaving many households in abject poverty. Those living with disabilities also face heightened violence and insecurity within conflict. Because of this, so many who have a disability in Afghanistan face more difficulties attempting to flee conflict, resulting in a higher reliance on humanitarian aid.

Bill C-41 would be able to reach this population, which has not had the same opportunity to seek refuge in other countries, and would allow for humanitarian aid to flow to Afghanistan to address the specific needs those with disabilities face.

The human rights abuses against women and girls, and the Hazaras, are particularly egregious. Women and girls have been denied their most basic rights, including their right to education and employment, at every turn. Finding different means to control women, the Taliban has imposed strict dress codes, forcing them to wear a burka, a full body covering that obscures their face and body. Women's freedom of movement has also been severely restricted, with women being allowed to leave their homes only in the company of a male relative. Of course, those who do not comply are met with harassment, abuse and state-sanctioned violence.

The restrictions imposed on women's education are devastating.

In March 2018, on the floor of the Library of Parliament, in the old Centre Block, at the heart of our democracy, I, along with the Minister of Science, the Minister for Women and Gender Equality, and the Prime Minister, met with the Afghan Dreamers. They were an all-women high school robotics team who, in partnership with FIRST Robotics Canada, had flown from Afghanistan to Canada to compete against high-school teams across the province. They brought their robot from Kabul to Canada.

● (1550)

It is hard to remember these young women and think about their lives today under the Taliban. They showed me what the future of Afghanistan was going to look like, and I remain in hope that this future comes to fruition. When I was speaking with these young women, they told me that when they left Canada to go back home they wanted to open a school dedicated to teaching other women and girls about science, technology, engineering and math. These young women were and continue to be Afghanistan's greatest resource.

Since returning to power, the Taliban has targeted schools like the one envisioned by The Afghan Dreamers, often destroying school buildings and threatening those who teach and attend them. At times, women have been prohibited from attending schools and universities. Women who are pursuing higher education have been forced to abandon their studies. Women are being used as a tool to advance the Taliban's power in the region.

Speaking at the UN Commission on the Status of Women on March 24, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan advocacy manager Sarah Keeler said:

But while girls the world over are out of education, the situation for girls and women in Afghanistan is unparalleled in its intensity and impact. Under repressive Taliban rule, Afghanistan is now the only country on the planet with the terrible distinction of denying women and girls their right to learn as a policy. Indeed, the Taliban's restrictions amount to system-wide gender persecution, in education and elsewhere.

For girls like Maryam, there are not just the barriers of poverty or lack of infrastructure, already overwhelming enough—there is also ideological malice that has intentionally robbed girls of their rights and hope for the future. “What crime have I committed?”, asks Maryam. She writes to us of feeling hopeless, suicidal and alone. All Afghan women and girls, but perhaps most of all the generation for whom two decades of democratic progress and investment in education provided the catalyst for real achievement and aspiration, are experiencing a profound mental health crisis.

The Hazara minority is no different. Through witnesses who appeared before committee, we heard about the devastation and persecution faced by the Hazara community. Hazaras are a predominant Shia Muslim ethnic group that has faced systemic discrimination

Government Orders

from the Taliban. From being subjected to attacks to forced displacement and other human rights abuses, the Hazara minority remains a vulnerable group in Afghanistan that is in dire need of the support this bill would allow.

Previously, Canada introduced special measures to support Afghans through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. We have welcomed over 29,000 Afghan refugees since August 2021. These special measures allow the expedited processing of applications from Afghan nationals seeking to immigrate to Canada. A dedicated channel was introduced for applications coming in from a number of measures Canada presented. The special immigration measures program aims to resettle 18,000 people. IRCC also introduced a temporary public policy that creates a pathway to permanent residence for extended family members of former Afghan interpreters who immigrated to Canada under the 2009 and 2012 public policies. More recently, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada introduced a temporary policy for extended family members of former language and cultural advisers. The work that our government has done has been important and life-changing.

While thousands of Afghan nationals have been able to seek refuge in Canada, there are millions more who need our support, and this bill would allow exactly that. We as parliamentarians have an obligation to all Afghans to pass this legislation quickly and judiciously. Aid to Afghanistan remains absolutely vital. With this legislative change, Canada is responding to the growing crisis in Afghanistan. This would also help our government work with like-minded countries and international partners to advance our priorities. Canada has a hard-earned international reputation as both a fierce protector and a steadfast source of humanitarian assistance.

● (1555)

I want to give a special thanks to those who worked on this issue. It is rare in this place that we work together with civil society to make such monumental change, but with this legislation, we will truly save the lives of some of the most vulnerable in the world.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not doubt the member's sincere personal feelings, but I have to say that the government has failed the people of Afghanistan for far too long.

If we reflect on the timelines, the Taliban took Kabul in August 2021. The Afghanistan standing committee report that the member referred to came out in June 2022. It has been nine months since then, and now we are debating this legislation at the end of March 2023. The foreign affairs committee unanimously passed a motion I put forward in the fall of last year reiterating the call from the Afghanistan committee, and passed a similar motion this spring.

Government Orders

This legislation, once passed, does not grant the exemptions yet. We will still have to wait for exemptions to be granted by the government through regulation. We have already been through two winters in Afghanistan under the Taliban, and the very dire situations the member spoke about have persisted throughout that time. However, the government has been very late in responding to unanimous calls, and certainly calls from the opposition, for action. Why has it taken the government so long?

• (1600)

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that Canada's terrorist financing regime is contained in the Criminal Code. Work needed to be done to ensure that we were amending the Criminal Code in a way that would give aid organizations the ability to deliver aid in Afghanistan. We also worked with those aid organizations. We took up the recommendations and testimony we heard at the special committee, because we wanted to ensure that we were getting right what we were doing.

I can assure the hon. member that with the regime in place and the authorization regime, we will be looking at things in a very timely manner, because we know the impact that it will have on the ground in Afghanistan.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Oakville North—Burlington for her speech. I share her sadness for the women of Afghanistan.

This situation has always had an emotional impact on me. During the crisis in the summer of 2021, I learned about a strong Afghan community settled in Granby. I had men coming to my office crying, worried about their wives and daughters. I discovered the solidarity and beauty of the Afghan people.

Last fall, I had the opportunity to meet with male Afghan elected officials in Rwanda. Unfortunately, the lone female Afghan representative was unable to attend. She was barred from leaving the country.

At the last IPU meeting I attended in Bahrain, I spoke about my concern for Afghan women, particularly those living in conflict zones, whose education has been disrupted.

It is true that this bill is an important step forward. However, as we have seen in the last few days, international co-operation groups are concerned because, in order to increase their assistance for women internationally, they say that they need financial resources from the Canadian government.

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

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I applaud the hon. member's advocacy and work on behalf of women and girls not just here in Canada but around the world. I know that groups like Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan are continuing to find ways to provide assistance to women and girls in Afghanistan, often doing it at great risk to their own lives.

I worry that Canadians have forgotten about Afghanistan, but through advocacy like ours and the hon. member's, we continue to

shine a light on the abhorrent conditions that women and girls are facing in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime. I think we all need to continue to speak up loudly on behalf of the women and girls in Afghanistan.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I share in the hon. member's horror and grief at what is happening in Afghanistan, with the discrimination and persecution that women in Afghanistan are facing right now. It is part of the reason my NDP colleagues and I have been so frustrated that it has taken 18 months to get here. We have needed this legislation. However, now that it is here, we are hearing concerns from humanitarian organizations that it may contravene international law and Canada's international obligations. In particular, Doctors Without Borders Canada has expressed these concerns.

Why did the government not do a blanket exemption and carve-out, like many organizations have been requesting? There are no other countries doing the kind of bureaucratic process the government has chosen with a registry. I am curious if the member could explain how this does nor does not contravene our international obligations, and why the government did not listen to the organizations on the ground and do a blanket carve-out.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I had not heard those concerns, so I thank the hon. member for bringing them forward.

I will say that Canada was unique among other countries in the way that our terrorist financing regime was designed. It was included in the Criminal Code, so it made it more difficult to make exemptions compared to what other countries have done. I know other countries around the world have granted a blanket exemption, but their terrorist financing provisions were not included in a criminal code the way ours are.

I look forward to the hon. member passing on the concerns that she has heard to me, and I look forward to working with her to ensure that we put forward something that is able to deliver aid to Afghanistan as quickly as possible.

• (1605)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I very much welcome this legislation coming forward, although I share some of the concerns of the hon. member for Victoria. Many of our allies and other donor countries did not have the problems we have had as a country with getting aid workers into Afghanistan without tripping up into the rules against terrorism. I welcome this legislation. We need to get it through quickly.

I was totally moved by my colleague's speech and her emotion about this issue, but our colleagues in Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. did not have the problems that were created for us by the very strict and overly narrow definitions of terrorism that tripped up our aid efforts. Does she have any thoughts on what we can learn from this experience going forward?

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, I think there are lessons to be learned from how the original legislation was drafted. As the hon. member knows, the original legislation was drafted by a previous government. We have been trying to find a way to put in place something that respects what is in the Criminal Code but still allows agencies to deliver aid.

I wish we could have done this many months ago. I was haunted by the testimony we heard at committee. I think of the young women who came to Canada whose lives have been so disrupted by what has happened in their country, a country that at one time not too long ago had so much hope. We were dealing with a system that was already in place, and I think there are always lessons to be learned as we move forward.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is heartbreaking to hear what is happening. I was recently at a Nowruz event with thousands of Afghan women, and the stories we heard about what is happening were beyond belief.

One thing I wanted to ask about was the human rights programming aspect. The parliamentary secretary mentioned that in addition to humanitarian aid, we will now be able to help with human rights programming. Could you specifically address how we might be able to help young women and girls who are not able to get educated at this point through these programs?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not able to answer that, but I will give it to the hon. member to answer. I would ask the hon. member to address all questions and comments through the Chair, not directly to the member.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Pam Damoff: Madam Speaker, you are welcome to answer if you wish.

As I mentioned previously, groups like Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, which have been doing such incredible work under a previous Taliban regime, are going to be able to do what they do best on the ground. There are other organizations. I singled them out specifically, but other organizations have teams on the ground in Afghanistan that stand ready to deliver education, aid and whatever is needed for the people of Afghanistan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, on September 11, 2001, a terrorist organization that was using Afghanistan as its base of operations attacked New York and Washington. In response to this attack, Canada joined an American-like coalition that worked to overthrow Afghanistan's Taliban government and supported the transformation of Afghanistan into a free democracy. Canada also joined other countries in establishing tough new domestic anti-terrorism legislation that aided in preventing any kind of presence of or interaction with designated terrorist organizations.

The decision to overthrow Afghanistan's Taliban government was seen as just and a form of retaliation for the lives lost on September 11, but it was also framed as a war for the liberation of the Afghan people. It was widely explained not as a war against Afghanistan but as a war for Afghanistan, in particular for the freedom of the Afghan people.

The spirit of that period was one of profound optimism about the universality of the human aspiration for freedom and democracy and about the possibility of external intervention quickly bringing about that democracy. This optimism was best expressed by then British prime minister Tony Blair, who said:

Government Orders

...ours are not Western values, they are the universal values of the human spirit. And anywhere, any time ordinary people are given the chance to choose, the choice is the same: freedom, not tyranny; democracy, not dictatorship; the rule of law, not the rule of the secret police.

The implication in the minds of many seemed to be that we could use superior firepower to chase out the bad guys, introduce democracy and then quickly move on with our lives.

As Canada joined military efforts to support the transformation of Afghanistan into a free democracy, Afghanistan also became a major focus of Canadian development systems. In this whole enterprise we were motivated by the highest aspirations: to sacrifice blood and treasure to allow women and men on the other side of the world to seize their birthright of freedom. However, on August 15, 2021, almost exactly 20 years after the 9/11 attacks, as the last allied soldiers were pulling out of Afghanistan, it was again overrun by Taliban forces. As of this moment in time at least, our great optimistic efforts to transform Afghanistan ended in failure.

On the same day that Kabul fell, rather than being at his desk working on the desperately needed response to these unfolding events, our Prime Minister was visiting the Governor General to call a domestic election, an election that we did not need, that featured more polarization and demonization of Canadians than any in recent memory and that returned a virtually unchanged Parliament. We would have been so much better off if the Prime Minister had been putting his responsibilities ahead of his perceived political interests.

Leading up to the fall of Afghanistan, the Conservatives had been calling on the government to use special immigration measures to assist the most vulnerable Afghans, those who assisted Canada during the previous 20 years, as well as ethnic and religious minorities, such as Hazaras, Sikhs, Hindus and Christians. In fact, the very first statement I ever made in this House back in 2015 was to call for special immigration measures for Afghan minorities. The government's response to these calls has ranged from slow to non-existent, and lives have been lost as a result.

Outside of the failures of our government, it is worth taking stock of what happened in general between September 11, 2001, and August 15, 2021. What caused the optimism for the expansion of freedom and democracy that drove nation building in Afghanistan post-9/11 to fade into the fatalistic acceptance of the apparent global democratic decline that led the United States and other countries to leave Afghanistan and effectively hand it back to the Taliban?

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

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

Government Orders

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, the interpreter is saying that the member is speaking so fast that she is having difficulty interpreting. She is doing her best. Could we ask the member to slow down a bit, please?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Of course we need the interpretation to work so that everyone can understand what is being said. The interpreter should have the member's notes. If not, we will be sure to provide them to her.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan can continue his speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I will. It is my right to speak in the House. I appreciate that.

Transforming Afghanistan was a great and noble goal, but doing worthwhile things is never easy. Supporting the democratic development of Afghanistan was always going to be a long process, and if it was going to work, then it would require a long-term commitment.

Tony Blair is right, in an ultimate sense. The people always ultimately choose freedom over tyranny, but the short-term optimism of the post-9/11 era did not pay enough attention to the need to gradually and painstakingly develop the institutions and political culture of a free pluralistic society over time. We were too quick to want to declare mission accomplished. We cannot expect to simply chase out the bad guys and then roll out the template of free democratic institutions because there is no single template for such institutions.

The core problem was that so-called neo-conservatism was not, in practice, sufficiently conservative. Conservatism, in its essential form, emphasizes the importance of local culture, tradition and familial attachments. To succeed, the institutions and culture of free democracy must be built on that pre-existing local foundation.

There is no single template for democracy because democracy succeeds when it builds on pre-existing cultural structures that have existing legitimacy, which then confer that legitimacy on the emergent democratic structures. This is how democracy was successfully built in the west, especially in the Anglo-American tradition over a long period. If those advancing democracy elsewhere do not build on the existing cultural foundation, then there will inevitably be rival centres of power that compete for legitimacy with the new democrat institutions.

In practice, neo-conservatism was not sufficiently conservative because it did not sufficiently take stock of how deeply embedded traditions and authority structures need to be collaborated with and harnessed in order to build free institutions that are authentic to the local setting over time. Any work of external nation building requires both great patience and even greater humility.

Free societies are not built like buildings. Rather, they grow like trees. Our own long history of halting democratic development in the west building on pre-democratic foundations should have made it clear to us that democratic development was always going to be a long-term project if it was going to be completed.

In one sense, the work of securing democracy is never complete. As the saying goes, the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Save for the possibilities of divine intervention or nuclear annihilation, there is no such thing as the end of history. That is as true in Afghanistan as it is anywhere else. The work of building Canadian democracy is not complete, so why should we have expected it to ever be complete in Afghanistan? Of course, the hope of many, and rightly so, was that at some point along the way, external troops would be able to fully withdraw and Afghans themselves would be the ones vigilantly guarding and defending their own freedom, no longer needing outside help.

The critics of continuing western involvements in Afghanistan believed we needed to end so-called forever wars at a certain point and to leave the country to its own work in this regard. This framing of forever wars was highly misleading.

American troops have been stationed in Korea for much, much longer than they have been in Afghanistan. Nobody considers that American presence in Korea a forever war. America's presence in Korea is rather a matter of a contingent of troops helping to guarantee the peace. The withdrawal of Americans from South Korea would create a significant heightened risk of catastrophic conflict, so it is good for America to keep a contingent of troops there as long as is necessary.

The nature of America's presence in Afghanistan was different of course than the nature of its presence in Korea, but the western presence in Afghanistan was still consistent with the gradual drawing down of engagement, more limited air support backing the Afghan army, extremely low casualty figures in the later years compared to the height of the conflict and a trajectory whereby a smaller and less costly presence could, over time, still help sustain local democracy and security.

The fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban was not the inevitable result of facts on the ground. It was the result of a political choice that reflected a change in the western mood, the shift from too optimistic, impatient interventionism without sufficient cultural understanding to too pessimistic isolationist abandonment.

As we have seen, the politics of isolationism and withdrawal, of putting domestic issues over external security imperatives, has led to global democratic decline, greater insecurity and ultimately a higher risk of costly war. This is why, in an age of further threats to free democracies, we must be vigilant and active, embracing realistic optimism and strategic patience and making the investments and the sacrifices that are required to keep the world a safe place for freedom and democracy.

The quote I read earlier continues with the poignant line, "The spread of freedom is the best security for the free."

I hear from time to time from constituents who want us to ignore events far away and instead to simply focus on challenges at home, but history teaches us that impulse to retrench from the world always leads to the decline of democracy and liberty and to threats from abroad washing up on our own shores. When this spirit prevails, the long-term costs to our own well-being and happiness are inevitably much higher than if we had been engaged with international events from the beginning. I hope we learn the lessons of that history and we apply it.

● (1615)

As it relates to Afghanistan, we must now turn our attention to that other legacy of 9/11, which is the impact of anti-terrorism legislation. Anti-terrorism legislation was designed to confront the threat posed by violent non-state actors. Certain states do engage in acts that would fit any coherent legal definition of terrorism, but we have generally found it useful to maintain the possibility of some intercourse with hostile or rights-abusing governments, even those that use terrorism. The extreme isolation associated with a terrorist listing was therefore designed for violent non-state actors as opposed to violent state actors. This design, though, has been stretched and complicated in certain respects in recent years.

First, certain organizations, such as the IRGC or the Wagner Group, may simultaneously function as an international terrorist organization and as part of, or a close affiliate of, a state. In our view, these organizations should still be listed as terrorist entities, but we should acknowledge that such designations move us closer in the direction of capturing state-affiliated entities, instead of just non-state actors, with anti-terrorism legislation. Designating the particular organs of terrorism, rather than the state itself, still provides space for some interaction with other state organs, and is therefore, in my view, quite doable, even without amending the Criminal Code as it exists.

More complicated is the case in which a terrorist organization comes to occupy and function as the de facto authority in the state, and this is now the case in Afghanistan. Removing such an organization from the terrorist list would clearly send the wrong message and weaken legitimate and important sanctions against that group. Withdrawing the designation from a terrorist group once it takes over government would appear to suggest that one way for a terrorist group to get off the terrorist list is to simply take over territory. Again, that would clearly send the wrong message.

However, the Criminal Code, as it currently exists, was not designed for the situation in which a terrorist group also functions as the de facto authority in a state, so it is reasonable to look for ways to make these provisions nimbler, if that nimbleness allows us to preserve the listing of terrorist groups as terrorist groups. Rather than removing the terrorist designation from a terrorist organization that is still a terrorist organization, we should be prepared to thoughtfully amend the Criminal Code to still allow some presence in, and engagement with the people of, a country when that country has been overrun by a terrorist organization without in any way legitimizing that organization.

This brings us to the particular provisions of Bill C-41. Bill C-41 would allow the Government of Canada to grant very limited exemptions to the Anti-Terrorism Act to allow the delivery of human-

Government Orders

itarian assistance in areas controlled by terrorist organizations. The legislation does not name Afghanistan or the Taliban directly, but it is clearly designed to allow the government to grant narrow exemptions that would allow the delivery of emergency humanitarian relief into Afghanistan.

Afghanistan faces an ongoing humanitarian crisis, in large part as a result of Taliban misrule. Terrorists are generally not very good at running an economy, yet Canadian charities have not been able to deliver essential humanitarian aid because in the process of delivering that aid to the Afghan people, they may run afoul of the Anti-Terrorism Act and thus risk criminal prosecution.

In this particular case, we are not talking about the expenditure of public funds. We are talking simply about increasing the precision of Criminal Code provisions to give private Canadian charities the freedom to deliver private funds to the suffering people of Afghanistan. Bill C-41 does not prescribe the precise form of the exemptions the government will grant. It would simply give the government the power to grant these exemptions. It is reasonable for a government to have this power to deal with contingency situations, although the government will necessarily be held accountable for its judicious and effective use of this power.

On the basic objective of Bill C-41, the biggest problem I have is that it comes too late, not too late to be useful, but too late for many who have already been suffering under Taliban misrule for over a year and a half. Peer countries have been way ahead of us in addressing this problem, and Parliament has been pushing the government to address this issue for almost all of that time. In fact, immediately after the 2021 election, Conservatives proposed a motion to create a special committee on Afghanistan. When it reported to the House last spring, that committee recommended that changes be made to allow humanitarian assistance to get into Afghanistan. Following that, this past fall, the foreign affairs committee unanimously agreed to my motion calling for changes that would allow humanitarian assistance to get into Afghanistan, reiterating what was in the Afghan committee's report, and the committee adopted a second motion on the matter, proposed by the NDP earlier in the winter session, yet it has still taken until the end of March to actually begin debate on this bill.

Government Orders

When I met with international development stakeholders on the bill, they emphasized a significant concern about timelines, and in a few different senses. They highlighted the issue of timelines for the passage of the legislation in the hope the government will choose to prioritize it within its legislative agenda so the legislation can, indeed, move forward. The bill does need to be studied and debated thoroughly, but we are prepared to move it forward as quickly as possible, provided that sufficient time is set aside for study and debate.

While the principles are important, the bill is technically and legally complicated and does require meaningful examination, but stakeholders are not only concerned about the timeline for the passage of this bill. They are concerned about the timelines the bill would create for them in being able to get to work on the ground. Until this legislation passes, international organizations are potentially prohibited criminally from running humanitarian or development programs in Afghanistan if there is some risk of any portion of those resources eventually ending up in the hands of the Taliban.

• (1620)

This legislation would allow the Minister of Public Safety to grant certain narrow exemptions. From the perspective of these organizations, the legislation marks an improvement. However, the process associated with accessing these exemptions would be time-intensive and potentially highly bureaucratic, with no timeline set out. Again, it is not only about how long it takes to pass the bill, but also how long it would take organizations to be authorized to get to work.

The proposed process is that an exemption would be granted after a thorough review by the public safety minister, but only after the issue has been referred to that minister by another minister, either the immigration or foreign affairs minister, who would presumably have to conduct their own analysis. Exemptions would also have to be granted for each individual organization. If one development organization applies for and receives an exemption to operate a particular program, then another organization, running essentially an equivalent program in the same or different geographic area, would also have to apply for their own separate exemption.

There is also a great deal of uncertainty about how widely an exemption would apply. Would an organization that got an exemption to run a program in one province in one year have to apply for another exemption to extend the program, run the same program in a different province or run the program in another year? From my reading, there is a certain lack of clarity around the breadth of the exemptions that would be introduced.

Multiple organizations doing essentially the same work would each have to apply separately instead of simply being able to proceed with their work based on an exemption granted to someone else. This process seems more bureaucratic and costly than it needs to be, and it raises questions about whether the actual exemptions would be in place in a reasonable amount of time.

It also raises concerns about equity. Would the government subject certain organizations to more scrutiny than others, and would small and diaspora-led organizations be able to access these exemptions alongside larger organizations that have a longer history of working directly with the federal government?

Conservatives have repeatedly highlighted the need to ensure the inclusion of small and diaspora-led organizations in our thinking about international development. It is perhaps natural and inevitable that certain trusted partners are more likely to receive direct government funding, but it would be a grave problem if small and less-known organizations continued to face criminal prohibitions on delivering aid while larger, better-known players were given exemptions in identical situations.

It would seem reasonable for the government to establish certain general categories or situations of exemption, which would apply to all organizations, rather than only grant exemptions on an individual case-by-case basis. We will be digging more into this specific part of the issue at committee. Although we feel there is an urgency around the timeline of passing this legislation, there is also an urgency to ensure that processes are streamlined so that we can get assistance to the people who need it as soon as possible.

When I have been consulting with Canadians about this legislation, some have asked if aid should be flowing into Taliban-controlled Afghanistan at all. We know that the real cause of the suffering of the Afghan people is their Taliban oppressors. Poverty is, in this and so many other cases, the result of unjust and broken political institutions preventing people from moving forward in freedom and security. Why treat the symptom when the cause of the problem remains in place?

To that, I would say that what is true in Afghanistan is true in many places, to a lesser extent, and that is that poverty often has its roots in injustice. When people cannot borrow against their assets because they lack clear title, when a primary breadwinner faces arbitrary arrests and does not have secure access to an objective justice system, when transportation routes of goods are not secure, when corruption limits opportunities, when teenagers cannot go to school for fear of violence there or on the way, these are all too common instances in many parts of the developing world where violence causes or perpetuates poverty.

People everywhere have the ingenuity and the potential to lift themselves out of poverty if they are not held back by unjust systems that deprive them of the security, title and credit that they need to get ahead. The fight for justice and for the recognition of universal human dignity is central to development and poverty alleviation. We need to recognize this reality, but we also still need to attack poverty directly, especially in emergency situations like this.

Government Orders

It is not always possible to go directly to the roots of a problem. In the case of Afghanistan, by choosing to abandon Afghanistan's security and the building of just institutions, we have cut ourselves off from the ability to get at the roots of the problem, but with those bad decisions already baked in, we should still do all that we can to save lives and elevate the conditions of the Afghan people.

We should support such measures, even while recognizing that the Taliban cannot be permitted to continue to inflict its reign of terror on the Afghan people. The political problem will require an eventual solution. Delivering humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan is a necessary form of harm reduction, but we should not lose sight of the underlying injustices, political problems and of the need to look for solutions to them.

Based on this, what can we say about the future of Afghanistan? Nobody can say what surprises will rest around the corner, but the Afghan people deserve our continuing support and goodwill. Continuing contacts between Canadian organizations and Afghans in Afghanistan help all concerned to be informed and create opportunities to respond to emerging issues and dynamics.

• (1625)

We need to start by removing legal barriers that prevent humanitarian aid from getting in. Continuing access to food, education and other essentials will provide Afghans some space to move forward. The involvement of Canadian organizations in this effort will mean contact and two-way awareness that could turn into something else down the road.

We should retain some of the old optimism, because the intervening decades between 2001 and 2021 were not all for nothing. A new generation of Afghans has seen a different set of possibilities, and we will work together to ensure the re-emergence of those possibilities. We must still look for a way to be there for them.

At the end of the day, we know the choice that Afghans will make when they are able, because even if not with the right timelines and the right tactics, the main point was correct: "Ours are not Western values, they are the universal values of the human spirit. And anywhere, any time ordinary people are given the chance to choose, the choice is [always] the same: freedom, not tyranny; democracy, not dictatorship; the rule of law, not the rule of the secret police. The spread of freedom is the best security for the free."

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are seeing women's rights around the world under threat. I highlighted in my own speech the threat to women and girls, their rights in Afghanistan and how egregious they are. However, I find it a bit rich when the hon. member stands up on providing aid to countries that are in such dire need when he has been such a vocal opponent of women's reproductive rights, in particular filibustering a study at the foreign affairs committee on providing resources for organizations that provide sexual and reproductive health in countries around the world.

I do not really have a question. I just wanted to make a comment on the need to support women and girls in Canada and around the world.

• (1630)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, we are less than an hour into debate on this important government bill on Afghanistan, debate that is, in my view, a year and a half too late. It shows the partisan political approach of the Liberals to immediately try to throw this important debate about Afghanistan over the side and shift to something else.

Beyond that, I would challenge the member to actually be aware of what is happening in the foreign affairs committee. The study that allegedly I have been filibustering has actually finished now. We have been through four hearings at the foreign affairs committee on that study, and I would invite the member to listen to some of the very thoughtful and insightful witnesses. We heard some witnesses from western NGOs. We also heard witnesses from throughout the developing world who shared their particular perspective on these issues.

I would welcome the member to actually come to the committee, as I have never seen her there before, to review the blues, listen to the witnesses and maybe be aware of what is actually happening at committee before she tries to divert an important debate on Afghanistan with something else.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. If the government was as quick to introduce this bill as my colleague was in reading his speech, Bill C-41 would have been passed a long time ago. I want to congratulate him because I have never heard someone say so many words so quickly.

There are a lot of things in this bill. Members know that I care a lot about this bill. With the support of my colleagues, I was one of the first to ask questions about this. We have been waiting over a year for this bill, and it is here.

We have a lot of questions about Bill C-41. One quickly comes to mind. Authorization must be sought from a number of departments and agencies. That is not clear. What Bill C-41 is saying is that the Government of Canada must give answers to these requests in a timely manner.

Does my colleague believe that this will be done in a timely manner—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, on much simpler matters such as passports and immigration applications, the government has massively expanded the delays we are seeing. When we already have families who are being privately sponsored for refugee status having to wait for three years and we hear the government saying it is going to approve exemptions in a reasonable amount of time, we do not have three years to wait, clearly, to get these exemptions moving forward.

Government Orders

By the sound of the question, my colleague from the Bloc has exactly the same concerns that I have, which are around timelines: how long it has taken us to get this far and how much longer it will take to not only pass the legislation, which is part of the process, but also get to a point where organizations are able to implement programs.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to comment on how disheartening it is to hear members of the Conservative Party not acknowledging the importance of women's reproductive rights when we are talking about humanitarian aid. It is very disheartening.

However, I will move on. Clearly, the reproductive rights of men are not at stake here, so I guess it is not important. I apologize, it is an important issue.

Today we are talking about how we need to ensure that the people of Afghanistan are receiving life-saving humanitarian aid. I want to hear from the member whether he feels that, in the current bill we are discussing, the processes would create challenges for smaller aid agencies that do not have the same level of resources as larger ones.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, again, we see the eagerness of Liberal and NDP politicians to shift the conversation to abortion.

I would just assure them again that there is a study happening at the foreign affairs committee. Four meetings have taken place. Neither of the members who have tried to divert this conversation from aid into Afghanistan to that issue have been at the foreign affairs committee. I participated actively in that study. My comments are on the record.

I would rather focus our discussion today on Bill C-41, which is the bill that is before the House. On this point, I agree with the member. This raises some questions about small organizations and whether small or medium-sized diaspora-led organizations would have an easy time accessing these exemptions. That is why I have raised this idea. What if we say that if one organization receives an exemption to operate under particular conditions in a particular place, then another organization that is doing more or less the same thing would be able to benefit from the same exemption?

• (1635)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, I have been a bit torn on this bill due to my own past history and involvement in Afghanistan and due to my hatred of the Taliban.

I care deeply about the Afghan women and girls and Afghans in general. I do believe we need to support this bill, but we do need to get it right.

Tied to this, though, in the Special Committee on Afghanistan, recommendation 2 talked about the importance of interdepartmental coordination. This is a good example of a bill that is coming from public safety to change the Criminal Code, but it would tie in to foreign aid, international aid and policies within foreign policy.

I would like the member to comment on the complexities of this. It would be nice to know how the government is actually going to

lead this effort to make sure that, however it gets put through, it is done right.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, that is a great point from my colleague. I want to recognize him and thank him for his service.

It has been inspiring for me to see how veterans developed close connections with the Afghan people and have been so instrumental in trying to support the Afghan people through immigration measures as well as wanting to be part of the humanitarian response to the challenges they are facing.

The member is right that government can be so difficult to navigate and so complicated. That applies to individuals, to organizations and especially to smaller organizations that are trying to engage in these processes.

I would call on the government to do everything it can to minimize red tape, especially the red tape that organizations that are trying to engage the government have to experience. We want people to be able to get these exemptions done so that they can get programming out to those who need it.

It is not going to be good enough to pass this legislation and then have a parade. We need to actually get all the way through the process so that aid could be delivered to people on the ground by as many organizations as possible.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development where we debated women's sexual and reproductive health and where we heard from women. NGOs came to ask for more help for Afghan women who have been raped. These are terrible situations. Representatives from the Afghan community came to my constituency office in Granby to complain about how slow the government was moving.

Beyond that, this is an unfortunate example of what happens when we allow religious values to come before science and dominate a government. This is an example of the rise of fundamentalism, which is why women's rights are being set back and violated. Women need this bill now. The Bloc Québécois will collaborate to speed up the process. As far as foreign aid is concerned, we heard from NGOs that were worried about funding. The federal government claims to have a feminist foreign policy. It should provide the funding to back up that claim.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, there were a lot of different things in there.

The member sort of had an implied criticism that there is something going on about religious values in general. I want to identify the fact that many of the leading development organizations in Canada that are working hard to get assistance to the most vulnerable people around the world are coming from some kind of a faith-informed humanitarian motivation. These are Christian organizations like World Vision or Foodgrains Bank and Muslim organizations like Islamic Relief. For many people, though certainly not for all, a commitment to a sense of the image of God being in all of us is what leads to a passion for development assistance.

I want to recognize the role of people who come from a broad range of philosophical backgrounds who are involved in international development and the important work they are doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have been waiting for this day for more than a year. We are finally debating a bill that should have been introduced a long time ago. Last year, I had the honour of sitting on the Special Committee on Afghanistan with my colleagues from different parties, some of whom are with me today. I was one of the vice-chairs.

It was at the meeting on February 7, 2022, already more than a year ago, that I had the honour of asking the witnesses one of my first questions. This is the first time I have done this, but I am going to quote myself, because I think it is important. This is what I said: "They said that the Criminal Code might need to be amended so that NGOs on the ground could operate in Afghanistan without fear of being accused of funding terrorism. In my opinion, this is a very important subject that we need to address. What are your thoughts on this...?"

I said that on February 7, 2022. Since then, I have asked that question every chance I get. I even introduced a unanimous consent motion in the House on February 22, 2022, to allow non-governmental organizations to do their work on the ground. That was over a year ago. The motion was defeated by the Liberals, and now we find ourselves debating this bill in March.

I put that question to the organizations themselves and to the various ministers who appeared before the committee. Surprisingly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship all replied that they agreed with me. That was in meetings of the Special Committee on Afghanistan.

One year later, we can finally debate a topic that everyone agreed on over a year ago. Democracy is great, but sometimes it takes a while.

It will come as no surprise, then, that I was quite happy to hear that such a bill was finally being introduced and to hear the government announce that it was going to amend Canada's Criminal Code to allow humanitarian aid to flow again and to allow NGOs to do their work without fear of prosecution. I hope that is what happens.

This bill is further proof that the opposition can spur action in Quebec, Canada and around the world. After applying pressure to the government together with my friends from the Conservative Party and the NDP, I am delighted with this huge victory. The Bloc

Government Orders

Québécois is always pleased to help. I believe that all my colleagues from the other parties are also pleased to help. That is the reason we ran for office in the first place.

Now, we must expedite the process because it has already taken too long. The Bloc Québécois can be counted on to fast-track this bill because the people of Afghanistan need help now. I say "now", but they have needed our help since last winter when we were debating this issue. This is a useful bill that will help us make progress in the area of humanitarian aid.

The caveat is that we need to work quickly, but not too quickly. We have three hours to debate this bill, which will then be sent to committee. There are things we can discuss and on which we can agree in order to improve the bill. I will first touch on the more technical aspects. The government tabled Bill C-41, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, on March 9, 2023.

Currently the bill is at second reading. As it is currently written, the Criminal Code does not include any exemptions to facilitate the delivery of these essential activities in regions dealing with terrorist groups. As I mentioned earlier, this bill amends one of the Criminal Code's anti-terrorist financing offences to facilitate the delivery of much-needed international assistance, immigration activities, and other assistance in geographic areas controlled by terrorist groups. In other words, these amendments would create a new authorization scheme that would allow those that provide humanitarian or other critical assistance, to apply for an authorization that would shield them from the risk of criminal liability if the terms and conditions of the authorization are respected.

• (1640)

We have to understand that the Taliban, as the current de facto authority in Afghanistan, is likely to receive revenue from any payments needed to support humanitarian aid.

Under the Criminal Code, any Canadian or person in Canada making or authorizing such payments would risk contravening the Criminal Code's counter-terrorist financing provision. That is what we have now.

Despite the uncertainty, most organizations have continued to respond to crises around the world, but problems have grown exponentially since the Taliban, a listed terrorist entity, took control of Afghanistan in August 2021. In that regard, the scale of the humanitarian and economic crisis that the Afghan people are now facing cannot be overstated.

On paper, Bill C-41 rectifies this inability to make exceptions for organizations that are trying to deliver humanitarian aid on the ground. The bill is the proposed solution, and some aid groups support it.

Government Orders

However, what is wrong with this approach is that there are already many legal provisions that the government could strengthen rather than imposing a whole new set of legal hoops for humanitarian organizations to jump through. There is also the fact that humanitarian aid workers have said that the current amendments create more red tape for them, as my colleague said earlier.

For the sake of clarity, here is what is in this bill. Under this regime, the following people would have the power to grant an authorization to NGOs: the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the Minister of Public Safety, and delegates with the power to grant authorizations. That is a lot of people.

These authorizations will shield applicants from criminal liability in the course of certain activities, including the delivery of humanitarian aid, when they would otherwise be at risk of violating the Criminal Code. It is really about time.

When deciding whether or not to grant an authorization, the Minister of Public Safety will examine applications referred by the Department of Foreign Affairs or the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and will take into account their assessment of the application.

In other words, the goal is to determine whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages in terms of the risk of financing terrorism. This is done through a system of information sharing between departments to conduct the security review that must be done prior to granting authorization. However, all this remains to be seen, because it does not mean that the authorization will be granted.

What happens if the authorization is not granted? Let us look at that together. Under this authorization regime, in the event of a negative response from the Government of Canada, the bill provides for the possibility of judicial review if authorization is not granted.

There is legal precedent in Canada that supports the assertion that because of the life-saving purpose of humanitarian aid, it cannot be considered criminal to provide such aid, even if a terrorist group may in some way benefit from it.

This does not mean that humanitarian organizations are shielded from anti-terrorism legislation. It means that they should not be presumed to be violating the Criminal Code simply because they operate in places like Afghanistan.

The problem is that Bill C-41 turns that presumption on its head. It uses an approach based on mistrust, one that requires humanitarian organizations to prove their abilities before they are allowed to respond to emergencies, and no one knows how long that process will take. One thing we do know, however, is that approval would involve at least two departments and up to nine security or regulatory agencies.

I cannot speak for my colleagues, but I myself have had numerous opportunities during my time in the House to see how slowly the Canadian government bureaucracy moves. Bill C-41 provides for applications for authorization to be processed by the Government of Canada within a reasonable time. That does not necessarily instill much confidence.

Despite the positive advances in this bill, what worries me is the number of interventions required between departments and the impact that such a bill could have on humanitarian organizations. It is no secret that, when it comes to processing times, I get the impression that the federal government does not spend much time checking the clock.

● (1645)

The situation for the NGOs and above all the Afghan people, the men, women and children who are suffering, is deteriorating before our eyes. Time is running out.

When the time came to create this committee, a Conservative motion proposed that the Special Committee on Afghanistan be created. It was not going to be adopted because there was no consensus in the House. If the Conservative motion had been presented as worded, it would have been defeated.

The Bloc Québécois came up with a possible amendment to the proposal to create the Special Committee on Afghanistan, adding a requirement that the committee focus not only on the fall of Kabul, the federal government's failure to support the Afghan people and what happened before the Taliban took power, but also on what we could do now and in the near future.

We entered into a dialogue with our Conservative friends about this amendment and we managed to get everyone in the House to support it. Then the opposition parties voted for the motion to create the Special Committee on Afghanistan. It is important to highlight this, because the committee's mission is to find out what is being done now and how we are helping people who are experiencing suffering that we in the House will never experience. Things are horrible there. Women and parents are being forced to sell one of their daughters in order to feed their other children. These are the kinds of horrors we heard about in meetings of the Special Committee on Afghanistan. That is why we wanted to create it, to come up with recommendations and to help the Afghan people as quickly as possible.

We have known about this problem for over a year, but today the government comes along and tells me that it was complicated to draft. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Immigration, everyone in the Liberal Party agreed that there is a problem and that we need to do something about it, but they said it takes time. The Minister of International Development also got involved, saying that we need to do it, but that it will take time, so we need to give them time. We are being told it is normal for this to take so much time.

There is a question I ask myself when I get up in the morning. As I often mention, I have a Post-it note on my bedside table that says, "Who do you work for?" When I open my eyes, that is the first thing I see. I work for Quebeckers and the people of Lac-Saint-Jean, but I also work for everyone who needs help around the world. It is part of my files, but I am also fundamentally human and I am a representative of the people. We have a duty and a responsibility toward people who are suffering.

Now the government is telling me that it was too complicated and that it is understandable that it took so much time. I will give an example. When the pandemic hit the entire country, I think the government acted fairly quickly to implement special aid programs. It only took the government two weeks to create the Canada emergency response benefit and subsidies for businesses when people were losing their jobs. Now, however, the government says it is understandable for this to take a year and a half, even though children are dying in Afghanistan, women are selling their children and Canada is unable to deliver humanitarian aid because of the Criminal Code. Come on.

I am rather appalled by that. I understand that I have plenty of Liberal colleagues who are acting in good faith, who want to help and who agree with us on this subject, but I think there is a problem somewhere in the machine. It is not right for the government to be able to create aid programs really quickly when people are losing their jobs in Canada but not when children are dying in Afghanistan. I think that is unfathomable and disgraceful.

I am going to end with that because I do not want to get too wound up, and this is still good news, after all. However, now that we have wasted so much time, we need to get Bill C-41 in place. How likely is that that the bill is well written and we can all agree on the amendments coming from the humanitarian NGO community, all together and not in committee?

What I am asking is that the parties come to agreement through informal conversations before sitting in committee and that everyone agrees quickly. I am hoping that there will be no debate in committee and that the amendments that are agreed upon are voted on quickly. Let us not waste any more time; we have wasted far too much over the last year.

• (1650)

I will say it again. The first question I asked with respect to this issue was on February 7, 2022, in the Special Committee on Afghanistan. The motion received unanimous consent, so I tabled it on February 22, 2022. What day is it now? It is March and April is coming. There was snow in the Parc des Laurentides, but it is sunny here. It is spring. It should not have taken this long.

Let us make sure that from now on it moves as quickly as it can and that this bill is as well crafted as possible to allow our NGOs to do the work on the ground, to help women, men, children and the Afghan people through one of the worst humanitarian crises on the planet.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognize Farzana Elham Kochai, who was a member of Parliament in Afghanistan. I believe I pronounced it relatively right. She is a young woman with a very powerful voice who is now in Winnipeg. I had the opportunity to meet her at the local McDonald's restaurant on one of my Saturday visits.

When I look at the legislation we are debating today, I think we all have a responsibility to find ways to ensure that it reflects the

Government Orders

interests of the people who are out there. I know I, for one, will be sharing my thoughts with Farzana and getting some direct feedback.

We can talk about why it took as long as it did, and so forth, another day, but we need to recognize that it is important legislation to pass for the people of Afghanistan. Could my colleague provide his comments on why it is important that we get that support?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, it is precisely because we are in contact with people who have been on the ground there for many years that we need to pass such legislation. Every day and every week, we meet people who tell us what they need, and we speak on their behalf. That is more or less what my colleague wanted to say as well. We need to go and get the information from those who are really experiencing the situation in order to use our parliamentary power to make legislative changes.

It is not such a bad idea to talk about why this took such a long time. Since the bill has not yet been passed, let us move it through the process as quickly as possible as of now. Humanitarian organizations and the people of Afghanistan are the ones asking us to do this quickly.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Lac-Saint-Jean for all that he does to help the people of Afghanistan. He spoke a lot about how long it took the Liberal government to introduce this bill.

I would like to give him more time to share his feelings and frustrations and I would like for him to talk about the consequences that he, other members and I have faced when dealing with the Liberal government in trying to help the Afghan people. Unfortunately, some Afghan citizens were killed because of these delays.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to commend the member for his efforts. He spoke French very well.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen on his French. I have a great deal of appreciation for him. I know that he has a direct connection to Afghanistan, because he served over there. We thank him for his service.

I thank him for the opportunity to say how frustrating this is and has been. He and I are part of a group of parliamentarians that also includes our friend from Edmonton Strathcona. The members of this group are advocating for former Afghan parliamentarians. We are working very hard to try and bring them here because we have a responsibility to these women. Unfortunately, we lost one of the women for whom we were advocating. I think that this has been very hard on the whole group. In fact, the Liberals are part of this group, which is a transpartisan group.

Government Orders

However, the situation is frustrating. Currently, the government's slowness is not only frustrating, but also something that I find incomprehensible. The government says it is feminist. It often wraps itself in human rights' superhero costumes. However, when it comes time to act in crises such as this, it always seems to drag its feet. It is frustrating, incomprehensible and unfortunate.

We have friends in every party in the House of Commons who work behind the scenes to help people half a world away living in fear. These people are frustrated, whether they are in the governing party or in the other opposition parties. This needs to change.

I think that the government has some serious soul-searching to do to understand what is going on. Unfortunately, we are talking about people's lives.

• (1700)

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would speak French but I find when I get upset, it is difficult to find the words in French. I am upset today because what we have in front of us is the situation the government has put us in, being 18 to 19 months too late. We are now having to judge between accepting and supporting bad legislation or giving the organizations that are desperately trying to help the Afghan people no legislation at all.

I will be speaking about my challenges later on today, but I wonder how the member reconciles that. I am finding it very difficult to reconcile this dilemma, the dilemma that will actually take away the rights that humanitarian organizations are by international law entitled to.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, my colleague and I are in the same position and we feel the same way. This is a bill that we need to pass, but it is truly imperfect and is not acceptable to the very organizations that asked us to create this bill.

We need to find solutions. Earlier in my speech I talked about that a bit. I do not know whether my colleague had the opportunity to hear it. I think that the members from all the parties are mature enough to talk informally before sitting down in committee to agree on changes to the bill that we could adopt quickly. Instead of putting on a show in committee and deciding to debate this or that amendment, let us sit down. We are capable of going into a room in Parliament, all together, before the committee in order to decide which amendments we can agree on.

That way, when we go to committee, everything will go more quickly. We will adopt amendments rather quickly and we will do our work properly and in the best spirit possible to be able to help our friends who are awaiting this help in Afghanistan.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean for his speech. Every time he rises here in the House we see that humanitarian causes are very dear to him.

With respect to Afghanistan, we know that the needs are immense and that millions of people are affected.

My question may be a little redundant in light of the earlier question. Does this bill strike a good balance between sanctions on a terrorist state and the exceptional measures for humanitarian assistance? I understand that improvements need to be made. Is that tied to this aspect of the bill?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question. I think this bill was supposed to strike a balance, which is no easy task when it comes to any discussion on terrorist financing. I understand how difficult it can be for legislators to draft a document that strikes this balance, and I think it has been achieved to some extent. Where we do see problems now has more to do with how this balance is being implemented. The government wants to move forward with authorizations and lots of red tape, when there are urgent needs right now. I do not think this is the best approach.

There is another problem with that balance, specifically that the burden of proof falls on the NGOs. It is the NGOs that have to prove that they are not malicious and they are not financing any terrorists. Take Doctors Without Borders for example. We all know that that organization's goal is to help people directly on the ground, not finance terrorists. Doctors Without Borders was one of the first organizations to denounce the wording of this bill.

I think we need to speak with representatives from Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International and other NGOs that are working on the ground so we can reach an agreement as parliamentarians to come up with quick and effective solutions.

• (1705)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Edmonton Manning is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, this has nothing to do with the debate. The chamber is cold and I was wondering if the air conditioning can be turned down a little so we can continue.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will have someone check into that.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have to say I was a bit nervous there for a minute after the Conservatives made it so I was unable to give my remarks last week. I was worried that was going to happen again. I am quite happy they are just cold at the moment.

Government Orders

As always, it is my great delight to stand in this House and represent the people of Edmonton Strathcona. Today, we are talking about something that is very close to my heart and something that I have been working on for most of my career. While I am delighted to stand representing the people of Edmonton Strathcona, I am not delighted to be having this conversation at this moment in time.

In February 2021, six months before the fall of Kabul, I wrote to Mr. Garneau, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, and I explained to him what was going to happen in August of 2021 if the Canadian government did not take action. I raised that again during question period in May 2021 and spoke about how people in Afghanistan needed Canada to stand up.

We all know what happened in August 2021. We all know how we failed the people of Afghanistan in August 2021. We know the reasons for it. I am not going to get into that here. We failed them on immigration. We failed them on humanitarian aid. We failed the people of Afghanistan in so many different ways.

Today, we are talking about a bill that is supposed to fix that failure. Today, we are talking about Bill C-41, which is a humanitarian carve-out. Let me correct that; it is supposed to be a humanitarian carve-out for humanitarian organizations.

We are in this place right now debating a bill that took 18 months to come to fruition, while so many Afghans suffered and starved. The government took 18 months. What we have right now is not even what the humanitarian sector asked for. It is not even what we have been calling for the past 18 months.

I stood in this House and asked for a humanitarian carve-out for humanitarian organizations so that Canadians who wanted to help in Afghanistan could do that and so that Canadians who have decades of experience working with the people in Afghanistan could do that.

I raised that in the House on November 30, 2021. I asked if the minister, at the time, was going to act with the urgency required to make sure there was a humanitarian carve-out in place so that Canadian organizations could work in Afghanistan and could help people in Afghanistan who were suffering so much under the current regime.

Instead, what we have now is a bill that will limit the abilities of humanitarian organizations. Let us make this very clear: This is not just about Afghanistan. This is about all humanitarian contexts. What we decide with this legislation will have impacts in Gaza and Yemen, and it will have impacts in all kinds of humanitarian contexts. While we are looking at it within the scope of Afghanistan right now, it is not just about Afghanistan and every single person needs to understand that.

I was speaking to experts. I am sure many of us spoke to experts within the humanitarian sector. MSF recently put in a published response to Bill C-41. It said:

Criminalizing Canadian humanitarian agencies or their staff for working in territories controlled by terrorist groups would be contrary to existing international norms and laws, most notably the Geneva Conventions, and might even be unconstitutional. There is legal precedent in Canada supporting the claim that, owing to the life-saving purpose of humanitarian aid, it cannot be considered criminal to provide it, even when a terrorist group may accrue some benefit from that aid.

MSF works in some of the most horrendous circumstances in this world. It is saying that this legislation does not meet the needs that needs to be met. I have heard some interesting things.

• (1710)

I have spoken to the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of International Development. I have spoken to all these ministers and asked, “Who is responsible, and when is it coming?” I have also listened to all three ministers tell me that it is someone else's problem, that it is someone else's fault and not to worry, that someone else is dealing with it or that it is too complex for them to undertake.

I want to tell members what some of the other countries have done. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade announced that:

Australia [would implement] the [UN Security Council's humanitarian] exemption immediately relying [upon] the Charter of the United Nations Act 1945. Accordingly, assistance or activities covered by [the Security Council's exemption]...do not constitute an offence under Australian sanctions laws.

The United Kingdom amended its regulations to indicate that its financing prohibition does not cover the delivery of humanitarian assistance or other activities that support basic human needs in Afghanistan. There is also the U.S. and the European Union. They all amended their legislation. In fact, with respect to the United Nations, on December 22, 2021, the UN Security Council decided through resolution 2615, the drafting of which was spearheaded by the United States, “that humanitarian assistance and other activities that support basic human needs in Afghanistan” do not violate the council's sanctions regime.

The council also specified:

[T]hat the processing and payment of funds, other financial assets or economic resources, and the provision of goods and services necessary to ensure the timely delivery of such assistance or to support such activities are permitted.

That happened on December 22, 2021. Therefore, countries around the world that are our allies who also believe in the rule of law, humanitarian assistance and humanitarian law were able to make this humanitarian carve-out. However, Canada took 18 months and has not provided a carve-out. Let us be very clear: This law is not a humanitarian carve-out. Why is this so important and pressing? Why have I brought this up in the House and written to the ministers time and time again? Why has every party in the House raised this issue?

My colleague from the Bloc just brought up recently how long he has been calling for this. The Special Committee on Afghanistan was calling for this. Why have we all been acting for this? It is because a record number of people in Afghanistan need our help.

Government Orders

Hunger does not wait. It is not waiting for us to have time or for it to be convenient for the rest of us. People are starving to death in Afghanistan. I have to say, Canada has spent billions of dollars, and we have lost the lives of Canadian soldiers on Afghanistan soil. We have a relationship with Afghanistan. We have an obligation to the people of Afghanistan.

They do not need our support when things are going well. The people of Afghanistan do not need us to step up when all is well. However, when six million people are at risk of severe malnourishment, tens of millions of people are food-insecure and cannot have enough food to eat, the economy has failed, there are drought conditions and climate change has made it impossible for the people of Afghanistan to feed themselves is when they need Canada to step up. That is when we need to do the work to help the people of Afghanistan.

Do not get me wrong, Madam Speaker: The Taliban is a horrendous terrorist organization by all definitions. What the members of the Taliban are doing to women and girls in that country right now is so repugnant and disgusting to me. However, we cannot stop helping people because of that. We still have to help people who are there. I would like to have every single schoolgirl be able to come to this country because if they cannot learn in their country, I would like Canada to do everything it can. I would like to say that an unlimited number of Afghans should be able to come here and study.

I know that I am very angry right now, but I will say one thing. I give speeches in my community all the time. I go and talk to students. It is a really important part of our role as parliamentarians to be in our communities.

• (1715)

I was talking to a grade 6 class about the importance of being a parliamentarian and my role as the foreign affairs critic. I talked about how one of the worst things for me was knowing that women and girls could not go to school in Afghanistan. Teaching women and girls fundamentally changes a country; it is the best thing we can do to deal with climate change, to teach women and girls all these reasons.

This beautiful girl in the front row put up her hand and told me that she was a refugee from Afghanistan, and she was in Canada studying and learning. It was such an incredible and beautiful thing to see.

I will come back to Bill C-41. One of the things that I think is very interesting about this is the way our humanitarian assistance has developed in this country. We have an Official Development Assistance Accountability Act in law. There is a law in our country, put in place in 2008. I was thrilled to be part of the civil society groups that were pressing for some of the legislation back then.

We have a law in place, and it says that Canada's humanitarian and development assistance would go to those most in need and that we would support those most in need. Not only is it law; it is Canadian values. My goodness, every Canadian wants to support people who are most in need and who most require our support. How can there be a better case for providing humanitarian support? How could that be possible?

Over the past eight months, close to 10,000 Canadians have joined the Aid for Afghanistan campaign, calling on the federal government to remove barriers to life-saving aid and assistance in Afghanistan. It is absolutely clear that Canadians support providing this humanitarian assistance. This is what they have been asking for.

The restrictions that Canada has in place have prevented Canadian organizations from doing that, from getting life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable and actually living up to our obligations under international law.

This is a country that has a feminist international assistance policy and is supposed to have a feminist foreign policy. From what I have been told, we have one; it is just not written down. I do not know if the government knows how policies work. This a country that is supposed to be a feminist leader and that is supposed to be leading the world, but we know that the impacts are disproportionately felt by women and girls. The impacts of the poverty in Afghanistan are being felt by women and girls. The human rights abuses that are happening in Afghanistan are disproportionately happening to women and girls.

All the rhetoric that we use with regard to humanitarian assistance impacts women and girls more, and yet this carve-out does not help us. I am going to say why it does not help us. First, and I have mentioned this already, it is a registry. It is not a humanitarian carve-out. It is not a carve-out in the same way that the UN, the U.S., Australia, the EU or the U.K had carve-outs. It is not that.

It was also developed despite the expertise in our country. The government did not liaise with, listen to or hear the sector. The sector was clear on what they needed. The experts in humanitarian aid, those who are experts at what they do, told the government what was needed and what they needed to see.

That is not what this legislation is. For the life of me I do not understand why the government would not want to listen to the experts in the field, who know what they are talking about.

Another thing that is wrong with this is that because of the way it is drafted, it puts humanitarian organizations at risk. It does that by actually interfering with their ability to be neutral and to be seen as humanitarian.

I was quite concerned when the current Minister of International Development was appointed. Humanitarian and development organizations spend all their time making sure that they are not associated with the military or defence, that they have neutrality and the ability to do their work on the ground. This bill would limit that. That is why neither the International Committee of the Red Cross nor MSF supports this bill.

Government Orders

• (1720)

We do not know what the bill would look like in other contexts. Right now, the bill has been developed because of what we are seeing in the Afghanistan situation. However, as I raised earlier, it does not talk about what happens if we are talking about other terrorist groups or listed entities. What would the bill mean in northern Nigeria? Can we not provide humanitarian aid there? What about Yemen and Burkina Faso? All these countries have similar challenges, and the legislation would apply to those groups as well. However, we have not heard from the government how it intends to deal with that.

We do not know if the bill is just for Canadian citizens working for Canadian organizations. What about a Canadian citizen working for another organization? What if there is a Canadian citizen working for the United Nations? Do they need to apply to be able to do that work? All of a sudden, the clarity is not there, and organizations that desperately want to get into Afghanistan and provide that help do not know what the bill would mean. They do not know what those expectations would be. They do not know what they would be legally allowed to do, and for an organization, that is terrifying. It is very frightening for any organization to think that it may be forced to stop doing the important work it does because it has broken regulations the government has put in place that the organization does not even understand and that have not been explained.

We do not know how the bill would work with smaller organizations or diaspora organizations. For a long time I have called on the government to increase the support for small and medium-sized organizations and for diaspora organizations. These organizations on the ground know the context and the communities. They have long relationships with these communities, but the legislation before us would make it much harder for them to be able to provide support.

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan is a phenomenal organization in Alberta. Right now it is doing everything it can to get educational products to women and girls in Afghanistan. Despite not being able to receive funding and all the things that are happening right now, it is still trying so desperately to get education to women and girls in Afghanistan. As Canadians we should be proud of an organization like that, but the legislation would make it harder for Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan to do the work it needs to do.

Then, we look at the processing piece of the bill. We have a situation right now where Global Affairs Canada is not able to process things as quickly as it promised. This is not a slight in any way on the overburdened bureaucrats at Global Affairs Canada. It is not able to move things forward as fast as it would like because it is understaffed and overburdened; moreover, the clarity from the Liberal government has not been there.

We can think about the urgent situation we find ourselves in, and then we have a situation where urgency is required and we are asking Global Affairs Canada to add another layer of burden to those who cannot keep up with the current burden. This is not a system that will work. A carve-out would mean that all humanitarian organizations would be free to go forward. The legislation before us would mean that we have just kicked that can down the road again;

once more, we are failing Afghanistan. Once more, the Canadian government has failed to live up to its obligations to Afghans.

I, for one, stand in this place. I am happy to work with anyone to make the bill better so that it meets the needs it has to meet for the people of Afghanistan. I am ready to stand in this place and work with anyone to make sure Afghans are no longer being failed by the Canadian government.

• (1725)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will ask a question of the hon. member.

She finished on a collaborative tone, as far as working together in this specific area goes. I do not believe any of us would disagree on what we need to do when it comes specifically to Afghanistan. However, my question is about the timing, the 18 months she and many other members referred to in terms of the bill.

How does she see this? Is this a miscalculation by the government or a delay in the calendar? Why has it taken 18 months to see the bill in the House of Commons?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I very much enjoy working with the hon. member for Edmonton Manning on many of these files.

Honestly, I want to think that it was a lack of speed. I want to think it was the thoroughness, but the resulting product does not make me think that this was the case.

In fact, I actually believe the government was hoping that this would go away and that Canadians would change the channel and stop paying attention. I think the government forgot how important the Afghan community is for all Canadians and how important it is that the humanitarian sector be able to continue to do that important work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, how can the government have forgotten, how can it have been mistaken to the point that organizations such as Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International and even the Red Cross, which are recognized around the world, must prove that they are legitimate before they can intervene in a country where millions of people and millions of women are suffering?

What is the explanation? I do not think it can be explained, but perhaps my colleague can say something about that.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I think what we will hear is that there was a desire to balance the needs of security versus the needs of humanitarian organizations. It is my thought, though, that this balance is completely wrong in this case. That is proven out by what we saw from the United Nations Security Council and what we saw from the U.S., the EU, the U.K., Australia and other countries that were able to do that.

Government Orders

From my perspective, I feel like government members, in fact, were not open to listening to the sector. They were not open to listening to experts. I have already sent a list of my concerns to one of the ministers responsible, and I got back a comment that said, “Thanks for your advocacy.” I sent 15 questions and I got a thanks for my advocacy.

I do have to say that they are not listening to us. They are not listening to Afghans. They are not listening to experts. This should be an easy thing to do. There is support from every party. There is massive support across Canada from Canadians.

I know this is not really an answer for the member, but I do hope it gives some clarity.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think the member is not recognizing some of the realities of the situation. We have seen dramatic increases in the number of refugees. When we factor in Ukraine, Afghanistan and other countries around the world, I believe it is fairly accurate that Canada is definitely, per capita, the best in the world on the refugee front. Even in hard numbers, not on per capita basis, we are doing exceptionally well.

Even the member from the opposition commented on the technicalities and the legal complications of the legislation. It is not like one can just bring a bunch of legal people to the table and say, poof, let us have the legislation. There is a process, yes, but the member is trying to give the impression that the government has not been active on the file. I would suggest that she just needs to look at the number of refugees and look at the increases in aid support, overall, that the Canadian government has been putting forward.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I have a couple of things to say.

First of all, my colleague referred to Ukrainian refugees, but I am not sure if he perhaps failed to understand that the government does not list them as refugees, so they are not given the protection that refugees should have in our community.

The other thing he talked about is Afghan refugees. I have to tell him that I was in my office during the last constituency week talking to interpreters who have had their families and co-workers left behind by this government. I have talked to interpreters who supported our military, who supported our country, who have been left behind.

Yes, absolutely, I will say that we have been able to bring many people here from Afghanistan and from Ukraine, but I will not say that we have done a good job of it, that we have not left behind people to whom we had deep obligations. That is not anything to do with Bill C-41, which is an entirely different thing.

If we are not going to bring people out of their country so they can survive a genocidal terrorist regime in their own country, I do have to tell the member that humanitarian aid is the support we can give them.

• (1730)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, this is very difficult, because we did want this legislation. We wanted to see the carve-out for humanitarian help.

My question for the member is very specific. I am looking at the way the legislation is drafted and imagining that we vote for it to get to committee to think about how we might be able to improve it at committee. I am not sure we will be able to, so my question for her is this. Has she or her caucus been able to figure out if there are fixes to this change to the Criminal Code that will actually work for what we need?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, this is the ultimate challenge we are facing. People are dying, and this legislation would help some organizations get there and provide some assistance at some point.

It has taken 18 months to get this flawed piece of legislation, so we have put the international development and humanitarian sector in this terrible position of deciding whether to take flawed legislation that could have wide implications or vote against the legislation, knowing it is almost guaranteed that we will not see any other legislation. Do we take the bad or the worse? That is not a position any of us want to be in.

We have many recommendations we are going to be bringing forward. I moved a motion in this place to move the bill to committee so we could start that important work. Something needs to be done as quickly as possible. I hope the government will accept our amendments. We have already started drafting those amendments. Hopefully, we can make this bill into something that will help and do less harm.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree with many of the things the member has said about how the process this bill creates seems much more red tape-intensive than it needs to be. I look forward to seeing the amendments the NDP and others are going to propose.

I know there are sometimes limitations with respect to scope, so I have a specific question for the hon. member. Does she think the changes that we need to make to this bill are within the scope of the bill as it is currently written, or would we need a new piece of legislation to address the problems?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I would say that this is very similar to the last question I just answered.

I am open to working with all parties to see if there is a way to improve this legislation. The scope will be something we will have to certainly press toward the very edges of. Again, it is a situation that the government could fix very quickly by bringing forward better legislation.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona for her excellent speech. She is such a champion for human rights and international aid, and such an expert in it. It grieves me to think of how this could have been improved had the government listened to her all along.

I want to give her another opportunity to expand on the possible risks this legislation puts organizations and individuals at, because it is a registry and not a blanket carve-out for all organizations, and how that can affect the safety of people on the ground in Afghanistan.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, a fundamental part of humanitarian law is that humanitarian assistance is protected and not a target. This is part of international humanitarian law for a very important reason: Even in the worst human situations, we need to ensure that humanitarian aid can be delivered. Even with the worst state actors, we need to make sure humanitarian aid can be delivered.

When this legislation goes into place, the way it could weaponize humanitarian aid is so dangerous to the organizations that are already putting themselves in danger and the volunteers who are already putting themselves at risk.

● (1735)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

The title of Bill C-41 is a bland one, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, but the impact on people's lives is exciting. This bill is about providing help and hope for those in desperate need. It highlights the Canadian tradition of caring for those in other countries.

As we are all aware, the situation in states under terrorist rule can leave innocent people in dire need. As a member of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, I have heard many tragic reports from those with first-hand experience of war and authoritarian regimes where basic human rights are not recognized. As someone who came to Canada from a war zone, I can empathize with those innocent people who did not choose the authoritarian regimes that they may be forced to accept.

Canadian values of helping those in need are rooted in a Christian humanitarian world view. We want to help where we are able, and Bill C-41 would allow us to do just that. Canada does not take unilateral military action against aggressive regimes. Our way is to work co-operatively with like-minded countries for the benefit of everyone, and while military force is sometimes necessary, building international consensus can take time. While that is happening, innocent people can suffer. This legislation attempts to address that suffering.

For example, Canada does not recognize the legality of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, as the Taliban is a terrorist entity. We have no relations with it. We do not support terrorists. However, the people of Afghanistan are in need and their terrorist government has no desire to help them. Drastic changes are needed in states like Afghanistan, but more war is not the answer. This bill is a sign that Canada recognizes that. As we deal with the reality of the situation in Afghanistan and elsewhere, this bill would allow us to assist the critical organizations involved in providing immediate aid to those people most in need.

Government Orders

Our role as parliamentarians should be to have a free and open debate about the specifics of Bill C-41, which includes conducting an adequate study in committee. However, we should not be delaying the passing of this bill. To achieve this goal, I would suggest that the justice committee launch a prestudy on this bill. By doing so, we would allow a thorough study of this act and provide interested Canadians the opportunity to debate and understand the specific details of what Bill C-41 has to offer.

Canadians do not want to endorse non-democratic states. However, the on-the-ground support offered through various activist-led operations should not be hindered due to the oppressive cultural and political climate entrenched in these states. We need to promote “Women, Life, Freedom” in these areas. Real changes have to start somewhere. This bill has the potential to provide a beacon of hope to those in dire need of humanitarian aid. There is also the potential to leave a distasteful legacy if we in this House fail to launch a swift and adequate study of this bill.

It is important to the Canadian people that we stick to our true democratic values. Because of this, upholding the legacy of honourable success stories should be of utmost importance. The Canadian war efforts from 2001 and 2014 in Afghanistan highlighted the tragic failure of democracy against a terrorist stronghold. Since the reoccupation by the Taliban in 2021, it has been made abundantly clear that our approach was not effective in creating lasting change.

Our Canadian troops heard first-hand the stories of Afghan citizens of repression under the Taliban. They not only fought for their Canada, but they also fought for the good, innocent people they grew to love in their day-to-day lives. The grim situations they observed first-hand in Afghanistan should be enough for us to see that this bill, which would allow aid groups to meet the needs of the desperate without fear of criminal charges, should be supported.

● (1740)

One of my staffers, whose mother served with our troops in Afghanistan, has recounted the stories her mother shared of her time serving there protecting the people from the Taliban. As she struggled to reintegrate into the Canadian way of life upon returning, she found herself facing deep grief and inner turmoil as the Taliban once again seized power 13 years after she had physically left the country.

My colleagues, that mother's experience is not hers alone.

Canadian troops put their lives on the line not only for their country, but to help Afghan women and children have hope of a better life. Years of conflict and violence led to a humanitarian crisis that shattered the innocence of these people. Many were left with the impression that dangerous and unethical acts are how one earns the love desired from one's parents. Their sense of purpose in life is determined by the warped world view of the Taliban.

Government Orders

No child should have to grow up in fear, but that is the situation in Afghanistan. While we cannot do anything at this point about the government that creates that fear, with Bill C-41 we can probably do something to help with the humanitarian crisis the Taliban has created. We owe it to our veterans and to our fallen soldiers to continue the effort toward a better humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. We cannot let their sacrifices be in vain.

Bill C-41 would allow us, as Canadians, to help the immediate situation on the ground while other work is being done behind the scenes to influence the meaningful societal shift required.

With that in mind, I believe approaching the situation from both the top down and the bottom up should be the most effective way of inciting the change we seek.

This bill provides the foundation that assists on-the-ground organizations to operate in terrorist-run states. However, we must tread carefully. Bill C-41 still needs work. The people of Afghanistan, and others, still need help. We must ensure this bill is swiftly examined and improvements adopted.

We might, for example, want to look at our duty to protect Canadians who become targets of oppression in states like Afghanistan. Citizens who courageously go to these states to provide humanitarian aid to the suffering victims of these states know the Government of Canada will support them in any way it can.

Many questions will arise as this bill progresses through this House and we should allow some time to address the concerns of our colleagues in a thorough but timely fashion. A pre-study by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights would assist in this goal.

To be quite honest, the real question is whether Liberal government members are serious about providing protection for aid organizations and will make it a priority or whether it will be consigned to the legislative back burner as not important. Human lives are at stake. The choice is theirs.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to answer the member's question, the government has made it a priority, and that is the reason we have seen the co-operation and the push not only for humanitarian aid but also for ways in which we can assist those Afghan refugees once they can get out of Afghanistan to come to Canada. Canada has led the way on that particular issue.

Recognizing there are many different agencies and individuals in Canada today who are very supportive of us continuing to provide that aid, and that this legislation we are debating today is in fact going to assist in Canada having an ongoing and more stable—

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the member the opportunity to answer and for other questions.

The hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I guess the question was about the assurance that the agencies will continue to do the job. In cases like this, in crises like this, we need to be thinking ahead of

time. That is what I think the government failed to do. We are talking about 18 months, 18 months where women, children and elders suffered a lot and the humanitarian aid did not get there to help them out and cope with these big challenges that they were going through.

The point is about the timing. I hope the government realizes that that was a mistake on its side.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague just mentioned a very long time has passed since Canada was called on, in particular by my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean, to take action on this issue in Afghanistan.

In addition to the long delays, Canada has not done what it was expected to do to resolve this situation in Afghanistan. I am not the only one to have talked about this. Afghan citizens in my riding in Shefford and even Afghan members who I have met seem to find that this situation has dragged on.

With respect to its obligations, Canada has not done everything it promised to do, especially for the interpreters. We see how action on this file did not unfortunately live up to expectations. Canada could have and must do more immediately.

We will be there, ready to collaborate.

I would like the member to comment on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, we have been hammered by hundreds of emails and questions from members of the Afghani community and from Canadian society asking why the government has dragged its feet in helping these people. Timing is so critical because whatever one loses during this time period, one will lose big and can never recover. That is what we are faced with.

I do agree with her assessment on this. I wish the government had acted earlier on this.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, people in Afghanistan are suffering now. It is appalling that the opposition parties have been calling on the government for over 18 months to address this situation and the government just now is acting on it by presenting a piece of flawed legislation.

Timing is so essential because Afghans need help now. In this piece of legislation there is a requirement of 180 days. Does the member agree that we should amend this to reduce that to 30 days or eliminate it entirely because the help needs to be delivered now?

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I think timing is at the essence of this. I also suggested that maybe a quick prestudy at the justice committee would probably improve the quality and conditions of this bill to be able to push it further. If this mechanism is the correct one, I think if it is passed through the committee and the final stage here, that would be critical and very important.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, at this point we are looking at legislation that we know is urgently needed but quite flawed. It need not have been so complicated to create a carve-out for charitable organizations.

Could the hon. member for Edmonton Manning comment on what they did in Australia, what they did in the U.K. and what our other allies in democratic efforts and in supporting the rights of women around the world did to ensure that their aid organizations could get in to assist?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I believe we could use some executive orders to speed this up and provide the necessary steps to get aid to the people who need it the most.

* * *

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

SENATE AMENDMENTS TO BILL C-11—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I would like to address the point of order raised earlier today, concerning government Motion No. 2 to concur in Senate amendments to Bill C-11, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

[*English*]

The House leader of the official opposition has raised concerns as the procedural admissibility of the government's new motion claiming that it is substantially identical to the motion that the House has been seized with since March 8, citing the ruling of anticipation. He contended that two motions cannot both be before the House at the same time, as stated in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition at page 568, that the rule of anticipation is:

dependent on the principle which forbids the same question from being decided twice within the same session. It does not apply, however, to similar or identical motions or bills which appear on the Notice Paper prior to debate. The rule of anticipation becomes operative only when one of two similar motions on the Order Paper is actually proceeded with. For example, two bills similar in substance will be allowed to stand on the Order Paper but only one may be moved and disposed of. If a decision is taken on the first bill (for example, to defeat the bill or advance it through a stage in the legislative process), then the other may not be proceeded with. If the first bill is withdrawn (by unanimous consent, often after debate has started), then the second may be proceeded with.

[*Translation*]

In a ruling on November 2, 1989, Speaker Fraser, at page 5474 of the Debates, provided this helpful observation: "in the view of the Chair, two or more items are substantially the same if...they have the same purpose".

[*English*]

This is the test to be applied when determining if an item of business is so similar that it cannot coexist with another item of business. In this case, while the difference between the two motions may appear to be minor, adopting the second motion would bring about a different outcome than adopting the first, in that it would result in a different amendment being accepted by the House in the French version of the bill. This means that the second motion is indeed substantively different than the first motion, and therefore, the concern over similarity is not present.

It should also be noted that, according to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the rule of anticipation has never been part of our Standing Orders and, furthermore, is no longer strictly observed. Invoking the rule stating that a decision once made must stand, which is detailed on pages 590 and 591 of the third edition, is often more relevant than the rule of anticipation. Indeed, there are several examples, including some cited by the opposition House leader, of two items proceeding simultaneously until a decision is made on one of them. I would point out that the House has not yet made a decision on the first motion.

[*Translation*]

As I understand it, the objective of the second motion is to correct an error found in the first, an error that arose because the numbering of the amendments is not the same in English and in French. Allowing such an error to stand runs the risk that the English and French versions of the bill would be different, with different definitions being kept in each language, therefore making the will of the House unclear.

The opposition House leader argues that the appropriate course of action should be to make this correction by way of an amendment, which could be moved once the current amendment to motion 1 has been disposed of. While that is indeed one way of addressing the issue, the Chair does not believe it is the only way. Instead, the government has proposed to bring forward a new motion with the necessary correction.

[*English*]

Given that the substantive effect of the two motions is different and given that no decision has been made on the first motion, I am prepared to allow debate on Motion No. 2 to proceed.

I thank the members for their attention.

Government Orders

• (1755)

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise in the House and speak to Bill C-41. I am going to be supporting this bill to get it to committee so it can undergo the vigorous review it needs to ease the concerns Canadians have. There are organizations that want to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in particular, but also to other areas of the world where terrorist organizations are in control, and they need to be able to do so without any repercussions here in Canada.

As we know, this bill would make some major changes to the Criminal Code to impact those individuals and organizations that are trying to help people who are the least privileged in the world and who are in crisis right now, especially in Afghanistan. There are over four million people who are starving. There is a lack of food and resources available to support the citizens. Those are largely women, girls and single-family units that do not have the ability to raise money.

In saying that, I want to first and foremost pay tribute to the brave women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces who served in the conflict in Afghanistan. Over 40,000 Canadians went to war in Afghanistan against al Qaeda and against the Taliban because of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. They served from 2001 to 2011, and the last of our troops came home in 2014.

We witnessed 165 Canadians die; 158 of them were brave soldiers of the Canadian Armed Forces and seven of them were civilians who were there assisting our forces, assisting the Government of Canada, working on diplomatic missions and working on things like humanitarian relief.

We have seen the consequences of that war for those who served. Thousands have come back with both physical and invisible injuries, whether it is PTSD and other operational stress injuries, or actual physical injuries, such as missing limbs. This still impacts our veteran community with a high level of suicide. Over 2,000 members were physically wounded or injured while serving in Afghanistan, and we have to continue to be with them.

I want to make the point that Canada committed itself to this war against terror in Afghanistan. It cost us in lives, we spilled blood and we spent a good portion of the treasury in fighting against the Taliban. It cost \$18 billion just in military contributions, as well as in provincial reconstruction.

In addition to that, another \$3.9 billion over two decades, from 2001 to 2021, was spent in humanitarian assistance building schools, building roads and infrastructure, and providing meals. We made sure Afghanistan converted from a poppy-based agricultural industry providing opium and other opioids on the illicit drug trafficking market around the world, to actual commodities it could trade legally in the global context that would provide a better, more sustainable way of life.

However, here we are today with an illegitimate government led by Taliban leaders who were complicit in the crimes against humanity that we witnessed before 2001 and that they are now undertaking today in Afghanistan. There are an illegitimate prime minister, Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund, and supreme leader, Mullah Haibatullah Akhonzada. These are people who helped orchestrate attacks against our own soldiers and our own civilians working in Afghanistan.

They have banned girls and women from going to school. They have taken most women out of the workforce so they are unable to provide for their families. They have reinstated the mandatory wearing of the burka, and other very misogynistic and chauvinistic policies that continue to trample on the rights of women, minority groups and minority religions.

• (1800)

We know that the Taliban today is actively hunting those Afghans who worked alongside our Canadian Armed Forces as interpreters, truck drivers and support workers in our military bases and forward operating locations throughout the Panjwai district where Canada served, and in Kandahar. Something we need to remember is that those we fought against are again back in control. We all saw on TV how it played out in 2021, as Afghans ran to planes to get out of the country, climbing aboard wherever they could. They were begging us to come back and begging Canada, the United States and others to come get those who wanted to go to our countries.

We knew this was coming as well. We knew that the U.S. had announced it was going to do its drawdown in 2021 when it announced it the previous year. Global Affairs Canada was raising this with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, saying that we had to act to get our Canadians, as well as our friends and allies, out.

It was not until the actual collapse of Kabul started that we finally saw some action. The first to come out was our diplomat corps, on a half-empty airplane. It was a disappointment for all Canadians and an embarrassment for the government, that we could have saved more Afghans and decided not to.

Over 17,000 Afghans who served with Canada made application to come here. Over 11,000 of them have been approved, and over the past three years, about 9,500 have been able to make it to Canada. A lot of us, in our offices, continue to advocate and find ways out for those who served alongside our forces. We had some luck a couple of weeks ago in having another Afghan interpreter get to safety here in Canada, but the support in Afghanistan from the government is non-existent.

We know that these Criminal Code amendments are necessary to ensure that those out there wanting to do God's work in Afghanistan would not be turned into people who are considered complicit in terrorism. We want to make sure that organizations like World Vision, the Red Cross and Red Crescent are able to go out there and help those in need without having to worry about whether they are going to be charged back here in Canada.

Government Orders

However, we have to be diligent, and one thing we need to find out through committee study is how the government would continue to monitor the situation. How would the government decide whether organizations are being coerced or are having to pay big bribes to the Taliban and other terrorist organizations around the world and essentially redirect money that would help the terrorist activity, the human rights violations and the atrocities that we, all too often, are witnessing?

We have to be diligent and vigilant in making sure the government and the department are continuing to oversee this. As we look at Bill C-41 and start providing exemptions for different organizations and individuals, we have to go into this with eyes wide open. We have witnessed other terrorist organizations raising money here in Canada. Hamas, Hezbollah and ISIS all have been able to raise funds in the past to fund their terrorist activities around the world, so we have to be very diligent.

The House of Commons passed a motion unanimously in 2018 recognizing the IRGC, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran, as a terrorist entity. If the Government of Canada would finally list it as a terrorist organization, we could also make sure it could not raise money here in Canada now that it does actually have assets.

Though I support getting this bill to committee and making sure we provide relief to those who need it the most, the most disadvantaged people in the world, we also have to be extremely critical in our analysis at committee to ensure that those who want to have other nefarious means do not exploit this for their own terrorist ideologies.

● (1805)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is encouraging to see the all-party support, and it is important to recognize that the legislation goes beyond Afghanistan. We are talking about aid where terrorism is involved, and it is broader than just Afghanistan. Afghanistan amplifies the issue for us all, so we can better relate to it, but the federal government has a responsibility, and this is what I like about the legislation; it deals with the bigger issue. Afghanistan in itself is a gigantic issue, obviously, but this bill would deal with that in such a way that I think it would position Canada better, in some ways, than countries that have not brought forward such progressive legislation.

I wonder if my colleague would not agree that getting the bill to the committee stage, so that we could perhaps even get some of the questions he has put forward answered, would be a positive thing for all of us to see happen today.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, we definitely are responding to the situation in Afghanistan, but I also look at Mali, and I also look at what is happening down in Haiti right now. There are a number of other failed states where we see gangs and terrorist organizations in control. I worry about Lebanon and the increasing influence that Hezbollah has there as the country continues to try to recover after the massive blast in Beirut, with all the damage and lives lost.

That is why I do like some of the parts of Bill C-41 that would provide flexibility to the minister and the department to do reviews

more than every five years. They could do them as they see fit. I would hope the government would listen to parliamentarians, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and the International Subcommittee on Human Rights. If they were to raise red flags, I hope the government would act upon them to ensure that, where we see dollars being diverted illegally into terrorist organizations or illegitimate governments, it can put a stop to any fundraising activities or dollars flowing to aid organizations to ensure we are not directly or indirectly financing terrorism.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for his speech.

My colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean said earlier that this bill is long overdue. We know full well that this has been going on for 18 months. What is the government waiting for? When will it help the men, women, and children who are being mercilessly killed in Afghanistan?

In my colleague's opinion, why did this take so long?

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I must agree it is disappointing that it has been 18 months since the fall of Afghanistan into the hands of the Taliban. It has been nine months since the Special Committee on Afghanistan brought forward its recommendations to the House, recommending these amendments.

For whatever reason, the government has dragged its feet. “Dither and delay” is the trademark of the Liberal Party of Canada when it is in government, so it is unfortunate that we are where we are, but at least we are moving it forward. I hope the bill gets through committee in an expeditious fashion so we can get back to the basics of saving lives. I just hope we have not lost too many lives because of the ongoing indecision by the government.

● (1810)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have all become very aware of the conflict situation in Haiti, and we know that many NGOs and humanitarian aid organizations are doing very good work there. Would the legislation also provide organizations working in Haiti, for example, with protection as well?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, to my understanding, Haiti, right now, is not listed as a terrorist organization, so right now we can raise funds.

I know that one of the things talked about when President Biden was here with the Prime Minister was Canada's participating in a special mission to Haiti to bring and restore peace and security to the region. We need to do that for our aid workers who are there. Haiti is like Afghanistan, the second-poorest country in the world. If anyone needs help, it is the people of Haiti, and if anyone needs to go, it is the gangs that are right now running the government.

Government Orders

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the legislation that was introduced by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Safety. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, I know our team needs to work closely to keep Canadians safe while also responding to the humanitarian crisis and bringing people to Canada.

In response to the situation in Afghanistan, Canada has acted to support the many women and girls, members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, human rights defenders, journalists, and ethnic and religious minorities who face oppression, persecution and violence from the Taliban.

It is not an overstatement to suggest that coming to Canada is a second lease on life for some of the world's most vulnerable people.

[*Translation*]

We made it a priority to resettle the Afghan nationals who supported the efforts of Canada and its allies during the mission in Afghanistan, along with their families. We are deeply committed to our goal of bringing at least 40,000 Afghan nationals to Canada by the end of 2023. We are proud to say that this is one of the most substantial commitments of any country in the world, and we are well on our way to meeting it.

[*English*]

Afghanistan represents one of the largest and most difficult resettlement efforts in Canada's history. The challenges of this resettlement initiative are unlike any other we have faced, starting with the chaos that ensued as the Taliban closed in on Kabul and the bombing of innocent women and children who gathered at the airport to flee the country.

The international withdrawal of military and diplomatic missions left little to no capacity to support the special immigration measures we had created for Afghans in Afghanistan. There are significant challenges in conducting immigration activities and finalizing applications in Afghanistan. That is why Afghans need to travel outside Afghanistan to neighbouring countries before their applications can be finalized. Once in these other countries, what we refer to as third countries, immigration processing can be completed and travel onward to Canada can be arranged.

There are also significant challenges involved in supporting Afghan movement, both to neighbouring countries and onward to Canada. Our government has been doing everything within our control to tackle these challenges head on. To mitigate against some of the obstacles, we have been working with NGOs and other organizations in the region to support these activities. That said, we have not let the barriers that the Taliban have thrown up to the international community stand in our way. To date, nearly 30,000 Afghans have been successfully resettled here in Canada.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

These people are Afghan nationals who collaborated on our mission in Afghanistan by working as interpreters, or in other roles, and their families, women and girls who are under the threat of re-

newed oppression and members of other ethnic and religious groups who are victims of persecution.

In Canada, these Afghan nationals will be able to feel safe after experiencing horrible trauma. I have to say that this is one of the most difficult tasks I have undertaken in my career, but also the most rewarding. As a parliamentarian and a Canadian, I am proud of what we have accomplished.

[*English*]

While there are many people in Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada and other departments working every day on this challenge, all members of Parliament could be proud of the role they play in supporting vulnerable Afghans and providing them with a new home. This can, in fact, be something that all Canadians can be proud of. Canada has stood with those who face oppression and persecution. We have worked to bring them here to provide them with a new home and support their transition to a better life in Canada.

I want to tell the House about one inspiring woman in particular. Her name is Maryam Masoomi. She grew up in Pakistan and Afghanistan, studying at a progressive school that championed education for women.

She worked in media and was the leader of an all-female music group called Sounds of Afghanistan in Kabul. Her songs about education, peace and women's empowerment put her life in danger when the Taliban seized control. If she had stayed in Afghanistan, Maryam would have faced a world where she was not permitted to study, work, sing or even leave the house without a male family member. As a member of the Hazara, an ethnic minority persecuted by the Taliban, and given her progressive education, she would have been the target of threats, abuse, forced marriage and possibly even execution.

She left her homeland, facing dangerous Taliban checkpoints, and she was able to escape with the help of the 30 Birds Foundation. Today, she hosts a radio show in Saskatoon called Kabul Jan, which features music from Afghanistan. She is able to once again perform music. She participated in a special day celebration in 2022. She is also a youth program facilitator at the Saskatoon Open Door Society, which helps other newcomers settle in and integrate into Canada.

[*Translation*]

Thousands of women like Maryam are given a second chance thanks to Canada's efforts. Canada has done a lot of good work and is still helping Afghans to come and settle here, but we are facing significant obstacles.

[English]

The language in the Criminal Code is very specific. As it is presently written, no one can make or authorize payments knowing that they may be used by, or benefit, the Taliban. To do so would risk contravening the Criminal Code's counterterrorism financing provision. As it is written, it is an effective tool for combatting terrorism, but it could impede the provision of much-needed humanitarian assistance and immigration services in a geographic region controlled by a terrorist group. This could involve anything from paying transportation costs, taxes, government charges or other fees.

Any Canadian or person in Canada making or authorizing such payments would risk contravening the Criminal Code's counterterrorism financing provision, given that these payments may be used by or could benefit the Taliban. As the Taliban controls the government, it is now benefiting from taxes, import tariffs and administrative fees. These fees are hard to avoid when supporting critical immigration processing and the movement of people out of Afghanistan.

[Translation]

The bill introduced by my colleague constitutes a reasonable and practical approach that keeps in place strong provisions to fight terrorism, while addressing one of the main obstacles to carrying out immigration activities within Afghanistan.

The proposed changes would facilitate the movement of vulnerable Afghans to a third country where it would be possible to continue the immigration process.

[English]

These changes would also give us the ability to respond to other similar situations that might arise, so that Canada's humanitarian response can be fully executed, no matter where in the world we find ourselves responding next. To do this, the legislation creates an authorization regime to facilitate the delivery of international assistance and immigration activities in geographic regions controlled by terrorist groups.

• (1820)

[Translation]

This authorization regime establishes a process whereby individuals and organizations, including Government of Canada departments, must submit an application in order to be authorized by the Minister of Public Safety to carry out specific activities. Accordingly, applicants will be protected from any criminal responsibility in the event that they carry out activities, including financial transactions, in countries or regions under terrorist regimes.

[English]

These efforts are aligned with the recommendation of the Special Committee on Afghanistan.

I would like to take, actually, a brief moment to thank all of my colleagues and all of the witnesses who contributed to the special committee work. These efforts led to important recommendations and the final report. More specifically, the report recommends that we “act immediately to ensure that registered Canadian organiza-

Government Orders

tions have the clarity and assurances needed—such as carve-outs or exemptions—to deliver humanitarian assistance and meet basic needs in Afghanistan without fear of prosecution for violating Canada's anti-terrorism laws.”

The report also recommended, “Canada review the anti-terrorism financing provisions under the Criminal Code and urgently take any legislative steps necessary to ensure those provisions do not unduly restrict legitimate humanitarian action”.

Certain obstacles, such as Taliban exit requirements, access to Afghan passports, restrictions on the movement of women and girls, and entry and exit requirements in third countries, will continue to pose challenges. That said, the proposed legislation would provide an impactful tool to help Canada bring vulnerable Afghans to safety.

I hope that members of the House welcome this bill and work together to expedite it. We must come together so we can continue our efforts to help some of the world's most vulnerable people, such as women and girls who face oppression find a new life here in Canada, Afghans who helped us during our mission in the country, female judges who convicted Taliban fighters and need to flee the country, and former legislators and journalists who continued to stand up every day to bravely fight for the rights of women and girls.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend and members of the government have, in their remarks, tried to argue why this legislation is better than the status quo. I do not think there is much debate in the House that there is a massive problem in Afghanistan and that we need to make amendments that make the Criminal Code more nimble, so that is not really where the debate is.

The debate is around the specific provisions, the construction of this legislation and the concern expressed by all three opposition parties that this legislation would pile so much red tape on development organizations that it would be very challenging for them to use them and they will face significant delays. What we have heard from many is that we need to be holding the government accountable concerning the timelines they would live with under this legislation to ensure that they can actually deliver assistance in a timely manner, that these exemptions are reasonable and accessible and that they are available to all organizations doing this work, not just organizations that have more experience accessing government.

I wonder, in response to my question, recognizing that there is agreement on the principle of this legislation, if the parliamentary secretary could explain why the government chose the particular approach that it did. Why it is different from what our allies have put in place? Why it is so relatively bureaucratic and intensive? Would the government consider the kinds of amendments that all three opposition parties have talked about?

Government Orders

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, the hon. member raises a very good point. We did not expect the Taliban to overtake the government as quickly as it did, but I am very proud of the fact that since then, although we had a significant amount of obstacles facing us, we were able to bring almost 30,000 Afghans to Canada. I have had the pleasure, throughout the past year, to meet and talk to many of the women and girls who have now come to Canada.

I cannot anticipate how this debate will go, but I would urge members of the House, based on recommendations that were part of the special committee's report, to come to the table and pass this bill as quickly as possible.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, let us be clear. Essentially, Bill C-41 is about finding mechanisms to allow trustworthy organizations to go and help the local population.

A large part of the parliamentary secretary's speech was about the welcome that Afghans have received in Canada, but now we are talking about ways to help the locals. For example, under the current laws, the Red Cross cannot go into Afghanistan to help.

Does the parliamentary secretary really believe that Bill C-41 strikes the right kind of balance between sanctions against terrorists and exceptional humanitarian assistance measures?

Many organizations, as well as the opposition parties, have intervened to say that they are very concerned that the bill does not strike that balance.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for presenting some points of view that are indeed very important.

From the beginning, we brought in a number of measures to temporarily fulfill our commitment to help the Afghan people. However, these measures have their limits.

When we introduced Bill C-41, representatives from the Red Cross were right there beside us, talking about the additional work they would be able to do thanks to this bill.

Of course, we are in the House to debate this bill, and Parliament must pass it. We still want to improve it. Recommendations were made at the special committee, and this legislation needs to pass as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, again, to the parliamentary secretary, we are not disputing the significance and importance of making changes in this regard. The issue is that it has been 18 months since the fall of Afghanistan, nine months since the Afghanistan committee made these recommendations and I think four or five months since the foreign affairs committee adopted a recommendation that mirrored those by the special committee on Afghanistan. Now we have a proposal that is potentially unwieldy.

We need to study at committee how to make it work better and to make it work more effectively. I am hearing from stakeholders that it is better than nothing. However, we need to figure out how to

make sure that not only the timelines for passing this legislation will be addressed but also the timelines that charitable organizations will be needing to get support to the ground.

I wonder if the member could share a bit about what amendments the government would be willing to support, especially when it comes to ensuring that all organizations will be able to access these exemptions on reasonable terms, in a reasonable time frame and that especially small diaspora-led organizations will be able to access this process in a reasonable way so that we are able to get aid to the ground in Afghanistan as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear. In 2021, no one anticipated the fall to occur that quickly. We also need to be very candid here in saying that the government made a huge commitment in actually bringing at least 40,000 Afghans to this country. We are very near 30,000.

As this bill is being proposed, and we are engaging with all partners and all NGOs, we certainly want and hope that the House will pass this bill as early as possible and will be as quick with the review process that my hon. colleague is alluding to.

• (1830)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things that were deeply distressing to Canadians was that, when we were asked to step up to help the American war effort in Kandahar, we lost incredible young people in that fight and then it all collapsed. There were people who worked with Canadian NGOs and with the Canadian military who looked to us to get them out to safety and they were abandoned. It is not being partisan to say the government failed the people we left on the ground and the people who trusted that when they worked with Canadians that Canada would have their backs. Canada did not have their backs.

I dealt with people who were stuck over there. We dealt with midwives trying to get out and with interpreters trying to get out. People were calling our MP offices begging us, and the government failed them. I want to know what the government is willing to say to all those people who trusted that the Canadian maple leaf would stand for something in Afghanistan. When push came to shove, Canada was not there for them.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, as I said, the efforts Canada made certainly resonated in the international world, but we also know there were challenges and obstacles along the way. I represent a beautiful riding called Orléans, which has a very large Afghan community and also has active military persons and military veterans.

Canada stood tall. We committed to not 20,000 but at least 40,000 Afghans coming to Canada. With all the obstacles we faced, we have close to 30,000 Afghans here in Canada. This bill would continue to help support not only the humanitarian efforts but also the movement to a safe passage of those who are the most vulnerable. We want to bring them here to Canada.

Government Orders

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think it is noteworthy that, regardless of how unexpected or expected events may have been, all of our allies have moved much more quickly than we have to introduce these exemptions. I want to ask the parliamentary secretary as well for her response to the Auditor General's report today. It shows that the government is failing to measure results when it comes to its so-called feminist international assistance policy. Twenty-four out of 26 policy indicators do not actually measure results. The government talks a lot about this, but it is not measuring its impact on the ground.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Madam Speaker, it is quite interesting actually that the hon. member asked me that question in the House, when last Friday he and all of his party colleagues could not even stand up when the President of the United States actually made reference to what—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There being no further members rising for debate, pursuant to order made earlier today, the motion for second reading of Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, is deemed adopted on division.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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

* * *

[*English*]

ONLINE STREAMING ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to 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, and of the amendment.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to rise tonight to speak to Bill C-11.

We have been around this issue a number of times. It is really important in this age of post-truth, disinformation, falsehood and conspiracy that we actually say in Parliament what it is that we are debating and what the issues actually are. One would think this is a place where the precepts of truth are supposed to hold to some kind of standard but unfortunately they do not.

Bill C-11 is fundamentally about making sure that some of the most powerful corporations in the world, the web giants, actually pay a fair share of tax and level the playing field with Canadian broadcasters that are unable to compete, given the huge advantages that have been taken and appropriated by some of the media giants that have emerged out of Silicon Valley. For example, we can look at Netflix and how Disney moved online and took up a huge role of broadcasting, which is fine because industry changes. However, they are not paying nearly the level of tax in Canada for services they provide in Canada, which puts other Canadian operations at a disadvantage. They have also not been willing to pay into the system that has existed in Canada for years and has created an ecosystem of arts, culture and identity: the media fund. This is about levelling the playing field.

This bill is not about spying on one's grandmother's Internet. It is not, as I have heard Conservatives say, allowing the son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau to block one's YouTube views on how to fix one's deck. This is not about censorship and shutting down so-called free expression. This is about making sure that extremely powerful corporations pay their share, and we are going to talk about that tonight.

Some of this disinformation was certainly allowed in the previous bill, Bill C-10, because, I am sorry to say, the environment minister, who was then the heritage minister, had an inability to even explain what the bill was about. He created an absolute total dumpster fire and got people rightly upset because he could not explain the difference between corporate content and user-generated content. What exactly was in the bill? He did not seem to know. It left the arts community and everyone else having to do damage control.

Bill C-11, I would say, is an okay bill. It is not a great bill. However, as a legislator, one of the great honours of my career has been to work with parliamentarians from around the world on the need to address the unprecedented power of Silicon Valley and to make it obligated to respect domestic jurisdiction. Its complete disregard for domestic jurisdiction is a serious issue.

In 2018, when I was on the ethics committee and the Canadian delegation of parliamentarians went to London for the first international grand committee, I believed that the Canadian delegation was out front because the Conservatives, the Liberals and the New Democrats were working together. We understood the need to take on the disinformation. The threat to democracy was such a serious element that it was beyond partisanship. What I have seen in my international meetings is that the need to hold companies like YouTube and Facebook to meet domestic obligations is something that should normally be beyond partisan consideration, but that is not what has happened under Bill C-11.

We met with parliamentarians from Brazil who told us about the shocking rise of Bolsonaro, who was a complete marginal extremist. They told us about how he used the YouTube algorithms to drive his ascendancy, which has created a political toxic nightmare in Brazil. We met with representatives from the global south who attempted time and time again to deal with Facebook and YouTube on toxic disinformation that led to genocidal levels of death in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. We met with delegations from Singapore on their attempts to get these Silicon Valley companies to take responsibility for the hate that was being perpetrated.

Government Orders

• (1835)

Today, the member for Lethbridge, in one of the most dismal, disgraceful speeches I have ever heard in my 19 years, presented a complete falsehood and talked about this magical thing called the Internet. This is not 2004. This is 2023, when this so-called magical thing called the Internet in Myanmar replaced all the domestic media and was used to promote violent, hateful genocide that left thousands and thousands and thousands of people dead. We had the representative from Facebook come to our committee, and I asked them a simple question about the corporate responsibility for genocide. The answer we got was the classic Silicon Valley jargon bunk: Nobody is perfect and we are all on a journey together. We are not on a journey together when corporate irresponsibility leads to genocide.

This is not about my opinion. This was the United Nations begging Facebook to take responsibility because it was the only broadcaster. It was the same thing in Sri Lanka. It was the same thing in Germany, where we can track the rise of anti-refugee violence to the algorithms of Facebook and YouTube. What we never heard from the Conservatives in their attack on Bill C-11 is anything about the algorithms.

Again, I want to refer to my colleague from Lethbridge and the toxic brew of paranoia, disinformation and hate that was promoted. I have read the legislation, and the member said that Bill C-11 was going to allow the cabinet, the Liberals and the son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau to spy on people's search pages. That is a falsehood. To say that Bill C-11 would allow the Liberals, the cabinet and the son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau to watch someone's Facebook scrolling is a deliberate falsehood. That has nothing to do with how Facebook or YouTube works and the algorithms that drive people to extremism. The member said that this bill would allow the cabinet, the Liberals, the elite gatekeepers, the son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the big arts union bosses, whom she also threw in, to block people's ability to watch cat videos. That was said in the House of Commons.

I raise that because there is a lot of synthetic outrage we hear. That is part of the job. People jump up and down and declare all kinds of calumny toward the government. I have certainly declared all kinds of malice toward government over the years. However, we are in an age of disinformation and paranoia, and we are talking about the need for parliamentarians to rise above that and not feed it for mendacious political purposes. This is an important issue because we see in 2023 the rise of conspiracy politics, and the new leader of the Conservative Party thinks it is working in his favour.

When the member for Lethbridge says that if this bill is passed, it will make the leader of Canada powerful like the dictator of North Korea, not only is that a falsehood, but it is a disgrace to anyone who suffers under authoritarian regimes. It needs to be called out because we are at a point where 44% of the Canadian public believes conspiracy theories. That is being fed by the Conservatives, who believe that this will somehow get them an advantage in polling. It is a very dangerous path to go down.

We have only to look, for example, at the new shadow minister for infrastructure, who has used her time in the House to promote disinformation about Bill Gates, a classic trope of conspiracy theo-

rists, and vaccines, which is another conspiracy misinformation drive. To her, Bill Gates and vaccines are undermining Canadian sovereignty, and she is accusing the Prime Minister. This is a person appointed as a shadow minister in the Conservative shadow cabinet. It is therefore not surprising that when Christine Anderson, a far-right German neo-Nazi extremist, came to Canada, she was feted and welcomed by key members of the Conservative caucus. They felt at home with that spread of disinformation.

• (1840)

This is not harmless stuff. A report that just came out on vaccine disinformation said that Canada had 198,000 extra cases of COVID, 13,000 more people sent to hospital and a \$300-million hit to the medical system from people who were encouraged to believe in vaccine disinformation. An extra 2,800 people died as a result. That is double all the car accidents in Canada for a year.

These people were not isolated weirdos. They were our cousins, our neighbours and our aunts. When we see the Conservatives promoting vaccine disinformation because they think it is going to win them votes, we have to ask ourselves what is happening in our nation today that the political representatives of the people are not telling people that medical science is working with us. We did not have all the answers on the vaccines. We did not have all the answers on dealing with the biggest pandemic in a century. However, we all had an obligation to stand up and say that threatening and attacking doctors, nurses and paramedics is unacceptable. That is the danger of disinformation.

It not as though this pattern comes out of nowhere, because we know what happened in Brazil with the Zika virus. There was suddenly a proliferation of falsehood videos on YouTube that told mothers it was feminists making their children sick, that it was George Soros who was making their children sick. However, there were doctors and nurses on the front lines trying to stop that pandemic, and we saw the disinformation.

Why does that disinformation need to be talked about? We have never heard the Conservative caucus talk about holding the algorithms to account, but it is the algorithms that have created toxic disinformation. They are upending democratic engagement. The Conservatives talk about freedom, the freedom to believe in ivermectin and horse tranquillizers. We have heard Conservative leadership candidates brag about how great ivermectin is. They can believe whatever they want, but the issue is that this is about how the algorithms on Facebook and YouTube turn people toward disinformation.

I urge my colleagues to read the book *The Chaos Machine*. As they will see in it, when people started to study vaccine disinformation in 2013 and 2014, there were parent groups talking about raising their children, but the only ones that were promoted on the algorithm promoted disinformation. If someone clicked on one of those, soon after the algorithm would feed them more and more extremist content.

By the time the pandemic hit, I had joined an international group of parliamentarians led by Damian Collins from the U.K. We thought we could actually stay ahead of disinformation. We thought we could challenge it and take it on. However, within a month it was clear that the game was over. During the pandemic, if someone checked anything on Facebook while asking for the query “alternate health” in Facebook’s search function, it sent them to QAnon. That is how the algorithm works.

The algorithms are set to send people to extremism, but we do not hear that when the Conservatives talk about Bill C-11. They are trying to make Canadians believe this is some kind of plot so that the big Liberal elites, their gatekeepers and their big arts bosses can attack our rights, spy on us and shut down our views.

In fairness, I know some of the Conservatives believe this. I firmly believe that some of them, in their hearts, do believe in the Klaus Schwab and George Soros tin hat conspiracy theory. However, I also know there is an element in the Conservative Party that thinks this is a great idea and that they should spread the hate and disinformation, because it will keep people angry and it will get them to vote against the other government. They do not come here with a vision of how to address the mass power of the web giants, which other jurisdictions are dealing with. They do not come here to ask how we ensure a balance of rights and freedoms and how we ensure local content.

• (1845)

I am not going to be the one to say let us give extra money to Postmedia or any of the other historic companies, but what is the obligation of companies to pay their share? That is a fair discussion and that is what we should be discussing, but it is not what this has been turned into. It is about the Conservative push to promote disinformation, falsehoods and ridiculous statements. The only thing I have not heard about from the Conservatives is “pizzagate”. That is about the only thing they have not mentioned. They have mentioned everything else but that.

When I go back to international forums with parliamentarians from France, Germany, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Brazil, who are asking what Canada is doing about disinformation, I will say there is a mixed bag. We recognize the damage disinformation is doing, that it costs lives, that it is creating paranoia and that there has been a rise in death threats against doctors, nurses, paramedics and people in political life for daring to speak up. It was the member for Oshawa who used his position in the House of Commons to promote the falsehood that the Prime Minister was somehow working for Klaus Schwab. When I took that on, within an hour I was attacked and received threats.

• (1850)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Lethbridge has a point of order.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I recognize that the hon. member would like to go on and on and really enjoys the sound of his own voice, but he is so far off the scope of this bill—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member has 20 minutes for his speech, and he has touched—

Government Orders

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, this is a point of order. This bill has nothing to do with dealing with disinformation. In fact, an amendment was brought forward at committee and that amendment was rejected, so I would ask the member to get back on track.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is debate. As the hon. member knows, a certain leeway is given, but the hon. member has been talking about the bill.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I am not quoting Nickelback tonight, so the Conservatives may not get the cultural reference, but I will quote Bob Marley: If the cap fits, let them wear it.

We are talking about how the Conservatives have used Bill C-11 to spread disinformation, falsehoods and paranoia to make stuff up. The member believes that Canada is going to be turned into North Korea. Who in the world back home actually thinks that Canada is somehow going to be North Korea if we make Netflix pay tax? Members should think about that for a moment. Who actually thinks that Disney is going to be forced to shut down and that this is all about the son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, as the member for Lethbridge said, being able to block cat videos? I know the Conservative backbenchers probably spend a lot of time in the House watching cat videos. I do not know what else they do on the backbench, but I can assure them that nobody is going to touch their cat videos. They are okay. We are just asking Netflix and YouTube to pay their share of tax.

That might be the other element we have not talked about tonight. The Conservatives are more than willing to allow massively powerful corporations not to pay their fair share. Look at what they do with big oil. There is not a subsidy yet they do not think it is entitled to.

To get back to the bill itself, it is about making sure that we have a level playing field. We also have to address in this Parliament of Canada that the idea of using disinformation, fear and paranoia and stoking our base consistently is not a healthy thing. I have heard again and again about user content. The Conservatives hate the arts. Have members ever been at the airport and their plane is delayed?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester has a point of order.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, that is a patent lie. I will be very clear. The member said that I hate the arts. My son is now in a program for musical theatre, so how could I possibly hate the arts?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member may bring up a point of clarification, but we do not use such words in the House, as the hon. member rightly knows.

We will let the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay finish his speech.

Government Orders

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, we also know it is very unparliamentary to accuse someone of lying, but I was starting to talk about the Conservative leader, so I know why the Conservatives are jumping in front of the bus to stop me.

Have members ever been in the airport and their plane is delayed? I will call my wife or sit and read a book. However, buddy beside me gets mad and starts shouting into his phone, and I ask him to stop because we are all delayed. That is the Conservative leader. That is what he does. If his plane is delayed, he shouts into his phone and is convinced that the son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau is going to block his user-generated content to rant about how his plane was delayed.

The Conservatives are not here for the arts. They do not believe in the arts. I have said that and I will say it again. If they are calling struggling artists “big union bosses” and they want to talk about user-generated content, then—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester has a point of order.

• (1855)

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, perhaps I will say this in a clearer fashion. I have a son who is studying musical theatre. It is very clear: How could I possibly hate the arts?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have an opportunity to make those facts known—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is not a point of order. The hon. member will have the opportunity to make those points in questions and comments.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. What is actually a point of order is that when you rise and somebody's microphone specifically turns off, they are supposed to close their mouth and sit down. This member continues to interrupt you and challenge your authority. I think he should put himself in order by respecting the Chair.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I think we are getting a bit warmed up right now. We are trying to keep an orderly House. I ask that we allow the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay to proceed with his speech. He has less than one minute to conclude, and then there are questions and comments that could be made during the 10 minutes following.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I am really glad to know that my hon. colleague has a son. I do not know what that has to do with stopping me from talking about the failure of the Conservative leadership to deal with disinformation, falsehoods, paranoia and conspiracy.

I would think it would be in the interests of all our children if, as parliamentarians, we act like adults. Obviously that has not been happening with Bill C-11. I am going to be here all week. I sit and listen to disinformation and falsehoods every day, but I think it is really important that we are clear when we call it out.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, although my colleague talked a little about conspiracy theories, the Senate is the place of sober second thought. It looked at this bill in detail and brought in amendments, one of which is to try to exclude individual content.

The senators recognized that the CRTC really should not be determining what individuals are posting. Clause 4 looks at the extent to which a program contains a sound recording that has been assigned a unique identifier under an international standard system, the fact that the program has been uploaded to an online undertaking that provides a social media service, the fact that a program or significant part has been broadcast by a broadcast undertaking or that it is required to be carried on under a licence. This amendment was brought to make sure that those who are doing commercial business are overseen by the CRTC, but individual content is excluded.

The NDP, in their unholy marriage with the Liberals, have rejected this amendment. Could the member explain to the Canadian public why that is?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I really want to thank my hon. colleague. I could say “Exhibit A”, and I could probably just sit down.

What is this “unholy marriage” stuff when it comes to parliamentary work? The Conservatives cannot do this without disinformation. I like my hon. colleague, but she was the member who believed that horse tranquilizers were going to help deal with COVID and ran on this obvious falsehood.

Let us talk about what the member is saying. I do not see anything in this bill saying that the son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau would be able to look at people's search functions. The Conservatives believe that, so—

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The individual on the other side of the floor continues to malign and treat other members in this House with great disrespect, as—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows that this is a matter for debate. On all sides, this is going on. There has been no name-calling. It is not unparliamentary language. I understand what the hon. member is saying, but it has been a very lively debate.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I married my wife in the church. I have not been involved in any unholy marriages with any Liberals. Members could look that up.

Now, I bet there is probably a Reddit page run by Conservatives that would say otherwise. I feel the need to challenge that disinformation and that paranoia because I bet by tomorrow morning they are going to say that Klaus Schwab looked over the wedding, and it did not happen. I married my wife—

• (1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are going to go to another question.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really want to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for his intervention. I appreciated how he has been calling out some of the harmful, and frankly, disgusting rhetoric coming from the other side of the House.

Could the member explain to us what he thinks would happen to Canadian arts and culture if we did not have a Bill C-11 to hold these companies with market dominance on the Internet to account?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, this is a good question because, again, I am not totally sold that Bill C-11 is the best solution. However, I think it is a solution to making sure that the tech giants pay their share and that we actually pay into the arts system in Canada. The tech giants have not paid tax.

Again, I am sorry, but I have been in the House for 19 years, and I have never heard the Conservatives talk about artists before. Now, today, I have heard them denounce this as big art's union bosses, as though Jimmy Hoffa played the mandolin.

Their idea is whoever the guy is from Diagon, right? They are YouTube broadcasters who are promoting ivermectin. They are worried about them, but I can tell them they do not need to worry. Nobody is going to stop all the insane conspiracy-driven hate and paranoia. However, we need to hold Facebook and YouTube to account for the algorithms because they are undermining democracy, and that is an obligation.

There was a time, just in 2018, when Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats worked together because we recognized that threat. What we are dealing with now is a Conservative leader who believes that there is an opportunity in spreading disinformation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I laughed a lot during our colleague's speech. It was very colourful, but, at the same time, the substance of it was very worrisome.

When the leader of the official opposition gave a long speech to oppose Bill C-11, he went on and on singing the praises of the free market. I think that we are all in favour of a free market, but there are some areas, such as culture, where I think that does not apply. There are some areas where we need to rely on the government we have to help protect and regulate that culture, which may be thriving but is still, in many ways, more fragile than the U.S.-based web giants.

Can my colleague explain why the real danger is not government dictatorship but the dictatorship of the digital multinationals?

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, the idea that the Conservatives are floating, that there is somehow a free market when one is dealing with YouTube and Facebook, is ridiculous. These are the largest broadcasters in the world because their algorithms decide what one sees. The idea that this is all some kind of free market is a falsehood.

Maybe the Conservatives just discovered the Internet a few years ago, but there is no longer a free Internet. It is a very controlled Internet. It is the algorithms.

Government Orders

One of the fundamental principles we fought for in Canada is the need to promote, preserve and ensure that Canadian, francophone and indigenous voices have a place in Canada to have their stories told. We can sell that to the world. In fact, our greatest export from Canada is not our oil and gas. It is our artists, and we need to support them.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by sharing with the member for Timmins—James Bay, and he is aware, that I agree with him. There is so much good in Bill C-11. There is no censorship in it. We need to cut through that noise.

However, I think it is fair to offer constructive criticism and concern. At committee last June, it was my view that we lost potentially good amendments because of animosity between Liberals and Conservatives. My hope was that the Senate might look to improve the bill and suggest amendments. Particularly, amendments could focus on ensuring that if a musician like the member for Timmins—James Bay in my community were to post a show on YouTube, it would not be open to regulation from the CRTC.

Could the member for Timmins—James Bay share whether he is concerned about this with respect to Bill C-11 as well?

• (1905)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I certainly think that Bill C-11 could have been better. Moreover, I think the CRTC is an extremely cumbersome instrument to deal with this. However, the Conservatives decided to take this absolutely extreme, paranoid position as opposed to saying, “What do we actually need to do to make sure this works?”

There were probably better ways to do this, but we were not given those options, given the realm. I have been an artist, and I know many people in the arts community. I certainly want to reassure the artists I know.

I do not know those who are concerned that if they post a YouTube video, the CRTC is somehow going to watch it. We can imagine if it did. Would that not be fascinating? That is not what this bill is about. It is about making sure that the tech giants pay their share.

I think there were better ways of dealing with this legislation and making sure that these tech giants are held to account. I certainly believe that, out of Bill C-11, we still need to deal with the issue of accountability in the algorithms. Certainly, there are issues with the tech giants in their refusal to deal with online harm for children and the vulnerable, the exploitation of people that has happened and the proliferation of hate and violence that we have seen in jurisdictions like Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Brazil. There have to be legal consequences. I think we need to look at those issues beyond where we are tonight with Bill C-11.

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for that intervention today. He was spot on regarding how Conservatives are dealing with this issue. The one thing he missed was fundraising. I can guarantee that his speech, or parts of it, will probably be the subject of a fundraising email as the Conservatives blast the NDP for wanting to censor everybody and everything. As a matter of fact, I tweeted something that made it into a Conservative email, talking about how it was so untrue with a gigantic “donate now” button at the bottom.

Could the member comment on what he thinks the real motivation behind this is? Other than just going along with the disinformation, is there an element of this that is really about raising money for political purposes?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, they really are special snowflakes, are they not? The only problem is they have to throw in some threats like they are going to get people and they are going to die because they are a friend of Klaus Schwab. We have to be better than that. We have to be speaking about truth, and what they have been talking about is not truthful.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise again to speak to this bill. I spoke to Bill C-10 in the previous Parliament and I have spoken to Bill C-11 in this Parliament, and this debate around the Senate amendments provides an opportunity to speak again.

I would like to start out by saying that Conservatives fancy themselves experts on all things to do with markets and the marketplace, but ironically they do not appear to understand markets. They do not seem to understand marketing distribution systems and networks, and the convergence of interests, big money interests, that occurs within these systems and networks.

In any market, big players, through their market power, can control distribution of product, physical or cultural. They can distort markets by deciding what consumers can have access to. It is an immutable law of the marketplace, as ironclad as the law of gravity itself, that the big players seek greater and greater market power, including through vertical integration. For example, distributors often seek to become producers of product. In the cultural sector, they seek to become producers of content. We see this with the big streaming services like Netflix and Amazon. In the case of Amazon, a company that was basically a mail-order house has also become a streaming service that does cross-marketing. When people order something on Amazon, they are asked if they want to subscribe to Amazon Prime.

Streaming services not only distribute content; they produce it more and more. It goes without saying that they have an interest in all of us being properly exposed to the content they produce at great cost. What is more, we see platforms like Google and Meta using their monopolistic muscle to intimidate duly elected governments, which I find unacceptable. This is whom the Conservatives are defending: the big streaming platforms, not the small, independent creators. They are sidling up to the big kids in the schoolyard. We are a long way from Adam Smith's free market of equals who bargain in the town square and achieve a fair equilibrium.

On the subject of algorithms, the bill is clear: The government cannot dictate algorithms to streaming platforms, end of story. The book is closed on that. In fact, it was never opened. Proposed subsection 9.1(8) of the bill reads, “The Commission shall not make an order under paragraph (1)(e) that would require the use of a specific computer algorithm or source code.” That is in black and white in the bill and has been since the very beginning, yet we keep hearing from the other side that somehow the government is trying to control algorithms. When members are characterizing what is in the bill as fake news, I find that very Trumpian. It is not fake news; it is fact, and it is fact in black and white in legislation.

There is also an assumption in the narrative of the official opposition that social media algorithms mean freedom, but algorithms are not the doorway to freedom. They can be straitjackets, straitjackets of the mind. They can be blinders. We know they can lock people in echo chambers that amplify their own ideological biases. Social media algorithms are not necessarily designed to expand one's horizon. On the contrary, they can be designed to narrow one's field of vision. They are myopic and can be used to promote specific economic and political interests. It can be through algorithms that biases are reinforced and, in some cases, that misinformation is given a high-octane boost.

Let us look at radio by way of analogy. Radio of the 1970s, when CanCon was introduced by a Liberal government, is not so different from streaming today, even though the Conservatives have tried to tell us that these are apples and oranges and cannot be compared. We can superimpose the Conservative position onto 1970s radio and see what would have happened if that argument, that ideology, had been applied to music on radio.

The opposition says that Bill C-11's discoverability features cannot be compared to CanCon, that they are night and day, apples and oranges. They argue that we needed CanCon when faced with the limited resource of radio frequencies and that this solution is no longer needed because the web is limitless and opportunities to be heard are infinite.

● (1910)

I agree about the web. It is an infinite ocean of limitless voices, large and small, and herein lies the contradiction in the Conservative narrative. How can there be censorship by governments, or anyone else for that matter, in the endless ocean that is the World Wide Web? It is an oxymoron to speak of censorship in the cyberera, unless we are in North Korea, where Conservatives appear to think we live. Today's challenge is not censorship, but misinformation and disinformation amplified by bots and algorithms.

Government Orders

Let us go back to CanCon and radio. The reason we needed CanCon was to counter a powerful, U.S.-centric distribution system whose financial interests were not necessarily those of Canadian music creators. Without CanCon, radio stations would have played only music provided to them by multinational record companies with an interest in promoting the musical artists they invested in. How would radio stations have decided what songs to play from all the music supplied to them? Playlists would have been compiled according to listener requests, requests based on the music supplied by the record companies and played on the radio, and on record sales at record stores stocked with records also supplied by the same foreign-owned record companies.

In a sense, without a requirement for CanCon, which is a form of discoverability, the de facto music industry radio algorithm would not have left much space for great Canadian music.

Finally, the Conservatives say that if Canadian culture cannot make it on its own, without any kind of government support, then it should face the judgment of the marketplace. They seem to view Canadian culture as the latest automobile.

If the Conservatives are so vehemently opposed to government intervention, the support of culture, are they asking that we eliminate Telefilm and the Canadian film or video production tax credit, which support Canadian films, many of them award winners? I think that is one of the questions that need to be asked here.

• (1915)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, with all respect to my colleague across the way, at committee the CRTC said that the Governor in Council, the cabinet, would provide the criteria by which the algorithms would be set to determine what content is voted up and what content is buried.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage admitted that he had given good thought to that, but he would not release what those criteria are. I am not sure how that squares with an open and transparent government, which is the platform the Liberals ran on.

Can the member comment on that?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, the law is very clear. I read the phrase in the law that said the government, and that includes the CRTC, cannot dictate algorithms. If by “criteria” the member means a request or a requirement that streaming platforms provide some visibility to Canadian content, I think that is a pretty wide-open criterion that leaves a lot of leeway to streaming services to do that in the manner they think is most appropriate.

One of the points of this bill is to make sure that Canadian creators can find space on streaming services, the same way CanCon was meant to make it so that radio could provide space for great Canadian music, which now dominates the world.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very interesting speech and historical look at this, as well as explaining different technical terms.

Since we come from the same neck of the woods in Quebec, I would like to hear my friend and colleague speak about the importance of creating that space for Quebec content via Bill C-11.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, I think a great part of this bill is driven by the need to provide support to Quebec content, as well as other Canadian content, and that is why stakeholders in Quebec are so in favour of this bill. The stakeholders have been consulted by the government over and over, and Quebec stakeholders are particularly keen on this bill, and for a very good reason.

I think it is a very important bill, not only for all Canadian creators but for maintaining the vibrancy of Quebec culture, which has shown itself to be extremely vibrant. It is an effort to maintain that vibrancy in the new technological environment that we have with cyber-communication.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for mentioning the web giants. I think we all agree that this enabling legislation is important and that they need to pay their fair share. I wonder if the member can tell this House when he thinks this enabling provision will be enacted.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, it is a good question; unfortunately, I do not have a precise answer for it.

However, the member hit on another important aspect of this bill, which is that it is not only about discoverability of Canadian content creators but also about levelling the playing field and making sure that streaming services pay their fair share. It is really not fair at all that traditional broadcasters have to contribute to the Canada Media Fund but the streaming services, the foreign-owned streaming services, have been able to skirt that obligation. This bill would help make things more balanced, and that is a very important point that the member has raised.

• (1920)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, my understanding is that the goal here is to ensure that foreign streaming services pay their fair share. We have a plan for that. Could the member tell me what the Liberal plan is to ensure that they pay their fair share?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, right now traditional broadcasters have to make payments to the Canada Media Fund, which is used to help in the production of Canadian content. At some point, through regulation, the streaming services will also have to contribute a portion of the revenues they earn in this country from Canadian consumers into the Canada Media Fund in order to help with the production of Canadian content for streaming.

Government Orders

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if I could ask the same question of the member for Lac-Saint-Louis as I did of the member for Timmins—James Bay, with respect to a Senate amendment that would have looked to scope out content posted on social media services coming from users who could be musicians in his community, for example. I am not asking about censorship, but just looking at whether he agrees or what his views are on whether more could have been done to ensure that the CRTC is not regulating content from a musician in his community, for example.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, this is a very technical bill, but my understanding is that the amendment in the Senate could encourage music companies to share music on platforms like YouTube instead of on music services like Spotify and Apple Music. The bill is quite clear that it is not meant to regulate the small, independent creator. As a matter of fact, it says here that proposed paragraph 5(2)(h) of the act would require that regulatory policy:

(h) takes into account the variety of broadcasting undertakings to which this Act applies and avoids imposing obligations on any class of broadcasting undertakings if that imposition will not contribute in a material manner to the implementation of the broadcasting policy set out in subsection 3(1).

There are checks and balances all through this bill to ensure that the small, independent creator is not brought into the scope of this legislation. It is important to note that there are safeguards throughout the bill, including with respect to freedom of expression.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time tonight with the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

It has been really interesting to sit here listening to the debate because I have sat on the heritage committee for years and went through all the testimony on Bill C-10 and Bill C-11. The only thing I agree on is that the former heritage minister knew nothing about Bill C-10 and that is why he was replaced. I would say the current heritage minister knows very little about Bill C-11, and he too should be replaced. This is an interesting conversation we are having here tonight.

I say that because, when one sits in committee and hears testimony after testimony twice a week for four years, it is kind of interesting. It is true that this bill a dumpster. We have seen it since day one when the former heritage minister tried to explain it. It came back to the House early in June and then we shoved it off to the Senate, only to have the unnecessary election and the bill died. How serious were the Liberals on that? They had an election that did not have to be called if Bill C-10 were so important, but, no, they shoved it to the Senate, called an election that did not need to be called and the bill died. We had to start all over and two years later, here we are again on Bill C-11, and the Liberals are still arguing the same points as they did on Bill C-10. It is interesting.

Now we are dealing with the Senate's proposal on this bill. I will say that the Senate, in my estimation, did a fairly good job on this. It worked hard on this. It spent weeks on Bill C-11. It did not like what we sent it, we being the House of Commons and the committee, so it spent weeks going over this. In fact, it had 26 amendments that it recommended the government look at and put in the bill. That speaks volumes. We never get that many amendments from the red chamber.

Out of the 26 amendments, we understand the government took 18, but it did not take eight. For whatever reason, the government did not like eight amendments from the Senate, which I will get to in just a moment. The concern remains on all sides of the Senate. I know they are flipping each way over there, but they all agreed this bill is a disaster.

In the Conservative caucus, we have talked about this since day one. We have been very vocal on this bill for very good reason. We are very concerned with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's involvement in Bill C-11. I am very concerned. I do not think it has the capability, in fact I will say that I know it does not have the capability, to really do what is necessary in Bill C-11.

It is not just the Conservative caucus talking about its concerns with Bill C-11. We have heard it from industry experts. We have heard it from academics, content creators and digital platform users. Everybody who came to committee over the last number of years expressed the same concern. Former CRTC vice-chair Peter Menzies spoke twice in committee about his concerns with Bill C-10 and Bill C-11. Dr. Michael Geist has been the most vocal on this, and he should be because he is Canada research chair in Internet law. I think he is one of the foremost thinkers in the country when it comes to Internet regulation. He has written oodles of articles not only denouncing Bill C-10 but also, recently, Bill C-11.

The government claims the platforms must pay their fair share. I have heard over and over today the government claiming that platforms must pay their fair share. This just in: They actually do. The government says it is long overdue. Platforms are among the biggest investors today in Canadian film and television production. There are all-time records in Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina and Vancouver. The business has never been so good. Why is that? It is because Americans are hiring Canadians to do their productions from Toronto, Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg and Vancouver. I could go on and on about the tremendous support in this country for working, paying taxes and shooting documentaries.

● (1925)

TV networks, such as CBC, CTV and Global, do not do documentaries anymore because they are too expensive. However, Netflix and Amazon do documentaries because there is skin in the game. They put well over \$1 billion into this country's film and TV production, which is later shown either on streaming devices or sold to the traditional broadcasters.

Government Orders

The Liberals say that we need to support the next generation of Canadian artists. However, Bill C-11 would hurt Canadian artists the most. The Senate was absolutely convinced on this issue. We were, too, on Bill C-11, as were many digital creators, who risk being harmed by the CRTC regulation.

I heard the member for Nunavut the other day, and again a couple of moments ago, explaining that there is concern with this. The concern should be up north, where their voices have never been heard. CBC does not go up there. CTV would not go up there, and Global does not go up north to tell indigenous, Inuit stories. It is too expensive. However, here we have Netflix and Amazon giving us the stories of Canadian people. TV and film production is at its all-time high in this country.

We were told in committee by the largest entertainment workers union, Unifor, that streamers are now the largest employer in this sector. No longer is it CTV, Global or CBC. It is the streamers that are the largest employer in the sector. We can see how it has grown.

I am a 40-plus year veteran of television. I have seen the decline in television, but the gap has been filled by streamers and production houses from others that had to come into this country to put money on the table to produce some of the greatest innovation this country has ever seen.

My fear now is that CanCon demands and higher regulatory costs would mean that many streaming services from around the world could block Canada. The biggest concern, and I have talked about this, is regulating user content. This was one of the eight Senate amendments rejected by the government. I pointed that out. It appears that the government wants to retain the power to regulate. Instead of listening to experts, the Liberals are catering to the needs of big telecom companies, which basically hold the monopoly, and they have for decades, over broadcasting in this country.

One more time, I am going to talk about the CRTC because I am fearful of it today. The CRTC, as we have seen, is a body with little or no accountability. I would argue it is one of the least effective regulatory bodies in the whole country today. It is a body that can barely handle the responsibilities that it has. For starters, the CRTC has been totally ineffective at managing Canadian telecoms. We have the least competitive and most expensive telecommunication industry in the world. I blame the CRTC. Canadians today pay the highest prices for cell phones and Internet. Many, in fact, do not even have broadband in this country.

Then there is that three-digit suicide prevention line, which this place unanimously voted for in December 2020. How easy would that be to put into action? The CRTC, in its wisdom, has taken a year and a half for a simple three-digit suicide prevention line. How can we expect the CRTC to address the problems of broadcasting when we already know it has no idea how to handle its responsibilities?

The big issue with Bill C-11 is the CRTC and the Governor in Council. Canadians have woken up. I have gotten lots of emails in the last couple of days. I can share them during questions and comments. This is a bill that Canadians should be very fearful of.

• (1930)

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

Mr. Speaker, the member said that we should be listening to experts. I think that is what he said specifically.

I know that I am certainly not an expert as it relates to the culture and making sure it is properly showcased throughout our country. One individual from my riding who is an expert is Gord Sinclair from the Tragically Hip. He came forward. This member must have seen his submission, where he said that this bill was critical to ensure the longevity of the arts in Canada. He went on to say that, had there not been those CanCon requirements and a need for investments back into Canadian culture specifically, that the Tragically Hip would not exist today. It would not have made it.

Is the member saying that Gord Sinclair is not an expert when it comes to Canadian culture and properly showcasing it?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, I did hear Gord Sinclair, and I thank the hon. member for bringing him up. Yes, through the sixties, seventies and eighties, when radio stations were forced to hit rates of 30% or 35% in Canadian content, there was a lot of Canadian talent that made a lot of people in the industry successful. We could go on for an hour naming the successful people that CanCon created. This was very much so in the radio days, but that is no more. In fact, the department does not know how much revenue Bill C-11 would bring in.

It has no idea, but over a billion dollars has been put into this country by the big giants for production. I have talked about Toronto, Regina, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Calgary. These are tremendous production houses, which I fear would have closed years ago.

• (1935)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I, for one, think the last election was super important because, if it were not for that election, I would not be here today, so I am thankful. I do not think it was a useless election, as he says it was.

I also want to talk about the great work that CBC has done for Inuit and indigenous reporters. We have great indigenous reporters who CBC has continually promoted, such as Pauline Pemik and Jordan Konek, who have appeared in national CBC shows, so I do appreciate what CBC was done for indigenous journalism.

Government Orders

I want to ask the member about online streaming because we have two great indigenous-owned online streaming providers, Isuma TV and Nunavut TV. They are indigenous online streaming providers that are forced to compete against each other. I think that giants, such as Netflix and Disney+, need to help indigenous online streaming providers to get the same airspace because they do not have the same capability to compete against those web giants.

I wonder if the member agrees with me.

The Deputy Speaker: I used to give out gold stars for best comments, but that definitely gets a gold star. We are happy to have the hon. member here in the House of Commons as well.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, did the member for Nunavut know the indigenous met with the minister and stormed out of the office, they were so upset over the regulations on Bill C-11, even Bill C-10? The indigenous, the Inuit and others are not happy with what has transpired.

They do need their voice up north. If CBC was doing such a good job, we would probably not have needed APTN in this country. It is funny that APTN has taken over the voice of the indigenous people because the public broadcaster could not carry it. That has opened a window for those in Winnipeg and at APTN.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his years of service. I also heard him say that he had a face for radio, and I did not realize that he had been on TV as well.

He mentioned, in his deliberations, all the emails he got from concerned Canadians. I wonder if he could share some of those with the House, from individuals who have legitimate concerns about what Bill C-11 is and how it would impact them.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, these came in over the weekend, and this afternoon, I had an email from my constituent Bob that I will share. It has an interesting spin. He said that what is lost in this bill is that, while the government is forcing Facebook and all to pay for news, those same media of Global, CBC and CTV are taking photos from his Instagram and Facebook pages and using them without payment. There is an interesting one.

The other email is a concern from a YouTuber. He is worried about the government overreach on Bill C-11.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, normally I would say it is a pleasure to rise and speak in this House, but I am very sad to hear the tone of the debate tonight, with personal attacks and insults against many members just because they have a different view. That is not our country. It is not why we are here in this House. We are elected to come and share a different view.

Bill C-11 is a bill that is purported to be about the modernization of the CRTC in the digital age, and everyone in this House is okay with that. Everyone agrees we need to modernize.

However, there has been an assertion that we need to make everyone pay their fair share, and that is certainly a principle everybody would be on side with, but the reality is right now these large streamers they are talking about are putting \$5 billion into the

Canadian economy. This bill, if implemented, would put \$1 billion in.

Already, I would tell members this is not really what is behind this bill, and my concern as the shadow minister for civil liberties has to do with people's charter rights and freedoms. Let me just refresh one's memory about what the Charter of Rights and Freedoms says in section 2(b), which is everyone has the "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication." We are supposed to have freedom.

There have been claims of misinformation and disinformation. In fact, on Twitter, the Minister of Heritage put out some things I want to go through one at a time about what the bill is and what the bill is not, because Canadians are listening to it all and are not sure what to believe.

The minister says that Bill C-11 would not tell Canadians what to watch. For this one, I want to do the fork analogy. Let us say somebody decides to go hide all the forks in the house in the hall closet. Then they tell Canadians they have the freedom to choose whatever utensil they want to eat with, so Canadians open the drawer and see spoons, knives and various things, but there are no forks. Now, if they want to spend the time to go hunt through the house, they can find those forks in the hall closet, so absolutely, they have the choice of what to eat with, but in fact, by burying the forks in the hall closet, the government has effectively impacted what Canadians can watch, or what they can eat with.

The minister also says that this is not going to infringe on free speech. However, what this bill would do is allow the government in council, that is cabinet, to determine the criteria that will be used by the CRTC to bury content. I am not saying I could be in the minds of the members opposite, but I am sure, from the commentary I heard tonight, they hate Conservative ideology. That would be fairly obvious to me tonight.

If somebody was posting content with Conservative ideology, perhaps the criteria the minister would set for the algorithms would say to bury that. We do not know what the criteria are, because even though the CRTC indicated the Minister of Heritage would set those and the Minister of Heritage said he had given consideration and in due course would reveal them, we do not know what they are. From an open and transparent government, we have no transparency on what the criteria are that will censor content, or bury it.

The Senate studied this and gave due consideration. It said it really had a problem with the government of the day, whatever government it was, deciding which individual content to bury. Yes, the government gets that people are making money off the Internet, streaming services and everything else. It wants to make sure Canadian content is out there and promoted, but individuals would be excluded, so the Senate brought an amendment to exclude that. The Liberal government rejected it, which says to me and to many Canadians it wants to have the ability to control what individuals put out. That is unacceptable.

• (1940)

In addition, the minister said that the bill would not create censorship on the Internet, but anything that can shut down content is a form of censorship. We know that in a healthy democracy, criticism of the government of the day and the ability to speak freely are essential elements. It is only in communistic governments that the government of the day determines what one can see, what one cannot see, what one can say and what is unacceptable. That is not democracy, and that is not what we want in Canada.

The final point from the minister is that any ridiculous things that the Conservatives come up with are to scare Canadians. Well, in addition to that being insulting, did the Liberals not listen to the many digital creators who came to committee and objected to the bill? Did they not listen to Canadian icons, like Margaret Atwood, who is criticizing the bill for its definition of Canadian content and for the ability of the government to tell her what to write or whether it is going to be promoted or not. I think that is ridiculous.

The other thing is that it is not just Conservatives who have concerns about the bill, and I have mentioned a few, but how about President Joe Biden? President Joe Biden has a concern about Bill C-11, and we were all here in the House on Friday to hear and to talk about the long-standing friendship between the United States and Canada. So let us hear what they have to say about Bill C-11.

This is from The Canadian Press:

Washington has raised concerns about the trade implications of Ottawa's online-streaming bill, prompting a legal expert to warn that Canada could face hundreds of millions of dollars of retaliatory tariffs if it becomes law. U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai expressed disquiet about the proposed legislation, known as Bill C-11, during talks earlier this month with International Trade Minister...at the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) Free Trade Commission ministerial meeting. The online-streaming bill, which has passed the House of Commons and...the Senate, would force American-owned platforms, including YouTube, Netflix and Amazon's Prime Video, to promote Canadian TV, movies, videos or music, and help fund Canadian content.

This is from True North:

The United States government has waded into the fight against two digital regulation laws being considered by the federal Liberal government. US Trade Representative and Ambassador Katherine Tai met with Canadian Minister of International Trade...on Wednesday to discuss Bill C-11 and Bill C-18. In a readout of the meeting, Tai stated that the US side "expressed concern" about the two laws discriminating against American businesses and content creators.

We have heard all of the rhetoric about how the U.S. is our strongest trading partner and that it is the most important relationship we have. Our friends to the south have expressed concern about the bill. Will this Liberal government not even consider their concern? Will it not even address their concern? I think that is un-

Government Orders

healthy for Canadians and unhealthy for our relationship with our neighbour to the south.

Let us talk about the lack of transparency on what will be voted upon or what will be buried. We have asked for over a year, and if there is nothing wrong with the criteria, why not share it?

Then there is the Canadian content definition, and I mentioned Margaret Atwood earlier. *The Handmaid's Tale*, which she wrote, unfortunately is not Canadian content, because even though Canadian actors acted in it, etc., and it was filmed here, the head company is from the U.S., and so it is not Canadian content.

I think that there is a pattern with this government of eroding our freedoms, and I see this as another slice of a thousand cuts in terms of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the media, and I could go on.

I know that there are people here who want to ask questions, but all I am saying is that our neighbours to the south have raised concerns, digital creators have raised concerns, we are raising concerns, and there is no transparency coming from the other side on the bill, and so it is time to take a pause.

• (1945)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is truly unbelievable. However, I guess it really is believable having sat through many of these debates listening to the types of things being said by the Conservatives. Do they honestly believe that we are moving towards what the hon. member says is a "communistic" set of laws? Is that not an incredible insult to people who have lived through these types of regimes? There has been no one before our committee, no constitutional expert who has raised concerns about that standing.

However, leaving that aside, can the member comment on Ambassador Tai's appearance before Congress just a few days ago where she said something completely different than what was being reported, and that she did not raise concerns about that, she was just interested in the progress of the legislation?

• (1950)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, as it goes with diplomatic relations, she may not have come out and said what she said to the press at committee because she wants to know the progress of the bill. She is interested to know whether the government would consider the amendments that the Senate made, which are very sound, and recognize that we want to exclude user content.

Government Orders

Yes, it is fine for people, in the definition of the Senate amendment, who have been assigned a unique identifier under an international standards system, have uploaded to an online undertaking in social media that is the exclusive licensee of copyright, is a program or significant part of which has been broadcast by a broadcast undertaking, or is required under a licence.

It is clear that the Senate intended that those were the people the CRTC should be regulating and not individuals. I am sure that what was quoted in multiple news organizations about what the U.S. thinks is true, that it has a concern with Bill C-11 and the government needs to listen to it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I do not share her concerns. Since the start, the bill has been the subject of some fearmongering by the Conservative Party.

For the past 30 years, cable companies have been helping to fund Quebec and Canadian cultural content. The act has never been updated to reflect the arrival of digital broadcasters.

By opposing the bill, is the Conservative Party not giving Google, Amazon, Disney+ and Netflix a gift, because they do not pay for Canadian cultural production? Why do the Conservatives not want web giants to pay their fair share?

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to separate the different parts of this bill because it is clear that everyone thinks that the government has a right to have people pay their fair share, for example, and to make sure that we have Amazon and Netflix helping out our performers and artists.

Full disclosure, I did make a CD. I did write a book. I could be considered an artist, although I will let those who consume the product be the judge of that.

Do our Canadian artists need that help? We have Shania Twain, Alanis Morissette, Terri Clark, Céline Dion, Jason McCoy, Keanu Reeves and Ryan Reynolds. Do we really need that help? I think Canadian artists are able to succeed in a streaming environment on their own. I think everybody can pay their fair share.

Let us look at one of the models from Bill C-18, which we are talking about at committee right now, where Taiwan has gone ahead and made a deal with big tech companies to donate \$250 million to fund things in their country. We are already getting \$5 billion. Where is the government on that negotiation?

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Sarnia—Lambton for that excellent and informative speech. When we listen to the Liberals and the NDP, and the rhetoric coming from that side, they would have people think that only the Conservatives have concerns with this bill. In fact, there are millions of Canadians who have written submissions to Liberal offices. They have testified at committee.

In fact, the Senate has come back with these very important recommendations and amendments to this bill. In the Senate, the majority by far is made up of non-Conservative members.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, he is absolutely right. If we think about the Senate that has 107 senators, there are only 18 Conservative senators there. Essentially, the Liberal Senate, that the Liberals kicked out and formed different groups, has said there are issues with this bill. There are issues especially on individual content and that is the major concern that we are talking about here.

We have the testimony that was heard at committee from people who are online digital creators who want the ability to grow globally. They do not want the government interfering in that and possibly down voting content if it does not like their content because it is not the ideology of the day.

That is the difficulty. I have already talked about the President of the United States. That should give serious pause to the Liberals. If they are serious about their relationship with the U.S., they need to be serious about addressing those concerns.

● (1955)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I just want to advise that I will be sharing my time with my little buddy from Bow River.

It is, again, an honour to rise and speak today in the House. Unfortunately, I am speaking about another oppressive piece of legislation, and with the current Liberal government that could be almost anything, to be honest. In this case, it is the Liberal online censorship bill, Bill C-11. It is known as an act that would impose restrictions on free speech and open the door to government censorship on the Internet in Canada, which is the long title of the bill, or whatever name the Liberals want to give it.

From the beginning, the Liberals have sought to force the bill through Parliament without proper deliberation or consultation. Though Canadian content creators, experts and Canadians in general have spoken out on the bill and the increased power it would give the government, they have been largely ignored. The Liberals rammed Bill C-11 through committee without leaving time for amendments, and they continue to conceal their true intentions and the very real consequences the legislation would have on the Canadian Internet, on social media and on the personal freedoms of Canadians.

If the Liberal government were to commit to getting Bill C-11 correct, as it claims it has, instead of steamrolling democracy, the Senate would not have had to do the government's work for it. It is rare that the Senate does not pass legislation that has already passed through the House. The Senate sending Bill C-11 back to the House with significant amendments, not only in quantity but also in content, shows that there is something seriously wrong with the Liberal piece of legislation before us.

Government Orders

Bill C-11 seeks to regulate audiovisual content on the Internet through an arm of the government called the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, commonly known as the CRTC, which has traditionally been responsible for regulating radio and television. The bill would put the CRTC in charge of creating and implementing regulations for the Internet for the very first time. Bill C-11 has been controversial since it was introduced in 2020. Disguised as an incompetent and misguided attempt to modernize Canadian content regulation, the bill is nothing more than censorship by a dictatorship.

The Liberals introduced Bill C-11 to take something old, the Broadcasting Act, and use it to try to bridle something relatively new: the Internet. In trying to do so, the bill is the very opposite of modernization. By placing greater control in the hands of the government and granting less autonomy to individuals, Bill C-11 would create the very opposite of a free and equal society. It would be something closer to the Prime Minister's country of admiration: the basic dictatorship of China's Communist government.

Canadians who have been shut out by Canada's traditional media gatekeepers are finding their voices on places like Facebook, Instagram, Spotify and YouTube. Unfortunately, Bill C-11 would stifle the voices of digital-first creators and hinder the ability of Canadians to find the content they may like. In effect, Bill C-11 would place an Internet czar, the CRTC, which would pick what content gets moved to the top of one's search menu and what content gets pushed to the background where it ought never to be discovered.

In this way, Bill C-11 is a direct attack on digital-first creators, on our choice as viewers and on the advancement of the arts and culture in Canada in this century.

After listening to testimony from digital experts, Canadian YouTubers, indigenous creators and others, the Senate introduced an amendment, one of many, that would encourage the CRTC to exclude some user-generated content from regulation. However, not only is this amendment not guaranteed to pass in the House, but it also does not go far enough. With or without this amendment, under Bill C-11, the CRTC would still be able to compel platforms to promote CRTC-approved Canadian content.

- (2000)

The Liberals claim that bringing in more government intervention will boost Canadian culture. I believe this is absolutely false. As countries ruled by oppressive leaders have shown us, more government control does not lead to creativity and innovation, nor does allowing more power ever cause governments to further respect their citizens' rights and freedoms.

Under this bill, the CRTC would have the power to regulate user-generated content, in other words, anything created, posted and produced on the Internet. As such, although the government claims that this bill is geared toward supporting Canadian culture and levelling the playing field, Bill C-11 would actually remove freedom and choice away from Canadians while unfortunately, and not surprisingly, it would put more power and control in the hands of the government through the CRTC.

According to a report done by Michael Geist, a University of Ottawa expert on broadcasting and online regulations, "No other

democratic nation regulates user-generated content through broadcasting rules in this manner...Canada would be unique among its allies in doing so, and not in a good way."

This designation of the government having the power to determine what qualifies as Canadian content should alarm Canadians and members of the government alike. Bill C-11's stated purpose of promoting Canadian content would essentially give the government, through the CRTC, the power to determine what qualifies as Canadian content. Under this guise of promoting Canadian content, the government would be able to designate certain opinions, certain stances and thoughts in general as un-Canadian and thus deserving of censorship.

We have seen the Prime Minister shut down and silence Canadians who disagree with the government already, determining their opinions to be un-Canadian. We have seen him render Canadians invisible and exclude them from society, deciding that certain medical choices and beliefs are un-Canadian. Now if Bill C-11 passes, the same Prime Minister, through the CRTC, would have the power to extend his pattern of dividing, stigmatizing and silencing Canadians he disagrees with on the Internet.

Ultimately, Bill C-11 would put Canada in step with countries like North Korea, China, Iran and Russia, which is totally unacceptable and altogether dangerous. In reality, Bill C-11 is yet another attempt by the Liberal government to silence any perceived dissent and to forward only a Canada that aligns with the government: in this case, the Prime Minister's vision and ideals.

This bill is simply another in a long list of misguided and out-of-touch policies. It demonstrates that after eight years under the Prime Minister, Canada is broken. Legislation that seeks to regulate and oppress Canadians has been the norm under the Liberal government. While Canadians are facing a cost-of-living crisis, struggling to feed their families and to heat their homes, their government is focusing its resources on extending its already heavy hand into the everyday lives of its citizens.

The bottom line is that the Liberal government has failed to be transparent and continues to show contempt for democracy and parliamentary procedure by consistently using heavy-handed measures to adopt what can only be described as oppressive and unprecedented legislation without proper scrutiny.

Bill C-11 is nothing but another Liberal assault on Canadian citizens and their personal freedoms. That is why it failed in the Senate and why even a modified version ought to be voted down by the House. If it is not, I hope the Senate does the right thing and punts it back to the House with even more amendments.

Government Orders

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, from Conservative speaker after Conservative speaker, we are getting conspiracy theories and dog whistle politics. Does the hon. member truly believe that three parties in the House would support a piece of legislation and that none of those members would raise concerns about being brought in line with countries like North Korea and Russia? I asked the previous member this. Is it not an insult to the people living in those regimes to even come close to comparing them?

I know the hon. member was not at committee and did not hear this. Could he name just one constitutional expert in this country who has raised concerns about it? No one has, yet they point fingers, yell and scream. They are yelling down the Twitter rabbit hole, hoping it yells back at them with money, over complete misinformation and disinformation about Bill C-11. Can the hon. member name one constitutional expert?

• (2005)

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I will say that I have heard other speakers answer questions in the House and speak, and a government that is—

Mr. Chris Bittle: Not one.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, does the member want to answer his own question or does he want me to answer it?

The Deputy Speaker: The question has been asked. Let us allow the hon. member to answer it.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I am glad my hon. colleague can answer his own questions. That is a first.

If we have a government that introduces legislation and that cannot even provide for Canadians, let alone this House, a charter statement on compliance, I think we, and Canadians, should be asking some serious questions, and they are.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was listening carefully to my colleague's speech. I do not share his concerns or criticisms whatsoever.

It seems as though the Conservative Party has been fearmongering for months. Some words are quite loaded and must be used sparingly, words like dictatorship and oppression or talk of civil liberties being limited. I never saw the CRTC do that while attending hearings in my previous life.

Is the member opposite aware that his criticisms and comments are not based on anything in the bill, and that individual users can continue to express opinions and share their content on social media? I wonder what exactly he is talking about.

[English]

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is right. I was not at committee, but I know, from what I have been monitoring in this particular debate and from the content of phone calls and emails to my office from many folks across the country, that they have concerns. It is not because we are raising them but because Canadians who have testified at committee have concerns as well.

Anytime we have a piece of legislation that effectively makes the government a regulator, we as Canadians need to be concerned. That is exactly what this bill does. This bill, by any other word, makes the CRTC responsible to determine what content is Canadian enough and what is un-Canadian. It has trouble keeping up with what it has been mandated to do already. I cannot imagine it trying to do this.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner is this. There are legitimate concerns with this bill. However, when words like “censorship” and “charter rights” get used inappropriately, I think that can take away from the legitimacy of those criticisms. Is he not concerned that some of that language can erode concerns that are legitimate with respect to certain aspects of the bill?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, what needs to concern Canadians is that this, again, is another example of the government taking advantage and trying to modernize the Broadcasting Act, trying to fit a round peg in a square hole, and completely failing us and Canadians in that the CRTC would regulate what we see. Is that censorship? Should that concern us as Canadians under the charter? Yes, it should. I should decide what I want to see and what is Canadian that I want to see and not some organization controlled by the government.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There was a question as to the charter statement on Bill C-11. I was hoping to get unanimous consent to table, in both official languages—

• (2010)

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting into debate.

Continuing debate, the hon. member for Bow River.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting debate today, and I rise to speak on Bill C-11.

I was here for Bill C-10, which went on until the Liberals finally realized it was problematic, shipped it off to the Senate and called an election because they knew they had a bad piece of legislation.

The Internet is an interesting place, but the expression of opinions has been going on for a long time.

I do not know if anybody in this House has been to Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, London. People can stand there and express any opinion they want. There are libel laws in the Criminal Code; we understand that. However, people can stand on that corner and express their viewpoints. There is no censorship and no control. If they attract an audience, the audience might like to listen. If they do not attract an audience, so be it, but they still have the opportunity to do that.

In 1989, the World Wide Web was introduced as a tool for communication and connection, for the free flow of information no matter where one was located. One did not have to be on Speakers' Corner but could be anywhere in the world. According to Tim Berners-Lee, who is credited with founding the Internet, the web was a universal linked information system that "evolved into a powerful ubiquitous tool because it was built on...principles and because thousands...have worked...to expand its capabilities based on those principles." That is how the modern-day inventor of this particular tool stated it.

Since then, it has exploded. At least five billion people in the world are using it. I remember being on a corner in Beijing, China, and the street vendor selling a watermelon was using the Internet. It has exploded around the world. It can be used to shop, browse and communicate freely. It can be used for anything one wants at just about the click of a button. This is the power of the Internet.

The government wants Bill C-11 to level the playing field, but I do not think this is the leveller. Despite what the government says, Bill C-11 would change the way Canadians interact with the Internet, and I do not agree with the how. Bill C-11 flies directly in the face of the Internet Rights and Principles Coalition Charter. The charter talks about the right to network equality, "universal and open access to the Internet's content, free from discriminatory prioritisation, filtering or traffic control on commercial, political or other grounds." It talks about the right to accessibility and expression, "the right to seek, receive, and impart information freely on the Internet without censorship or other interference."

However, the heritage minister has continued to stonewall against some of our concerns. As Conservatives brought forward amendments that people were sharing with us, the government did not accept them and then went to the Senate after ignoring the amendments we wanted to make. Unfortunately, Bill C-11 stands in the way of Canadian innovation and tells Canadian creators that their aspirations can only be achieved with the help of the government. There is a phrase: "I'm here to help you. I'm from the government." In my world, I tell people to run now and run like hell. When somebody from the government says they are here to help, people should run.

For decades, the Canadian arts and cultural sectors have reached global audiences without government choosing the next success story. In my riding, as in many rural ridings, over 40% of the people do not have access to broadband. The Auditor General stated that less than 60% of rural Canadians have broadband access. Maybe that is what the Liberals should be working on, not controlling the Internet.

When there are people in Canada who do not even have reliable Internet, we should be looking at that. However, the crux of Bill

Government Orders

C-11 culminates in what the government has been doing since it took office. It wants to spend, regulate and control more. Enter Bill C-10 and then Bill C-11 to mandate the CRTC to regulate the Internet.

I have been on the heritage committee for a long time. There was a report with a recommendation that people should only be board members on the CRTC if they lived in the 613 area code. That was the Yale report recommendation. I am not sure about the CRTC when people have to live in Ottawa to be on the board.

Often during committee we heard that the CRTC was the only organization capable of achieving such a wide regulatory order. This bill would lead to the addition of even more government employees and costs, which would be significant whether done in-house or contracted out. It would be a huge cost. Not only would the scope of the CRTC reach Canadian radio waves and TV screens, but now it would also reach the Internet.

● (2015)

In 1997, a former Liberal MP, the Hon. Roger Gallaway, said:

[T]he Internet is the system linking computers all over the world, allowing the free flow of information. Now the new chair of the CRTC...has stated that her commission intends to regulate the Internet to ensure adequate levels of Canadian content. If information is flowing freely how and why is [the commissioner] going to measure its Canadiana?

Rather than spend our money in such a fashion perhaps a suggestion of redirecting her cash to libraries, book publishing or literary programs would be infinitely more meaningful. Regulating the flow of information is in a historical sense an extraordinarily dangerous step. I would suggest that regulating the flow of information is in fact censorship.

As parliamentarians I suggest that we stop the CRTC's flight of fancy before it takes one further step.

Does it sound familiar? History repeats itself, this time at the behest of the government. In 1997, when the Internet was but a fraction of what it is today, the concerns of regulatory censorship in what is Canadian content was being raised by the Liberals.

More recently, Canadian writer-director Sarah Polley adapted a screenplay from a novel by Canadian author Miriam Toews. She won an Oscar for her film *Women Talking*. Will the CRTC acknowledge that this production qualifies as Canadian content? Whether productions have significant involvement by Canadians is not considered by the CRTC to qualify as Canadian content.

Government Orders

Turning Red is a Pixar film written and directed by a Canadian, set in Canada and with Canadian characters. Does it count? No, it does not; it is not Canadian. Under Bill C-11, that decision would fall to cabinet, its order in council, the governor. Yes, that is the one that says they are going to give the directions to the CRTC. I do not think any party should be making those decisions and directing the CRTC.

At least the previous Bill C-10, a bill that died in the last Parliament, included an explicit exemption for user-generated content. However, then the Liberals removed it from their own bill. Members of the government realized they would not be able to tighten the grip on Canadians' viewing habits should that exemption remain. Therefore, they tried again with Bill C-11 and told Canadians not to worry but to trust them. That is another phrase. It gets scary when somebody says, "Trust me".

A careful examination revealed complicated ways in which they can still be regulated. The Senate introduced an amendment intended to explicitly rule out user-generated non-commercial content, but the government rejected that too. The Liberals rejected the Senate, Canadians and the exemption. That must say it all.

As Canadians' foremost expert on Internet and copyright law, Dr. Michael Geist said, "For months, [the Minister of Heritage] has said 'platforms in, users out'.... We now know this was false. By rejecting the Senate amendment, the government's real intent is clear: retain the power to regulate user content. Platforms in, user content in."

If the CRTC is given this mandate, it may direct social media platforms and streaming services to develop the algorithms to favour and disfavour based on a certain criterion, but one we do not know. No one but the government knows. The screening occurs through discoverability. When one opens a browser on a platform, such as YouTube or Facebook, such results would be screened artificially based on a CRTC directive. This needs to stop.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I want to ask the member about some celebrities because one of his colleagues was kind enough to mention some mainstream celebrities. These ones are indigenous. Some, he might know: Tantoo Cardinal, Tom Jackson and Tina Keeper. They are well-known celebrities.

There are also other independent producers: Nataq Ungalaq, Lucy Tulugarjuk, Sylvia Ivalu, Tanya Tagaq Gillis and Elisapi. Would the member have known or heard of any of these names if it were not for my mentioning them now? Does he agree that this act is necessary so that we can continue supporting indigenous independent producers like this bill intends to do?

• (2020)

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the time my colleague and I spent on indigenous committees. The member brought a great voice to that committee when I was on it, and I appreciate it.

No, those are not familiar names to me, but I have watched the indigenous channel a number of times and watched the stories that are on it. They are not on CBC, CTV or Global, but I chose to watch them. I have turned to that channel and there have been excellent Canadian stories, indigenous stories, produced by Canadian indigenous people and put on that channel. I have chosen to watch

them. It has been my choice to do that, and there is excellent quality on that particular channel.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the talk we heard in the debate about level playing fields. Could he comment on whether an unfettered Internet is the most level playing field that could ever possibly exist?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I am going to go back to history to answer that one. I am going to go back to 1960. At that time, most political debates happened via radio. There was a candidate who was Irish and Catholic, and the United States had never elected an Irish Catholic president. However, he looked to a new medium: He looked to television. He studied it and looked at how he could perform on television. His opponent, Nixon, thought that was no problem. Somebody took a new medium, which he did not get government support to do. He won that debate and JFK became president.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does my colleague from across the way truly think the Internet is some wild, open place where people can post and see whatever they want, or does he actually think that the companies with dominance on the Internet are making decisions for us about what we should watch and what we have access to?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, I am going to go back to history again. During the Vietnam War, I was in university, and I read different papers from all over the world. They would write about battles that occurred in Vietnam, and one would say each was a different battle; however, they were all the same. I know that because my family and cousins were there, and they told me what actually happened. Are we to say they should not be able to write their version of that story? Are we to say that one cannot write one's version of the story, and it needs to be one story? No, the person who wants to write should be allowed to.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad I caught your eye so I can speak to this piece of legislation. I know I started speaking on it, but I guess the government made a mistake in its original motion. I was so keen to make sure I was here to add my voice and the voices of my constituents on this.

Years ago, when this bill was known as Bill C-10, which then got converted to Bill C-11, I remember standing at a Calgary Stampede pancake breakfast in my riding in the community of Auburn Bay. The hosts served two to three thousand people that day. I stood at the front of the line, and before people got their pancakes, they had to interact with me.

I had a great many constituents tell me the number one issue they wanted to talk to me about was Bill C-11. I was floored that some of them knew the number for a piece of legislation. A lot of young people wanted to talk about it. What they knew was that Bill C-11 was coming through and would have an impact on free speech, and they did not like it. I asked them what they knew, and we had an exchange about it.

The majority of emails I get are in opposition to Bill C-11 and also in opposition to Bill C-21. I have had a handful, which I could literally count on one hand, of people who have had positive things to say about Bill C-11.

People are extremely upset with the government over the Senate amendments and which of the amendments it has chosen to proceed with and which it has not. One of the Senate amendments it rejected would have protected user-uploaded content.

As we know, with most user-uploaded content, there is a possibility for someone to make revenue from it when they have a channel. All of it is captured by these amendments that the government would be accepting in Bill C-11. Bill C-11 is still a deeply flawed piece of legislation.

Before I continue, I want to say that I am splitting my time with the member for Lakeland, who I am sure will do a terrific job speaking on behalf of her constituents as well.

I want to go through the legislation, specifically section 7, which I have the most concerns with.

In my home, my kids go on YouTube and streaming services exclusively. We do not have cable. There is no over-the-air TV like back in my day. When I say “back in my day”, I still remember when there were black and white channels.

In Communist Poland, there were only two channels we could get. They were both in black and white. The joke always was that the regime had set up a second channel to prove to people the first one was not that bad. I do not remember it, but the first time I got to watch TV in colour was when I came to Canada in 1985. It was a nice thing to see that colour TV was something we could get.

My kids do not have that experience at all. They go onto YouTube and I go onto YouTube as well. I am going to mention two particular channels I love, because they are by Canadian content creators who would be impacted by Bill C-11.

The first one is an Ontario channel called TheStraightPipes. It is two guys from Ontario who review cars. They just get vehicles and review them. They would have to go to the CRTC to get a licence that says the videos they post are Canadian content.

They are from Canada. They are Canadian content creators. Even when they travel to America, I still think of their videos as Canadian content. Would they be eligible for a licence for their Canadian and international audience to be able to look at their videos if they go to America and do them?

The second one I want to mention is my favourite, and I mentioned it earlier in the previous stage of debate on Bill C-11 It is Leroy and Leroy. If people are not on Instagram checking out these guys from Saskatchewan, they are missing out.

Government Orders

Leroy and Leroy is the funniest comedy channel about funny street signs all over Canada. I will always remember the one video they uploaded of a “no parking” sign on a straight road somewhere in Saskatchewan. I know it is really difficult to figure out one straight road from another in Saskatchewan. It is a rural road, there is a “no parking” sign and there is just nothing there that someone would be concerned about vehicles blocking.

I wonder whether they would have to keep reapplying to the CRTC as Canadian content creators. Are they Canadian enough? When they travel outside of Canada to do their comedy routine, would they be Canadian enough?

I have a Yiddish proverb. I always have a Yiddish proverb. I am going to butcher the pronunciation of it.

[Member spoke in Yiddish]

[English]

It means, “Truth has all the finest qualities, but it is shy.” I am glad we are having this debate this evening, because it is an opportunity for the shyness to come out and the truth to come out.

Many members on the opposite side do not like the fact that we call this a censorship bill. We say the CRTC is going to be able to control what people see and hear online, but that is what many of the witnesses have been saying.

● (2025)

Countless witnesses, professors and academics, people who have specialized in writing, including a constitutional lawyer who used to work for our justice department, have expressed concern over the content of the bill and how the bill is written. When there is a disagreement between experts and the common, everyday people who write to my inbox telling me they are upset with the contents of the bill, I am going to trust my constituents, the real experts when it comes to legislation before the House. They are the ones I represent here. They are the ones who are going to have to live with the decisions we are making and the types of legislation we are going to pass.

I am very concerned with section 7. It reads, “For greater certainty, an order may be made under subsection (1) with respect to orders made under subsection 9.1(1) or 11.1(2) or regulations made under subsection 10(1) or 11.1(1).”

Government Orders

We write these laws in this manner. I am not burdened with a legal education, thankfully, but I did go back to the Broadcasting Act to see under which sections the government would be able to direct things. This one would allow cabinet to issue, under the heading “Policy directions”, any of the objectives of the broadcasting policies set out in a different subsection, or any of the objectives of the regulatory policies set out in a different section. It starts by saying, “the Governor in Council may...issue to the Commission directions of general application on broad policy matters with respect to”, and then it goes into detail.

The next section I will talk about is licencing. Everything to do with licencing would be impacted as well, because the government would be able to direct the CRTC through a policy directive and tell it what to do. That is all in section 7. It goes on to talk about regulations generally, and we find that in many pieces of legislation.

For those constituents who are perhaps watching this and will use this as an explanation when I go through this, it goes from literally 10(1) all the way down from (a) to (k), and the government covers everything down to what respects the audit or examination of the records of licensees.

What does that mean? Is it that, if Leroy and Leroy gets a licence with the CRTC to prove its creators create Canadian content, the creators can be audited, such as with respect to how many videos they did in Canada versus not in Canada? If TheStraightPipes brings in an American vehicle, or a vehicle perhaps manufactured elsewhere, are the creators going to be audited on that?

The bill talks about distribution, mediation rules and respecting the carriage of any foreign or other programming services by distribution undertakings. What happens if TheStraightPipes decides to do a joint episode with an American channel? Does it need a special licence, a different licence, and have to pay a fee? Is it Canadian content enough?

All these broadcasting rules are being brought into the age of YouTube, and they do not really apply here where the cost of production is so low and so close to people. However, in the bill, there are things about advertising, Canadian programming and what constitutes Canadian programming, which is where this Canadian content comes in.

Again, there are a schedule of fees, performing of the licence and the undertakings, which are all being covered, and it starts with the policy directives that can be set by the Government of Canada. A lot of different groups have expressed concerns about it. Like I said, it is probably the number one issue emailed to me or in the phone calls I get in the office.

I talked about the Calgary Stampede pancake breakfast outside the Auburn Bay A&W, which was hosting it. The gentleman who runs it, Balwant, is a great community activist. He is always helping different charitable groups and supporting them.

There are a lot of groups and individuals who think this is bad legislation: Digital First Canada; OpenMedia; J.J. McCullough, who is an independent journalist but has his own YouTube channel as well; Justin Tomchuk, who is an independent filmmaker; and the Digital Media Association. The list goes on and on.

This piece of legislation is bad. It is about censorship, or it would give the opportunity for it, and if the government really meant for it not to be not to be known by that, it would have abandoned this piece of legislation. It would have gone back to the drafting process and drafted a better bill.

This entire situation could have been avoided. Motions were tabled that actually did not do what they were supposed to do, and then the government came back and tabled a different motion because it is just trying to ram the bill through the process, and that has not worked out for the government. I think there are way more Canadians who know about Bill C-11 and about the CRTC than ever before, and the vast majority of them in my riding are opposed to Bill C-11.

I am going to vote against Bill C-11. I will continue to advocate against it, because that is what my constituents want me to do. Hopefully, through this intervention here in the House of Commons, I have been able to demonstrate that the legislation, particularly section 7, and its amendments to the Broadcasting Act are completely on the wrong track. The government needs to kill Bill C-11.

• (2030)

The Deputy Speaker: I love the comment “I’m Leroy. He’s Leroy behind the camera.”

It is time for questions and comments.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I do not watch YouTube very much, so I do not know what that reference to Leroy is. I am sure he would have the same response if he watched Isuma TV, which shows great Inuit content, and which is quite disadvantaged at this point because it cannot compete against web giants like Netflix and Disney+.

To get to my point, for many years, broadcasters and cultural workers have been losing a lot of revenue and have been suffering from unfair competition from the web giants. Does the member agree there needs to be an end to this kind of injustice and we need to ensure indigenous content providers can get the supports they need by taxing web giants like Netflix and Disney+?

• (2035)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, what I would like to see is an opportunity for indigenous Canadians to participate freely, just like everybody else on YouTube, and upload their content free of the requirement to obtain government licences or of the requirement to keep updating their licences with the CRTC. That is not what they need in their lives. They do not need more government; I am certain of that. Just like my constituents do not need more government, Canadians in Nunavut and the territories also do not need more government in their lives.

Government Orders

The nice thing about platforms such as YouTube and many other online streaming services is that they equalize the production costs and the opportunity costs of joining, so that more and more eyeballs are being presented and there is the opportunity to be found and discovered by Canadians and by people internationally. That is the great opportunity.

We do not need to insert the government to generate those revenues. If one has a really interesting idea, a really fun and comedic routine or some very traditional cultural demonstration of one's personal culture, there is an opportunity to present it to others. If they find it interesting, want to look at it and want to share it with others, they are going to do so.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to get up and ask my colleague from Calgary Shepard a question, because “there's always something to do.”

The government of the day has subsidized media outlets across this country to the tune of over \$600 million because these media outlets that are highly regulated by organizations like the CRTC and forced to follow these rules cannot generate the advertising revenue or the interest they need because the government is dictating to them what they can and cannot do. Does my colleague see Bill C-11 doing the same thing to digital content creators on the Internet?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the media bailout fund, which I think is what the member is referring to, was a \$595-million fund. I remember it distinctly because I was on the Standing Committee on Finance at the time and held it up for about three to four hours asking basic questions. A government official was there from Finance Canada, and I asked whom it would cover and how one would actually obtain the funding. I said that it sounded like it was \$595 million to cover politicians, and asked if that was correct. After about 15 minutes, the official said that, yes, that was basically it.

I started reading off the titles of different publications and asking if they would be eligible, and none of them were. Basically, if someone were going to cover the government and what the government was doing in current events, and obviously in flattering coverage because someone would never bite the hand that feeds them, then they would obtain the money. That has been one of the greatest problems with this. Again, this is old thinking. It is thinking from 40 years or 50 years ago to take the Broadcasting Act and impose it on online streaming services, on YouTube and online platforms. It just does not fit, and the government should abandon this.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are few values more important to the people I represent, as they are to my colleague who just spoke, than advancing freedom and protecting individual rights and liberties, especially when it comes to the creeping, reaching, interfering and the heavy hand of government and its agencies.

I oppose Bill C-11 because it is not just about what its proponents claim. It will be a way for the Liberal cabinet and CRTC gatekeepers to control what Canadians see, say and hear online. The Liberals have ignored and ridiculed the concerns about Bill C-11's impacts and potential unintended consequences for Canadian media of all kinds and for everyday Canadians. Thousands of Canadians, and Conservatives, have spoken out for three years, so now, at the

very final stage before it becomes law, the charitable assumption that its proponents are unclear or unintentional about the risks and potential consequences can no longer be entertained.

Bill C-11 remains an attempt by the Liberals to regulate the Internet, with unprecedented powers for the CRTC and no clear guidelines or guardrails on those censorship powers.

The other parties argue for the bill on two main grounds: modernization of the Broadcasting Act and that it will enhance and expand Canadian content and culture online.

The truth is that Bill C-11 goes backwards on Canadians' successful online innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurialism by regulating it with the Broadcasting Act. Instead of promoting Canadian content as a whole, Bill C-11 will pick winners and losers, prioritize and deprioritize content, and therefore shape what Canadians see, regardless of their actual preferences, and whether Canadians can be seen or heard under its criteria, which will be decided by the CRTC and ministers. To be clear, on this point, I really do not care what party it is. This power, in particular, should not be extended to any.

Unlike the Liberals, Conservatives measure success by outcomes delivered, not money spent. The challenge of how to best expand and promote Canadian content is clearly not going to be done as well by Bill C-11 as it is already being done by the private sector, hardly a surprise. For example, the Motion Picture Association Canada is responsible for half of domestic media production and spent \$5 billion in 2021 alone. That private sector investment is five times the amount allotted in Bill C-11. This is more of the costly coalition's usual MO of spending lots of tax dollars regardless of results, despite the private sector's obvious leadership. It is a government gatekeeping and taxpayer-funded solution in search of a problem.

The core problem with the way Bill C-11 deals with the concept of Canadian content is that, one, it does not actually define it and enables politicians to tell the CRTC what it is, and two, any person or business may be restricted since their content can be pushed up or down if it is decided that they fit or that they are not Canadian enough.

Canadians do not have to decipher the truth from our back-and-forth here. Currently, the CRTC's definition of Canadian content often depends on copyright ownership, which big streaming services usually keep, instead of, say, Canadian staff, locations, writers, actors, compositions, art or stories.

Government Orders

The power granted to politicians is clear in Bill C-11. Section 7 of the Broadcasting Act states, “the Governor in Council may, by order, issue to the Commission directions of general application on broad policy matters”. Well, “Governor in Council” means a cabinet minister. Conservatives tried to remove that clause to ensure that the CRTC chair would be free from political interference, but Liberals blocked it, so the power is there.

After the costly coalition pushes through Bill C-11, Liberals will write up a set of backdoor regulations for the CRTC and then apply some sort of values test to every YouTube video, Facebook post, TV show, documentary and radio show, and it is endless. Social media is caught because of Bill C-11’s definition of “online undertakings” and “programs”, which can include images and sounds where written text is limited. That could mean videos, podcasts, photos and memes, but not written posts or news articles.

Clauses 9 and 10 could empower the CRTC to adopt so-called discoverability rules that would force social media sites like YouTube to modify algorithms and affect how often videos are seen on social media feeds, based on the yet-to-be determined criteria for what is and is not sufficiently Canadian. Bill C-11 clearly makes the Canadian government and the agency the regulator of the Internet. The Broadcasting Act states that the regulations will prescribe “what constitutes a Canadian program”. If the content is not Canadian enough, it will get slapped with fees and taxes, and it will be censored. If it is Canadian enough, it will continue just as it does now.

Bill C-11 will also force content creators, from small YouTubers all the way to Netflix, to pay fees to the Canada Media Fund, but it does not define who will be exempted and makes creators pay based on a points system that value-tests whether their content production is Canadian enough.

● (2040)

The winners would be government-subsidized broadcasters, such as the already advantaged government-funded CBC, which would get even more funding with Bill C-11. The losers would be the independent innovators driving Canadian digital leadership, and often young Canadians. So much for the democratized free market of ideas that the Internet embodies.

Conservatives proposed to define discoverability and limit government algorithm manipulation, as well as amendments to ensure greater transparency of the CRTC and its decision-making, but the Liberals rejected them.

Digital entrepreneurs have grown rapidly on YouTube and Instagram. They create brands off their channels and the advertising revenues their videos generate. They are worried that they would not qualify as Canadian enough, and that small channels, with only a couple of hundred subscribers and next to no revenue, will suddenly be forced to pay government, or even get fined up to \$25,000 per day, as in proposed section 32. It is crazy that a young Canadian YouTuber could get fined because they are not Canadian enough.

Conservatives also tried to remove proposed subsection 4.1(1), which may be referenced by members opposite as exempting normal Canadians from these CRTC rules, but the Liberals put in an

exemption to the exemption right after, so there is actually no change.

The Liberals plan to reject the amendment that would explicitly encourage the CRTC to regulate professional, copywritten content, which seems to be their actual aim, instead of individual user-created content. Even then, it does not change the discoverability rules that would control and prioritize what Canadians see and hear, thereby controlling the content creators.

Experts warn that this will happen. Former CRTC commissioner Peter Menzies says that under Bill C-11, Canada will “become a global leader in restricting online speech and meddling with news media.” Canada’s top legal scholar and digital content expert, Michael Geist, whom the Liberals now deride when we quote him, says it will restrict who can hear Canadian voices: “the risk with these rules is not that the government will restrict the ability for Canadians to speak, but rather that the bill could impact their ability to be heard.” If Canadians do not have the freedom to hear it, then the creator does not have free expression.

Forty thousand creators from Digital First Canada signed letters calling for these rules to be removed. The Liberals ignored them. Prominent and diverse Canadian YouTubers, like J.J. McCullough, Morghan Fortier, Justin Tomchuk and Oorbee Roy, have all spoken about their concerns about what Bill C-11 would do to their viewership and their income.

J.J. McCullough said:

Given that YouTubers make videos of every genre imaginable, from fitness to architecture to political commentary, it is frankly terrifying to imagine that government may soon have a hand in determining which genres of video are more worthy of promotion than others.

In summary, anyone proud of the tremendous success of Canadians on YouTube should be deeply concerned about the damage that Bill C-11 could do to their livelihoods.

If MPs pass this bill into law, no one can say they were not warned about the potential consequences. The level of uncertainty and concern, as much about what is not defined as what is, and the potential impact on the core value of free expression should be enough for the costly coalition to hit pause and fix this bill.

That is the duty of policy-makers, the duty of MPs, to ensure that legislation does what they claim and to mitigate unintended consequences before passing laws. MPs must defend the values of Canadians' right to freely, without censorship or risk of consequences, express their views, so long as they are not inciting harm or hate, whether or not they align with the views of anyone in here. That is our job.

No government agency responsible for broadcasting in a free and democratic society should have powers to censor, control and regulate as proposed in Bill C-11. Canadians have fought and died to defend rights to free thought and expression.

I will close with these words:

you fit into me
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook
an open eye

Margaret Atwood was talking about love and pain. That is what Bill C-11 would do to what Canadians can see and hear online. She says Bill C-11 is “creeping totalitarianism”. I would not presume but it is probably fair to say she is not a Conservative, but she is a world-renowned Canadian artist and icon, and Bill C-11 supporters should actually listen to her before it is too late.

• (2045)

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the member I heard earlier, I am burdened with a legal education from the best law school in Canada, Osgoode Hall Law School.

I very much enjoyed the member's speech. My question is about what she said when she was talking about the freedom to speak but not necessarily the freedom to be heard. My understanding is that this would give the CRTC the ability to control algorithms, thus potentially burying comments, perhaps like burying a comment that was called out on Twitter for not being truthful, like the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Would the member be worried that the content by the member for Kingston and the Islands might be buried?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, what I am extremely concerned about in this legislation is the ability of government and a related agency to define what counts as Canadian content, to set all those rules, regulations and guidelines after the law has already passed, and then to basically apply a values test to what Canadians can view on the Internet, thereby controlling what content is prioritized and what content is not prioritized, which by its nature obviously controls the content creators.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was sitting here quietly, not saying a word and not getting in the middle of it, and then the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South decided to get up, so I have a question.

I shared a video recently of the former leader of the Conservative Party slow-clapping Joe Biden, which was extremely disrespectful. That has already been seen just under two million views on Twitter. I wonder if the member can comment as to whether I should be con-

Government Orders

cerned about my content not getting views like that, two million views of the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. Should I be concerned that if this law is passed, I will not get that kind of reach?

• (2050)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member would next want to spring forward to House of Commons legislation that sets guidelines and regulations, after the law is passed, about the speed at which one ought to clap or how and in what way Canadians adequately show their appreciation, admiration or concern. I am not sure.

I appreciate the member for standing up and asking the question, but I would think that, given that this subject really gets to the foundation of our democracy, the tens of thousands of Canadians who are worried about their free expression, their income, their individually driven businesses and their online entrepreneurialism and innovation would probably want to see him, as a member of the governing party and the costly coalition that will make the ultimate determination on this bill, take this issue seriously.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, it is always the same old story from the Conservative side. They are fearmongering, saying that freedom of expression is under attack, when there is absolutely nothing to that effect in the bill.

However, there is one thing the bill does that the Conservatives never talk about: It brings fairness to Quebec and Canadian cultural production. Cable companies have been contributing for 30 years, but digital broadcasters were not included in the act at the time because they did not exist.

Why do the Conservatives want to prevent YouTube, Netflix and Disney+ from paying their fair share for cultural productions and helping our creators and artists?

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, if the government, or the member who props up the government and supports everything it does, but sometimes not, and keeps the Liberals in power so Canadians cannot have a say on this disaster, wanted to have a piece of legislation that focused directly, solely and only on that topic, they could have put it forward and we could have been debating that, but that is not the only consequence of Bill C-11, so we are not.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and speak on behalf of the constituents of Red Deer—Lacombe about an issue that I am hearing quite a bit about. Before I go any further, I will note that I am splitting my time with my friend from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

Government Orders

Bill C-11, the online streaming act, and in the previous Parliament Bill C-10, is causing a lot of concern and a lot of debate here in Canada. We are not debating the bill *per se* anymore in the sense that it has been returned to this place. This does not happen very often. Those who are still able to freely watch this at home need to understand that it is very rare for the Senate of Canada to return a piece of legislation to the House of Commons, because normally MPs do their due diligence in the legislative process here. It goes through committees, where we hear from witnesses and hear from experts, and we can generally amend legislation in the House of Commons. I am not saying it ever goes to the Senate in perfect format, but if we are actually doing our job here, the Senate would have very few recommendations or changes to propose for a piece of legislation.

That is not the case with this particular piece of legislation. I believe there were 26 or 29 amendments made by the Senate. I can tell members how many Conservative senators there are in the Senate. I think there are 15, so that tells us that the vast majority of senators in the Senate are not in the Conservative caucus. However, that Senate, by a majority vote, decided to report the bill back to the House of Commons with well over 20 amendments, some of which the government has decided to accept. They are largely the innocuous ones. The important ones, dealing with what people can freely say online, what constitutes Canadian content and what the government and the CRTC can regulate, have not been accepted by the government, so we are in this debate now, in this standoff.

I want to be fair to the government in my analysis of the legislation, so I want to talk about the correspondence I have gotten in my office from Canadians and from my constituents in regard to the bill. We know how it is when we go to a convention. There is the “yes” microphone and the “no” microphone, with people speaking in favour of something and people speaking against something, so in fairness to the government, I will talk about the correspondence I have received that have a positive view on Bill C-11.

Now that that is out of the way, I am going to talk about all of the negative things we are hearing from constituents. Not since the proposals on firearms have I had this much uproar in my constituency. Actually, I have not had this much uproar since back in 2017, when the previous finance minister, Bill Morneau, tried in the summertime to change the tax laws in this country, which created so much furor.

Not one person in my constituency has written into my office to say they agree with everything the government is doing on Bill C-11, and there are people in my constituency who use social media, watch Netflix and watch Disney+. They are those who have not cancelled Disney+ and saved themselves from financial ruin, according to the current finance minister. All kidding aside, they have not, and here is why: It is because they trust the people who are being very critical about this piece of legislation. They are largely objective people.

Margaret Atwood has said, “bureaucrats should not be telling creators what to write” and that bureaucrats should not be in charge of deciding what is Canadian. She has referred to all of this with two words that I think should make every member of this House stand still and think for a second: “creeping totalitarianism”. That is from Margaret Atwood, a voice of reason. Everybody around the

world has read, understands or has access to some of the fine works of Margaret Atwood.

Senator Richards, who was appointed by the current Prime Minister and is himself a novelist, in his January speech in the Senate said that Bill C-11 is “censorship passing as national inclusion”. I hear this all the time. I do not know what my colleagues hear, but basically when we hear the government talk about inclusion, what it really means is that everybody who agrees with it is included and everybody who disagrees with it finds themselves on the outside looking in and feels like they are foreigners in their own country. Our country has never been more divided, and there has never been less trust in institutions. We only have to go back to a little over a year ago to see what the reaction has been to the divide-and-conquer approach the current Prime Minister and the government have taken.

● (2055)

Senator Richards goes on to say, “Cultural committees are based as much in bias and fear as in anything else. I’ve seen enough artistic committees to know that. That what George Orwell says we must resist is a prison of self-censorship.” This is Orwellian language being invoked by a Senate appointee of the current Prime Minister. He also said, “This law will be one of scapegoating all those who do not fit into what our bureaucrats think Canada should be.” That is what an intelligent, articulate senator, a novelist appointed to the Senate of Canada, is on the record as saying in a speech in the Senate.

It is shocking that we find ourselves here in this place reviewing this legislation again after everything we said when it was Bill C-10 and before Bill C-11 went to the Senate. It has now come back to us with the senators confirming all of our suspicions, all of our concerns and all of the problems we identified for the Canadian public.

Professor Michael Geist, who has been a perennial witness here, is one of the most learned people when it comes to free speech and all of the laws pertaining to it. He is the University of Ottawa’s Canada research chair in Internet and e-commerce law. On digital content, he says, “Canada punches above its weight when it comes to the creation of this content, which is worth billions of revenue globally. We are talking about an enormous potential revenue loss for Canadian content producers.”

Government Orders

This is at a time when Canadians are having an increasingly difficult time making ends meet with inflation, the carbon tax, the cost of living and the cost of housing. Everything is going up in this country. If we go back to January, Jack Mintz wrote an article about this. In 2015, the cost of the federal government service was about \$38 billion a year. Today, eight years later, the cost of public service salaries is \$58 billion, an increase of \$20 billion. It is an increase in the size of the federal public service in Canada of over 30%, so there are 30% more people working for the Government of Canada now than there were in 2015. Have things gotten better? Have people gotten their passports quicker? Are people getting across the border quicker? Are people getting anything done? Are any of the services needed by my fellow Canadians getting done in a quicker and more timely fashion? The answer is clearly no.

Why on earth, why in the name of everything that is good about the free country we live in, would we increase the size of the bureaucracy even more through the CRTC and give it the ability to do to the Internet what it has done to cable TV and radio? Canadians are no longer watching. They have tuned out. They have tuned out to the point where the government has had to spend \$600 million just to prop up legacy media outlets because nobody is interested in their mandatory content.

Why do we not hear from them? We can hear from many people. I have been a member of Parliament here for 17 years, and I hear from people I disagree with all the time, but that does not make me a bitter or jaded person. It does not make the information I am hearing more or less valuable. We need to hear from everybody, and everybody should have the ability to say what they need to say. When they are not heard, when they feel like they are not being heard and when they feel like their government is working against them all the time, they start doing things they would normally not do. We saw that manifested on this Hill for three weeks last year. This is the kind of governance we are getting from the folks across the way.

• (2100)

The implementation of this bill is going to be a blunder. There is no reason for me to believe that increasing bureaucracy and the capacity of the CRTC is going to create a better outcome for the people of Canada than the current 30% massive increase in the size of the government we have already seen. On behalf of my constituents who have written me, I would urge the government to at least reconsider its position on the amendments and accept all of the amendments the Senate has proposed, because it would at least make a horrible bill somewhat more bearable.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about the amount of correspondence he got from constituents and people from all across his riding who were concerned about Bill C-11. I have heard a lot of concerns from people in my area around this.

I am wondering if the member could perhaps go into a little more detail on some of the specific concerns he heard from regular, everyday, hard-working Albertans.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I will reassure my friend from Fort McMurray—Cold Lake that one of my favourite places to visit in our beautiful province is Cold Lake. I have already booked

camping and fishing at Cold Lake, so I am happy to go there and reacquaint myself with not only the good people in her constituency but also the great fishing opportunities there.

Aside from that, Albertans are sometimes a little culturally different from the rest of Canada, and I accept that, but we want responsible government. What I have heard from my constituents by and large is that they do not want to be told what they can and cannot watch, and they do not want the government regulating them.

Here is Canadian content. For digital content creators, “CanCon is defined using criteria applied by three bodies: the CRTC for regulation; Canadian Heritage to access tax credits; and the Canada Media Fund (CMF) to access its public financing.” That trifecta of bureaucracy is going to be governing what Canadian content providers can do. They know impossible odds when they see them. Dealing with one government department on an issue is bad enough. When they have to deal with three for the same issue to try to get something done, good luck.

• (2105)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, in 2020, one in four people working in the cultural sector lost their job, but Netflix's revenues increased by over 22% in that same year. Does the member agree that we need this legislation to equalize the playing field in online streaming?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, the member has cherry-picked a year when Canadians were basically told to stop going to work, go home and get paid \$2,000 a month. What were they going to do? What did I do until we had what was not even a hybrid Parliament but a virtual sort of Parliament where we did not do anything other than talk?

An hon. member: We interviewed.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, yes, we interviewed each other online.

In all fairness to the member's question, I have the privilege of representing the first people of Maskwacis in central Alberta. The thousands of people in the four bands of Samson, Ermineskin, Louis Bull and Montana are amazing representatives of their culture: the dancing, the music, the drums and all of those things. I have complete confidence and faith that if the government gets out of the way of first nations people in this country, first nations people, who are intelligent enough and hard-working enough to do everything they need to do to take care of themselves, will not only be successful but thrive in Canada. I do not know anybody in a first nation who says that another solution from Ottawa is probably going to help them out.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the entire debate from the Conservative Party is so divorced from the reality of what Bill C-11 would do that I do not even know where to start. On the last point, we had indigenous groups coming forward, proposing amendments and seeking to move forward on Bill C-11.

Government Orders

I do not know where the hon. members get their idea that this bill would engage in some sort of censorship, that the three parties in support of this bill are in favour of censorship and that members on this side of the House, who stand up for charter rights, are in favour of censorship. Where does this come from?

I know the member and all Conservative members mentioned one particular academic. Can they name another one, perhaps even a constitutional expert, who is opposed to the bill and has raised concerns about charter rights in this country?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, if the member across the way is asking me whether or not Bill C-11 is charter-compliant, I will note that the charter compliance review would have been done by his colleague, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, who is the same person responsible for bail reform. Members will have to forgive me if I have my doubts.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-11. Nearly one year ago, I spoke to Bill C-11 in the House of Commons, and I expressed my opposition to the bill, a bill that would regulate the Internet. I have said it before and I will say it again: The Internet is supposed to be open and free. It is supposed to be open and free to create one's content and choose what one reads, free from government over-reach.

However, here we are, once again, debating Bill C-11, a bill that would give the government the power to regulate what people see and hear on the Internet. If Bill C-11 passes, the government will give itself power to control what people watch. Instead of giving Canadians more of what they want to see, YouTube would be instructed to give viewers more of what the government wants them to see.

This could be our last chance to stop this bill from becoming law, which is why so many Canadians have reached out to their MPs to oppose Bill C-11. As I have said before, Bill C-11 is legislation to regulate the Internet. The Liberal government wants to influence what people see while they are browsing the web. It wants to push specific content to the top of their screens so they see it first. Consequently, other content will move down their screens so they see less of it. This is what the Liberals really mean when they say they want to make content more discoverable.

Back in the day, as my other colleague mentioned, the content we saw and heard was controlled by a small group of large players. Whether that was a small group of radio tycoons or a small group of television moguls, there were a limited number of people who decided what content we consumed. We were limited to what we could read, listen to or watch through traditional media channels. One of the reasons Canadians were limited in the content they could consume was that the government regulated television and radio through the Broadcasting Act.

The Broadcasting Act meant that TV and radio stations had to have broadcast licences to operate. TV and radio stations needed to meet specific government-imposed rules concerning what they could air and what proportion of their content had to be Canadian. My colleague mentioned this earlier today when she explained how television and radio had been managed as a finite resource. However, the Internet is not a finite resource. Its content can be infinite.

People no longer have to tune in to the soap opera at a specific time in order to consume content. The Internet allows consumers to access what they want, when they want it.

Now the government wants to regulate the Internet like it regulated traditional television and radio stations. The Liberals claim that Bill C-11 is needed to modernize the Broadcasting Act. Instead, they are taking an outdated government approach to traditional broadcasting and applying it to a free and open Internet. The Liberals want to place regulations on content that goes beyond large companies such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. They want to apply the same regulations to user-generated content, whether it be a local podcaster, the independent content creator or even the individual uploading videos to social media. The Liberals claim they have included an exemption for user-generated content, but they also added an exemption to the exemption, making such effort effectively meaningless.

What happens if someone decides to violate the Bill C-11 regulations? Well, the fines could be as high as \$25,000 for a first event by an individual and \$10 million for an offence by a corporation. The government thinks that Canadians are incapable of choosing what they want to read or watch on the Internet. The government believes that Canadians need help navigating through their social media streams. It believes Canadians would be better off if the government were deciding what they see and hear on the Internet.

The other day, the Prime Minister was hosting a town hall and spoke about the importance of the government keeping Canadians safe from the Internet. He could not hide his belief that it is the government's job to protect Canadians from the Internet. The Prime Minister's mentality is that the more government the better. He said, "the Internet means there's a lot of people spending a huge amount of time in places that governments have no ability to keep you directly safe from Internet companies, specifically the web giants like Facebook and Google".

• (2110)

The Prime Minister believes that only the government can keep us safe. No wonder he wants to regulate what we see and hear online. If his government can regulate the Internet, it can decide what is best for us to see.

I know the Prime Minister likes to call the opposition "despicable". Do members know what is despicable? It is despicable for the Liberals to target the freedom of individual Internet users in Canada. It is despicable for the government to push certain content to the top of our screens and therefore move other content down our screens. It is despicable for the government to overwhelmingly reject the advice of experts and digital content creators across this country. That is right, it is not just Conservatives who are opposing Bill C-11. Experts across the country are alarmed.

This following is a statement by University of Ottawa law professor Michael Geist on Bill C-11.

An hon. member: You can name another one.

Government Orders

Mr. Dan Mazier: You can listen to this if you want to.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. members should be speaking through the Chair and not directly to other members.

The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa has the floor.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, if the people across the way want to listen, here is the quote from Michael Geist.

He said, “To be clear, the risk with these rules is not that the government will restrict the ability for Canadians to speak, but rather that the bill could impact their ability to be heard.” That is the fundamental problem with this. He then continues:

In other words, the CRTC will not be positioned to stop Canadians from posting content, but will have the power to establish regulations that could prioritize or deprioritize certain content, mandate warning labels, or establish other conditions with the presentation of the content.... The government has insisted that isn't the goal of the bill. If so, the solution is obvious. No other country in the world seeks to regulate user content in this way and it should be removed from the bill because it does not belong in the Broadcasting Act.

Bill C-11 was so bad that, when the NDP-Liberal coalition sent it to the Senate, even the Liberal-appointed senators sounded the alarm. It was written so terribly that the Senate returned the legislation back to the House of Commons with 29 amendments.

I found it interesting that the Liberal-appointed senators, after hearing from experts, proposed an amendment that would reduce the amount of regulation that Bill C-11 would have on social media, but guess what? The minister has already indicated that the Liberals will reject the amendment, which came from their own senators. If the government is unwilling to listen to its own senators, how can Canadians believe they will be heard?

There is a reason I am here with my Conservative colleagues at nine o'clock at night to oppose Bill C-11. Canadians want the Liberal government to keep its hands off the Internet. Although this may be our last chance to stop this bill in this Parliament, Canadians can be hopeful knowing that it will be killed once Conservatives are elected to clean up the Liberal government's mess. Until then, I will, once again, be voting against Bill C-11.

● (2115)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are hearing from speaker after speaker that we are regulating the Internet. Ultimately, this piece of legislation will regulate 10 of some of the largest companies in the world. We have not heard one member stand up to express concern about the monopolistic tendencies of tech giants.

I know the National Post has called Conservatives the PR mouthpiece for Facebook and Google, but I was wondering if the hon. member could comment on the fact that the Internet is not what we saw in the 1990s. It is controlled by a few monopolies and duopolies over various elements. Why does he stand in support of that?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, that is the fundamental flaw with this whole legislation and the attitude of the government to the Internet and its approach to the Internet. It has a complete disregard for what Canadians are telling it. Experts, industry people and content developers are all telling it to at least look at the amendments

and fix the legislation. Will it? No, it will not, and that is why we are here.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are obviously concerned about monopolistic practices that the government continues to enable, but one thing Canadians hate more than that is big government, and that is what this bill would do. It is only going to further blow out the powers that be, who are going to regulate the Internet. That is going to make bigger governments. There is going to be more bureaucracy and more headaches for Canadians. Does the member have anything he would like to add to that?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, can one imagine any more government, especially when the Liberals are in power? As was commented earlier tonight, we have a passport system that is backed up and not working. We have an immigration system that has two million people waiting to get approved. This is just a mess. They have basically broken everything, so why not break the Internet as well?

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am going to read a section of Bill C-11, which reads:

- (3) This Act shall be construed and applied in a manner that is consistent with
- (a) the freedom of expression and journalistic, creative and programming independence enjoyed by broadcasting undertakings;

I wonder if the member agrees with me that indigenous groups like the Maskwacis, who were mentioned earlier, will not be negatively impacted by this bill.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, I do not know specifically about that group, but I know rural Canadians, especially in places that are sparsely populated and have a lack of connectivity services, will be severely impacted by this. They have very little opportunity to speak, and they should be able to speak as freely and as often as they want to. These regulations will complicate that whole process, so I would encourage the member to have a second look at this. What kind of impact would this mean to rural Canada? It is not good for us living in rural Canada.

● (2120)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there were 80 witnesses who came before committee to testify in regard to this piece of legislation. That is 80 witnesses, yet the only one Conservatives will quote is Michael Geist. Could this member quote one of the other 79 witnesses, please, just to entertain us?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, again, this is the problem, which is that they are not listening to those witnesses. How many of those—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Dan Mazier: Can I answer the question, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to let the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa respond.

Government Orders

Mr. Dan Mazier: Mr. Speaker, this is the frustrating thing about this bill: No one is listening to the witnesses who gave testimony. If there were 80 of them, how many said that this is a rock-solid bill and we should approve it? Why would the government not then bring it forward for unanimous consent? This bill doing is dividing Canada, not bringing us together.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to let you know, in a very polite way, that I will be sharing my time with my very hon. colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby, who has some very important things to tell us and all Canadians.

Before I get to the heart of the matter, I will say that I have been listening to my colleagues from the Conservative Party for a few hours now and I am seeing things that are rather fascinating and disturbing.

The first thing I find fascinating is their insistence on quoting Margaret Atwood. I would just like to remind my Conservative colleagues that Margaret Atwood is a great defender of women's rights, including the right to abortion. If they are fans of Margaret Atwood, I hope to hear them quote her soon to defend a woman's right to abortion. I am sure that they watched the series *The Handmaid's Tale* and they were able to learn a few lessons.

The second person they are quoting, and I think that is amazing, is George Orwell. I would just like to remind my Conservative colleagues that George Orwell was a socialist who fought in Great Britain and went to Spain to fight with the republicans against the fascists. I hope to hear them quote George Orwell often in the weeks and months to come, maybe even during the election campaign. I have some quotes for them, free of charge, if they want. It would be my pleasure.

We are talking about something that is very important for Quebec, Canada, all our regions and our communities, but also first nations: the cultural sector. It is really important for our identity, be it the Québécois nation, the Canadian nation, first nations, Métis, francophones outside Quebec, that we have the means and resources to be able to tell ourselves our own stories. It is important to have the resources to create our television programs, which describe what is happening in our communities, along with our challenges and hopes, and that we give this work to our local creators and artists who will work to be able to say, here is what is happening in Quebec, Ontario, the north, the Maritimes or British Columbia.

We have a system that was put in place years ago in which the government has a role to play in supporting our artists, creators, artisans and technicians, as does the private sector, which benefits from this cultural production. This production has value in its own right, intrinsic value, that makes us stand out from other countries and nations around the world and enables us to say that this is who we are, here are our ideals, here is what is happening in our country, here are our concerns and here are our expressions. I think it is essential to have the right legislative, regulatory and financial framework to keep that. We are also talking about thousands of jobs in almost every community across Canada, and it is extremely important to maintain this capacity to produce cultural content.

In the agreement created 30 years ago, those who supplied the pipeline needed content for it. They made money from this content. Therefore, they had to help finance the content. The cable companies at the time were the pipeline and were forced by the Broadcasting Act to contribute, in particular, to the Canada Media Fund, which helped produce Canadian television and film. This balance was a given and benefited everyone. Cable companies made a very good profit. They had certain obligations, but it made it possible to produce content in Canada, with Canadian artists who told Canadian stories. That was 30 years ago.

The problem is that cable companies are no longer the only ones in the picture. Digital broadcasters have arrived. When the act was written, the Internet did not exist.

● (2125)

This law must be modernized to ensure that these web giants, who are using a new medium, are also required to contribute to and support Quebec, Canadian and indigenous artists and creators.

Essentially, that is what Bill C-11 is about. We keep saying this over and over again, and I am going to say it again, despite the Conservative fearmongering. There is something I cannot understand: If Videotron, Bell, Shaw and Rogers must contribute to cultural production under the bill, why would YouTube, Google, Disney+, Netflix and Apple TV be excluded? These web giants have basically been given a tax gift for the past 10 years. They have basically been told that they have the right to profit from Canadian content and cultural production without having to participate in it. It is like giving them a giant tax break that is completely unfair and unjust. I find it absolutely fascinating that the Conservatives are now saying it is okay that Google, Apple TV and Netflix do not need to pay.

The Conservatives are defending big corporations, multinationals that are making tons of money off Quebec and Canadian consumers. The Conservatives are lining up behind these web giants and these big corporations. That is what they are doing right now, using completely false pretences to scare people.

When it comes to Bill C-10 and Bill C-11, it feels like every day is Halloween for the Conservatives. They wake up every morning and think of ways to scare Canadians. They use emotionally charged words like “dictatorship”, “censorship” and “totalitarianism”. Wow. I have to wonder whether those folks have ever even seen a CRTC decision. That is not exactly what is going on. These decisions have actually been used to promote local cultural creations. I do not see how we are becoming like North Korea because we want to promote our television programs, our films, our artists, our singers. No one is being forced to watch or listen to anything. If someone is not interested, they can simply turn off their TV, radio, iPhone or iPad screen.

Give me a break. This fearmongering is an attempt to convince people that the federal government is suddenly going to decide what Canadians will see. That is ridiculous.

A couple of weeks ago the leader of the official opposition called the CRTC a woke organization. I could not believe it. Anything the Conservatives do not like they call “woke”. I attended CRTC hearings in a previous life, and I can say that CRTC officials are quite beige. It is a pretty square organization. They are talking nonsense on the Conservative side.

I believe that the CRTC has made good and bad decisions. There are reasons to criticize this organization, but it is a bit of a stretch to call it a far-left organization. Words have meaning, after all, and we need to be careful.

We recently celebrated the International Day of La Francophonie. One of the themes of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie is discoverability of works. We must be able to ensure that people can find songs, works, broadcasts and movies in French on Netflix. Everyone celebrated the Francophonie in the House, but when Bill C-11 is being studied, the Conservatives forget all that. It is no longer important now.

The NDP put in the work and improved Bill C-11 to ensure that French-language works are more readily accessible and also to provide more support for first nation and Inuit cultural productions and for community organizations that make content and news.

I realize that Bill C-11 may not be perfect. However, this bill has all the provisions needed to guarantee freedom of expression and to support our culture, artists and artisans. That is why the NDP is proud to support it.

• (2130)

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, he expressed pleasure at hearing Orwell quoted to him from Conservative benches, so I will maybe continue in that vein.

He was certainly my favourite novelist of the first half of the 20th century, although he did spend most of his career writing and criticizing socialism and its excesses. In *1984*, the main character worked in the “Ministry of Truth” and sat in his cubicle deciding what people could see and what information they would have access to, which seems rather relevant to this debate.

We might as well be honest here with each other about what the bill does. It expands the powers of the CRTC to influence and control what people find, see, hear and post online. Could he comment on the expansion of the powers of the CRTC?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment and his question. I think that we could have a debate and a discussion at some point on George Orwell's ideological and political views and his real objectives as a left-wing socialist.

To answer his question, I think that it is, in fact, essential that the CRTC has authority over digital broadcasters. That is the purpose

Government Orders

of this exercise. It does not expand bureaucracy; there is absolutely nothing new about it.

The CRTC had authority over traditional media, television and radio. Over the past 30 years, no one has died because of that. Things still turned out okay. Now, the law needs to be modernized so that it also applies to web giants and digital broadcasters. I do not see how this creates a major problem. People will be able to watch whatever they want, when they want, as usual.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to tell my hon. colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie that I totally agree with what he said in his speech. It is so hard to be here and have a debate when some parties are saying that this is not true and that Bill C-11 is regressive and violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Why does he think the Conservatives have become so successful on social media these days with ideas that are completely false? Bill C-11 does not in any way infringe on the right to freedom of expression.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my Green Party colleague for her question. I think it is an important one.

If we are being realistic, the Conservatives are using scare tactics for political fundraising purposes. That is what we are seeing. They are doing this for purely partisan reasons, to collect data, collect money and fill the Conservative Party coffers. They are spreading misinformation and worrying people for nothing.

In my opinion, the Conservatives are demonstrating a distinct lack of sensitivity when it comes to culture, the cultural sector and artists, when all of the artists' associations in Quebec and Canada strongly support Bill C-11, formerly Bill C-10, and think it is absolutely necessary for their future and our future as a cultural nation.

• (2135)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, in his speech, the member was talking about why certain companies in Canada have to pay to support Canadian artists and bemoaning that companies from outside of Canada do not have to.

Well, the answer is quite simple. When one is headquartered in Canada, one is required to, right?

These companies are international companies. Nobody in this building is going to disagree with the fact that people should pay their fair share when it comes to that. The problem is that we have a regulatory framework that incentivizes those companies to be in other countries and not in Canada.

Would the member not agree that if we maybe took a different approach, to have a regulatory environment that would incentivize them to come to Canada rather than stay away from Canada, that might not be a better way to go?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, to tell the truth, we do not really care where the companies' head offices are located. They do business in Canada. They have customers in Canada. They make profits in Canada. They need to abide by Canadian laws and be governed in such a way as to support the production of Quebec and Canadian cultural content. Period. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): [*Member spoke in Inuktitut*]

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, I said “good evening” and “thank you” in the Inuktitut language when I rose this evening. Why did I begin my speech in Inuktitut? The reason the NDP supports the bill is that we made a large number of improvements to the original bill. As members know, the NDP proposed more amendments than all the other parties.

We ensured that freedom of expression would be upheld, that the CRTC's powers would be balanced by an obligation of transparency and public consultation, and, above all, that indigenous languages and the diversity of our indigenous media would be improved. That was an essential component during this debate.

[English]

I have been listening very attentively to my Conservative colleagues tonight, and I have a couple of observations.

First, it is quite clear to me that there is not a single Conservative member of Parliament who has actually read the bill, because they are completely aside from the essential content of the bill itself. Just to—

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

The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I think that it is completely disingenuous of the member opposite to be making false allegations that we perhaps have not read the bill, and I—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is a matter for debate.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby. Let us try to avoid imputing faults to other members.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I am actually going to explain why it is clear to me that the Conservatives have not read the bill.

First off, the majority of their speeches have gone something like this: “Something, something, North Korea; something, something, tyranny; something, something, freedom.”

Now, the reason there is no link between these wacky Conservative speeches—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): On a point of order, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member forgot to mention Michael Geist. They say “Michael Geist” a lot.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): This is a serious discussion and a serious matter.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, first off, let us deal with the “something, something, North Korea”. There is nothing in Bill C-11 that transforms Canada into North Korea. The comments are saddening and horrific when we think of what North Korean citizens are living through. The reality is we are seeing forced starvation in North Korea, massive prison camps and a population that is under very clear tyranny.

For Conservatives to invoke North Korea in talking about Bill C-11 does a profound disservice to North Koreans who are living through an absolutely horrendous totalitarian regime that oppresses them, tortures them and kills them. Any Conservative who mentions North Korea, immediately, in my mind, has zero credibility on the issue of Bill C-11, which is a bill that basically obliges big tech to provide some support to the Canadian cultural sector that has suffered profoundly, particularly over the last few years. We have seen, in some parts of our cultural sector, the loss of three-quarters of the jobs that existed. What Bill C-11 would do is provide a boost to our cultural sector. It would not provide prison camps, forced starvation, torture or systemic human rights abuses.

Second is the issue of tyranny, the “something, something, tyranny” that has been raised by Conservatives. The reality is that big tech, as we know now, and I will come back to this shortly, already forces content on Canadians. We have seen this with the references to the “Stop hate for profit” campaign, which includes endorsements from the Southern Poverty Law Centre and the Anti-Defamation League. The reality is big tech, with their secret algorithms, forces content that is often profoundly harmful to Canadians.

Let us look at the third part, the “something, something, freedom”. Conservative MPs supported the so-called Freedom Convoy that denied the freedoms of thousands of members of this community of downtown Ottawa the right to actually go to work as 600 to 700 businesses were forcibly closed by the so-called Freedom Convoy extremists. Seniors and people with disabilities were denied the right to medication and the freedom to get groceries through that period as the roads were blocked. These extremists ran their trucks, blasting their air horns 24 hours a day, denying freedom to thousands of residents of Ottawa Centre to actually get a good night's sleep, work, get groceries and get medications.

Conservatives supported all of that oppression of the people of Ottawa Centre. When Conservatives use the word “freedom”, I find it disingenuous, beyond belief, given the kind of oppression that they have recently supported in this area.

Government Orders

When Conservatives stand up, obviously not having read the bill, obviously having no reference to the bill, and do not even talk about the arts and culture sector and the loss of jobs, do not talk about big tech and how they are imposing their content on people, I say to myself that we have three parties in the House that are supportive of Bill C-11 and one party that prefers to choose big tech over the rights of Canadians to actually see Canadian content. That, indeed, is the essence of Bill C-11.

It forces big tech, which contributes virtually nothing to Canada, to actually start supporting Canadian content and Canadian artists. We saw this decades ago when big American music companies basically decided to impose American artists on Canada. Canadian parliamentarians at that time had the foresight to tell them to hold on, that they had to reserve a spot for Canadian content, because our Canadian musicians have talent and ability, that they were not going to simply impose foreign artists in the Canadian market, and that they were going to have to create a space for Canadians as well.

We saw the results of that, a renaissance beyond belief with Canadian artists and musicians, television programs and producers, Canadian movies not only being extraordinarily popular in Canada but right around the world.

● (2140)

Now, we have big tech pushing back with the support of its acolytes in the Conservative Party. Big tech is saying it wants to impose content on Canada and that it does not want Canadians to have a space. It does not want discoverability of Canadian artists and Canadian talent. Four out of the five parties, if we include the non-recognized parties in the House of Commons, are in the process of saying they are going to stand up for Canadian artists, for Canadian jobs and for the right of Canadians to see Canadian content, to hear Canadian content and to hear those stories about each other. Whether from British Columbia, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador or Nunavut, we are going to hear from each other, despite what big tech says.

That is the reality. That is the essence of the debate tonight. It is not about North Korea or repression. It is about allowing Canadians to hear each other's voices. That is what is so essential to this debate. It was missed by every single Conservative speaker, and I can only surmise that they have all missed the point of the debate because they have not read the bill. What they have read is the latest fundraising pitch from Conservative Party HQ, and that seems to be the only reason they are dragging this debate through this evening with such ridiculous, wacky and over-the-top exaggerations and making up of things that simply are not in the bill. We heard one Conservative member say that, because of Bill C-11, the government is going to be able to track Canadians on their cellphones.

That is unbelievable and unbecoming of this place. It is unbecoming of a member of Parliament to say that, but not a single Conservative corrects the other Conservatives. They just sit together stewing in their misinformation nexus, rather than address the bill itself. Of course, as I mentioned, the NDP succeeded in getting more amendments passed than any other party, because we were focused on improving the bill and making it even better. To my regret, and I think to the chagrin of most Canadians, Conservatives

were just there to monkeywrench and vandalize, rather than to actually try to improve the legislation so it would be in the best interests of all Canadians.

When it comes to the Senate amendments, because we had, as New Democrats, the opportunity to build a better bill we are proud of, particularly when it comes to indigenous peoples, we have clearly improved the bill. It is for those reasons we believe it should be passed, sent back to the Senate and adopted, so we can get Canadian actors and musicians working again and building more Canadian jobs.

● (2145)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed hearing that. I will say that I do not think the member should be too surprised with the way Conservatives are acting. Let us not forget it was just three days ago that the President of the United States heckled them for not standing up for gender parity. Pretty much everything is on the table now, in terms of what Conservatives are capable of.

To the member's point about the Conservatives not reading the bill, if someone has been, like me, sitting here for quite a while now, they have heard speech after speech, and the Conservatives keep referencing 29 amendments that have come from the Senate. There have only been 26 that have come from the Senate, which means not only have they not read the bill, but the same person who has written every speech for them keeps talking about 29 amendments, and there are only 26, so I just want to say to the member that he is absolutely right. The Conservatives are not paying attention, they have not read the bill and they are just reading canned speeches that have been written for them.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I think the natter of this Parliament for the Conservatives was started after the member for Carleton, on Monday afternoon, said that the Conservative motion they were bringing forward was the most important ever in the history of Canada, and on Tuesday afternoon he forgot to vote. He did not show up to vote. He did not show up to work. Members will recall our former leader, Jack Layton, saying that you don't get a promotion if you don't show up to work. The member for Carleton did not show to work; he should not get a promotion.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, if we want to talk about the bill in particular, let us get to what we are supposed to be debating tonight.

On Bill C-10, there was a portion in there that had an exemption for programs and that users could upload on social media. In other words, there was an exemption for user-generated content. I do not know if the member is actually familiar with that term.

In Bill C-11, they put the exemption back in. What clause was that? Moreover, in what clause did they actually put an exemption on the exemption?

If the member knows the bill that well, why did they put that exemption on an exemption and what clause was it?

Government Orders

● (2150)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, this is very interesting. Conservatives are now switching from North Korea and tyranny and freedom to trying to disingenuously take the bill and pretend that there is something hidden in it that Canadians should be concerned about. He knows very well that user-generated content is exempt.

As the member would know, if he had followed the debate at committee, the NDP ensured in the bill that, first, user-generated content is not impacted, and second, of course, freedom of expression is preserved. It would be great to have just one Conservative member stand up and honestly acknowledge what the NDP did, the fact that the bill has been improved and that what we wanted to preserve has been preserved in the bill.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it has been a very interesting debate on Bill C-11. I quite seriously think there is a deeply held belief that this bill is going to hurt freedom of expression that is entirely on the part of members and the Conservative caucus.

I am so grateful, and I am not going to claim that law school makes a person understand everything, but statutory interpretation is one of those things that one gets a good skill for, being able to read a piece of legislation. Where one finds freedom of expression is protected in this bill is in the Broadcasting Act, and then we have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which defends freedom of expression.

Nothing in this bill could possibly reduce Canadians' freedom of expression, nor has it ever been the case that anyone, before this debate, has ever conflated protecting Canadian content with censorship.

They are completely different concepts. I am very frustrated at this hour of night that we are still debating Bill C-11 without really debating it, because there were places I wish it had been improved. There are questions of whether there is a two-tiered approach to our cultural industries. However, there is no doubt that creators in this country have been losing the opportunity to make a living because of the competition from online streaming services that are big—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby some seconds to answer.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. She is absolutely right. Freedom of expression is absolutely not impacted by this bill. I wish just one Conservative would honestly stand up and admit that.

She also raised another key point. The—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an absolute honour to have the opportunity to raise concerns and share my displeasure with what is going on right now with Bill C-11. It is being rammed through Parliament after

having pretty substantive debates. I am going to be sharing my time with the member for Yorkton—Melville.

I want to start out by indicating that I believe Bill C-11 is a deeply flawed piece of legislation. I am not the only person who thinks so, and Conservatives are not even the only people who think so. The Prime Minister's own independent senators had so many concerns when the bill went to the Senate that they provided a series of amendments that would help make this bad bill less bad.

I applaud them for the diligent effort they put forward in calling additional witnesses and exploring other pieces of the bill. They made a number of amendments to the bill that were rejected by the government. It really showed the hand of the government that the ultimate goal of this bill is actually to allow the government to decide what does and does not count as Canadian content and what people would and would not see. It became explicit in the rejection of some of the substantive amendments that came from the Senate that this was, in fact, its *modus operandi*.

I share this because, until this point, the government was claiming that its intent was not to have the power to be the content regulator. However, in the rejection of one of the amendments, it actually said that it wanted the Governor in Council to regulate this content. This means that the government is giving itself the power to decide what it wants people to see online and to pick what does and does not count as Canadian content. I think it is a really scary thing for any government of any stripe.

This means that one will no longer get to pick what one wants to see online. Instead, the government gets to pick what one has a chance to see online to begin with. I do not want that power being given to any government of any political stripe. I do not think that is how things should go.

I know I am not alone in those fears and concerns. I have had countless people reach out to me. I have had average, everyday normal people who do not normally pay attention to politics reach out because they are really concerned about the contents of this bill. They are concerned that this is going too far and that this is a step towards absolute censorship.

While members opposite have made all kinds of jokes and seem to talk down the fact that we have these concerns, the concerns are real. They are legitimate, and they deserve to be addressed. Instead, we just get a whole bunch of nonsense and belittling, and that is not how this should be going. There is nothing progressive about censorship. The progressive parties are claiming that this is a progressive bill, but I am not sure how censoring anyone is progressive.

One of the pieces I really want to get into is how flawed the very definition of Canadian content is. I have a list of some things that are not considered to be Canadian content. I was kind of shocked at how vast the list was. I did not capture everything, but here is a small list of things I found in doing some research for this.

Government Orders

The Handmaid's Tale series that is on Hulu, and in Canada it is on Crave, is not considered to be Canadian content despite being written and based on Margaret Atwood's very famous book. It was filmed here in Canada. A part of the series was set here in Canada. It is not considered to be CanCon because the ownership is not Canadian; therefore, that is not Canadian content.

Turning Red, a Pixar film on Disney+, is set in Toronto. The main character is a 13-year-old Chinese Canadian girl. It is a really cool movie. I really liked it. It even has real superstar Canadians on the cast, like Sandra Oh. Can members guess what? It is not Canadian content. Again, it is the ownership piece.

● (2155)

Deadpool 2 was filmed in Vancouver. It stars Canada's number one cheerleader, Ryan Reynolds. It was even co-written by Ryan Reynolds, a Canadian who was born in Vancouver, and as I said, one of Canada's biggest cheerleaders. However, it did not have enough Canadian production, so sorry, it is not Canadian content. That is just on the film side.

Now, let us go into the music side because this is kind of fun. A good chunk of Justin Bieber's music is not Canadian content because it was recorded outside of Canada and he collaborated with artists from around the world. It is the same thing with most of Bryan Adams' music. Bryan Adams is an iconic Canadian rock star. Most of his music actually does not fit the qualifications to be CanCon because he partnered with Mutt Lange on a large part of his music. Céline Dion is an absolutely celebrated Canadian artist. Most of her newest music is not considered to be CanCon. *My Heart Will Go On* is not CanCon. It is crazy.

However, here is where the CanCon definition gets really fun. There are some real quirks in this. *Snowbird*, which was a hit by Elvis Presley, in fact does count as Canadian content because the music and lyrics were created by Canadians. Another unique one that fits into this bill is *Hit Me With Your Best Shot* by Pat Benatar. That is a great song. Growing up, we heard it a lot on the radio. We had a classic rock station in Fort McMurray, KYX 98, and it played *Hit Me With Your Best Shot* a lot. I am now understanding why: It met the Canadian content requirements.

I talked about the things that do not make sense in how CanCon is currently described and put out. We are now saying that the CRTC has done such a great job with film and music and defining what is and is not Canadian content that we are going to give it the whole Internet and hope that it does not screw it up. That is scary. This is a space where Internet is limitless. It is not something that can easily be kept in a little box like radio or television broadcasting because it is not technically and typically broadcasting. Anyone with a phone can produce a hit video. Anybody who has a unique idea can do this.

I grew up in Fort McMurray, which is a melting pot of everything from around Canada and the world. So here I am standing with my Nova Scotia tartan. I am not from Nova Scotia. My grandfather lived in Nova Scotia at one point. However, I am sitting here, giving a speech and wearing a Nova Scotia tartan as someone who is not from Nova Scotia, because growing up, I got to experience Atlantic Canadian culture, Cape Breton culture and culture from B.C. and Vancouver Island, and I saw a whole bunch of variety in

what Canadian culture was. The scary part is that we are now going to be letting bureaucrats in Ottawa, the "Ottawa knows best", the ones who have probably never experienced some of what Canadian culture actually is decide what counts and what does not count and what Canadians get to see on the Internet and what they do not get to see. That is a scary spot to be in.

In my area, if someone says they are from Ottawa and they are here to fix their problem, people are typically a little concerned, probably a bit more than a little concerned. I say this because it is serious. Some of the colleagues from the other side have been really concerned that they have only been hearing the same things over and over again from Conservatives, and part of it is that some of the experts they have been quoting up to this point are experts in their field.

I am going to quote one person from the University of Calgary. She is the Canadian research chair in cybersecurity law and associate professor, Dr. Emily Laidlaw. She said:

The indirect knock-on effect of this legislation on internet users and what they seek, receive and share online is important to the analysis. If the adverse effects of the provisions on social media users are too great, then the interference with free expression is disproportionate and unconstitutional.

She said this in her transcript when she was speaking to the Senate. The government has rejected some of the Senate's amendments. The Senate amendment that made this bad piece of legislation less bad did not take into account the fact that there are serious concerns when it comes to the constitutionality of this.

I really would hope that everyone can agree that we need a bit of a pause. We need to go back to the drawing board on this and revisit so that we have the best possible legislation.

● (2200)

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, there is nothing in the legislation that lays out what CanCon is. What the legislation does is ask platforms to make Canadian content more findable for Canadians.

What in making Canadian content more findable takes away choices from Canadians to watch whatever they want to watch? Just because people can find Schitt's Creek more easily online, that does not mean they cannot watch something else if that is what they prefer.

Government Orders

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, the scary part about the bill is that it does leave a lot to be determined at some other point. It leaves a lot to be determined in regulation. It leaves a lot to be determined by other levels that are away from this piece of legislation, which is part of the concern that we brought up. It also means that large media streaming giants like Crave or Disney+ might decide that the regulations in Canada are too much and so they are just going to leave. Canadians would then lose all of that content that is and is not Canadian, which limits their choice.

Currently, Canadians do not have a choice about a lot of pieces of online media that other places around the world do, specifically because of our regulatory framework and the fact that some of these businesses and companies just choose not to play here. That means we have fewer options and less choice. We hear the same song on the radio over and over again, because it meets that qualification standard, and it is the same kind of thing.

The bill would actually serve to disadvantage Canadian content, Canadian artists and Canadians ultimately.

• (2205)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am going to read a section from Bill C-11. It reads:

programming that reflects the Indigenous cultures of Canada and programming that is in Indigenous languages should be provided—including through broadcasting undertakings that are carried on by Indigenous persons—within community elements, which are positioned to serve smaller and remote communities, and other elements of the Canadian broadcasting system;

Can the member please tell me what is so scary and so concerning about this section?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, this is the interesting part about the bill. It is quite a comprehensive bill that covers a lot of different subjects. One of the challenges is that it takes the Internet, something that is very large and very vague, and tries to put it into a box. Frankly, it is not something one can easily put into a box. Therefore, digital creators, whether they be indigenous or from different cultural communities, could be disadvantaged by this very legislation. The up-and-coming artists who have not quite gotten there yet, who are still using their telephone to try to put themselves out on YouTube, will be disadvantaged perhaps by this legislation unless the government decides to step in and decides that they actually do fit the qualifications of Canadian content.

This is part of the challenge here, that there are poison pills strung all throughout this legislation, which perhaps has a good intent but does it poorly.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, *The Handmaid's Tale* has come up a great deal in this debate, and there is time to actually dig into why. *The Handmaid's Tale*, written by Margaret Atwood, once adapted to the screen, did not count as Canadian. It is fairly easy to look it up. It is described on Wikipedia as “an American dystopian television series created by Bruce Miller”, an American. For the film, the screenwriter was Harold Pinter, who is British; the director, Volker Schlöndorff, is German; and the score was by a Japanese artist.

They are all very talented people, but Canadian artistic enterprises are trying to find work for Canadians. The wonderful and chilling dystopian novel by the brilliant Margaret Atwood had many

other hands bringing it to the screen, and those hands were not Canadian. If we tried to enter it into any kind of Canadian artistic prize category, we would not get it in as a Canadian piece of work, because it is American or international with American producers and Americans own it. That is why it is not Canadian content.

We need to protect Canadian content or our writers and our screenwriters—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake a few seconds to answer.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I will keep this really short and sweet. Margaret Atwood touched on Bill C-11, saying it was “creeping totalitarianism”, period.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, during the lockdowns, and for me the lockouts, I still found myself with very little free time on my hands, but when I did have those precious few moments, I could turn to the Internet as a source of information, entertainment and comfort during uncertain times.

The Internet is an endless frontier for creativity, discovery and free thought. While the reach of radio and TV is confined largely to within our own borders, Canadian creators throughout the past few decades have been charting new pathways online. Canada's media landscape of the 21st century has been and will continue to be defined by their artistic endeavours. Regardless of people's background or prerequisite knowledge of their craft, Canadians have been reaching global audiences through the power of their voices, performances and words. It is our duty as legislators to celebrate and ease their efforts in reaching the world. In no instance should we be working to limit their expression at home or abroad.

We should afford the same consideration to Canadians who consume this content. The first 30 years of commercial Internet have changed the manner in which we enjoy our entertainment. While the evolution of radio, print and TV over the last century has taken place within the vacuum of Canada's telecommunications industry, there is no such restraint on online content. Canadians are more empowered than ever to pick and choose the content they want to watch, listen to and read. The government should be working to encourage, not suppress, variety and choice within a new broadcasting reality.

Regrettably, in Canada, and in the year 2023, this bill gives us cause to rise to the defence of free expression and free choice. This debate should have all Canadians concerned, and it does. In a complicated world in which the free flow of information is more important than ever, I am pleased to speak once again to Bill C-11 from the perspective of the majority of Canadians.

Government Orders

When a government has been given every opportunity over the course of a year to do the right thing, is presented with Senate amendments that attempt to repair mistakes that were made and then rejects some of those amendments, Canadians are given cause to reflect and draw conclusions on the intentions of the current government.

It is clear that the Prime Minister made up his mind from the very beginning of this process. He is not interested in the appeals of civil society, industry professionals, independent content creators, and the 92% of Canadians who access an uncensored Internet for their news, opinions and entertainment. From the beginning of the debate, they have been calling on the government to stop its attempts to censor their search results.

We must not embark down the road of censorship and algorithmic control. Canada is one of the most connected countries in the world. We are the model for what a free and open Internet can achieve. In normal times, this would be seen as a net positive for civil discourse and the cultural mosaic, and any responsible government would embrace this potential. However, that is not the case with the Liberal government. It has seen fit to impose top-down regulations of the worst kind on the one true international entity that reaches beyond borders and makes Canadian culture freely available to the world.

Bill C-11 applies CRTC regulatory powers to the Internet. It effectively empowers the Prime Minister, his cabinet and bureaucrats in Ottawa to decide what Canadians see and say online. They would determine which material is given preference and would effectively have control over Internet algorithms.

The government continually claims that this legislation would have no effect on the performance of user-generated content, such as a typical cat video, but its actions tell us a different story, and Canadians are picking up on it. Despite overwhelming public pressure to back away from independent creators and to leave “the little guy” alone, the government has rejected a Senate amendment that would have protected content created by ordinary individuals. This amendment would have ensured that regulations target only commercial material. Canadians are rightly offended by this decision. To reject hard-fought-for protections for free expression in the eleventh hour reeks of a hidden agenda.

These fears are entirely justified. The Prime Minister has decided to impose his own personal brand onto the Internet, and we have to wonder why. I would argue it is because, even with his desperate attempt to control the narrative via the legacy media, which he has to do before 2024, he no longer has control over the message.

As the relevance and appeal of traditional media fades, the Internet has done more than fill the void. It has changed the media landscape forever.

• (2210)

To consider just a few of these statistics, every day 100,000 songs are uploaded to streaming platforms, 1.7 million books were self-published in the last year, there are now three million podcasts that put out about 30 million episodes this last year and 2,500 videos are uploaded to YouTube every minute.

While decades-old media empires have been implementing strategies to downsize, alternative culture is flourishing. There are nearly 40 YouTube channels with more than 50 million subscribers, which is far above the reach of any newspaper or record label in Canada. We have also seen a shift among our young people, with 86% who have expressed a desire to become online influencers.

In fact, it is our young people who are driving these numbers in large part. The Prime Minister has now ostracized 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds who are very motivated to vote in their first election, and a number of them are my grandkids. This is excellent news for them for the future of independent Canadian arts and culture, but the problem, in the Prime Minister’s view, is that not every ounce of this material will align with his government’s opinions.

We have seen this type of behaviour before. Liberals attempted to restrict Canada summer jobs funding through a draconian values test. Employers were permitted to offer life-changing experiences to our youth only after attesting to uphold values the Liberal Party deemed appropriate.

Their 2021 platform promises to revoke the charitable status of crisis pregnancy centres because their life-saving work flies in the face of the Liberal Party’s belief in abortion at any time and for any reason. The majority of Canadians, over 80%, actually want to see more pregnancy counselling centres, not less. The Liberals are so out of touch.

Now they are attempting to control cyberspace through Bill C-11. Once again, Liberals are attempting to pick winners and losers. In effect, this bill works to extinguish this ambition for the next generation of Canadian creators. It would destroy the creative drive that makes film, music and print material so alluring.

Instead of relying on a tried-and-true business model to promote their content to the world, creators would be forced to manure their output to fit within the Prime Minister’s CanCon ideal. We heard a bit about that from my colleague. This is not what arts and culture in a free society looks like.

The Liberals argue this legislation is required to ensure more Canadian content reaches our screens, but at the same time, they are killing the inventive spirit that has inspired a new generation of Canadians to express themselves.

In a piece in *The Free Press*, Ted Gioia writes, “...what we really need is a robust indie environment—in which many arts and culture businesses flourish and present their diverse offerings.” He also says, “...we deserve a culture in which there are hundreds or thousands of organizations doing audience development and outreach.”

“Let a thousand flowers blossom,” he says.

Government Orders

As colleagues on both sides of this House often say, the world needs more Canada. I wholeheartedly agree. Canadian culture is being expressed, not lost, in current and expounding methods, but this can only be maintained through an open and free Internet. Let us not limit our potential. Let us not turn back in time.

Canadians analyze this bill, and they cannot help but conclude it is an attempt to impose state censorship through the back door. Giving any government the power to manipulate online algorithms will not benefit Canadian culture. What is also clear is the threat it poses to freedom of expression in this country.

The Liberals' time in office will end, along with that of all other future governments. Do we honestly want the government of the day, whoever it is, to impose its world view over top of what we say and do online? As a proud Canadian, I certainly do not want that.

I will end with this. If it should pass, I want Canadians to know the following. A Conservative government would repeal Bill C-11. Recognizing the richness and breadth of Canadian content in the Internet age, we would require large streaming services to invest more into producing Canadian content, and we would explain that to Canadians when we brought it forward while protecting the individual rights and freedoms of Canadians.

Through a Conservative approach to CanCon, homegrown talent would be able to compete on an equal footing with the rest of the world. When removed from the seat of power, I predict the Liberals will applaud a Conservative government's effort to repeal this legislation. Instead of entrusting the future of Canadian culture to faceless bureaucrats in Ottawa, we will trust Canadians' ability to promote Canada to the world and make their own decisions on what content they consume. We will allow a thousand flowers to bloom.

• (2215)

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very interested in the member opposite talking about the Internet being this vast place, international without borders, where one could find all this content.

I am wondering if the member honestly thinks that people, randomly on the Internet, with all of this content, find what it is that they want to watch, or does she think it is the platforms that are deciding what to put at the top of the feed, what Canadians should watch next, what maybe appeals to people. It is the platforms that are making those decisions. It is the platforms that are wielding that power.

It is our job as legislators to write laws to protect Canadians, including Canadians who work in the arts and culture sector.

• (2220)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate that question, because the truth of the matter is that the government has already been trying to manipulate what Canadians see on the basis of its funding of the legacy media and its expectations of them.

We are seeing this, as well, with Facebook. On this side of the floor, we connected with them because we are seeing changes in algorithms in regard to policy and politics. Of course there need to be

those controls in place, but, believe me, the last thing Canadians want, and certainly this younger generation that has found their voice wants, is to see any government telling them what they can and cannot do, see or create.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville is a friend of mine, and I understand that she believes what she is saying.

I cannot see it in this bill. I see nothing in this bill where faceless bureaucrats are going to tell Canadians what they can watch. That is not the case. This bill is about ensuring that our creators in this country would have work up against what is a monolithic, multinational digital media with giants like Netflix, Disney and Crave that are producing an enormous amount of content without a concern for the Canadian voices and the Canadian artists within that content.

Bill C-11 is just updating the Broadcasting Act to deal with that reality.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, the CRTC is getting its marching orders from the government, absolutely. What it says to them will impact how the CRTC functions, and it has its hands full, quite honestly, dealing with the dynamics around the legacy media at this point in time.

The truth of the matter is there is all kinds of production going on in Canada, from those large producers. If the member listened to the speech from the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood who was in the industry for 45 years, he talked about all across this nation, and especially in British Columbia, on the island and in the Lower Mainland, these companies are coming to Canada to make their movies and documentaries. We are gaining an incredible amount of GDP because of that influx into our nation.

We deserve the freedom as Canadians to use the Internet in the way that it has been designed and is functioning now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. Again, we are really seeing a campaign of fear and disinformation from the Conservatives. People will be able to post whatever they want on social media. People will be able to listen to whatever they want. This will not change anything.

The Conservative Party says it would continue to give these web giants a sort of tax break where they are not required to contribute to Canadian cultural content production.

Why do my colleague and the Conservatives want to disadvantage Canadian companies by giving tax breaks to web giants such as YouTube, Disney+ and Netflix?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, he must have missed the last part of my speech, so I will just repeat it, briefly.

Government Orders

A Conservative government would repeal Bill C-11 and, recognizing the richness and breadth of Canadian content in the Internet age, we would require large streaming services to invest more in producing Canadian content while protecting the individual rights and freedoms of Canadians.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

It is a pleasure to speak on Bill C-11, a bill that the citizens of Oshawa have been very clear about. Oshawa wants us to kill this bill.

Canadians are not ignorant or dumb but the Prime Minister and the Liberal government clearly believe that Canadians are simply not smart enough to decide for ourselves what we want to see and hear.

There is a quote I have on my front door. It is from John F. Kennedy, a man that I admire. It states, “the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.”

This quote helps frame the debate about the bill. Does this bill expand the rights of every Canadian or does it diminish their rights and freedoms? Does this bill threaten Canadians' ability to communicate, make a living or be heard?

Some very prominent Canadians have weighed in on this unprecedented bill and how it threatens freedom of speech.

Section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to free speech, which can only be effectively exercised if one has the ability to be heard.

As Professor Michael Geist explains, “to be clear, the risk with these rules is not that the government will restrict the ability for Canadians to speak, but rather that the bill could impact their ability to be heard. In other words, the CRTC will not be positioned to stop Canadians from posting content, but will have the power to establish regulations that could prioritize or de-prioritize certain content, mandate warning labels, or establish other conditions with the presentation of the content (including algorithmic outcomes). The government has insisted that isn't the goal of the bill. If so, the solution is obvious. No other country in the world seeks to regulate user content in this way and it should be removed from the bill because it does not belong in the Broadcasting Act.”

Canadian author Margaret Atwood has a gift of boiling down rhetoric to a very specific phrase. She sees this bill as “creeping totalitarianism” and I agree with her. Conservatives believe in freedom of speech, thought and belief. Traditionally and historically, these rights and freedoms were not considered a left- or right-wing thing. They were based on a fundamental understanding that in free societies, we have fundamental rights.

Let us review the fundamental question that this bill is forcing us to ask. This legislation is about one thing: trust. Do Canadians trust this government to respect our rights and freedoms if Liberals are given these new, unprecedented powers?

Trust is unfortunately a challenging concept for the government. Trust is a characteristic, a quality that needs to be earned. It is a belief in reliability, truth or ability of someone or something. Trust

can be predicted from past behaviour and past actions. Given this government's past, we see a record of distrust and concern. Let us examine that statement. Let us take a look at the Prime Minister and his government's history and what has been said about their approach to governing and what premises and ideologies drive their behaviour, in regard to Canadians' rights and freedoms.

We could talk about Bill C-18. We could talk about the Emergencies Act, the freezing of bank accounts of Canadians who disagree with the government, or Canadians who should not be tolerated and instead punished due to their unacceptable views or we could talk about David Pugliese's exposé in the Ottawa Citizen about the Canadian military who “saw the pandemic as [a] unique opportunity to test propaganda techniques on Canadians” or Swikar Oli, who wrote in the National Post. We could talk about privacy advocates raising concerns, about the Public Health Agency tracking Canadians without their permission or Susan Delacourt writing about “nudging” techniques to manipulate Canadians' behaviour. Were these government behaviours warranted? Maybe, maybe not, but it begs to the question: what else is going on that we do not know about? What direction is the government racing toward? More freedom and choice or more government control?

Our democracy is fragile and “creeping totalitarianism” can be insidious and appear to be harmless or based on noble lies or intentions.

There are so many examples but let us focus on the bill in front of us and what it means and could mean. Let us review.

Bill C-11 is an online censorship bill designed to control search engines and algorithms so that the government can control what Canadians see and hear.

What is censorship? Censorship is defined as “the suppression of speech, public communication or other information”.

As Canadians know, whoever controls the narrative controls the world.

Canadians are storytelling creatures. We tell each other what is going on by talking, singing, dancing, creating and showing others about ourselves, our ideas and our feelings. Historically, we have been able to do this freely.

Government Orders

• (2225)

With the advent of the Internet, Canadians embraced a new way of telling these stories. We could now send birthday videos around the world, sing a new song and post it for all to see. If people liked it, they shared it. New innovations allow Canadian creators and storytellers to earn a living online, communicate, educate, debate, explore. We could choose what we wanted to see and enjoy where it sent us, but this ability is being challenged.

Bill C-11 would prevent Canadians from seeing and watching the content that they choose for themselves. The Liberals and their big government, big corporate friends would decide who is heard and who is silent.

Have colleagues ever heard the term “inverted totalitarianism”? It is a term coined by Dr. Sheldon Wolin to describe a system where big corporations corrupt or subvert democracy. Elitist politicians with their ability to control and regulate are influenced by the big players, the big corporations that have the money to lobby government officials and regulators such as the CRTC to get the rules that benefit their monopolies and their bottom lines.

Is this where the Liberal government has taken Canada? Such arrogance. Perhaps Canadians should not really be surprised. The New York Times reported that our Prime Minister once said that Canadians have no core identity and that he wanted us to become the first post-national state.

Does that sound like someone who wants to protect our unique Canadian culture, our unique Canadian values? After all, we did elect the Prime Minister who said he admires the basic dictatorship of China so much because it gets things done. Perhaps this explains why the Liberal-NDP coalition has been so focused and intent on ramming this bill through the House.

Sadly, this legislation models practices directly from the Communist Government of China. The CCP has created the great fire wall, a heavily censored Internet that directs users to approved content under the guise of protecting the public and keeping people safe. It blocks unacceptable views and connections that the CCP considers harmful to the Chinese public. The goal of its Internet is to reshape online behaviour and use it to disseminate new party theories and promote socialist agendas. It is about shaping the Communist government's values.

Could that happen in Canada? One of my constituents, Rhonda, who lived and taught in China for two years in the early 2000s recounts, “When I lived in China for two years, we always had to verify the news and Internet content with friends and families back home or in free countries, as we knew we were not receiving unaltered information. It was highly regulated by the Communist government in China. I fear we are heading in this direction in Canada and I am having a hard time understanding how this is possible when it's supposed to be a free and democratic society.”

I agree with Rhonda. This idea of creeping totalitarianism seems to be alive and well in Canada. If Canadians give governments these new powers, I believe it is just a matter of time before these powers are abused. Bill C-11 would give the current Liberal government and future governments the authority to pick and choose

what individual Canadians are allowed to watch, essentially placing the government as a content regulator.

Homegrown Canadian talent and creators would no longer succeed based on merit. Bureaucrats in Ottawa would determine content based on its level of “Canadian-ness”, but the culture of minorities would be cut out. By the way, how does one define “Canadian-ness”? This bill certainly does not do it. The CRTC would have control, big government would be lobbied by big corporations to wedge the little guys out. Corporate government would grow. Entrepreneurs, creators and artists would be squashed.

Sadly, we saw Canadian content creators come to Ottawa to have their voices heard but, as expected, they were shut down. The government wholly rejected any amendments brought forward that would narrow the bill's scope and fully exempt content that Canadians post on social media. Canadians are asking the questions, asking what the government is afraid of. Is it freedom? We have had different journalists and commentators around saying that this could change the independent Youtubers' way in which they make their money. Their viewership and revenues would take a hit. That is something that I think is quite worrying.

To finish, why does the government want to cause more uncertainty, loss of income and pain to make Canadians depend on the government? Why the attack on Canadian innovators in a way that no other country does, except maybe under the Communist Government of China? Why does the government not trust Canadians to be their own directors of their own destinies? We trust Canadians. A Conservative government would repeal this horrible bill.

• (2230)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member for Oshawa was speaking, all I could think is that somewhere there is a Liberal war room clipping all of that to use in ads to make sure no one votes Conservative.

• (2235)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for pointing that out because I specifically used factual representations of what is going on. I am getting letters and emails from across Canada. Canadians are so worried about the direction the Liberals are taking this country in and where it will end.

To start to regulate the Internet, to decide what Canadians can see and what they can say, and, more importantly, as Professor Geist said in committee, to regulate which Canadians will be heard and which ones will not be heard is an incredibly wrong way to be moving. As I said in my final comments, Canadians can trust that a Conservative government would end this horrible bill and put decision-making back into Canadians' hands.

Government Orders

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have heard all evening that this bill would not regulate or diminish freedom of speech. What I heard in the member's speech was that freedom of speech includes the right to be heard. I am wondering if he could expand on that. Those two concepts must go together.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I started my speech by quoting John F. Kennedy, who said that when the rights of one person are diminished, the rights of all men are threatened. One of the greatest rights we have in free and democratic societies is the right to speak and be heard. What this piece of legislation would do is regulate the ability for people to be heard on the Internet. It is not me saying this. All kinds of academics went to committee, and I quoted Dr. Michael Geist. The challenge is that the government is not even listening to them. It is not listening to the academics who came forward, and it is not listening to some of our greatest writers. I mentioned Margaret Atwood.

The challenge right now with this piece of legislation is that it is for future governments, and once these powers have been given to any government, ultimately they are going to be abused. We have seen the government's track record, and it is something that Canadians are not proud of.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaaqtittiji*, it seems obvious that members of the Conservative Party have not read Bill C-11. That is why I keep reading sections of the bill. I am going to read yet another section. It states:

provide opportunities to Black and other racialized persons in Canada by taking into account their specific needs and interests, namely, by supporting the production and broadcasting of original programs by and for Black and other racialized communities

The way I interpret that is that it both gives a voice to Black and racialized communities and ensures they have opportunities to be heard. I wonder if the member can explain the dichotomy between what he is saying and what is in Bill C-11.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I am actually in agreement with the member. The government should allow content from racialized Canadians to be promoted. However, maybe she missed the point in my debate and argument. This bill would allow the government to stop an individual's ability to be heard. It will decide what goes into the algorithms. It will decide what Canadians are going to be seeing. As videos and content get shared around, if the government does not like where it is going, the government will control where it goes. This is the problem. This bill may have the exact opposite effect of what the member feels it will have, and it needs to be stopped.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to join this debate, mostly to refute some of the claims that have been made by Liberals and the NDP about the Conservative position on this bill.

During debate on Bill C-11, the Liberals and the NDP have falsely claimed the Conservatives do not care about Canadian artists and that we do not care about Canadian culture. They have accused us of spreading misinformation and are insisting, falsely, that this bill is somehow necessary to protect Canadian culture.

I want to clear the air on the first part. I love Canadian culture. I am fascinated by all things Canadian, and I love travelling to new places in Canada. I love its land and people, and I am always fascinated by how Canada's history shapes its culture. I have always read Canadian authors. I have always listened to Canadian music. In my formative years, the eighties, most of my favourite bands were Canadian. In my university days in the early nineties, I went to countless live shows with emerging Canadian artists.

I have been buying Canadian books, Canadian albums and Canadian concert tickets for decades, but this bill is not about ensuring the health of Canadian culture. This bill is about giving extraordinary powers to a federal institution to influence what Canadians find, see, hear and post on the Internet.

This bill would give the CRTC powers that do not belong in a free and democratic society. This bill gives the CRTC the power to compel web platforms to favour some content over other content depending on the CRTC's preference, not the consumer's preference. This government interference with consumer preference naturally conjures up all kinds of thoughts of governmental control over the arts and access to information from both real history and literary dystopias.

When the Conservatives, or anybody, suggest that this bill is on a spectrum of governmental control that might include Goebbels' ministry of public enlightenment, the Soviet censorship system or Orwell's fictitious ministry of truth, Canadians and Conservatives who have engaged in this debate are merely raising the same concerns raised by experts, eminent Canadians and Liberal-appointed senators. These points have been made by academic experts like Michael Geist. They have been made by eminent Canadians like Margaret Atwood and David Richards. The latter happens to be a Liberal-appointed senator. They have been made by the former CRTC chair Peter Menzies.

We are raising the points made by contemporary professional digital content creators who have come to committee to say they are desperately worried that this bill is going to destroy their livelihoods. We are not making this up. This bill gives power to the CRTC to create winners and losers. It directs the CRTC to separate content the CRTC thinks Canadians should find, see, hear and post from content the CRTC thinks Canadians should not be able to find, see, hear or post. The Liberals and the NDP are welcome to make the argument that it is a good thing for the CRTC to differentiate between what Canadians should find and what they should not find on the Internet. They can make that argument, but they cannot argue that this bill does not do exactly that. That is the point of this bill.

What about Canada's 50-year history of mandatory Canadian content for broadcasters? We have heard lots about this in points when members are refuting Conservative speeches. The Liberals say that this bill is just evening the playing field by treating the Internet like old-fashioned TV and radio. Are we seriously talking about evening the playing field?

Government Orders

The infinity of the Internet is the ultimate level playing field. Nothing has been done to break down barriers between artists and their audience like the Internet. When the Liberals say this bill is levelling the playing field, what they really mean is they want to make the Internet every bit as uneven as the playing field the CRTC already regulates.

● (2240)

Once, the Soviet Union took a very dim view of western music. It banned not only American and British artists but even Canadian artists, like Rush, which was banned in the Soviet Union. It also banned the entire genres these artists popularized. There was no rock and roll, no jazz, no blues and nothing that could be associated with decadent capitalist western culture in the Soviet Union. If someone was living in the Soviet Union, all they could get was Russian classical music performed by trusty state-sanctioned and state-funded orchestras. Imagine being denied the Beatles because they did not fit in with the government's bureaucrats' ideas of what a model citizen should enjoy.

Although Bill C-11 is certainly not promising to ban foreign content from Canadians, it is proposing to gently suppress foreign or unregistered Canadian content in favour of content approved by bureaucrats at the CRTC. Let no one doubt who leads these bureaucrats. The Liberals always appoint their own when it comes to boards and commissions, including at least one defeated Liberal candidate sitting as the current CRTC commissioner.

That leads us right to the heart of why it is wrong to treat the Internet like 1970s radio and television: There is simply no way that a bunch of bureaucrats hand-picked by the Liberals can be arbiters of who and what is Canadian content. Despite what the Liberals and the NDP, and particularly its House leader, have been saying all night, there has never been a golden age of Canadian content regulation. Back in the eighties, people knew that when a song or TV show came on that nobody actually liked, it was on just because it ticked the boxes and was Canadian content. In the seventies, a checklist system was made whereby if something ticked enough boxes, it was in and was Canadian content. However, this system was always fraught with problems, like system gaming. We have heard about this tonight. Do members remember when Bryan Adams was not Canadian enough to be considered Canadian content? He was a Canadian who lived in Canada, in Vancouver, but other songs recorded by American bands in Vancouver could qualify as Canadian, maybe if the record producer slipped in a writing credit.

Bureaucrats with the power to censor, subsidize or otherwise make choices on behalf of consumers are the worst arbiters of good taste. That is why the Soviet Union could never make a decent pair of blue jeans. It is true. If we put bureaucrats in charge of something like this, they are not going to come up with what the people really want. That is why my favourite Canadian novelist, Mordecai Richler, once called the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council “mediocrity's holy trinity”. That is what he called them.

With all due respect for the Canadian artists who have testified at committee that the old rules helped their careers decades ago, I think some of them are being too modest. The Tragically Hip owe

their success to their incredible talent as songwriters and performers and how hard they worked in their formative years. The Canadian content system may well have helped them, but their connection with Canadians and Canadian audiences seemed inevitable to me, just like a generation earlier when Rush produced their own album. They found an audience in Cleveland on the radio and then made their way back into Canada and throughout the world.

Bill C-11 would treat the entire Internet like it is 1971 again. The government wants to treat Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, paid streaming services and every other thing we can find, see, hear or post on the Internet like the system it is comfortable with, the one that has been around for 50 years before any of these things were invented.

The Liberals and the NDP say that opponents of the bill, from Conservative politicians to academic experts to eminent Canadian artists, are all wrong and that none of us understand. The Liberals and the NDP say that this is not about freedom of expression, censorship or regulating cat videos, but about making the web giants support Canadian artists. If that was true, why did they not say so in the bill and accept the amendment that would have truly created the exemption for user-uploaded content? They could have done that, but they chose not to because they want a bill that expands the powers of the CRTC.

The bill would not modernize the Broadcasting Act. It is Canada's first Internet regulation bill. It is wrong, and it should be defeated.

● (2245)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was so glad that the member chose to explain to Canadians why The Tragically Hip is so successful. What the member probably does not know in that case, otherwise he would not have written it, is that Gord Sinclair of The Tragically Hip came before the committee. He gave the credit for The Tragically Hip's success to the fundamental rules around Canadian content and checking those boxes he talked about.

In fact, Gord Sinclair said:

Our potential as a creative nation is as vast as the country itself. Songwriters are our best cultural ambassadors. We are compelled to create, to express what we know and what we feel. We need partners in government and industry, including streaming.

That is what Gord Sinclair from The Tragically Hip said. Therefore, before the member goes and puts words in the mouth of the best rock band in Canada that we have ever produced, he should understand how its members feel about it.

Government Orders

• (2250)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, it was actually because of interventions by this member earlier in debate that I chose to mention his city's great band. There is a real Canadian value on display, which is a modest understatement. I really believe that band was so talented and connected so well with Canadians that it could have succeeded under any set of rules. That is why I mentioned them. Other Canadian artists will find their way as artists. Their talent is irrepressible and it cannot be denied.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a very specific question.

We must modify and modernize the Broadcasting Act because the system is broken. This system was created in the 1970s and 1980s, so it is ill adapted for digital broadcasters.

I will give an example. Pierre Lapointe, a well-known Quebec singer, told us a few years ago at a ADISQ gala that one of his songs had been streamed more than one million times on Spotify, yet he had only received \$500.

The system is broken. It puts web giants at an advantage and our artists at a disadvantage. Why do the Conservatives not want to help our homegrown artists?

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I guess this member is sort of a part of the government, or his party is governing with the Liberals. Why did the government not exempt user-generated content and the uploading of user-generated content? This is a big bill, and I am not going to oppose everything that is contained within it. I am not going to suggest that every motivation behind the tabling of this bill was wrong, but the bill is unsupportable to the extent that it would grant new and extraordinary powers to the CRTC that do not belong in a free and democratic society. I, frankly, do not see how this bill, if passed, would necessarily solve the problems that the member suggested. It would take away all kinds of opportunities for other Canadian content creators to find an audience through an unfettered Internet.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, there are a number of things about this legislation that I wish were different. I do not think I have ever seen a bill in this place, even the ones I would be persuaded to vote for, that I thought was perfect. However, the difficulty I have in this debate are the exaggerations, and I am pleading with colleagues on the Conservative side. Comparing Canada with the People's Republic of China is just not supportable. It is just not, and it makes it impossible to engage in a thoughtful debate when there are such really damaging claims that hurt our democracy being made in this place.

There are flaws in Bill C-11, for sure, but it is not totalitarian, it is not the People's Republic of China and it is not North Korea. It is Canadian content. If the hon. member wants to call Canadian content mediocre, that is his right, but do not claim that Bill C-11 puts Canadians in a situation anywhere comparable to that of people who live in totalitarian states.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I would invite the member to listen more carefully then, because I did not say many of the words that she put in my mouth, and she did not notice or note any of the words other than a couple that she picked here and there. I said quite the opposite of what I think of Canadian content. I talked about the regulation of Canadian content, and I oppose it in this bill.

• (2255)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, irrespective of the hour, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise in the House tonight to speak to Bill C-11, the online streaming act. Before I go on, I want to note that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

The Liberal government does not trust Canadians with freedom. Members will hear me say that several times more.

The bill returns to us from the Senate, where more than two dozen amendments were unanimously agreed to, and I will not get into the 26 versus 29. That should give us all a sense of the state of this piece of legislation. We want to thank our counterparts in the upper chamber for their efforts to improve this heavily flawed bill.

Let us all go back for a moment to the beginning of Bill C-11. Its purpose was to update the 1991 Broadcasting Act, to bring equity and fairness into a new age of communication tools, and hopefully have a structure and adopt principles for new communication platforms that we have not even dreamed of yet. That was a goal we could all support.

However, as is too often the wont of the government, it is the overreach of this bill that we must now focus on so that a problem that needed solving does not become a bigger problem than the one we started with. That brings us here today.

The Liberal government does not trust Canadians with freedom.

One of the most important amendments involves the protection of user-generated content from regulation by the CRTC and focuses the scope of the bill toward professional, copyrighted music, music with a unique signifier number or videos that have been broadcast on mainstream media and then uploaded.

Importantly, this amendment removes the clause that would add the criteria of direct or indirect revenue. Unfortunately, the Minister of Canadian Heritage has already indicated that the government would not support any amendments that “impact the bill”. Here, my analysis would cause me to read “impact” as “improve”. It is disheartening to hear the minister reject impactful amendments that could be greatly beneficial to our Canadian content creators.

These creators rightfully expect the government to implement responsible legislation that creates a safe and competitive environment for them to continue growing their brand and sharing their Canadian reality.

Government Orders

What no Canadian creator, indeed no Canadian, expects is for their government to begin telling them what it means to be Canadian. Yet, by giving the CRTC the power to regulate Canadian Internet users and define what can be categorized as Canadian content, or CanCon, the government is instead restricting those Canadians who are on the forefront of Canadian digital content creation.

Artists and creators who excel in their fields deserve nothing less than an equal playing field and the tools they need to succeed. It is the users of the content, not the government, who should determine how often it is viewed or the ease in which new viewers could find new material. In addition to fair compensation, they should also be able to share their stories through the medium of their choice, be it television, film, music, prose or, what we are talking about now tonight, online.

The Liberal government does not trust Canadians with freedom.

The government is sending the message to people that says they should not be trusted with the freedom to create and view the content of their choice online. It is continuing its “Ottawa knows best” approach of limiting individual freedoms by creating problems with user-generated content that do not exist.

The government has had an opportunity here to adapt how it treats the arts, culture and media to suit modern realities and platforms. Instead, the Prime Minister has rejected every attempt to include safeguards in the bill that would protect the freedoms of Canadian Internet users to ensure that they have access to the content of their choice and not what the government decides to promote or de-promote.

Again, the government does not trust Canadians with freedom.

Another important amendment proposed by the Senate is the definition of CanCon itself. This amendment would make sure that the CRTC considers all factors like the producer of the content, the key creators of the content, furthering Canadian expression, whatever that means because it is not defined, the amount of collaboration among Canadian industry professionals and anything else brought into regulation before disqualifying content as CanCon. Again, as in the previously mentioned amendment, this amendment would certainly impact the bill, so the government rejected it.

We must not lose sight of the fact that culture naturally grows and evolves over time. Canada has long-prided itself on being welcoming to the cultures of many different peoples. In fact, if one turns on television today, one may hear a CBC ad that says, “It’s not how Canadian you are. It’s who you are in Canada.” Yes, I watched the CBC Saturday night because the hockey game was on.

● (2300)

Why then is the government putting forward legislation aiming to do just the opposite by determining how Canadian one’s content is?

What we absolutely do not support is online legislation that would affect what people can access on the Internet. Having freedom of speech and the ability to express oneself freely within the confines of the law is crucial—

An hon. member: And be heard.

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, and be heard, as the member aptly interjected.

This includes those who upload content to social media platforms and other digital platforms. They expect to be just as visible as their neighbours, regardless of how Canadian the CRTC thinks their content is.

Even with the amendments put forward by the Senate, Bill C-11 remains a misguided and deeply flawed piece of legislation. It is one that ironically does not reflect Canadian values and the realities of digital content creation. Canadians are rightly concerned about the infringement on their freedom of speech and the implications of possible government overreach that this bill, like Bill C-10 before it, could have on them, on the freedom of speech and on the freedom to be heard.

The government does not trust Canadians with freedom.

If ensuring citizens were accessing local content online was truly a pressing issue, would we not see other governments around the world enacting similar legislation? We have heard the criticism of comparing the bill to other authoritarian states, but when it comes to online censorship or the possibility of it, that is exactly where this potential legislation can go. These are not countries that we want to emulate.

Initially, the government put forward, in clause 7, unprecedented power of the government over the CRTC. The Senate rejected this amendment and, fortunately, in the light of day, the government accepted that rejection. Many stakeholders were concerned about the amount of regulatory authority this would give the government over communications in Canada.

It is difficult to imagine how the government could put forward legislation with so many unintended side effects and areas of ambiguity. It has led many to speculate that the so-called side effects were actually the true intention of the bill. I must admit, I do not blame them for entertaining such thoughts. The alternative seems to be that so little thought was put into a bill of such consequence that they did not realize the impact it would have on Canadian creators and Canadian internet users.

We are seeing a large number of Canadians, both content creators and consumers, expressing serious and valid concerns about the way their government is handling their livelihoods and entertainment. Under Bill C-10, the attempt by the Liberal government to regulate the Internet and limit Canadians’ free speech and free hearing was unacceptable, and it is still unacceptable in its current form under Bill C-11.

Government Orders

The number of jobs created by content creators who have enough audience to monetize their channels, like YouTube, in Canada is estimated at about 28,000 full-time jobs. Instead of hindering this type of digital-first Canadian content creation, we should be supporting it. The best way to ensure Canadian content is allowed to thrive is by empowering our creators and not limiting them.

We must not only support our Canadian artists but also pave the way for the next generations' success. We have an obligation to ensure that new bills do not hinder the creativity and the individuality of our creators so that innovation can be fostered. This country has a wealth of venues where inventive ideas emerge daily, and it is in our best interests to help our creators export their talent around the world.

As Conservatives, we will always support Canadian creators, artists and broadcasters by protecting their rights and freedoms. Bill C-11 remains an unacceptable attack on those freedoms, as it provides both the CRTC and the government with unprecedented control over online content.

This is a misguided piece of legislation that will see the potential end of free speech and free hearing for Canadians online. Why does this government not trust Canadians with freedom?

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would put the member's last question back to him and ask whether he trusts platforms to decide for Canadians what they watch, rather than the government.

• (2305)

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, on the platforms, it is my understanding that it is the level of use by the users that determines the prioritization and not the platforms. The algorithms are driven by those who are using and viewing. It is by the users. It is the freedom to choose what one sees. That is what is driving the algorithms behind it, and that is exactly what we want to see. We want to see that freedom of the users of the content: the hearers. That is what this legislation would be impacting. It is not the freedom of speech as much as the users.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, as a woman standing in the House, who knows it took over 100 years to get anything close to representation of women's voices in the House, I am having a really difficult time with this debate tonight, and certainly with those last comments.

Users do not choose, when there are algorithms involved. I am a programmer analyst, and I can tell you that there have been marginalized voices for over 100 years in this country. If we do not do something to level the playing field, we are not going to see what people want to see. We are going to see what people have been told is the most important. Women's voices have been missing, indigenous voices have been missing, indigenous languages have been missing and we have not given space for those voices because too many white men have been taking advantage of the news, journalism and the arts. There are not even enough women in the arts, so I guess my question—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington has the floor.

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, in my maiden speech to the House in 2019 or 2020, I referenced my four daughters and said I hoped they would have no glass ceiling above them. The Internet provides the opportunity, if that is their chosen field, not to put any ceiling above them. They have the full freedom.

I am surrounded by very capable female colleagues who did not require the quota to bring them here. The freedom the Internet provides gives the expression of those opportunities. It does not hinder racialized Canadians, Inuit and first nations. It provides the platform that is accessible to all. A quota does not help that. It will not help my daughters; they will make it on their own.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, here is a little late-night levity, maybe, to bring a smile to everyone's face. To the member, does it make him scared that this bill would twist the arms of Canadians to watch what bureaucrats want them to watch? Would it make some providers feel like they are "locked in the trunk of a car", and does he believe Conservatives "are ahead by a century" on Bill C-11?

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for possibly leading me not astray but down the right path. This bill would create the possibilities, the potential and the temptation for governments to overreach. That is the danger. It is a danger where we do not want to see governments of any stripe go. No one can call Margaret Atwood a Conservative. When she describes creeping totalitarianism, what is she referring to as a content creator?

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, it might have started as a good idea, but the Liberals, with the support of their NDP allies, could not resist the temptation to take this opportunity to reshape Canadian culture and society in their own image, so we are here in the House of Commons this evening, late at night, talking about Bill C-11, the so-called online streaming act. This act has morphed into the Liberals' attempt to regulate the Internet, and we are hearing from so many Canadians that this is a terrible idea.

The Liberals are saying that they are just updating the Broadcasting Act, which has not been updated in 30 years and, in the meantime, since the Internet has been invented and more people are getting their news, entertainment and information off the Internet and fewer people are going to the legacy media, it is important that they now regulate the Internet. However, they are saying that this does not affect user-generated content, the things that ordinary Canadians post on the Internet.

Government Orders

Here is the problem. As soon as that user-generated content becomes commercial, it falls within the rules, and the CRTC is going to regulate it and impose Canadian content rules on it. The question we ask then is the obvious question: At what point does our user-generated content become commercial, and at what point do we have to start worrying about the Canadian content rules? The answer we get is that we should not worry. We should leave it up to the Liberals because they are going to do it right and are going to leave it up to the CRTC to figure out what the rules are.

We asked if we could at least see a draft of the rules, and the answer was no, that we should trust them as they are the Liberal Party and know what Canadian culture is and what Canadians want to watch. It will commission the CRTC to come up with the new rules, and they will give it a policy directive. We asked them if we could see the policy directive, and the answer was no. Therefore, we as Canadians are left in the dark.

This is very important public policy that needs to be debated here in the House of Commons. This is the people's chamber. The people want to know what is going on with something as important as the Internet, which everybody relies on and has become pervasive in our society.

The Senate, the chamber of second thought just down the road, looked at this legislation. It did not approve it. It said there was a problem with it, that we need to get rid of user-generated content altogether. However, inexplicably, the Liberal government has said that it is not going to change anything. That is why we Conservatives and so many Canadians are against Bill C-11.

We are not alone. We have received so many emails, and I am sure the members opposite have also received a lot of emails, from people who have issues and problems with Bill C-11, but we are also hearing from higher profile people such as Margaret Atwood, for example, who has been cited here by several of my colleagues. She is a famous Canadian author who was quoted in *The Globe and Mail* as saying that bureaucrats should not be telling creators what to write and should not decide what is Canadian.

She said, "So it is creeping totalitarianism if governments are telling creators what to [write]." Those are not my words. They are the words of Margaret Atwood. She is a very fair and balanced person and acknowledges that Bill C-11 shows some signs of what she says are "well-meaning attempts to achieve some sort of fairness in the marketplace." She added, "But like a lot of well-meaning attempts, if people haven't thought it through, the effect might be different from what [they] thought it would be." Is this personal for Ms. Atwood? Maybe it is. The Emmy award-winning adaptation of her famous book *The Handmaid's Tale* failed the Canadian content rules. Imagine that, Canada's most-famous author is not Canadian content.

A person who lives in Abbotsford, right next door to my community of Langley, is Kris Collins, a.k.a. kallmekris, who through her own ingenuity, creativity and determination, has become one of Canada's most popular Tik Tok stars. She has 48 million followers. It is phenomenal.

• (2310)

She is known around the world. She has learned how to monetize her social media presence. In the process, she was making a lot of money at it, so good for her, and all of this without the help or intervention of the CRTC. Ms. Collins figured out on her own what Canadians want and what the world wants. She knows how to market herself. She did not need the government.

This is what she says about the Liberal government's attempt to change all of that: "I am scared. I have been paying really close attention to Bill C-11, a.k.a. the online streaming act. It is something my fellow Canadian creators should be paying attention to, and all the viewers as well. Bill C-11 was supposed to be promoting Canadian storytelling online. In reality, the bill has ended up so broadly worded that it lets the CRTC interfere with every part of your online life." This is exactly what Conservatives have been talking about: Liberal overreach.

We talked about the Senate, the chamber of sober second thought, as it likes to call itself or as Canadians call it. I have a quote from one of the senators, the Hon. David Richards. This is what he had to say about Bill C-11. I will read the first two sentences of his speech: "Honourable senators, I have a good deal of problems with this bill. I think it's censorship passing as national inclusion."

We hear the Liberals saying that it is not censorship at all, that people are free to post and write whatever they want and that the government is not telling them what not to write or what not to post. However, here is the problem. A bureaucratic body, the CRTC, would be tasked with deciding what to promote and, consequently, what to demote on the Internet, all based on that body's idea of what is good Canadian content, keeping in mind that Margaret Atwood did not pass the test.

Senator Richards went on to talk about equality, quoting somebody who commented a lot about equality, and that is author George Orwell, who, in his novel *Animal Farm*, said, about the society he was talking about, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." That is the issue here. That is why so many Canadians are upset with this legislation. They are feeling like they are less equal than people who might agree with the Liberal government's idea of what is Canadian culture and what is good for our society.

I want to quote one of those ordinary Canadians. This is a person who lives in my riding, Perry Springman, who wrote me a very thoughtful email. I have gotten a lot of emails, hundreds of them, and the vast majority are clearly against Bill C-11, urging Conservatives to vote against it. There are a handful that have some reserved support for the bill. I just wanted to get that on the record, to be fair. This is what Mr. Springman said: “Our family has lived in Langley, B.C. for the past 16 years and have family ties to this city for almost 50 years. We have enjoyed the freedoms we have as Canadians to choose what we want to see on the internet, freedom of speech, freedom of expression. In the past few years, we are seeing these freedoms erode. While we are always careful to warn our kids of the potential dangers of some of the content on the internet, we are very much against the government deciding what we should have access to. Therefore, we would like to express our deep displeasure in the Federal Government's attempt to pass the Bill C-11. In no way do we support the passing of this bill.”

This is just a sample. I do not have time to read more.

When I was a kid, my dad used to tell me and my brothers, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” I will grant that the government's Bill C-11 probably started with good intentions, but, in typical overreach, Bill C-11 went off the rails. I know the Liberals are not going to take advice from the Conservatives, because they always say that they do not have to, but will they take advice from ordinary Canadian citizens, experts in the field and people like the Springman family? Will they at least take advice from the Senate, which is telling them that this legislation is wrong?

• (2315)

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could the member opposite tell me whether he thinks he is getting all these hundreds of emails about Bill C-11 because of all the misinformation about the legislation that is being perpetrated by the Conservatives?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, if I get a well-drafted email, like I did from the Springman family, I am going to assume that they have thought about this carefully and that this is something that they wrote of their own volition and to express their own opinions. I think that we should respect it. I think the Liberal government should respect voices like this.

• (2320)

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, like the member, I am getting hundreds of emails sent to my office as well.

Does the member think he is getting all those emails on his computer and physical mail through a mailbox because of the misinformation from the Liberals and NDP?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, to be honest, I think the question from my colleague from Manitoba makes a whole lot more sense. If the Liberal government would pause, think carefully about what the experts are telling us, what people like Margaret Atwood are telling us, what the Senate is now saying and what ordinary Canadians are telling them, maybe they would just decide that removing user-generated content all together would improve this bill drastically.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, one of the sections in Bill C-11 says, “the Canadian broadcasting system shall be

Government Orders

effectively owned and controlled by Canadians, and it is recognized that it includes foreign broadcasting undertakings that provide programming to Canadians”.

Could the member explain how Margaret Atwood might say that this is creeping totalitarianism?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I think that would be a question to put to Margaret Atwood. I am just going to take her at face value. This is what she thinks. This is her experience. She believes what Canadians want to see, write and publish and how they are going to have a conversation with each other should be up to Canadians to decide, not up to the government bureaucracy. I think that is what she is talking about.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was interesting a short time ago when we had an opportunity to listen to one of the answers from the Bloc. The member for Shefford said that if violating freedom of expression means ensuring Quebec content is well represented online, then it is worth it. They may not vote against this particular bill, but they are certainly saying what the member is saying about the fact that there are violations.

Can the member comment on our colleague from the Bloc's assessment of the bill?

Mr. Tako Van Popta: Madam Speaker, I am not quite sure how to answer that question. The Internet is a new invention. It changes everything. Just like when the Gutenberg printing press was invented, it upset culture and completely overturned society, but it came out stronger. I think the Internet will do the same. We are too close right now to see what effect it will have, but we have already started seeing some of the effects with legacy media struggling and people like Kris Collins thriving.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

I am always proud to rise to speak on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country on legislation we have before us. Bill C-11 is before us tonight at this very late hour. It would amend the Broadcasting Act.

Our constituency office has received hundreds and hundreds of emails, letters, phone calls and messages on this bill. Every time I am out in the community, people come up to me, letting me know how they do not want Bill C-11 to pass, as well as the former Bill C-10.

I think it is amazing that along with soaring gas and grocery bills and rising rent and mortgage payments, residents in my riding are letting me know that in addition to these very important topics, they are also concerned about this bill, which would affect their use of the Internet. I think it is because all of these topics affect their lives every day.

Government Orders

That level of attention is warranted because of what the government is proposing for this legislation to pass. It would cause unprecedented changes in how Canadians go about their daily lives online. Local residents in my community, Mitch and Lori, wrote to me to say that Bill C-11 represented the tipping point of government overreach.

Benji wrote to me to say that Bill C-11 would represent a major step back for our country.

Were Bill C-11 to pass, which it looks like it will with the Liberal-NDP coalition, those members in this House would be gifting the Liberals the power to play censor on what Canadians can see, if it does not match what they determine to be classified as Canadian content. The beneficiaries are the oldest legacy companies whose viewership has decreased. This bill would allow the government to have a policy directive implemented through actions like criteria. The government would give authority over online licensing and other matters. The only thing is that we have no idea what these would all be.

Bill C-11's twin bill, Bill C-18, would help failing legacy media companies looking for government cheques. They have found a perfect partner in the Liberals' desire for greater control of everyday Canadians' lives. A free and democratic country like Canada should never seek to empower the government with censorship powers to protect failing companies.

Canadians are rising up against the bill and against the Liberals for not listening. Bill C-11 is the government's proposed updating of the Broadcasting Act to provide the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, the power and authority to regulate online content platforms.

The stated reasoning behind Bill C-11 is to bring the CRTC into the 21st century, while supporting Canadian artists and promoting the spread of Canadian content over that of international competition. While that may seem like a noble goal, there are reasons Canadian artists, legal experts and digital content providers are speaking out against this bill. In fact, this legislation is going to suck content creator innovation into an antiquated Broadcasting Act black hole.

There are profound questions about using the CRTC bureaucrats as online regulators, as would be granted by Bill C-11. Here I am again in this House standing against bureaucracy and government overreach. This bureaucracy, the CRTC, took over a year to implement a three-digit number for mental health emergencies, despite that action being called for unanimously by all members of this House. This organization has proven to lack accountability. It regulates the telecoms and we know that Canadians pay some of the highest rates on the planet.

The questioning we did at the industry committee last summer of the CRTC, that I was part of at the time, on the Rogers' outage was like we were questioning a telecom executive and not an executive of the regulator.

The CRTC's expertise is primarily regulating radio waves, television feeds and advertising. If this bill passes, it would also be tasked with regulating user-content generating websites, like YouTube, where users upload hundreds of thousands of hours of

video content every minute but even assuming they could do it, the federal government should not be policing what will be defined as Canadian content when using social or digital media platforms.

● (2325)

Canadians are right to question an organization having the power to censor or impose what content will be prioritized for Canadians to see online.

Here is the most concerning part: The criteria will come later and we have no idea what the criteria will be. We are just to trust the Liberals.

A free and open Internet is the gold standard of open, democratic nations around the world. The bottom line is that what we will search for and see online will be different after the CRTC puts in place its regulations, which will change online algorithms.

The former vice-chair of the CRTC, Peter Menzies, has come out strong, all along the way of this legislation. Of this legislation from the past Parliament, to which there really are few changes in the new legislation, he said, "Overall, it ensures that going forward all Canadians communicating over the internet will do so under the guise of the state."

Then, in November 2022, Mr. Menzies stated, "If Bill C-11 passes and Internet regulation falls into political hands, Canadians will regret it for the rest of their lives."

Many of the very people the Liberals say Bill C-11 would help do not even want it. There was extensive testimony, at both House of Commons and Senate committees, by content creators, digital experts and professors. Without Bill C-11, Canadian artists are succeeding in making their full-time livings producing content on digital platforms with the support of fellow Canadians and viewers from around the world, receiving billions of views.

Canadian social media stars bringing their concerns to the federal government about their content being hidden because of Bill C-11's regulations found themselves ignored. Over 40,000 content creators affiliated with Digital First Canada called for the discoverability rules in Bill C-11 to be removed. The government is not listening to all of these voices.

What is discoverability? It really is about, when one searches online, what comes to the top based on what one is asking about and what one's interests are. This legislation would change discoverability, because the CRTC would come up with criteria that would rise to the top.

Government Orders

The Liberals have refused every offer of good faith regarding Bill C-11, not just from regular Canadians but also from the government's appointed senators. Most of the senators are independent who sent an unusually high number of amendments, after months of study, back to the House of Commons.

The minister responsible made it clear he was rejecting all amendments that attempted to restrict the powers he sought for himself and the CRTC.

Once again, this has never been about good legislation, better regulation or updating our laws. It is about control for the Liberal government.

Some Canadians have already gotten a sneak preview of what life with Bill C-11 might be like. Recently, Google announced that, because of another overreaching online law, Bill C-18, it started a test run to temporarily limit access to news content, including Canadian news content, for some Canadian users of Google.

This was not an outright ban. However, people were searching and not seeing what they did before, and that is my point here. Censorship by big government or big tech has the same results.

When I debated the government's original version of this bill in the previous Parliament, I said that Canadians did not want this deeply flawed legislation that would limit speech and online viewing.

The number has changed from Bill C-10 to Bill C-11. Sadly, everything else has stayed the same, with some minor amendments from the Senate. The most important Senate amendments have been rejected by the government.

Canadians still do not want it, but the Liberals and their coalition partners insist on passing it. It is time for a government that protects consumer choice and encourages Canadian creators instead of getting in their way.

• (2330)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, if I understand this correctly, I do know that Conservatives are willing to just say that the NDP and the Liberals will do anything together and that we work in lockstep. I disagree, but I hear they always say that.

If I understand this correctly, the member is saying that this bill would give all of this power to the government, and somehow the Bloc Québécois, which has been in lockstep with the Conservatives lately on just about every issue, is going to turn that over.

If Canadians are expected to believe what they are saying, if I understand this correctly, the Liberals, the Bloc, the NDP and the Greens are all in cahoots and those parties are willing to give this unfettered power to the Liberal government. Is that correct?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, the point is that this legislation would give incredible authority to the CRTC. As I laid out in my speech, I do not have a lot of confidence in the CRTC's taking on of all this extra responsibility and authority, considering what it has existing in its mandate. One could argue that the CRTC is not meeting a lot of the obligations of its current mandate.

The government is willing to give the CRTC this incredible new authority without even telling or disclosing to Canadians and parliamentarians what would be the criteria and all of the rules about the new authority that it would have. This should be concerning to every Canadian.

• (2335)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I keep putting this question to the Conservative members who are speaking tonight. Beyond their whole campaign of fear and misinformation, which has been going on for months and is being used as a fundraising tactic, there is one fundamental question.

Why does the Conservative Party want to prevent web giants like Netflix, Amazon, Google, Disney+ and Apple TV from participating in funding Canadian and Quebec cultural production, while cable companies are forced to do exactly that? Why do they want to maintain this inequity and give the digital giants a tax gift that they absolutely do not need?

[*English*]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, this is not about what Conservatives are saying. This is what has been said by many Canadians out there, including by digital creators, experts in the field, professors, people who study this and former executives from the CRTC. These are the voices of these people who have testified at committee, both in the House of Commons and in the Senate. It is their voices that are being brought forth. Conservatives are talking about what their voices are, and they are saying that there are members in the House who are not listening to those voices.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals talk about how the NDP, the Bloc and the Liberals are all in coalition together and about how it is a great bill, so people do not have anything to worry about, yet the Senate also said that this is censorship. Why did the government not accept the Senate's recommendations?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, it is extremely concerning. This bill spent a lot of time in the Senate, and a lot of senators had real concerns. They brought forth an incredible number of amendments to the government, of which the government did not accept all, so here we are today. The government is not listening to witnesses who have testified at committees both in the House of Commons and in the Senate. It is not listening to senators and it is not listening to Canadians.

We have to wonder what truly are the Liberals' objectives. They are wanting to give incredible authority to the CRTC, and we do not even know what that authority would be and what the criteria would be. All of this is extremely concerning.

Government Orders

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to be standing up to reiterate what all my colleagues have been saying tonight: It is time to kill Bill C-11.

The legislation is about giving the government more power and making sure that we have extra regulation. If we give the CRTC more regulations, that means more red tape and more gatekeepers telling us what we can and cannot watch; it also equals less opportunity for us, as Canadians, and less opportunity for creators who are using the Internet. We know that it comes with more costs.

We already heard that the government is going to ask content providers to make sure that they have the appropriate broadcast licences to go onto YouTube and other social media platforms and get their creations out there. These creations may be online programming, some of the short films being produced, animation or sharing their music. Now they are actually going to have to pay for a licence to have their own channels on social media.

We have already witnessed how government intervention has cost us as consumers. Canadians already pay the highest Internet service fees in the world. We pay the highest mobile phone bills, more than anywhere else in the developed world. To me, that is extremely disturbing. Canadians continue to pay more and more, while everybody else seems to be getting away with paying less while getting better services than we get from our phone companies or Internet service providers.

We still have lots of Canadians, including in my riding, who do not have access to high-speed broadband. They do not have that opportunity to actually see what we are talking about here on Bill C-11 because they still do not have the ability to hook up online.

As Conservatives, we believe that Canadians should be given more of what they want. However, the Liberal-NDP coalition wants the government to tell Canadians what they can watch or see on YouTube and other social media platforms.

The question here, and we are going to use a little theatre, is 2(b) or not 2(b). Of course, I am talking about section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Under fundamental freedoms in section 2, it says that everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication.

If we go to Justice Canada's own website, and we are talking about a department of the federal government, it says:

The protection of freedom of expression is premised upon fundamental principles and values that promote the search for and attainment of truth, participation in social and political decision-making and the opportunity for individual self-fulfilment through expression.... The Supreme Court of Canada has maintained that the connection between freedom of expression and the political process is "perhaps the linchpin" of section 2(b) protection.... Free expression is valued above all as being instrumental to democratic governance. The two other rationales for protecting freedom of expression [are] the search for truth through the open exchange of ideas, and fostering individual self-actualization, thus directly engaging individual human dignity.

Canadians who value their Charter of Rights, who understand the freedom of expression, are all the ones out there denouncing what Bill C-11 could do. That is why we are hearing from social media content creators. A lot of them have their own shows where they share their political views. They share a lot of things, from criticizing what is going on in the film industry to criticizing what is hap-

pening here in the House of Commons. They fear, and they have testified at committee, that their ability to share their thoughts online, and the costs that come with it, would undermine their freedom of speech, expression, and opinion and thought. This would happen through the excess licensing that this bill would create.

That is why, as Conservatives, we are standing so strongly in opposition to what is very much a censorship bill that we are seeing from the Liberal-NDP coalition.

● (2340)

We heard through the debate tonight a lot of times from the Liberals asking where the legal expertise was. All we have to do is look at Phil Palmer, who is a constitutional lawyer and former official in the Department of Justice. He argued that Bill C-11 is unconstitutional. He said:

...C-11 lacks a foundation in Canadian constitutional law. Internet streaming services do not transmit to the public by radio waves, nor do they operate telecommunications facilities across provincial boundaries. They and their audiences are the clients of telecommunications common carriers, which are subject to federal regulation. Netflix, for instance, in this case is no more a federal undertaking than a law firm such as McCarthy Tétrault or a chain store like Canadian Tire, both of which rely extensively on telecommunications services.

We are talking about a situation where we have the Government of Canada overstepping its means through Bill C-11 and infringing upon the rights of Canadians, Canadian companies, individuals and our artists. I would make the argument that Bill C-11 would actually penalize content creators, including our artists, whether they are creating music, culture, clothing or any other type of art that is out there on social media.

We already heard from the member for Sarnia—Lambton. She talked about the monetization and the ability of creators who have been able to go online and make a good living selling their music, art and any bit of their creations. Right now, if we regulate the industry, we are talking about \$1 billion a year that the arts community is going to be able to earn. Today, without government interference, it is making \$5 billion a year. Why would we want to limit the ability of our arts and culture industry to actually make less?

I guess there is the argument out there about having a free market versus government intervention. We know that government intervention always equals more dependency, because people are going to have to rely on grants and subsidization to be able to earn a living. I think the Liberal-NDP coalition, and I think my colleagues will agree with me, actually loves when Canadians become more dependent, because if they are more dependent, the government gets to control them.

A great example of that is the \$595-million media bailout and how the government has control of our free press, supposedly.

Government Orders

This is a debate about freedom. This is about the debate to have freedom to create, share and earn a living. This is about freedom of Canadians to view and listen to what we as consumers choose, without the gatekeepers dictating what we see and hear. This is about the freedom to express ourselves and participate in society online without any censorship, but we should not be surprised, since we have a Prime Minister who has said that he admires basic communist dictatorships.

I have heard from hundreds of constituents and Canadians across the country who oppose Bill C-11 as well as the NDP-Liberal coalition. They are worried about censorship. The artists and content providers are worried about the red tape, the extra costs and the limited market opportunities. Matthew Hatfield, who is the campaigns director of OpenMedia, encapsulates this the best. He raises the issue I think most Canadians are concerned about. He says:

...Bill C-11 must not give the CRTC the power to manipulate the results of algorithms on platforms. We would never tolerate the government setting rules specifying which books must be placed in the front window of our bookstores or what kinds of stories must appear on the front pages of our newspapers. But that's exactly what the discoverability provision in section 9.1(1) currently does. This dictatorial approach is not needed or appropriate.

I can tell Canadians that there is hope out there. A future Conservative government would kill Bill C-11.

• (2345)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have heard a lot tonight about creating even playing fields, but Bill C-11 is about doing the opposite. It would make the field less even, take us backward and jam the Internet into a 1971 system around Canadian content.

I wonder if the member could comment on whether he agrees that there is nothing more even than the playing field of an unfettered Internet.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, there is no question that Canadians have done very well on the Internet as it is today. They have been able to access the international market and share their culture and artistic abilities with other Canadians.

The fear we have was reflected by Justin Tomchuk, a filmmaker, who said, "If Bill C-11 disrupts the discoverability of Canadian creators globally", as there is concern out there that trade action could be taken, "I can see a scenario where some companies with few physical ties will leave the country entirely so they can continue to work unimpeded by these aggressive mandates."

An overly zealous government with more regulations will drive away the great artists we have here now, those creating great content, and companies that see an advantage in coming to Canada to create wonderful movies, TV shows and other creations we like.

We do not want that to happen. Let us make sure we have a level playing field and open up Canada for everyone to come here and create amazing art and culture.

• (2350)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I think we all know by now that the online streaming act is attempting to update the outdated Broadcasting Act. I will read a quote from the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists. It said, "Other countries are taking measures to protect their economy and their cultural sovereignty. Canada must not fall behind. Sovereign countries must have the necessary tools to tell their own stories in the 21st century." I wonder if the member can respond to that.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, we listened to testimony, including from Peter Menzies, the former CRTC commissioner, who said that we cannot take a square peg and put it in a round hole. The bill still reads very much like the old Broadcasting Act. It is talking about applying broadcasting licences, which are meant, of course, to go to the big TV stations, to people who are trying to set up a YouTube channel. That type of over-complicated, costly and unfair system, which my colleague just said is ridiculous, is something we cannot allow to happen.

Do we have to update the Broadcasting Act? Yes, we do. Do we need to tell Canadians what they should watch? No, we do not. We want to make sure that censorship is stomped out, that Canadians and consumers can choose what they see, watch and listen to, and that all Canadian artists are allowed to put their creations online unfettered by government interference.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member opposite how making Canadian content more discoverable online limits the choices in what we watch.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, when we have a government agency like the CRTC deciding what the algorithms are and what Canadian content is without having it defined and without Canadians having the ability to individually choose what is Canadian enough for them, it is disturbing to many people. That is why our offices have been overrun with emails and phone calls. More and more people are concerned about the government's ongoing dictatorial approach to how this country is run.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There being no further members rising for debate, pursuant to order made earlier today, the debate is deemed adjourned and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:53 p.m.)

Housing	
Mr. Poilievre	12618
Mr. Trudeau	12619
Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Therrien	12619
Mr. Trudeau	12619
Mr. Therrien	12619
Mr. Trudeau	12619
Finance	
Mr. Singh	12619
Mr. Trudeau	12619
Mr. Singh	12619
Mr. Trudeau	12620
Taxation	
Mr. Hallan	12620
Mr. Beech	12620
Mr. Hallan	12620
Mr. Hussen	12620
Ms. Lantsman	12620
Mr. Beech	12620
Ms. Lantsman	12620
Mr. Beech	12621
Mr. Paul-Hus	12621
Ms. Bendayan	12621
Mr. Paul-Hus	12621
Ms. Bendayan	12621
Seniors	
Ms. Larouche	12621
Ms. Gould	12621
Employment Insurance	
Mrs. Desbiens	12621
Mr. Kusmierczyk	12621
Oil and Gas Industry	
Ms. Pauzé	12621
Mr. Guilbeault	12622
Taxation	
Mr. Barlow	12622
Ms. Bibeau	12622
Mr. Barlow	12622
Ms. Gould	12622
Mr. McLean	12622
Mr. Virani	12622
Canada Revenue Agency	
Mr. Blaikie	12623
Mr. Kusmierczyk	12623
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Ms. Kwan	12623
Mrs. Lalonde	12623
Foreign Affairs	
Ms. Yip	12623
Ms. Joly	12623

Finance	
Mr. Lawrence	12623
Mr. Beech	12623
Taxation	
Mr. Lawrence	12624
Mr. Champagne	12624
Mr. Berthold	12624
Mr. Guilbeault	12624
Mr. Berthold	12624
Mr. Guilbeault	12624
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship	
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	12624
Mrs. Lalonde	12624
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe	12624
Mrs. Lalonde	12625
Taxation	
Mr. Bragdon	12625
Mr. Fisher	12625
Mr. Morantz	12625
Mr. Beech	12625
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	12625
Mr. Champagne	12625
Mrs. Shanahan	12625
Mrs. Lebouthillier	12625
Housing	
Mrs. Roberts	12626
Mr. Hussen	12626
Taxation	
Ms. Ferreri	12626
Ms. Gould	12626
Mr. Génèreux	12626
Ms. Bendayan	12626
Foreign Affairs	
Ms. Dhillon	12626
Ms. Joly	12627
Veterans Affairs	
Ms. Blaney	12627
Mr. MacAulay	12627
Democratic Institutions	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12627
Mr. LeBlanc	12627

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Telecommunications Act	
Bill C-26. Second reading	12627
Motion agreed to	12629
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee) ..	12629

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Chief Electoral Officer of Canada

The Speaker 12629

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lamoureux 12629

Committees of the House

Procedure and House Affairs

Ms. Chagger 12629

Motion for concurrence 12629

(Motion agreed to) 12629

Business of the House

Mrs. Romano 12629

Motion 12629

(Motion agreed to) 12629

Petitions

Gatineau Park

Mrs. Chatel 12630

Climate Change

Ms. Ashton 12630

Seniors

Ms. Ashton 12630

Environmental Sustainability

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12630

Human Rights

Mr. Genuis 12630

Mr. Genuis 12630

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 12630

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns

Mr. Lamoureux 12633

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Criminal Code

Mr. Guilbeault (for the Minister of Public Safety) 12635

Bill C-41. Second reading 12635

Ms. Damoff 12635

Mr. Genuis 12637

Ms. Larouche 12638

Ms. Collins (Victoria) 12638

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12638

Ms. Taylor Roy 12639

Mr. Genuis 12639

Ms. Damoff 12643

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 12643

Ms. Barron 12644

Mr. Ruff 12644

Ms. Larouche 12644

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe 12645

Mr. Lamoureux 12647

Mr. Ruff 12647

Ms. McPherson 12648

Ms. Pauzé 12648

Ms. McPherson 12648

Mr. Aboultaif 12651

Ms. Pauzé 12651

Mr. Lamoureux 12652

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12652

Mr. Genuis 12652

Mr. Cannings 12652

Mr. Aboultaif 12653

Mr. Lamoureux 12654

Ms. Larouche 12654

Ms. Collins (Victoria) 12654

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12655

Points of Order

Senate Amendments to Bill C-11—Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker 12655

Criminal Code

Bill C-41. Second reading 12656

Mr. Bezan 12656

Mr. Lamoureux 12657

Ms. Bérubé 12657

Mr. Falk (Provencher) 12657

Mrs. Lalonde 12658

Mr. Genuis 12659

Ms. Pauzé 12660

Mr. Angus 12660

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee) .. 12661

Online Streaming Act

Motion 12661

Mr. Angus 12661

Ms. Gladu 12664

Ms. Hepfner 12665

Mr. Savard-Tremblay 12665

Mr. Morrice 12665

Mr. Gerretsen 12666

Mr. Scarpaleggia 12666

Ms. Gladu 12667

Mrs. Shanahan 12667

Ms. Idlout 12667

Mrs. Wagantall 12667

Mr. Morrice 12668

Mr. Waugh 12668

Mr. Gerretsen 12669

Ms. Idlout 12669

Mr. Motz 12670

Ms. Gladu 12670

Mr. Bittle 12671

Mr. Boulerice 12672

Mr. Falk (Provencher) 12672

Mr. Motz 12672

Mr. Bittle 12674

Mr. Boulerice 12674

Mr. Morrice 12674

Mr. Shields 12674

Ms. Idlout	12676	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12692
Mr. Kelly	12676	Mrs. Wagantall	12692
Ms. Hepfner	12676	Ms. Hepfner	12694
Mr. Kmiec	12676	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12694
Ms. Idlout	12678	Mr. Boulerice	12694
Mr. Calkins	12679	Mr. Carrie	12695
Mrs. Stubbs	12679	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12696
Mr. Lawrence	12681	Mr. Epp	12697
Mr. Gerretsen	12681	Ms. Idlout	12697
Mr. Boulerice	12681	Mr. Kelly	12697
Mr. Calkins	12681	Mr. Gerretsen	12698
Mrs. Goodridge	12683	Mr. Boulerice	12699
Ms. Idlout	12683	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12699
Mr. Bittle	12683	Mr. Epp	12699
Mr. Mazier	12684	Ms. Hepfner	12701
Mr. Bittle	12685	Ms. Zarrillo	12701
Mr. Patzer	12685	Mr. Lawrence	12701
Ms. Idlout	12685	Mr. Van Popta	12701
Mr. Gerretsen	12685	Ms. Hepfner	12703
Mr. Boulerice	12686	Mr. Falk (Provencher)	12703
Mr. Kelly	12687	Ms. Idlout	12703
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12687	Mr. Dreeshen	12703
Mr. Patzer	12687	Mrs. Gray	12703
Mr. Julian	12688	Mr. Gerretsen	12705
Mr. Gerretsen	12689	Mr. Boulerice	12705
Mr. Mazier	12689	Mr. Soroka	12705
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	12690	Mr. Bezan	12706
Mrs. Goodridge	12690	Mr. Kelly	12707
Ms. Hepfner	12691	Ms. Idlout	12707
Ms. Idlout	12692	Ms. Hepfner	12707

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