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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[English]

PETITIONS

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I have one petition to present. It is a petition on behalf of Canadians from across the country who are concerned about the risk of violence against women, particularly when they are pregnant.

Increasingly, the injury or death of preborn children as victims of crime is not established in Canadian law as a risk factor. Folks are calling for Canada, this Parliament, to consider that to be an aggravating circumstance in sentencing under the Criminal Code of Canada. Currently, Canada has no abortion law and this legal void is so extreme that we do not even recognize preborn children as victims of violent crime. Justice requires that an attacker who abuses a pregnant woman and her preborn children be sentenced accordingly and that the sentence should match the crime.

The people who have signed this petition are calling on the House of Commons to legislate the abuse of pregnant women and inflicting harm on a preborn child as an aggravating circumstance for sentencing under the Criminal Code.

HEALTH

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I present a petition signed by the residents of Brantford—Brant in response to the heartbreaking and tragic death of 12-year-old Grace-Lindsay McSweeney, whose life was taken far too soon from a Tylenol overdose.

Unfortunately, the situation is not uncommon as acetaminophen, a key ingredient in over-the-counter pain medication, is responsible for approximately 10,000 overdoses in Canada per year. Grace's parents and other petitioners urge the government to require warning labels outlining the risk of lethal overdose on all medical products containing acetaminophen.

Additionally, the petition calls for removing acetaminophen from non-analgesic over-the-counter products and for its sale to be restricted to behind the counter with a minimum purchasing age. The petitioners believe that all acetaminophen products should be required to have a child lock cap and be limited to selling only 36 units per package.

With approximately 10 Canadians dying from suicide each day and a mental health crisis adversely impacting youth across Canada, the petitioners urge the government to offer immediate assistance to the provinces to further mental health counselling for young Canadians across this country.

• (1005)

SENIORS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today that calls upon members of Parliament in the House of Commons to undertake a serious and comprehensive review of the current transit system of Canadian citizens' money in this country, with the aim of putting in place more stringent procedures, protocols and safeguards to protect seniors, in particular from losing their lifetime savings and wealth to fraud.

We recognize there is a growing retiring population in Canada. Increasingly, they are becoming the target of fraud, given that they have built up wealth over a lifetime to help support their retirement years, and are vulnerable due to lack of controls and protections through the transmission of money within the Canadian banking system. Seniors are seeing the savings they have built up over years removed.

This is about consumer awareness and what we can do, as parliamentarians, to protect seniors' retirement.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE**

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today. I want to start by thanking you for your very important ruling on the matter of privilege raised by my colleague, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, a ruling in which you found a prima facie case of a breach of privilege and allowed the member to present his motion for this matter to be further studied at the procedure and House affairs committee. I want to put your ruling in some common language for the common people. I do not want to put words in your mouth, Mr. Speaker, but when I thought about it, I was reminded of the quote from the movie *Network* when the anchor said, “I’m as mad as [blank], and I’m not going to take this anymore!” That is how Canadians feel about what has happened with these allegations around foreign interference in our elections.

What a nightmare. One can imagine waking up one morning and reading in the paper that a foreign power is threatening one’s family. I cannot imagine waking up, seeing that and knowing how I, or any member of this House, or any Canadian, might feel. The problem is that many Canadians are experiencing this. I will get to that in a minute.

Let us think about that. A foreign power decides it does not like how a high-profile elected politician voted in this House and makes it its mission to threaten and intimidate his family. I wish it was just something from a spy novel or a movie, but it is real. It actually happened and it is happening as we speak.

Those who are watching this broadcast right now might think that I am talking about the Prime Minister, but I am not. In fact, the Prime Minister abstained from the vote that triggered this whole matter, which is like not showing up to play with his team and then saying that because he was not there he is not to blame that they lost. I am not speaking of the Prime Minister or a cabinet minister, although they also abstained from the vote, or a member of the government or even a Liberal member; in fact, I am speaking about an opposition member. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills was sanctioned by Beijing for taking a moral stance and voting against genocide.

I want to take a moment to read from an article published on March 27, 2021, after this occurred. After the sanctions, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, said, like the mensch he is, that he was going to wear those sanctions “as a badge of honour.” That is leadership. That is not hiding, delaying or impeding the progress of this House in terms of passing laws that are important to Canadians. He stood up to the PRC, the Communist Party in China, and said that he was going to wear this as a badge of honour: in other words, that he was not going to allow it to intimidate him by doing this.

What were those sanctions? After the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, who is also our party’s foreign affairs critic, voted on the motion, which I will get to in a minute, the sanctions were also placed on the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights, which concluded in October that China’s treatment

of its Uyghur population amounted to genocide. The Chinese Communist Party said that the individuals concerned are prohibited from entering the mainland, Hong Kong and Macao, and Chinese citizens and institutions are prohibited from doing business with the relevant individuals and having exchanges with the relevant entity.

• (1010)

Other members might have just said nothing. They might have said that they did not want to stir the pot any more than it has already been stirred. However, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills took a principled stand, and he said, to the Chinese Communist Party, that he was wearing it as a badge of honour. That is what leadership looks like.

When I was a young man, I would often tune into the proceedings in this place. I looked at the MPs debating and understood the high honour bestowed on those who put their names on a ballot and come to this place to make laws and shape the future of this great country. It is a high honour.

My favourite, Winston Churchill, said something that has been quoted many times in this House but it could never be quoted enough. He said that “democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms.” Our system is messy by design, chaotic, as members know, and at times descends into a serious state of disorder. Many people ask, “What are these guys doing? Why are they so critical of the government? Why do they not actually offer solutions?” Our debate can, at times, be furious in this place, but it is from the hot cauldron of debate that good policies and laws are created.

The reality is that we, in this party, are His Majesty’s official loyal opposition. We believe that it is an act of loyalty to oppose the government. Consider what things are like in countries with no strong opposition that is free to be critical of the government. We need look no further than what Mr. Putin has done to his critics, like Alexei Navalny, Vladimir Kara-Murza and Sergei Magnitsky, or what China has done to its Uyghur population, to the Turkic Muslim population and to Hong Kong, and what it wants to do to Taiwan, to understand that in countries where opposition is silenced, terrible things happen.

That is what Beijing tried to do. It tried to silence this opposition through intimidation efforts against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and his family, and to silence Chinese Canadians through ongoing intimidation and scare them into thinking that voting in Canada might be hazardous to their future. I will get into more of that in a moment.

This did not happen in China. This is happening right here, on Canadian soil. I am astounded at the lack of care, the lack of attention, the lack of interest by the government in dealing with this fact. I am going to talk a little more about that as well.

I just want to say, to Canadians of Chinese descent, Chinese Canadians who are watching this speech right now, that I want them to know that the Conservative Party of Canada stands with them. We will always stand with them. Just like my grandparents came here 100 years ago to avoid the pogroms in Ukraine perpetrated against Jewish communities, they came here to avoid the oppressive freedom-hating regime in Beijing. On behalf of all my colleagues, I want to thank them for being here and I want them to know that we will always stand up for their rights as citizens of this country.

• (1015)

So many stories have come out of this about Chinese communities in ridings across this country, where, as the leader spoke about in his speech yesterday, there is demonstrably lower voter turnout. Why is that? It is because, although the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has the ability to stand up in the House, on the biggest stage in this country, and defend himself, millions of Canadians who do not have that ability are suffering at the behest of the Chinese Communist Party in this country. The House needs to wake up and do something about it before it goes on any longer.

I say to the members of the Chinese community that they should always know that we will be with them and that they should never be afraid to go vote in this country. It is a great privilege. I can say, as someone who won by only 460 votes in the last campaign, that every vote counts. Their vote really matters, and that is what makes Canada such a great country. I want to thank the Chinese Canadian community for trusting our country to do the right thing, even if the government needs to be dragged, kicking and screaming, into doing the right thing by His Majesty's official and very loyal opposition.

With respect to the facts of the specific matter, the Prime Minister claims he did not know until last Monday about a Beijing operative's intimidating a sitting MP. He claims that he did not know about it, even though the intelligence report was in his office two years ago. It is hard to imagine. It was not just in his office; it was with his national security adviser, ironically. It was not with his chief of staff. It was not from someone else in the PMO; it was actually with a person who is responsible for advising the Prime Minister about national security threats. That is what the role of the national security adviser is.

This whole sordid affair reminds me of a Sherlock Holmes quote, “when you have eliminated the impossible whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” We have a mystery here. The Prime Minister says that he would never deliberately keep such information from any member, and that it would be wrong to do so. I agree with him. It would be very wrong to do that. Therefore, for the moment, let us take him at his word. He says he did not know. That is something I can somewhat believe, because he does not seem to know much about what is going on in his office. He did not know that the Trudeau Foundation had a meeting in his office. He did not know that Beijing donated \$140,000 to that very foundation. He did not know about an important intelligence report that his national security adviser was given two years ago. He did not know, even though Katie Telford, his chief of staff, said in committee that he reads everything and that nothing is kept from him.

Privilege

How do we reconcile these things? There is something missing here when the Prime Minister says he did not know about this until a week ago, but his chief of staff says he is told everything and he reads everything. There is a disconnect here. That is why it is so important to pass this motion; we need to get these questions answered, and the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is the right place to get to the bottom of all this. The bottom line is that we have a Prime Minister who does not know what is going on in his office. That should be a concern to every Canadian.

What is left? The report was in his office, but he never read it. The only thing really left to assume is incompetence and negligence. There it is. Option one is that he knew and is denying it; option two is that he did not know and is incompetent.

• (1020)

Two years ago, the government was briefed by our security agency, CSIS, which said that there was an ongoing intimidation campaign against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Why was this happening? It was because that member brought an important motion to the House. I thought it would be worth taking a moment to read that motion and bring us back in time to two years ago, the time of that vote, to understand what that important motion was speaking to. The motion said:

That,

(a) in the opinion of the House, the People's Republic of China has engaged in actions consistent with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 260, commonly known as the “Genocide Convention”, including detention camps and measures intended to prevent births as it pertains to Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims; and

(b) given that (i) where possible, it has been the policy of the Government of Canada to act in concert with its allies when it comes to the recognition of a genocide, (ii) there is a bipartisan consensus in the United States where it has been the position of two consecutive administrations that Uyghur and other Turkic Muslims are being subjected to a genocide by the Government of the People's Republic of China, the House, therefore, recognize that a genocide is currently being carried out by the People's Republic of China against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, call upon the International Olympic Committee to move the 2022 Olympic Games if the Chinese government continues this genocide and call on the government to officially adopt this position.

That was a very important motion. To put it in basic language, it was about calling out Beijing for committing genocide, the most heinous crime a government can commit against any people. We did the right thing, or most of us did. Conservatives voted for the motion, with the Bloc, the NDP and even some Liberal members, but there was one important Member of Parliament in the House who did not vote for it; it was the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister refused to recognize that there is a serious problem. Not only did he not vote for it, but he did not vote at all, which is even worse. It was a gutless move that left the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, a member of the opposition, to bear it, which is what I am trying to get across. In the aftermath, China banned him from entering the mainland, as we talked about, and it did something else: It threatened his family because of his motion and how he voted. Nothing is more important than our democracy, and that is underpinned by the privilege MPs have to speak their mind in this place and to vote how they choose.

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There have been a lot of leaks about foreign interference since last fall. Intelligence officials, frustrated with the Prime Minister's actions, have taken to leaking information to *The Globe and Mail*. Each leak is like a bomb going off. First, there was the one about funding 11 candidates. Then came foreign police stations, and then there was the allegation that a Liberal member tried to get Beijing to hold the two Michaels longer for political reasons. Now we have this.

Canadians desperately want a public inquiry. Members want a public inquiry. What does the Prime Minister do? He drags his feet and appoints a “special rapporteur”, a term never used before, who happens to be a member of the Trudeau Foundation.

The Prime Minister looks weak, and I am sure Beijing thinks he is weak. In fact, I think this is pure Neville Chamberlain-level weakness and incompetence.

Finally, yesterday, after a week of questions and immense pressure from His Majesty's loyal opposition, the Prime Minister expelled the diplomat.

I just want to conclude by saying that it is time for the House to wake up from this nightmare. This country desperately needs a real leader who will stand up to tyrants and dictators without delay or hesitation, and bring home respect for Canada on the international stage. The member for Carleton would be that leader after the next election.

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if we listened to the Conservatives' questions during question period, or to their speeches over the last 24 hours, with all indications that they would like to continue to debate this issue, it is very clear that this is a political issue for the Conservative Party. It is an issue through which they want to attack the Prime Minister. They have been very clear. The Prime Minister found out last week; they know that, yet they continue to espouse misinformation.

My question to the member is this: Is there not any sort of conscience on the other side, when the Conservatives continuously want to espouse misinformation and continue to want to ramp up this issue to politicize it? Why are they doing it?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, honestly, as a fellow Manitoban, I know that the member is better than that. I know he does not really believe what he just said, so it is hard for me to dignify that with an answer. What he is saying is that, having all this information, knowing that the report was in the Prime Minister's Office two years ago, he would just have us sit here quietly, like Beijing has its opposition sit quietly and like Mr. Putin puts his opposition in its place. He would have the loyal opposition sit here and do nothing, and that is not something we can do. There is too much at stake.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, we have been talking about this issue for hours, for weeks already. If quick action had been taken at the outset, we would not be held up by this issue today. We could be talking about health, seniors, the fight against climate change and biodiversity.

Does my colleague agree with me that we have really become stuck on this issue, and that we could be accomplishing a lot more for the people of this country?

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, my colleagues know that I am a numbers guy. I love the finance committee, and I agree 100%. I would like nothing better than to be debating the budget, but the Liberals cut off debate on the budget. Therefore, we cannot talk in the House about, for example, the fact that they have doubled the national debt in the last six years, from \$600 billion to \$1.2 trillion, because the government and the costly coalition NDP partners actually quashed debate in the House about that.

I agree wholeheartedly, but the fact of the matter is that action should have been taken early on, two years ago, to let the member for Wellington—Halton Hills know this was going on and to call a public inquiry.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I really appreciated his reminding us that the opposition is important to democracy and to Parliament, although I do not remember him saying anything like that when Stephen Harper was Prime Minister. Things were different then.

What is going on right now is very troubling. Every day brings new revelations. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills and his family are being directly threatened. The Liberal government is dragging its feet despite having had this information for two years.

Does my colleague agree with me and with many other members of the House that the only way to fully understand what is going on and fix it is to have an independent public inquiry into foreign political interference in general in this country?

• (1030)

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, first, in terms of being the opposition party, I just want to say to that NDP member and his entire party that we could use a little help over here. They are not the opposition any more; they are a part of the government. They vote with the government on pretty much everything.

I appreciate the question, but, of course, the member knows very well that our position is that we should have a public inquiry. If it had been called right off the bat instead of having an appointment of the Trudeau Foundation as special rapporteur, maybe we would not be in this place right now.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's speech, and I think he laid out the facts quite clearly and perfectly.

One of the things that struck me was his comment about an opposition, because we have seen, over the last eight years, that this government, in effect, does not want an opposition; it actually wants an audience. It wants us to sit here and listen to its members ram pieces of legislation through, as they have been doing, that have profound impacts on Canadians. This issue has a profound impact not just on the member for Wellington—Halton Hills but also on the Chinese Canadians who are facing that fear, intimidation and harassment by the Chinese regime in Beijing.

On the issue of an independent inquiry, do all roads not lead to that? Do we need a rapporteur to tell us what the majority of parliamentarians and the majority of Canadians are saying, which is that we need an independent inquiry?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, the words that come to mind when I think about the Prime Minister are “deny”, “deflect” and “delay”. If he rags the puck, maybe this will not be a big issue by the time the special rapporteur gets around to making his ruling.

The member for Winnipeg North says that we are playing politics. They are playing politics with the future of our democracy, and they should be ashamed of themselves for standing up in this House saying they are not.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member for Repentigny rightly pointed out, we have been discussing the issue of foreign interference, particularly Chinese interference, for several weeks now. We know that the government has blundered on several fronts when it comes to dealing with interference. We saw it with the elections and with the \$125-million endowment it gave to a foundation several years ago out of the public purse—our money. I am talking about the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, of course.

The foundation is having major problems, especially on the tax front. For many years, the foundation has failed to meet the criteria for a charitable organization, and things are only going to get worse, because the criteria are increasing and the foundation is not doing anything to improve.

What does my colleague have to say to members about the threat that Chinese interference poses to charitable organizations in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, it just stretches credulity to think that, when a so-called Chinese philanthropist showed up at the Trudeau Foundation to give it \$140,000, they did not have their own agenda. They did have an agenda, which was to influence the Prime Minister to be soft on China.

That is why I said in my speech that this is Neville Chamberlain-level appeasement, weakness and incompetence.

• (1035)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could reflect about the number of years that foreign interference has been an issue, even while Stephen Harper was the prime minister and today's leader of the Conservative Party was the minister re-

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sponsible for democracy. Those individuals did absolutely nothing; they did zero in terms of dealing with this particular issue.

The Prime Minister has done numerous things. When he actually found out about this specific case, just a week ago, he took immediate action. The Conservatives may disagree, but based on the speeches that I have been hearing over the last number of hours, this debate is more about character assassination of the Prime Minister than it is about defending rights.

What hits one affects us all, and the Conservatives are doing a disservice to the issue by ramping it up politically. Does the member not believe that the Conservatives need to turn the page, dial it down and ensure that we deal with the issue?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, members opposite like to say that prior governments should have created a law that would have protected the Liberals from getting into yet another scandal. I find it quite ironic.

I want to mention one thing. I noted yesterday that the member for Winnipeg North was waxing philosophical about his time in the Manitoba legislature and the many years he spent there. He made a point of saying that he was in opposition. I think members on this side want to do him a favour and make sure that he is returned to the role he cherished so much as soon as the next election comes along.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to split my time with the hon. member for Bay of Quinte.

It is usually a pleasure to rise in this House on behalf of the constituents of Thornhill, but I am afraid that is not the case today. I want to start by speaking about the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, somebody who has been in this House a lot longer than I have. He looks at this place as upholding democracy. He knows more about this than I will ever know. I seek advice from him as a member who works with opposition colleagues and who treats this place as it should be treated. To know his privilege was breached is, unfortunately, something that nobody ever wants to speak to. I know the member probably does not want me speaking about him, but I hold him up when it comes to members of Parliament who teach me something about being here.

On that note, the member had to deal with getting a call, probably sometime in the afternoon, from a journalist who told him that he and that his family living abroad in Hong Kong might be the subjects of intimidation. The journalist told him that this was done by a diplomat who, until yesterday, was given immunity, powers and rights by the government that Canadians do not even have. Moreover, the government knew about that diplomat's behaviour or what that diplomat did over the course of two years.

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The government will say that it has acted quickly and as soon as it found out, it did something. However, there is more to this. It made a conscious decision to disparage the character of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Members of the Liberal Party suggested that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was in fact briefed two years ago on what the diplomat did, not a week ago after it became known in the newspapers. They said that he was briefed on the intimidation or the behaviour of this diplomat two years ago. It was a conscious decision by Liberal members opposite to say that, and we know that is not true.

In fact, last Wednesday, after *The Globe and Mail* printed what the member learned in that call from a journalist about the intimidation of the member and his family, the Prime Minister went as far as to say that the CSIS report that we are talking about of July 2021 never left the intelligence agency and that it was not shared. Of course, this claim was debunked a day later, when his own national security adviser told the member for Wellington—Halton Hills that this was not true at all, that it was shared with multiple ministries and the Privy Council Office, which is directly attached to the Prime Minister's Office. This weekend at the Liberal convention, where Liberals were clinking glasses, the public safety minister blamed CSIS for not informing the government. However, we know that is not true.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills went to committee to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs directly why she has not expelled this diplomat, and that is before they waited seven days to act after knowing for two years. He asked why this person still enjoys diplomatic immunity, rights that Canadians do not have, life in Toronto and taking his kids to the Ex, while they go to school with their compatriots in Toronto. After two years of knowing the behaviour of this diplomat, why is that even okay?

• (1040)

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills asked her, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was confronted at committee last week about the expulsion, gave a stream-of-consciousness response. She gave a live-action response, a cost-benefit analysis of why they would, why they would not, why they should, why they could not and why it took so long. This was for the whole world to watch. On something a minister should use their inside voice for, she gave this response in front of committee while the cameras were on. She did it in front of a member of Parliament whose family was being threatened over a vote in the House of Commons, which the government knew about for two years. We know that. That is what happened back then.

Members on the Liberals' side have suggested that this member knew. The member opposite just talked about this being a debate about character assassination, but that is the character assassination. They actively tried to assassinate Wellington—Halton Hills' character by suggesting to the Canadian people that he was briefed on this two years ago. That is a shame. It stops members of Parliament from doing the work in this chamber.

We know why we are talking about this. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills cosponsored a motion. By the way, much of the front bench of the Liberal Party was absent for the vote on that motion. They did not vote on it. There is probably a reason for

that. To have the member's family attacked because he sponsored that motion is a complete breach of privilege, and it is hard for anybody to look at this as anything else.

It is hard for Canadians to have confidence in a government that puts its political fortunes ahead of the work that is done in this House, as the member for Wellington—Halton Hills never does. It is hard to believe that is the case. It is harder to believe that Liberals take this seriously and that they have done so many things, as they get up and claim every day. Even yesterday, in question period, they were asked about it a number of times. The Minister of Public Safety has said, on at least one occasion, that the Chinese police stations that have been widely reported on in the media are closed. This is just not true. That is not the case. We know of at least two that are open.

For the duration of most of the question periods leading up to this, day after day, we find out new information trickled out by *The Globe and Mail*. The Liberals say the reporting is not true, and the Minister of Public Safety continues to lead Canadians to believe the police stations are closed when they are not. In fact, an opposition motion that was voted on in the House just yesterday called for closing those police stations. Who voted against this? It was 150 members of this House who all ran under the Liberal banner.

These members voted against a national inquiry on the matter of foreign interference in elections because they already appointed a friend, a former member of the Trudeau Foundation, to tell Canadians whether an inquiry is needed. Yesterday, they voted against that inquiry, as well as a foreign agent registry.

A foreign agent registry is something the U.S. and Australia have. We have a lobbyist registry for just about anybody on just about any charity. Just about any business that talks to government needs to register, but there is no existence of a foreign agent registry for people who come here from another country who are registered, who are given diplomatic immunity by the government, who engage with the government and who engage in their own affairs here. We do not have a foreign agent registry. When asked about it, we are told it is just continued consultations and some gaslighting view that a foreign agent registry would in some way be racist.

Do we know who would not think it is racist? The Chinese Canadians who are intimidated in their own homes would not think it is racist, nor would the Iranian Canadians who have called our offices with a blurred-out background in a car far away from their homes because they are terrified of the intimidation they feel from dictatorial regimes on the other side of the world. That is a shame. We want to see a foreign agent registry, and we want to see it now.

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• (1045)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is with respect to the spreading of misinformation. Last Thursday, I was heckled by a member who said that I had said the Prime Minister and the member in question had the same briefing.

I stood up and I said, and I quote from Hansard:

Mr. Speaker, it was never my intention to say that the Prime Minister and the member had the same briefing. If that is in fact what I said, I would apologize for saying that it was the same briefing.

No matter what we tell the Conservatives, they have their certain spin. It is about character assassination. As we continue with the debate, as they continue to want to ramp up the politicization, it is more about the character assassination of the Prime Minister than it is about the issue.

When will the Conservative Party depoliticize this and allow the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to deal with the issue?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, we will depoliticize it when the government acts. This motion of privilege is not about that member. It is not about the member in question.

That member has gaslit Canadians into believing the member got a briefing two years ago. We can look into the parliamentary record to see it. He has disparaged the character of a member of the House.

He has said himself that an attack on any member of the House is an attack on all members, so he should think about that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. What I was reflecting on in my question was the issue that the member did get a general briefing, as other members—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That has been dealt with by the Speaker and I hope we can move on from it.

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am trying to understand why the government is failing to act on this matter, but I cannot. The House has repeatedly voted in favour of standing up to any form of intimidation and harassment against communities and even against an MP who became an independent so as not to compromise his core values. The government party also voted in favour of that.

In short, I get the impression that the government is not always walking the talk. That is the case here. It seems as though the government is never short on fine words when it is time to talk but turns into a pillar of salt when it comes time to take meaningful action.

What should the government have done if it had put its fine words into action?

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. The government has not acted on this. We had a motion in the House, which the government voted against, that called for a public inquiry, that called for a foreign agent registry. That is least the government can do to show Chinese Canadians, and, frankly, Canadians right across the country from many diaspora communities who are intimidated by the regimes at home, who are fearful for their lives, their livelihoods and their families, just like what was done to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, that it actually takes this seriously and that it takes national security seriously. It can vote in favour of the many motions in front of the House that have called for sanction on that.

• (1050)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have intervened on this topic several times to implore members of the House to lower the temperature. I applaud the member who just spoke, because she did attempt to lower the temperature in the House and focus on real solutions.

How does the member see a way out of this impasse in the House, where everything is being held up? Would she agree with me that the things that were in the Conservative motion were quite reasonable, including the necessity of calling a public inquiry, so we are not constantly saying "he said, she said" about what has happened here and we can get an independent authority to judge the facts about foreign interference?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, a public inquiry would be one of the ways. A foreign registry would be another way.

Canada does not have a legal definition for political interference. What we have to do is find other things that happen, where diplomats are potentially breaking other laws, in order for us to investigate them.

A foreign registry would allow us a legal definition, perhaps, of what interference is. The Australians have that. This would be a good model to look at.

If the government were actually serious about this, it would at least engage in conversation and not just disparage members of the House.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, "speak softly and carry a big stick" was the foreign policy of Theodore Roosevelt, the American president in the early 1900s. It meant softly spoken diplomacy, backed by something that could make one's word count when it mattered and make it stick.

We may not have the largest military in the world, or population or government, but we do have trade, resources and IP. All of those can be used to ensure we uphold our great nation. It allows Canada to maintain its democratic system, while simultaneously expelling any unacceptable state actors who threaten our democracy.

Privilege

Why does it matter? Because this country matters and our country's place in the world matters, as it is becoming increasingly more hostile. Canada has always been a beacon of hope, a pillar of democracy and freedom alongside our allies including Europe, the United States, Australia, Japan and South Korea, among many others.

However, our democracy is under threat and the threat has infiltrated the very democratic system that we hold incredibly dear. The government has failed to protect Canadians from foreign interference from Beijing. There have been no less than eight police stations set up in Canada to monitor our own citizens in Canada, and 11 MPs were influenced in nominations and elections.

Two years ago, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills had his family threatened and intimidated by a Beijing operator over a vote to denounce the treatment of Chinese Muslim Uyghurs in China and the government allowed the perpetrator to remain in Canada for that two years.

This country, the Prime Minister have allowed Canada to be in an abusive relationship with China. China takes advantage of Canada, which has resulted in a “speak softly and carry a small stick” foreign policy to allow China to treat Canada as the “little potato” nickname it calls our Prime Minister.

China is taking advantage of Canada. If we want proof of that, we can compare it to a survey that talks about the five signs that someone's partner is being taken advantage of. Members can be the judge. The signs are constantly making excuses for them, frequently compromising on the things one wants, being afraid of confrontation with them, often waiting around for them and paying for dinner almost every night.

We constantly make excuses for China. We only need to look at Hansard from the last few weeks to see the government tripping over itself and making excuses for China. The Liberals go so far as to blaming the MP for Wellington—Halton Hills for the fact that his family went through hell. They say it was his fault.

The Liberals have said that it was the Leader of the Opposition, when he was the minister of democratic reform, who did not put stricter laws in place that would have restricted the Liberal government from being interfered with. They say that it is not China's fault. It is the fault of the Conservatives. It is the fault of Canadians. It is the fault of anyone but the Liberals. They constantly make excuses for China when they should not.

We also frequently compromise on the things that we want. What is the biggest export from Canada? Coal. For a government that talks about net zero, or how great it wants the environment to be and how it wants to make the world better, Canada ships coal that is burned in China. Of course, the wind just blows it back toward Canada. Does that sound like we are frequently compromising on the things we want?

We had a deal for vaccines with a company called CanSino in China. It was signed in May 2020. Canada put all its eggs in that basket. It said that said this would save us. The government did not go to Pfizer. It did not go to Moderna at that point. It went to CanSino and signed a deal. Guess what. The deal fell through be-

cause China fell through. We are in an abusive relationship with China.

We lost \$55 million. I know this is small potatoes compared to the almost \$1 billion we lost with Medicigo and Novavax, but it was the first of three failed deals, and it was with China. The government promised we would get vaccines. It promised we would have them produced in a facility in Montreal in the summer of 2020, but China let us down because of this relationship.

Another issue is that we are afraid of confrontation with China. We took two years to kick out an agent who threatened a sitting MP in the House. Intelligence went to CSIS and to the Privy Council. We are afraid of confrontation.

We often find ourselves waiting around for China. The Prime Minister had to wait for a meeting with the president of China. We buy \$100 billion in trade from China, yet when there was a G7 meeting, the Prime Minister had to go to a side room and have a meeting off camera. The president told him that he was supposed to have a meeting off camera, that he was not supposed to tell anyone about it. The Prime Minister then said that Canada respected the rule of law. Again, we are afraid of confrontation. That is an abusive relationship.

● (1055)

We also pay for dinner every night. In the trade relationship with China, Canada buys \$100-billion worth of goods per year from it and China buys, in response, \$25-billion worth of goods per year. Madam Speaker, an analogy would you giving me \$100 and I give you \$25 back, saying that I have the better relationship, that I have to compromise. No, if people give me \$100, they have the relationship and the ability to set the compromises. It is a really sad situation.

The real question for Canada and for the Prime Minister is this. What are we going to do to protect Canada's democracy, its people, its government, its MPs, their freedom and democracy, and our home and our values? The government has failed its citizens in its basic duty to protect our values and our home.

If it were not for the accurate and honest reporting of reporters for The Globe and Mail and Global News, the litmus test for a free and democratic society being freedom of the press, our democracy in the House would be worse off than it is now when it comes to protecting the values of our democracy. If it were not for His Majesty's loyal opposition, the government-in-waiting and this prime minister-in-waiting, we would be worse off than we are now. It has been this freedom of the press, not the government, that is truly protecting Canadians by reporting accurately and honestly. It may be too accurately and honestly.

Privilege

At the Liberal convention this weekend, a motion was passed, saying that the Liberal Party of Canada request the government to explore “options to hold on-line information services accountable for the veracity of material published on their platforms and to limit publication only to material whose sources can be traced.” In other words, if The Globe and Mail or Global News did not disclose its sources, these stories would never have been allowed to come out. Let us think about that for a moment. We are in the House today only because of the freedom of the press.

Reporters Without Borders just demoted Canada from fifth in the world for freedom of the press to 22nd. That is really alarming. Is it only to protect this abusive relationship with China?

The bigger conversation is that a government that promotes democracy should be prepared to face the consequences in protecting it. When this democracy is under threat, the government does not seem to take it seriously. The real question is this. Why do Canadians continually have to shame our government into action? If the government had a leader, that leader would stand up for the country and the democracy which it represents.

Perhaps the biggest question is this. What are we afraid of? Are we afraid of an open inquiry into foreign interference that is not headed by a former member of the Trudeau Foundation? Are we afraid of sending very bad actors who threaten our very own MPs packing? Why did it take two years and two weeks? Why are we afraid of shutting down and stamping out Beijing police stations, with force if need be? Why are we afraid of setting up a foreign registry like they do in the U.S. and in Australia? Are we afraid of defending our democracy, our people and our nation and of holding Canadians and Canada to the high standard that we expect of our government?

We can work together but we will not put up with this abusive relationship. We do not capitulate to infiltration of our elections and our national security or to threats and intimidation to our citizens and our elected officials. When it comes to an abusive relationship, we can either get out of the relationship or we can improve it. The first step, when we are looking at an abusive relationship, is to accept that we are in an abusive relationship and to tackle it head-on in an open inquiry. I think every party in the House has asked for an open inquiry. Maybe it is better if we phrase it as counselling. Maybe we just need a new leader.

To fix this abusive relationship, we need to stand up for Canadians. We need to speak softly, diplomacy is very important, but we carry a big stick. We do not put up with abuse. We do not put up with compromise in our democracy. We certainly do not put up with one country infiltrating another, and we do not put up with democracy as a whole being threatened and putting down Canada, which we know is the number one nation on this planet. To fix this abusive relationship, we need to stand up for Canadians, but perhaps what Canada really needs is a prime minister who will do just that.

• (1100)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I was sitting in the opposition benches, Stephen Harper went to China and brought back a commitment for panda

bears. What he did not tell us is that he actually signed off on a secretive trade deal.

The member might want to reflect on that, given his comments about trade—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. Could we allow the hon. member to ask his question?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when it comes to foreign interference, it is really important to recognize, as I have, that foreign interference has been taking place for many years, even when Stephen Harper was there. Stephen Harper was aware of it.

How does the member justify the secretive trade agreement or Stephen Harper doing nothing? The Prime Minister found out about this last week for the very first time. Within a week, that diplomat was asked to leave the country.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, first of all, we have a trade relationship with China because they are the second biggest economy in the world.

When Stephen Harper signed investment deals, not trade agreements, it benefited Canadians. At this point, there is now a massive trade deficit, and Canadians are not benefiting. Canadians are in an abusive relationship and are losing in this relationship with China under the Prime Minister.

At the end of the day, we have to have a nation that speaks softly, has diplomacy and has sets of investment deals because that is good for Canadians and Canadian companies, but we do not put up with Canadians being compromised, elections being compromised or democracy being compromised. There is a difference. Our government knew that difference and acted on it. The Liberal government does not.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure of serving with my colleague on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. I always liked his knack for summarizing, for getting straight to the point.

As a member of the Bloc—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Would hon. members please remain silent to allow colleagues to ask questions?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, as a member of the Bloc Québécois, I am always surprised to hear our neighbours across the way point out what Mr. Harper has done. Apparently, Mr. Harper has made a big impact on politics, based on how often they mention him.

Privilege

Now, for my question. The member mentioned the fact that a resolution passed at the Liberal convention this weekend—one that was akin to a form of media censorship—would be dangerous.

What should we think of a Prime Minister who gets his information from the newspaper rather than CSIS?

• (1105)

[English]

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, we are all very concerned with the fact that there is information that went through the proper channels, but either the Prime Minister ignored it, or he was incompetent in receiving that information on behalf of Canadians.

We have been over this. This has been perhaps the most alarming part of the information we have received. Canadians have been left in the lurch for two years. The Liberal government is trying to figure out why, only based on the fact that the freedom of the press allowed information to come to the public. Otherwise, we would be going about our days dealing with an array of other issues right now.

First and foremost, we want to know who knew, and when. We cannot believe that the Prime Minister and a lot of other people did not know. Certainly, the first act is, how do we fix that? The only way to do that is through an open inquiry at this point.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think we all agree that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has an incredible amount of integrity.

Where we do not see integrity is in how the Conservatives are trying to exploit this. I am amazed that my colleague quotes Teddy Roosevelt. Do Conservatives think their leader is going to carry a big stick? Teddy Roosevelt, of course, launched illegal invasions into Cuba and Philippines, and mass murder, based on falsehoods.

The Conservatives believe that, as long as Canadians do not know history, they will be okay. When it was Stephen Harper who was kissing up to China, what did they announce? The member on the back bench can confirm that they were going to send blueberries to China. In exchange for blueberries, what did China take? Chinese state corporations took control of a huge part of the oil sands. Stephen Harper said that was okay because they were sucking up to China.

For Conservatives to come in now with this false history is really concerning. They are exploiting a very serious situation to make their very juvenile leader look like he is going to walk out on the world stage with his big stick to take on China. For sure, Canadians deserve better than that.

Mr. Ryan Williams: Madam Speaker, Canadians deserve a government that is going to stand up for them. As I clearly noted, the big stick is our trade relationship, which will ensure that we can not only encourage growth and investment, but also keep out bad actors and bad countries that want to do bad things to Canadians. We are certainly going to do that. This prime minister or the next prime minister, the opposition leader is going to be a great prime minister and will do that for Canadians.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, in listening to the debate last night and today, which has

been quite something, I am at a loss for words as to how to frame what we are hearing from the other side and the costly coalition down the way. They are scrambling to the defence of the one member of the government who continually stands up to speak to this very important issue. How did we get here?

For months, Canadians have been hearing, through leaked security reports to the media, about Chinese interference or foreign interference in our previous elections and nominations. Then, within the last week, we found out that there was a foreign operative from Beijing, by the name of Zhao Wei, who took it upon himself to find out about a sitting member of Parliament in the House, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills is very respected on all sides because he is a very reasoned leader. He is very passionate and very articulate. He is measured in his responses, measured in his debate, and he has garnered respect on all sides. However, this foreign operative endeavoured to find out the whereabouts of this sitting member of Parliament's family in China and perhaps here.

Why was that? It was to make an example of him because of the way he voted and the motion he put forward on China's human rights atrocities and its record on human rights as it applies to the Uyghurs, a section of China's population who are being persecuted. Horrible acts are being committed against them. All that he was doing was standing up for this minority, and this Chinese operative decided to target him and his family to make an example of him.

Two years ago, in September 2021, a CSIS report came out identifying this, and this government did nothing. As a matter fact, up until yesterday, Zhao Wei was still in this country affording the privileges and rights that many Canadians do not even have. He had diplomatic immunity to say anything and to do anything. Indeed, the lone speaker from the government would want Canadians to believe that the Prime Minister, his ministers and his cabinet knew nothing about this.

I want to read something from CSIS a report entitled “Mission Focused: Addressing the Threat Environment”. Under the heading of “Duties and Functions”, it reads that they are to:

Investigate activities suspected of constituting threats to the security of Canada and report on these to the Government of Canada.

Take measures to reduce threats if there are reasonable grounds to believe the security of Canada is at risk.

Provide security assessments on individuals who require access to classified information or sensitive sites within the Government of Canada.

Provide security advice relevant to the exercise of the Citizenship Act or the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

Conduct foreign intelligence collection within Canada at the request of the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister of National Defence.

However, the report continues with what CSIS, in its own words, can do. It reads:

CSIS may collect foreign intelligence; that is, intelligence relating to the intentions, capabilities and activities of a foreign state. However, foreign intelligence may only be collected from within Canada at the request of the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister of National Defence, and with the consent of the Minister of Public Safety.

These assessments or reports are relied upon and provided to the Government of Canada. The report goes on to say:

In 2022, CSIS produced over 2,500 intelligence [reports]. These are relied upon by Departments and Agencies to help inform policy making and to support evidence-based decisions. Separately, CSIS may also take measures to reduce threats to the security of Canada.

• (1110)

I offer that into the record because there are only two choices here. Either the Liberals and the government do not care about the safety of parliamentarians, the families of those who serve, and the stress and mental health of those in the chamber trying to do their jobs daily, or they are negligent in their duties with malicious intent. They are either grossly incompetent or grossly negligent. That is right. We have two choices here. That is it.

They allowed a threat against a sitting member of Parliament and his family, then they allowed this person, who sent that volley across the bow of the ship and threatened a sitting of Parliament, to stay in the country for two years. They will also have us believe that, seven days after they found out about it, the Prime Minister acted swiftly. If the leader of our country does not know about these threats, he does not care about them, which is crazy to believe. As I said, there are two choices here: They are either grossly incompetent or grossly negligent.

For over two years the government has sat on knowledge that a member of this House and his family have been under threat. For over two years, it has done nothing about it. If we go around this chamber or anywhere on the site of Parliament, there are signs about our security. If we see something, we say something.

Now, we have top secret CSIS security reports that are being leaked to the media. Why is that? It is because, as we heard through other testimony on foreign interference, CSIS has been providing these reports and nobody is acting on them, so whistle-blowers from within are trying to find a way to raise the awareness of the threat levels in our country, whether they are threats of interference in our elections, threats against sitting members of Parliament or threats against Canadians of the Chinese diaspora.

We go out, as members of Parliament, and we meet with Canadians from all walks of life, and there are many times I have had a meeting with members from different diasporas, and they say, “Can we just go outside? I am going to turn my phone off, and I want to go outside.” This is real. They are worried about the foreign interference. They are worried about their country of origin listening in and finding out. They are being intimidated during elections as to who to vote for. These threats are real, and our colleagues across the way would have us believe that there is nothing to see here.

Originally, they said it was because they did not have the information. The government did not act because it did not have the information. It only found out about the threats and intimidation when it was revealed in a *Globe and Mail* story. What has transpired over the last week in the case before us today provides valuable insight into the Liberal government. What has happened to the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills is just another example. Two days after the story broke, the Prime Minister told Canadians that the CSIS document in question had not been circulated.

Privilege

Can members believe that our leader, the leader of our country, is so woefully unaware? He is blissfully unaware, going merrily about his way in whatever he is doing, going to cocktail events and taking selfies, but he does not know about the threats against a sitting member of Parliament in the House. He told Canadians that the report by CSIS outlining the details of the threat to intimidate the member for Wellington—Halton Hills never left the building. On Thursday, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills caught the Prime Minister in this miscommunication. I say “miscommunication”, because it would be unparliamentary to call it anything like a “lie”.

• (1115)

According to the member, the Prime Minister's very own national security adviser called him directly to tell him that the intelligence assessment of July 20, 2021, was indeed sent to all relative departments, that in fact it did go to the Prime Minister's Office and it did go to the public safety minister's office.

I do not want to get into the machinations of the machinery of the government, but for those watching, the Prime Minister's Office also includes the Privy Council Office. PCO is the Prime Minister's department. He is solely responsible for it. Anyone who has worked in a large organization will understand the silo effect, each part working on its own projects, its own agenda with one large body overseeing everything, being the guy who sits in that seat right there.

With the exception of possibly the finance department, PCO is the only organization in all of government that actually knows what is going on everywhere. In fact, each week all the deputy ministers from across the government descend on the Prime Minister's Office in Langevin Block to discuss what has transpired, what is coming up and how they are going to move forward. They strategize. Each week, all the political chiefs of staff from each department meet so they can inform the Prime Minister's Office on their files and how they are progressing.

The Prime Minister and the government want us to believe that they did not know, that they were not informed, that this information simply fell through the cracks. With all these people meeting each week, discussing issues of national importance, I find it extremely hard to believe that no one in this government would flag this issue, that not one person would say to the Prime Minister that he needed to know about this, that not one person would raise it.

As I said at the start, we should give them the benefit of the doubt. Gross incompetence or malicious intent, there are cases made for each. We have seen gross incompetence daily. We have all heard the rumours about files piled so high on the Prime Minister's desk that it is not inconceivable that perhaps he actually still has not seen the memo yet as it is not on this month's reading list. Maybe it is on next month's reading list.

Privilege

The total control demanded by this PMO is unlike any in the history of government. Nothing gets signed or passed until the Prime Minister's Office has seen it or okayed it. Nothing gets done until the Prime Minister has given it the green light. Advice from the departments can sit for weeks and months in PCO and PMO and, because the Prime Minister is vacationing in the Caribbean, surfing in B.C., taking all-expense paid trips, things just seem to pile up. I mean, leading is hard.

We all heard the testimony of the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Katie Telford, in recent weeks. The Prime Minister reads everything. If that is true, if he reads everything, we know with certainty that the CSIS intelligence file was in his office. Would it not stand to reason that he actually read it, that he understood it and that he willfully chose to ignore it? That leads us to gross negligence. Why on earth would a Prime Minister put the lives of members of Parliament at risk? I will remind this chamber that the Chinese operative was going to “make an example of” a sitting member of Parliament. What does it mean to “make an example of”? Why would any threat against a parliamentarian go unanswered?

Why would the government willfully ignore intelligence briefings from CSIS? It is because it did not suit their needs or their political agenda. That is right. If it was not incompetence, it was negligence. It is that simple. If we look at the political climate and the events that were transpiring around this time, we can see a pattern. We know that foreign actors were funnelling money to 11 Liberal candidates in the greater Toronto area, 11 sitting members of Parliament. That is a fact. CSIS has reported on that.

We know that the Prime Minister was planning a snap election at the same time. We know that, despite numerous warnings, the Prime Minister and his staff understood the security threats. We know that CSIS provided the information on the intimidation campaign against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills in 2021 and the government did nothing.

• (1120)

In its 2021 annual report to Parliament, CSIS said that foreign interference threats had increased. Canada's spy agency said efforts by foreign states to steal intellectual property from Canadian researchers and companies were “persistent and sophisticated” and contributed to a “mounting toll on the country's vital assets and knowledge-based economy.” It warned that foreign interference threats in Canada to shape public policy or harass dissidents, as well as espionage, “increase[d] in scale, scope and complexity”. In 2022, an unsealed indictment in the U.S. alleged that Beijing's overseas campaign to put pressure on Chinese nationals to return and face criminal charges in China included enforcement efforts on Canadian soil. That is right, through its use of illegal police stations operating in Toronto and Montreal, the Communist Chinese regime was using intimidation to influence Canadian citizens.

Prior to the 2021 election, constituents came to me and asked if it was real, was it actually happening in Canada that a foreign country had police stations in our country and was forcing Chinese Canadians to do their deeds through intimidation. I chalked it up as conspiracy and told my constituents that it could not be true, yet it is. Months after the government stood in the House and admitted, yes,

it is and it had closed their doors, but these police stations are still open. They are still threatening Chinese Canadians.

I said at the beginning that if one sees something, one should say something. Can anyone imagine being from China and living here? They come here for a better life, and yet they are still feeling the undue pressure of the foreign government that they fled because they still have family there. They are still worried about persecution. They are still worried about intimidation. They are still worried about the threats of violence or whatever could happen to their families. Why would they say something when they see the leader of our country taking such a weak stance?

Talking about weakness, time and again we have seen the Prime Minister on the world stage being so weak. Literally weeks after Iran shot down PS752, a Ukrainian airline, killing 57 Canadians, there he was bowing to the same regime that killed those Canadians. The right thing to do is to send a message to these countries that we are strong, that regardless of our political beliefs, we will stand up for one another here.

There is something that we do not take into consideration, at least I did not when I signed up to be a member of Parliament, and that is the threats of violence, the increasing threats to our own safety and our families' safety. I have to say it is alarming. I can handle myself, but I worry about my family, always. The message has to be that regardless of which party we are with, if a country attacks one of us, it attacks us all, and it will not be allowed. When the government was challenged with that, its response was that it was kind of worried about what China was going to do. That is BS. I would like to say that word in full.

The government is so weak on such issues that matter to all Canadians. We can do so much better. Yesterday we had a motion before the House about setting up a foreign interference agency and having a non-partisan commission to investigate foreign interference, and the government voted against it. Yes, it has appointed a special rapporteur who has close connections to the Prime Minister. He might as well just sign the report right now and hand it in because we know what it is going to say. I am not besmirching our former governor general. I am saying the Prime Minister should have better guidance from those around him.

I will cede the floor with this. I am so troubled by the fact that all the government wants to do is impugn the reputation of a sitting member of Parliament that it could have protected in the first place.

Privilege

• (1125)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what has become abundantly clear in the hours of debate we have had thus far is the fact the Prime Minister found out about this just last week, and a number of measures were taken, including the expulsion of a diplomat within a week. Those are the facts. The member might want to speculate, hypothesize and all these other weird things, but those are the facts.

The Conservatives continue to want to dial up the issue because they want to focus on character assassination more than they want to deal with an issue of substance.

One member affects all members. This is an issue that will be discussed at committee. The question is this. There were 49 members of Parliament in 2022, a couple of dozen provincial legislators and even some local councillors. Does the member not believe that the best way to deal with this is to put politics aside and let the committees do what they need to do?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, the best way to deal with this would have been two years ago when the government first had the report.

I do not believe for one minute that the Prime Minister, his ministers or those around him did not know about it. I think it is unacceptable that this member of Parliament continues to stand up here and gaslight with respect to the 49 elected officials who were briefed on this. He continues to throw that out there.

Last week, when the Liberals changed their talking points, they tried to say that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills somehow knew about it two years ago and did nothing when it was solely their responsibility to stand up not only for the sitting members of Parliament who have been elected to represent Canadians, but also for those Canadians who are facing intimidation from foreign agents.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, when we look at this whole situation, it is obvious that the Prime Minister does not understand China. When it comes to foreign affairs, I do not think he understands Russia. There are many things like that.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question. Is the Prime Minister acting this way because he is gullible, naive or incompetent?

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, that goes to the main point in my intervention, which is this. The Liberals do not care about the safety of parliamentarians or the families of those who serve, so they are either negligent in their duties with malicious intent, grossly incompetent or grossly negligent.

I worked in China for a long time in my previous career and I know about the threats and intimidation. As soon as people land and get into a taxi, it gets pulled over and the Chinese officials know exactly who they are and why they are there.

I have faced intimidation by China. I cannot imagine what it is like to be from the Chinese community living here in Canada, having fled that country for a better life, yet still being faced with threats of violence and intimidation, and worrying about my friends and family back home and the coercion they face. It is unacceptable and the sign of a weak leader. It is not even leadership; it is just weakness.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend from Cariboo—Prince George would know that my colleague from Kitchener Centre and I, the Green Party, supported the motion to ensure that the prima facie case of privilege that the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills advanced goes to committee for study, but there is one factual matter I want to probe a bit with him.

We know a lot of things about the circumstances here, and I have an open mind on whether the Prime Minister or the people near him in the PMO knew for two years. We do not know that. We know that CSIS wrote a report, we know that the national security advisers knew, but we do not know whether that information was communicated to the Prime Minister's Office and I am not prepared to make that assumption. With respect to the information going forward from CSIS or the national security adviser to the Prime Minister's Office, I find it entirely plausible that it did not pass it on. I would like to ask him if he does not think there is even a possibility that is the case.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I am going to respectfully disagree. This is a matter of national importance and of the safety and security of a sitting member of Parliament. I will go back to what I said during my intervention. CSIS does these reports and investigations only at the request of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Safety or the Minister of National Defence. I just cannot see it happening that it produced these reports and they somehow sat under a stack of selfies in our Prime Minister's Office without him seeing them. I just cannot see a situation where our Prime Minister does not know about the matter of a national security threat.

Beyond that, CSIS built these reports about potential threats within his party to nominations or whatever. I cannot see any scenario where the Prime Minister, in his leadership, had no knowledge of it. He can say he did not know and plead ignorance all he likes, but I just cannot see it. I have sat in security briefings at the highest level, and I cannot believe that the Prime Minister had no knowledge of it. Our first job is to tell our commander-in-chief when there are threats. We cannot insulate them and allow them to be willfully ignorant of these threats.

Mr. Gary Vidal (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George to comment briefly on the facts of the timing of all this. We heard from the member across the way that he wants to talk about facts, so let us do so.

Privilege

We started on Sunday night, when the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was informed of this potential threat to him and his family. That story came out in the media on Monday. On Monday and Tuesday, the government side deflected; there was no comment about anything. Finally, on Wednesday morning, the Prime Minister and the public safety minister said that this report never made it out of CSIS. I think by the end of the day or early the next morning, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was in fact informed that this report had made it to the PCO and the national security adviser's office. The Liberals deflected for a couple more days. They were going to summon the ambassador to have a conversation, and finally, we end up with this operative, as he is called in many reports, being expelled from our country.

What we are trying to accomplish in this parliamentary privilege motion is actually getting to the truth, and we have the goal of getting it to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for a deeper study. Could the member for Cariboo—Prince George talk about how this changing set of facts and narratives affects this?

• (1135)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, that is kind of the modus operandi we have seen from the Prime Minister, at least in the seven and a half years that I have been a member of Parliament. Whether it is “elbowgate”, Jody Wilson-Raybould, SNC or the WE scandal, it is always, “There is nothing to see here.” Then they blame Stephen Harper or the previous government. It just goes on and on.

The Prime Minister reminds me of the schoolyard bully, where he picks and natters at somebody. When the person finally has enough, they punch the bully in the nose, and the bully runs to his parents and blames everybody else. He does not take responsibility for his own actions, which caused that to happen.

It is the lack of leadership we have seen and come to expect from the Prime Minister, as well as the weakness he has shown time and time again. It is his own self-adulation, the arrogance we have seen and how he loves being on the red carpet rather than being on this green carpet right here.

This is the House of the people; this is the House of Commons. This House elects 338 members of Parliament so that we can bring Canadians' voices here. At the very least, the Prime Minister should be standing up for the 338 members of Parliament so that they can vote with their conscience and be the voices for their constituents and Canadians. Canadians know that we will stand up for them. Regardless of who they are or where they are from, we will allow them to have a free and democratic life here in Canada. We will not stand for a foreign country intimidating them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must first acknowledge the Speaker's ruling on the question of privilege raised by the member for Wellington-Halton Hills. I find the Speaker's response to that motion very interesting.

I am an economist by training. More specifically, I am a macroeconomist. Some say that a macroeconomist is a microeconomist who knows how to count, but, no, I would not say that. Many things could be said about economists, but I would say that I like to

have an overall picture of the situation, so that is what I will provide to the House. I know my colleagues have waited a long time for me to explain the situation to them. No, that is not true, I know that is not the case, but I will nevertheless take on the task of explaining who the Prime Minister is. I will share my macroanalysis of this situation. I will start at the beginning.

I was a member of the National Assembly in Québec City before sitting here and, in Québec City, I served under two premiers, Ms. Marois and Mr. Couillard. When I saw them during oral question period, they were always passionate. For Ms. Marois, it was always a true pleasure to cross swords with her friends across the floor. It was clear that she loved debate and that she loved being premier.

As for Mr. Couillard, there are many things that divide us. I can say that because I faced him for four years. However, he was like that as well. When he got to question period, he was prepared. It was clear that he enjoyed it, and we enjoyed asking him questions. One of Mr. Couillard's problems is that he had left “his heart at home”, as Michel Rivard would say. However, that is another debate. If he is listening today, I salute him and I reverently salute Ms. Marois, the first woman premier in Quebec history.

When I arrived in the House of Commons, I was anxious and happy. I told myself that I would be finally seeing the Prime Minister in all his splendour. In 2015, it was said that he was a rock star, a bit like Bono or something. He was heard singing songs from Queen even though it was not very convincing. I still thought it would be impressive.

I arrived in the House and I saw him for the first time. I would say, respectfully, that I was disappointed. There are many other words that would come to mind. I know that there are people who would encourage me to say them, but I will just say that I was disappointed. In summary, I would say that I saw someone who did not want to be here. He is in the House but he does not really want to be, nor does he want to answer questions. Sometimes, he prologues Parliament and leaves for a while. He was excited to be re-elected in 2021, but we waited months before returning to the House. It appears as though he does not really want to be here.

It occurred to some that he might not like this part of the job, but surely he still worked hard as the leader of Canada, was aware of everything that was going on, read the CSIS reports and had an opinion on everything. People really wanted to believe that that was true.

I will give a short presentation. I hear people laughing on this side of the House, while on the other side, people are giving me the stink eye and wondering where I am going with this story. I feel like they are worried, but I want to assure them that I am not speaking to the Liberal Party, but to its leader. I know, there are small differences.

Privilege

I figured that I might as well watch him for a while and give him a chance, because that is the kind of guy I am. Those who have watched me for a while know that I give people a chance. It is something that people like about me. I therefore gave the Prime Minister a chance and then I studied his actions over many crises.

First, I always have the proverb in mind that says, “To govern is to anticipate, and whoever does not anticipate is doomed.” It was Émile de Girardin who said that in 1852. I believed that, because he was in government, the Prime Minister had to be someone who plans ahead, but that is not so. He planned to hire McKinsey until 2100. This is one of the things that he can anticipate. He anticipated that Canada would have a population of 100 million by 2100. It is a prediction, but I am not sure that it would be very glorious.

• (1140)

When it comes to anticipating things, he scores a big fat zero. He simply does not have that skill. Some might say that anticipating is not always easy, but I would remind the House that to govern is to anticipate, and whoever does not anticipate is doomed. He certainly seems to be running toward a brick wall. He is running toward it at such speed that even Alexis le Trotteur could not catch up. Then, when a crisis hits, he decides to take his time. It is a bit like *The tortoise and the hare*. He starts off very late and moves at a tortoise's pace. He has both disadvantages at the same time.

Let us return to the crisis. Let us talk about crises for a moment so that members can understand where I am going with this. I am painting a portrait.

First, there was the Wet'suwet'en crisis. When that happened, had he anticipated it? The answer is no. He did nothing. In fact, it is because he did nothing that it ended in a crisis. When the crisis began, he was travelling. That is another thing, he likes to travel. He does not like crises, does not like governing, does not like being here, but he likes to travel. He is a great traveller. Let us think back to the first 10 days of the crisis. He was travelling and said that he would not return for that. It was a rail crisis and there were no more trains anywhere, but he said that he would not return for that, that there was no way he would miss a trip. It is like a trilogy. It lasted 30 days. In the first 10 days, he said he was travelling and did not want to be bothered. However, he had to return one day. In the next 10 days, he acknowledged that there was a problem but stated that it was not the government's job to address it and that the provinces would have to figure it out. In the last 10 days, he realized he was really in a jam, so he decided to listen to what the Bloc, among others, was saying, and to do what the Bloc had requested him to do, and it worked.

Then, there was the COVID-19 crisis. Could it have been anticipated? Of course not. COVID-19 could not be predicted. I cannot blame him because nobody, or at least almost nobody, saw it coming. Countries began closing their borders. People were panicking and asking what the Prime Minister had decided to do in Canada. He had not done a thing. People were coming here and they did not need to be tested. There was nothing. Planes full of people were arriving from China, from Italy. There was no problem. The Prime Minister's handling of the situation was so abysmal that even Valérie Plante, the mayor of Montreal, became involved. The mayor arrived at Dorval and said to stop letting people into the country,

that it was terrible and that we would end up full of COVID-19 cases. It is unbelievable: The Prime Minister did so little that the mayor of Montreal had to become Canada's head of state on the fly.

Let us talk about trucks and the occupation in front of Parliament. Was it foreseeable? It was, a bit. There was talk of it. I remember a man from British Columbia. He was in Vancouver in his 53-foot truck. He said he was headed to Ottawa to protest. Canada is big. He left Vancouver with a 53-footer. When I heard him talking he was clean shaven. When he arrived here, his beard was so long he could have joined ZZ Top. In other words, we saw him coming, the guy with his truck. The protesters settled in. Once they were settled, someone a bit calmer than the others asked the Prime Minister to intervene. The Prime Minister did just that: He went outside and insulted them. He waved his arms in the air and insulted them. He went back inside satisfied that his job was done. Sadly, no, it was not; the protesters were even more riled up than usual. Their eyes were practically popping out of their sockets and they needed sunglasses to keep them in. It was bad. The Prime Minister finally decided to emulate his father, more or less. He brushed off the Emergencies Act and ended the whole thing by using the nuclear option.

The Prime Minister is a procrastinator. He keeps putting things off and letting them drag on. Picture a teenager's bedroom. That is pretty much Canada, in Trudeau's eyes. He lets everything drag on—

• (1145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would remind the member that we do not use names.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, I apologize. I was not referring to him. I was talking about the Prime Minister. I am sorry and I will never do that again, unless I make a mistake.

Now let us talk about Chinese interference. Chinese interference is very serious. It poses a threat to democracy. According to the intelligence services, it is the greatest known threat to Canada. This is very serious. It seems to me that the guardian of democracy in Canada is the Prime Minister. It is up to him to ensure that we have a healthy democracy. This guy was democratically elected, so I think it would be in his interest to try to protect our democracy.

This all began in the fall of 2022. Honestly, there are so many elements to Chinese interference, but I will focus on the most important ones. I will address all of them and try to find the common threads, in other words, the same issues that keep coming up over and over again. Members will see where I am going with this.

In the fall, we read in the papers that China had interfered in 11 ridings in 2019. We asked the Prime Minister what was going on. He said that he had no idea, that he had never heard anything about it. When we asked again, he compared us to Trump, of all people. I cannot say we were happy about being compared to Trump. The Prime Minister accused the opposition of saying that the elections were not legitimate, despite the fact that no one in the opposition had said anything of the sort. That made us angry.

Privilege

We answered that we were not saying that the Liberals had not won the election, but that we simply wanted to know what happened in 11 ridings. The Prime Minister told us that he had no knowledge of this. Right after that, he went to the G20. I can still see it. He told us he did not know what was happening, but at the G20, he ran after Xi Jinping to talk to him, as if he had no one else to talk to. He spoke to Xi Jinping for so long that Xi got fed up. The Prime Minister told us that he had talked to Xi about interference.

However, he had told us that he had no knowledge of any of this and that the election results were not illegitimate. Why did he talk to the president about interference? That is the first problem. Was he joking? Is the Prime Minister a joker? Perhaps he is.

There was also interference in 2021. I would like to remind the House that this is a minority government. According to the final polls, it was a close race. The Chinese interfered in 11 or 15 ridings in 2019. Since then, they must have practised and gotten better at it, because they may have interfered in up to 15 or 20 ridings. It does not take a PhD in math to understand that, if someone can influence the election results in 10 or 15 ridings where the Liberals and Conservatives are neck and neck, that could mean victory or defeat for one of the parties. It could determine which party forms government. This is no laughing matter.

We know that the Chinese government is fond of the Liberals. It likes them. It believes it could get close to the Liberals without much trouble. It would prefer a minority Liberal government. The Chinese government is not as fond of the Conservatives. It is a well-known fact. This is troubling.

We told the Prime Minister that the issue had to be dealt with before the next election. We have a minority government, which means that an election could be called at any time. We need to resolve this problem quickly to make sure that the dice are not loaded when the next election happens. That will take intelligent action.

Then we learned that, in 2021, the member for Don Valley North apparently spoke to the Chinese consulate and even asked them not to free the two Michaels, so as not to favour the Conservative Party. It is not always easy to grasp all the arguments in this affair. It is about as easy as eating an apple through a tennis racket. I do not really understand it, but, in any case, that is what happened. Obviously, the Prime Minister says that he was unaware. The Liberal member for Don Valley North is now an independent member, despite the fact that he had the Prime Minister's support. It is troubling.

Then there is the Trudeau Foundation debacle, and that is a real circus.

• (1150)

If anyone thinks they understand something about the Trudeau Foundation, it is because someone explained it wrong. It is complicated, so we are looking into that. Apparently, in 2016, the Chinese government donated \$140,000 to the Trudeau Foundation.

The Prime Minister says that he has not had anything to do with the foundation for 10 years. That is another joke. He is a real card. He says that neither he nor his office has had anything to do with the foundation.

Then again, his brother is involved in the foundation. In 2016, the Prime Minister's Office called the foundation about the Chinese donation. After that, the Prime Minister asked Morris Rosenberg, the former CEO of the Trudeau Foundation, to look into the matter and determine whether there had been any Chinese interference. In Mr. Rosenberg's massive report, there are four lines about Chinese interference and that is to say that there is none. The Prime Minister then asked David Johnston to act as special rapporteur so he could decide on whether there is a need for an independent public inquiry. Mr. Johnston told him that that was a big ask, that he was not sure he could answer right away, and that he would study the situation for two months. It is like Rodin's *The Thinker*: everyone is waiting.

While we are waiting, other things are happening. All of these people are from the Trudeau Foundation. The Prime Minister goes to spend Christmas with a friend who is involved in the Trudeau Foundation. His office also hosted the Trudeau Foundation.

Do they take me for a fool? The Prime Minister says that he has not had anything to do with the foundation for 10 years. He keeps repeating it. The members of his government keep repeating it. The government House leader rises and says that he has not had anything to do with the foundation for 10 years. Does he believe that? The Liberals are in trouble. They believe that guy, when everyone knows that it is all complete nonsense, and it just goes on and on.

The latest news is about the police stations. There are two in Quebec. That is new. The Minister of Public Safety was very serious last week when he said that they had been closed. We called, and they are still open.

How can he not know that? Before saying something, he should check it. He is a minister. He also has a team. If he does not have time to check, he can ask his friend to call and find out.

They are still open. It is troubling. One of these police stations is five minutes away by bike in my riding. I will say it again, this is troubling.

Here is the cherry on the sundae. Now I come to the present day. Two years ago, the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills and his family received threats. Once again, the Prime Minister says he was unaware. Jody Thomas, his national security adviser, said she was aware, but he was not. Is he telling jokes, or is he a little lost? I am putting it extremely politely, but that is what we must ask ourselves.

Now, we have a member who was threatened by the Chinese government because he voted against its wishes. We do not care about its wishes. It did not elect us.

I just said that. The Prime Minister will never be able to say that the hon. member for La Prairie may have been threatened. We do not know. The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills was threatened two years ago, but we did not find out about it until this week. The government still says it was unaware.

I swear that if I were the prime minister of Canada, which will never happen, but let us just pretend for a moment, and I found out that a member had been threatened, I would be throwing the diplomat out five seconds later. It would not take me five weeks or five days. In just five seconds, he would be out on his ear.

If the Prime Minister had learned about this right away, he could have thrown him out and told him to beat it. Instead, he procrastinated. The Liberals got together to figure out what they should do. The Prime Minister knew two years ago, the rascal.

He knew two years ago. Now they are getting together to figure out what they should do. The opposition demanded that this person be ejected. They said that they could not do that and that it is no easy thing to expel an ambassador.

Finally, yesterday, they bought themselves a spine and announced they would be throwing him out. Now they are patting themselves on the back like they are heroes.

We do not believe that. Are any other members of the House being threatened by China? We do not know. It is troubling. It is very troubling.

• (1155)

Members of the House and their families may be under threat. The Prime Minister may know this is happening, but he will not say. The Prime Minister is a cross between Ulysses and Pontius Pilate. Happy the man who, like Ulysses, has travelled well.

There is one thing this Prime Minister likes. He likes to travel. Last weekend, when he was in front of the Liberals, he was happy because he was travelling to see the King—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to go to questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, at times, we can witness that the coalition between the Conservatives and the Bloc is doing quite well. It is kind of like the blue and the light blue. It is interesting.

I went through premiers Gary Doer, Greg Selinger, Gary Filmon and, of course, former prime minister Stephen Harper, all in opposition. I am very comfortable with what we have been able to accomplish.

I would challenge the member. He has a different view of the last eight years. I could talk about the tax break to the middle class; the GIS lifting hundred of thousands, going to millions, of people out of poverty; and the historic number of trade agreements signed off by the government. Shall we talk about COVID and about the nine million Canadians who benefited from CERB? What about the wage subsidy program? Shall we talk about post-COVID? We can talk about child care. We can talk about the health care agreements. We can talk about the Volkswagen deal. It is endless.

Privilege

That is a leader who has demonstrated an immense amount of focus, when every day, the Conservatives, and now the Bloc, are more concerned about character assassination. As those two political parties focus their attention on the negative, on the Prime Minister, and are spreading misinformation, we will continue to espouse what is important to Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, that was not really a question. It was a love letter to his own party. I am surprised to hear him list all the things that the government has done in the last eight years. Considering how much money they make, I should hope that they are getting things done. The Prime Minister certainly ought to be doing things. He has a packed schedule. However, we could list all the things he did not do or did wrong. Dental care was a mess, and CERB was plagued by fraud.

My colleague said that we are a coalition. I would respond that we are the coalition of democracy. That is what we are. The Conservatives are right to be angry with this government, because one of their members was intimidated, threatened for two years, and this government sat idly by. Now the government is trying to get the Bloc Québécois to say that they are only Conservatives and that they are not part of our party. Come on. They are right.

When the Conservatives are right on one issue, we are not ashamed to stand up and say we support them. The coalition for democracy is standing up to this government of opacity.

• (1200)

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. If I ever have the opportunity to be prime minister, regardless of where the threat came from and against whom, that diplomat and that country would know, exactly, that the government would not tolerate that.

It is NHL hockey playoffs right now. Evander Kane, from the Edmonton Oilers, said something that is a saying in my riding as well, which we say to bullies. I will paraphrase because some of the language is unparliamentary: If someone messes around, they will find out what will happen to them. That is the message I would send to China regarding this: Mess around and find out.

In my intervention, I said that there are two choices we have here: malicious intent or willful negligence. I want to ask what my hon. colleague believes as to why the Prime Minister sat on this information and did not inform the sitting member of Parliament.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, there is an obvious kernel of truth in my colleague's question. It is very troubling. Did the Prime Minister know the truth but fail to say anything when he should have, or did he not know because he was too naive? Which of these alternatives is preferable? Neither of them.

Privilege

The government obfuscates and remains silent every time we say something about Chinese interference. Their attitude is deny, deny, deny. Lives may be at stake, but the Liberals continue to deny. That is the problem.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from La Prairie for his speech. I always learn new turns of phrase from him. This time, it was, “It is about as easy as eating an apple through a tennis racket”. I had not heard that one before.

I would like to make it clear that the NDP obviously supports our Conservative colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills and his family, who are in an extremely delicate position. I also agree that troubling facts keep emerging, what with the secret police stations, the contributions to Liberal candidates, the strange donations to the Trudeau Foundation, and now these threats against a member of Parliament, who was not informed for two years.

There is nothing more important in a democracy than getting to the whole truth so that Canadians can trust our institutions and the electoral process. Does my colleague agree that the only way to get at the whole truth is to hold an independent public inquiry?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, my colleague is right. Speaking of coalitions, I think it is pretty clear. The Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP all agree. Is that partisanship? No, it is not.

I completely agree with my colleague that we need an independent public inquiry. We have been asking for one for a long time. The NDP has been asking for one. The Conservatives are also asking for one. The government got the brilliant idea to procrastinate once again, hoping things would get better on their own, only to discover that it had wasted two months and that the revelations keep on coming. It is not over yet, I am sure.

I therefore agree with the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. We need an independent public inquiry.

• (1205)

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague from La Prairie for the tone and mood of his speech. He addressed serious topics, but he found a way to make it fun to listen to. He is a talented speaker who should inspire many. I really like listening to him in the House.

A few days ago, the Prime Minister stated that he was not aware of the threats and intimidation that the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills had been facing for the last two years. Soon after, we learned that he may have been aware and that his entourage was aware. In short, all this is unclear. However, CSIS was well aware of this information and did its duty by notifying the Prime Minister's Office.

My question for my colleague is as follows: Does he feel that this government is listening to the agencies, especially CSIS, the way it should, or is it operating in isolation?

Is CSIS just there for decoration?

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, I recognize all the work done by my colleague. Our caucus truly appreciates him and so do his constituents.

The question is whether CSIS has discovered anything. I have never been there, but I imagine that those people must work hard. They are not sitting on their couches eating chocolates and waiting for people to come to them with information. They have to go look for the information and work hard.

They go look for information some place, somewhere, and that is extremely important. They want to protect Canada's democracy and parliamentarians. After making all these efforts, they come up against a government, and especially a prime minister, that completely ignores the hard work they do. There is reason for concern. We are in the dark.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will ask my question in English, because I do not have much time.

[English]

I want to thank the hon. member for his speech, the history and the truth. In my interactions as former House leader, I found that this member speaks the truth. He is honourable, and his word is his worth. I cannot actually say that about the Liberal or NDP House leaders.

Is there no other option at this point but to have a public inquiry, with Mr. Johnston, to get to the bottom of what is happening with foreign interference and all of the stuff that is happening with the Trudeau Foundation? Is an independent public inquiry the only way to get to the bottom of what is happening here?

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for La Prairie has 40 seconds to respond.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Madam Speaker, it would take me longer than 40 seconds to say how much I appreciate my colleague. He is amazing.

To answer his question, yes, an independent public inquiry is essential. One thing we know for sure about the Prime Minister is that he is in no way competent enough to find out what happened and disclose it publicly. He has to hand over the reins to someone else, and an independent, public inquiry is what it will take.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I too want to add my voice to the conversation we are having here today in this debate on privilege. The issue of a member's vote in this place is really what we are after today. Our ability to vote without influence from other countries is very important.

Privilege

I would note that the vote in question had to do with the recognition of the genocide of the Uyghur people in China. The Beijing government has been focused on repressing the Uyghurs through things such as forced abortion, forced sterilization, re-education camps and concentration camps. Members may have seen the photos of Uyghur folks lined up at the bus terminals and being loaded onto the trains. We have stated often in this place “never again”, and here we are watching “never again” happen again.

That vote that took place in the House of Commons was historic. The Canadian Parliament was one of the first parliaments around the world that voted to recognize that. It was something many members had worked fairly hard on, and we had also felt pressure from various corners to ensure that we got that right.

What is fascinating is that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills voted for that motion while the entire Canadian cabinet did not. That is telling, perhaps, as to the weight of that vote. However, it also raises the question of foreign influence happening here in Canada. What kind of influence is that having on the Canadian cabinet, given the fact that we have discovered now that the government knew for over two years that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills' family was being harassed because of this particular vote? What was happening to members of the cabinet in their personal lives and how was that being influenced? That is what this whole debate is about. It is about the privilege of members of Parliament to be able to do their job.

Probably one of the most important things we do as members of Parliament is to vote from our seats in this place. That is what we are elected to do. We are elected to take our seats in this place to vote on things. Votes are a moment in time. Votes are a very binary thing. We vote for something; we vote against something.

In many cases, when we have a vote, those are weighty moments. Members must consider all the ramifications and impacts of the position they take on that. There is nothing that brings more clarity into a situation than having a binary vote on a particular piece of legislation because that is when we get to find out about who is affected, what the ramifications are and all of these kinds of things. Particularly if people are upset about that vote, we get to hear about it after we cast that vote. Our ability to vote in this place is incredibly important.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has been a stalwart defender of democracy. This may be due in part to his roots, as he comes from Hong Kong, so he has a firm understanding of the relationship with the Beijing government and the world. Just due to the nature of his heritage, the member has some fortitude when it comes to understanding how democracy works, and he has worked very hard in this place to ensure that democracy works better. He has a very good grasp of the history of this place and the history of our mother Parliament over in England. He worked on the Reform Act, which is an act that has empowered individual members of Parliament. That is something that the member has been passionate about.

• (1210)

He has argued for increased members' budgets. He has argued for more members of Parliament, so we have more representation for

individual Canadians. His allegiance to democracy, parliamentary democracy and the House of Commons is unquestioned.

I want to thank him for that. I know his passion and diligence on these democracy issues are so important. That is perhaps the great irony of this particular situation. Of all members of Parliament for this to fall upon, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has impeccable credentials in the defence of democracy. That is why it is so frustrating to see that the government sat on this information for over two years, only for us, as individual members of Parliament, to find out about this through the press. That goes to show why the freedom of the press is so important.

This is something the Liberal government has been undermining over the last number of years, just as we have seen with Bill C-11. We see how voices that may disagree with the government may be repressed online. We see that with the funding of journalism across the country. We see this with the subsidization of CBC, how that money influences the reporting that we get.

This particular instance shows that the freedom of the press, the ability for the press to be unencumbered by owing the government a favour of any sort, is necessary. We see, with *The Globe and Mail* and *Global News*, that if it were not for the work they had done, we would never know about this. We would never know that, for over two years, the government and the Prime Minister sat on the information that a member of the House and his family were being threatened because of a vote that had taken place here.

We have heard, over the last couple of days as we have been having this debate, over and over again how the Liberals are trying to spin this, and it is classic gaslighting. My working definition of “gaslighting” is that whatever someone is doing, they accuse their opponents of doing the same. I would like to address a couple of those things.

One of the things they say is that the Conservatives did nothing when they were in power. The fact of the matter is that the Liberals have done nothing to stop this. They have allowed it. They have watched it grow. They have watched the foreign influence grow in Canada and have done nothing to prevent it over the last number of years.

The other thing that is interesting is that, under Stephen Harper, there was a different leader in China. When Stephen Harper was the prime minister, there was a different leader. China had a different outlook on the world under the other leader. There has been a significant shift.

If someone wants to look it up, they can google “wolf warrior”. The current leader of China, Xi Jinping, has openly stated that China is moving into a wolf warrior pose in the world. Instead of bidding its time, which was the previous leader's line, it is looking at being a wolf warrior. They are looking to be dominant in the world. There is no doubt about that. They are much more aggressive.

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That is a completely different context. I know the member for Winnipeg North will probably stand up to talk about Stephen Harper and the great job Stephen Harper did when he was the prime minister. The point is that, when Stephen Harper was the leader, Canada was seen as a strong player on the international stage. We were convening meetings to take on ISIL. We were a valued partner of the Five Eyes. Australia, the United States and the U.K. looked to Canada to provide a leadership role in many of these discussions. Now we are ignored, sidelined and not trusted by the international community when it comes to dealing with things like China.

The Beijing government worked much more carefully. It was much more concerned about what Canada had to say about what it was up to. Today, we have a completely different context.

• (1215)

Today, we see the Chinese run roughshod over Canadian values and institutions. They have set up police stations on Canadian sovereign soil. We have seen this over and over again. We just know that a lot of this is about posture. We know that, under Stephen Harper, Canada had a proud posture on the international stage. We had a posture that said we were open for business but that we had rules that everybody had to follow. Canadian sovereignty was something we were very concerned about.

In fact, we spent a lot of time mapping the north. The entire search for the Franklin expedition was a mapping exercise to establish Canadian sovereignty in the north. This was a nation-building exercise. It was something that we told the Canadian people about. It was a source of pride for Canadians. However, we also said we needed to establish Canadian sovereignty in the north because of threats from China.

Threats from China were something that the Harper government took very seriously. It was something that we went into with both eyes open. We dealt with China, but we said that we knew it was a Communist country and that Communism is not something that is equivocal. We cannot make equivalencies between Communism and democracy, and therefore, the rules of engagement that we deal with when dealing with France, Germany, Holland or the United States are going to be different from those we have when we are dealing with China.

Because it operates on a different system, we need to ensure that we deal with China appropriately. To some degree, this comes back to ideas around humanity and whether people are basically good. Maybe it is postmodernism that the government really espouses, with ideas around equivalency, and we just have to basically trust that everybody is good. There are evil actors in the world. There are nefarious actors, and China is one of them. China has not been a force for good in the world over the last number of decades.

That is a major difference between Conservatives and Liberals. Liberals have a naive view. They want to equivocate. They want to say that it is a different system, but it is just as good. I would argue that this is not the case and that there are threats and nefarious actors in the world. These are threats and actors that we must take seriously and challenge. We must stand up for democracy and make the arguments for why democracy is better and why the Western systems are better.

Those are important things to do, and I do not think it is good enough to say, “You do it your way, and we will do it ours.” I think we should say, “This is the way we do it because it is better, because it is moral and because it is the right way to do things.” I see this postmodern idea that there is no truth, or that the truth is relative, as a failure of the current government. All of these kinds of things have really been worked into it.

The other area of gaslighting I see happen through this debate, particularly in questions from the Liberals, is how this is the member's fault and how the member should have known about this. Of course—

• (1220)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I apologize to my hon. colleague for interrupting his riveting speech, but we have no French interpretation. We have to select the English channel to hear anything. The French channel is completely silent.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will look into it right away.

[*English*]

Is it working now? Yes.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, the other area where we are seeing some significant gaslighting is where the government says that it is the member's fault and the member should have known about this. This is an interesting thing about victim blaming. We see the government accuse others of doing this all the time, and here we are seeing that once again. The government's newest line is that it did not know; it only found out on Monday, just the other day. However, there seems to be a lot of evidence that it knew about this over two years ago. That does not include all the other troubles we have with foreign interference in this country. The Trudeau Foundation is embroiled in a whole host of scandals now around taking Chinese money.

When the government was kind of embarrassed about its coziness with the Beijing government and Chinese influence in Canada, it appointed a special rapporteur. This position does not have any legal standing in Canada; nonetheless, it has appointed this person. One would think that if one were trying to allay Canadians' fears around this foreign interference issue, one would find somebody with no connections to the Beijing government and no relationship to the people who are being accused of not doing anything about it. However, here we are with the director of the Trudeau Foundation being appointed as the special rapporteur.

That organization has taken money from the Beijing government or their emissaries. We have seen all kinds of confusion around who took the money and how it was organized. The Prime Minister's brother was the one who facilitated a donation. Then we see that this organization's annual report names the Prime Minister as a member. Now, he says he is unaffiliated and has not had contact with it for over 10 years, but his name is still in the annual report. He is still part of the Trudeau Foundation. That is the reality, whether the Prime Minister wants to admit it or not. He can say that he is currently uninvolved in the operations of the organization, but when he leaves this place, he will be able to be a part of its directorship. If he says that funds donated to that organization today could not be disbursed in the future, what does he take Canadians for?

Today, donations are being made to the Trudeau Foundation; despite saying he is unaffiliated to it at the moment, the Prime Minister has connections to this organization. It is obvious that even if it were true that he is unaffiliated, which it is not, he will be reaffiliated in the future. He will be back on the governance board doing the same things, and he will have whatever kind of money has been donated to the Trudeau Foundation at his disposal once again.

We have also seen over and over that the Liberals' claim to success is about how much money they spend. The Liberals accuse the past Conservative government of not doing anything and then go on to state how much they have increased funding for whatever the situation is. The Liberals accuse Conservatives of not having done something compared with how much more money they are spending on a particular thing.

Again, this is another place where the Liberals will say that they have spent more money on this, which is an interesting way of ranking things. If we can get something and not have to spend money on it, that would seem to be a good win. We will not have to spend money on it if we can have national security because of our posture in the world and because we speak softly and carry a big stick. We will not have to spend money if we have no foreign interference because, rhetorically and by our posture, we signal to the world that Canada is not open to foreign interference.

• (1225)

These are things that will happen naturally and organically. We will prevent foreign interference by our posture and by our rhetoric, and we will not have to spend money. However, the Liberals will come and tell us how much money they are spending on initiative X, Y or Z as a point of proof that they are doing more. I just want to reject that whole premise outright. The amount of money that is spent dealing with a particular thing does not necessarily correlate to taking action on that thing.

I just want to restate once again that Canada is not for sale. Canada is a sovereign nation. The Canadian government should do all that it can to prevent foreign influence in our democracy and ensure that Canadian democracy is upheld wherever it is under threat.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just to pick up on the member's last points, people who are following the debate should be very much aware of the facts. The fact is that, whether the Conservatives want to agree or disagree, the Prime Minister first found out about this just last week. He took

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immediate action. Within a week, we now have a diplomat being expelled from Canada.

Back on March 12, we talked about establishing a foreign influence transparency registry. On March 15, we put in a special rapporteur, who could well come back suggesting that we have a public inquiry. The Prime Minister says that if that is the recommendation, that is what we will accept. Would the member not acknowledge that the Prime Minister found out for the very first time last week, as he has indicated?

• (1230)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, the member will have to forgive me for not believing a lot of what comes across from that side of the floor. There was the WE Charity scandal, the SNC-Lavalin scandal and the question of who stayed in a \$6,000-a-night hotel room. We have seen over and over again that the government has not been forthcoming. It has been a distract-and-deflect kind of government. Therefore, we are not going to take the Prime Minister at his word. We are going to continue to investigate this and call for an independent inquiry. We are going to hold the government to account so that we can show Canadians that there is an ethical government-in-waiting ready to take a seat on that side of the House.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, the motion is important because it enables us to express our indignation and shine a light on what happened to my Conservative colleague and his family.

Since day one, this government has been reacting instead of taking action. This has been going on for weeks. It is hard for us to believe that the Prime Minister just happened to find out last week that a member and his family were being threatened for the past two years. That is pretty hard to believe.

There is only one way to shine a light on the situation as a whole, which is not pretty: an independent public inquiry. We have been calling for this for weeks, as my colleague just said.

Instead of waiting for the special rapporteur, who is not independent in the least, will the Prime Minister stand up right now and launch an independent public inquiry?

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, that is probably the crux of the situation. Canadians are looking to the government to provide stability, to provide clarity and to ensure that this kind of thing does not happen anymore. A public inquiry that is truly independent and has the ability to follow its nose and to look in the dark corners, if set up correctly, would actually have the opportunity to bring trust back to our Canadian institutions.

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The member is totally right in that this is bigger than just the individual member. I mentioned this off the top. For me, it is an interesting thing that the entire cabinet did not vote on that particular item, on the same vote that the member's family was threatened over. Therefore, was their vote being influenced? Were their families being threatened, or was there some other part of their personal life that was being used to extort a non-vote on that particular item? This is the one that we know about. What other actions have been happening in this place to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have a responsibility in the House to protect democracy, and that means we have to be the adults in the room.

When the allegations of electoral interference came up, the Prime Minister reasonably should have said that there would be a public investigation so that people would know that it was not so much just about China, but that there could be all manner of foreign interference. We know about Russian bot interference during the convoy. Let us do that and reassure people.

We found out the shocking news about the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I do not know that there is any evidence that the Prime Minister knew two years ago, but when he was made aware, he did not expel the diplomat, and that sent a very disturbing signal. In the midst of this debate, and I mean no offence to my Liberal colleagues, the fact that they put forward the member for Winnipeg North and the member for Kingston and the Islands is turning this into a gong show, and that is not helpful.

However, I would ask my hon. colleague about his own leader, who is getting up and making outrageously juvenile claims that thousands of Chinese Canadians were intimidated into not voting, in order to benefit the Prime Minister. That kind of exploitation and falsehood is also dangerous to democracy.

We need to take this thing in a focused manner. We need to be able to reassure people. However, to exploit it like the Conservative leader is doing is, to me, as concerning for democracy as the failure of the Liberals to take responsibility for their ship and what they should be doing right now to protect democracy.

• (1235)

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, building on the comments from my hon. colleague around the gaslighting that happens in this place, one of the other things that the Liberals bring up all the time is the perceived partisanship of this. Again, it is interesting that they accuse their opponents of doing what they are actually doing.

One of the things that is fairly obvious is that the Liberals benefited from the Beijing influence in the previous election, and, therefore, were not interested in dealing with this. It is becoming increasingly obvious that one of the reasons the Prime Minister did not deal with the perceived foreign influence of Beijing is that the Liberals stood to benefit from the influence. Therefore, when they say it is partisan interest that is driving this, that is precisely why they did not do anything.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it cannot be emphasized enough how important this debate is for the proper functioning of Canadian democracy. I know that the Liberals seem to be making light of the fact of what happens in this place.

My question for the member for Peace River—Westlock is this: Is he concerned about what seems to be the increasing disconnect between the legislative and executive branches of government with respect to how Canadian democracy is supposed to function?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, 100% that is a concern for me. This is part of the Liberals' increased Americanization of this place.

We get a lot of American politics that comes across the border in our media, so many people would not necessarily know, but, in the United States, the executive branch does not sit in the legislature like it does here in Canada. In Canada, the executive branch is just the Prime Minister and the cabinet, who sit right in our legislature. We have the opportunity to interact with them. We see, increasingly, that the government is less and less interested in participating in the chamber and ensuring that they can be held accountable to everyday Canadians and this place.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulo, BQ): Madam Speaker, foreign interference in nothing new. Let me provide a quick run-down. First there was the contract for embassy equipment awarded to Nuctech, a Chinese company. Next we have the telecommunications contract for border services and protections for the Prime Minister awarded to a company using products from Hytera, a Chinese company. Then we have the Trudeau Foundation, the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg and the illegal police stations. Let us not forget the delayed release of the two Michaels and the threats to an MP and his family.

How many so-called coincidences will it take for this government to understand that Chinese interference is real, and that an independent public commission of inquiry is absolutely critical? When will this government finally take action to send a clear message to the Chinese government that Quebec and Canada are not for sale?

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, the coincidences are piling up, as the member points out, and that is probably not a coincidence. I remember that, way back before 2015, the Prime Minister, at an event, said that he admired the basic dictatorship of China. Little did we know how prophetic that would be.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand to debate the things that are so important to Canadians in this place.

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Since it is the first opportunity I have had to speak since last Wednesday, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that May 3 was Constitution Day in Poland. This takes on a special relevance in the midst of the debate taking place today, because it is a celebration in the midst of significant adversity that the Republic of Poland experienced throughout its history. In 1791, it brought about the first modern constitution on the European continent. For many years, though, while Poland was under Soviet control, people were not allowed to celebrate that milestone. It is certainly an honour for me, as someone of Polish heritage, and for many of the Polish diaspora across our country and so many around the world who look at that example of peace, freedom and democracy and acknowledge the importance of that. I wish the Polish diaspora here in Canada and around the world who celebrated on May 3 a happy Constitution Day.

We have before us what is a very unique debate. It has been very troubling over the last couple of weeks and number of months, when we have seen highlighted in this place, and specifically in media across the country, how there have been attacks on Canadian democracy. It cannot be emphasized enough how important it is to ensure that the first priority of any prime minister, any member who sits in the chamber, and, I suggest, every Canadian should be to be aware of how important the preservation of our democracy is.

When I was first elected, in 2019, and, more than that, as I have been engaged in politics in various capacities, from a volunteer to a political staffer and a number of other different ways throughout my life, I have seen that we need to emphasize how important the preservation of our democratic infrastructure is. However, over the last number of weeks, we have seen that it is under threat. It is one thing to see something under threat; what is worse is that we have seen that the current Prime Minister and what seems like a small group within the Liberal government that is apparently calling the shots have refused to take meaningful action to protect Canada's democratic infrastructure. We see that hitting a boiling point.

We have before us a privilege motion, concerning the privileges of a member of Parliament that were seen to be violated, according to the Speaker's ruling that was made yesterday. We have what is, in its very nature, something that takes priority. For the many Canadians watching this debate, let me unpack a bit of the history as to why this debate is even taking place, because the word "privilege" is something that does not necessarily enter the lexicon of most people when they think about democracy.

When we look back at the very origins of this place, the reason why there is green carpet in this place speaks back to the more than 800-year history of why we have the democratic institution called the House of Commons. We have what are called privileges as members of Parliament in this place, and they date back to when there was a tension with the executive government, which was the Crown in the United Kingdom about 800 years ago, that led to a large group of English noblemen who were not in agreement with the Crown at the time. It led to disagreements, and they came to a resolution, which resulted largely in, although not limited to, the Magna Carta, which created the ability for discourse to take place without fear of repercussions from the Crown.

Many of the symbols that exist in this place today are in direct reference to that strong democratic history that we have. I cannot

emphasize enough how important it is even to just have the honour and privilege of being able to stand here to represent the 110,000 or so people I represent in east central Alberta, in the constituency of Battle River—Crowfoot. That came from eight centuries of figuring out how that works. When it comes to a privilege motion or a privilege debate, as we have before us, what that means, for all those watching, is that somebody's ability to do their job in this place was hindered.

• (1240)

My colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills is someone I have come to know over the last couple of years and have followed significantly throughout his career in politics as I volunteered for the Conservative Party and monitored all things Canadian politics, including his run for leadership and his efforts to protect and build Canadian democratic infrastructure. What we see here is that, because of the actions of a hostile foreign regime, the Communist dictatorship in Beijing, the People's Republic of China, his ability to do his job in this place was put at risk.

That is egregious, and I do not think there is any disagreement in this place that it is egregious, and it is good we are able to have debate and discussion about it here today. The context in which that has happened is astounding. Like I said to start, it is one thing for a threat to take place against our democratic infrastructure, but it is very much another thing for it to have taken place and not been responded to.

Over the last number of months, we have had significant debate in this place about the idea of foreign interference. It is certainly not new. This is something that has been debated at length over different points in history over the last number of years, and certainly going back much further than that. However, we have seen that the Liberals did not seem to take it seriously. I would suggest today that this is the real crux of why what we are doing here today is so important and why their actions have been so disappointing.

Again, I will come back to the idea of privilege. A member of Parliament has the right to speak and be unhindered in their ability to do their job in this place. That is very important. It is absolutely essential. We cannot have a hostile foreign regime, or anybody, keeping us from being able to represent our constituents. That is the idea of privilege.

The lack of action on the part of the Prime Minister and the Liberal government is very concerning, and I will get into some of the timelines and specifics as to why, when we look at the facts, that certainly is the conclusion that I and so many have come to.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has spoken very eloquently throughout the course of the debate over the last couple of weeks, even when members from the Liberal Party were accusing him of maybe being the one perpetrating falsehoods. There were a whole host of other peripheral discussions taking place.

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What the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has emphasized is that he, as a member of Parliament, has the opportunity to rise on a point of privilege to be able to make his case heard in Canada's democratic institution, the House of Commons, the people's House of Commons, yet many Canadians do not have that ability. How many Canadians are facing pressure from the Communist dictatorship in Beijing or other hostile foreign regimes, yet do not have the voice or ability to make their stand in a place like this?

It is not simply about whether an MP was able to perform his duties. That is certainly part of it, but so significant is the fact that there are so many Canadians, whether of the Chinese diaspora, from other groups who may face pressure from different governments around the world, or any Canadian who would face that kind of pressure, who do not necessarily have the same voice that we do in this place. As we stand and debate our right to be able to protect Canadian democracy, we need to not only think about the 338 of us in this place, but also to think so seriously about every single Canadian who could face similar struggles.

As we look at that, let us make sure we look at the regular, common person. Let us make sure we look at every single person, whether they escaped a hostile foreign regime to come to Canada for a free and better life, or whether they are a multi-generational Canadian. We need to take this seriously, because it is not only about MPs. This is often what the Liberals forget. They talk about what happens in Ottawa as if it were the pinnacle of all things that matter. Everything that happens in this place needs to be focused on the Canadian people, because they are who matter.

• (1245)

Let me unpack the timeline before us.

Approximately two years ago, it was revealed that intelligence was sent up the chain, and we know for a fact it reached the Prime Minister's national security adviser, that there was an effort to influence the decisions of a member of this place by a hostile foreign regime, being the Communist dictatorship in Beijing. It is not simply media reports that have highlighted it. It has been corroborated through testimony and evidence.

Let us look back two years ago at the context for which that pressure was placed on the member's family, which still lives in Hong Kong. It is important to know what the debate was that led to that.

There were two motions, and this happened around the time of the second of two motions. One was a committee motion and the other an opposition day motion. Parliament was tasked with discussing and debating the idea that the Communist dictatorship in Beijing was perpetrating a genocide against a minority group, specifically the Uyghurs, in China.

If we want to look at the context for that, we can look at the public record to see what those votes and debates were. For both of those motions, the Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois, I believe the NDP and in fact many Liberals were part of the group of MPs who voted to say that what the dictatorship in Beijing was doing was bad news, it was constituted genocide, from forced abortions to slave labour camps to other very serious things.

I cannot help but recall one specific instance that left me deeply troubled about the state of our Canadian democracy and specifically about how flippantly the Liberals treated it. When faced with one of those votes, a member of the Liberal cabinet stood while the vote was taking place and said that he was abstaining from the vote on behalf of the Canadian government.

As somebody who knows parliamentary procedure, and I know the table has followed closely all things that have happened in this place in its 800 or so years of tradition, that is not how things work in this place. MPs vote. Therefore, it was not only unprecedented for a member of the Liberal cabinet to stand and make that declaration, but it certainly left a bad taste in my mouth. For many observers who follow Canadian democracy closely, it was incredibly concerning that an effort was made by the government, the cabinet, ministers of the Crown led by the Prime Minister, to make a declaration like that. In fact, it was the chair occupant at the time who basically highlighted that it was not okay, that this was not how things worked around here. We saw two motions over a period of a number of months when the Liberal government, the cabinet, the ministers of the Crown, refused to take a stand on the issue.

Two years later, because Conservatives took a stand, pressure was applied to a member. This is not just any member, although constitutionally all MPs are equal in this place, which is one of the cornerstones of what our Westminster system of democratic government means. This member is the shadow minister for foreign affairs, the person responsible for providing that critical oppositional perspective to the minister of the Crown. It is incredibly poignant that it was not the family of some random member of the House, but specifically the opposition critic, the shadow minister for foreign affairs, whose family had this pressure exerted upon it.

• (1250)

That is the context for what happened two years ago.

We now fast-forward to about two weeks ago. On a Monday morning, I happened to be on Twitter while I was on my way to a meeting when all of a sudden I started to see these articles referencing that the family of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills had been pressured. This was a developing story. It was one of those days, as the Speaker and others in this place would know well when something like that develops, things changed rapidly.

We started asking questions. We learned over the course of the last two weeks a very concerning trend of events. The Prime Minister's national security adviser was advised of this two years ago. I have before me the 2022 CSIS public report in which it talks about a lot of the efforts it undertakes. It talks about accountability, about people being first, outreach, briefings to elected officials and whatnot. This is all well and good, and important, but the fact is that the Prime Minister's national security adviser was advised two years ago, yet the Prime Minister was not informed.

I am going to talk about the disconnect between the legislative branch and the executive branch of government in a moment. I want to highlight some testimony that we heard at committee.

The Prime Minister's chief of staff, who acts as the gatekeeper, so to speak, talked at length about all the information and the process in which the Prime Minister received security information. When Ms. Telford testified before committee, she may not have realized the implication of the testimony when she referenced, and I am paraphrasing, that the Prime Minister read everything that was put before him. Quite frankly, I have my doubts as to whether that is the case, but that is my personal opinion.

We have a great disconnect between what has been said and what seems to have happened. We have a great disconnect between the security apparatus in our country and the information that it is obviously trying to get to the decision-makers and the ability for the Crown, the government, being able to make decisions. That is deeply concerning.

I have talked a lot about how it is so essential to safeguard our democratic infrastructure, to stand up for the abilities of Canadians to be involved and engaged in their democracy. One of the issues I would suggest should be highlighted as of primary importance is one of a technical matter, and it is somewhat unique to the Westminster system of Parliament and how it operates in Canada, and that is the growing disconnect between the legislative and the executive branch of government.

It is inconvenient to the Liberal agenda to have a minority Parliament. We know that. The Prime Minister has referenced that on many occasions. Democracy is the reason why this place exists, the reason why a government operates on the idea of confidence from the people's House, notwithstanding the coalition agreement and some of those intricacies of the current circumstances, whether it is committees or actions of this place. In fact, it seems to be no accident that the government sued the Speaker when it did not want to follow through on actions of the House, and that puts Canadian democracy at risk.

I would be remiss if I did not mention this. Everyone in this place has a mom, and as we come to the conclusion of this debate, I hope I will be given the latitude to simply say this. As Mother's Day is soon upon us, I wish Danielle, my beautiful wife, my mom, my two grandmas and my great-grandma, who is 100 years old, a happy Mother's Day. On behalf of myself and all my constituents, happy Mother's Day to every mom in Canada.

• (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I applaud the member for his comments in recognizing the important role that mothers play in our society. I would echo those words.

However, I am in disagreement with the member on virtually everything else he has said. I would classify it as spreading information that is factually not true. For example, we do know for a fact, and it is a fact, that the Prime Minister found out about this issue just last week. We know for a fact that the Prime Minister has taken

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a number of actions, and within a week, we have seen a diplomat asked to leave the country over the issue.

Whether it was at the very beginning or where we are today, this government has taken the issue of foreign interference very seriously. Could the member explain to me why the former Conservative government chose to do nothing on the issue?

• (1300)

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I find it that interesting, and I talked a lot about process and history and why this debate was important, that the member seems to disagree with virtually everything I said, other than my wish of a happy Mother's Day to all moms in Canada. This highlights the concern that exists with the growing disconnect between the executive government branch and the legislative branch.

The Liberals say that they did a lot, yet the Prime Minister's chief of staff said that he saw everything. Now, all of a sudden, he did not know about it.

This is not just me as a Conservative saying this. I am hearing this from many constituents and many Canadians across the country. It is either ignorance or incompetence. Either way, it is incredibly concerning and we have to do better as a country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, obviously I am appalled by this whole situation. I am concerned about our parliamentary privilege. There is also the issue of security for us and for my family members.

I would like my colleague to comment on the message that the Prime Minister's inaction is sending. How should we, as members of Parliament, interpret his inaction in relation to the fundamental public service that we perform and that serves democracy? What message does this send to any potential candidates who might decide to sacrifice part of their lives to go into politics, when that can have a dramatic impact on their safety and that of their families?

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right. It is not serving our democracy well.

More than that is the fact that it is not only members of Parliament who have been pressured in an effort to silence their voices when they stand up for human rights, let alone many other things that we stand up for on a regular basis.

As the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has referenced repeatedly, it is not only the privileges of members of Parliament that we need to be concerned about, but rather the implication this has for all Canadians, whether that is because they swore their oath to the Crown today or because they are multi-generational Canadians.

Democracy is put at risk when we allow hostile foreign states to take advantage of Canadians. The fact that the Liberals did nothing is so incredibly concerning and puts our democracy at risk.

Privilege

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member has talked a lot about the foreign interference that has taken place in our country beyond just my colleague who we are speaking of directly. He also raised the point that in committee the Prime Minister's chief of staff stated that nothing was ever withheld from him and that he read everything.

Given that intelligence reports have been produced with regard to my hon. colleague and the harassing nature of Beijing toward him and his family, given that those reports have been released and given that the Prime Minister has access to everything and nothing is ever withheld, that he reads everything and never ignores a thing, I wonder what my hon. colleague might say to the Liberals' proclamation that the Prime Minister somehow did not see these documents.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, there was an old radio show, although I did not listen to it on the radio, as I am too young for that, in which detectives would say, "Just the facts."

What my friend from Lethbridge has referenced is where the facts dispute the official narrative that the Prime Minister and members of the Liberal Party have forwarded. The fact is that they obviously knew about it or they lied at committee in regard to another matter. That is a question; it is not an accusation. If my reading of the Standing Orders is accurate, it is my understanding that the question can be raised.

Either way, we need to get to the bottom of this, because the facts are disputing the Liberals' narrative. Something does not add up and Canadians deserve answers.

• (1305)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that he might want to stay away from the word "lie". We cannot say indirectly what we cannot say directly.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, maybe the member can explain why it is that the Conservatives intentionally choose to ignore the fact that the Prime Minister did find out last week and, as I indicated, a number of actions were taken virtually immediately, one of which led to a diplomat being expelled from Canada within a week. I would suggest that is action.

Why do the Conservatives continue to want to make this a political issue by spreading misinformation?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, in relation to your previous ruling, accusing somebody of spreading misinformation, I would suggest, is doing indirectly what they are afraid to do directly.

We are faced here with a pretty substantial dispute on what the Prime Minister has said, versus what everything else says. When it comes to the Prime Minister's record, his is a litany of broken election promises, of things he said or did not say, and of accusing people of experiencing things differently. Quite often we look at the integrity of somebody who is making a claim as to whether it can be backed up. Of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, members

of all political parties have emphasized how trustworthy he is. When it comes down to the claims that Prime Minister has made, I cannot find anybody who is willing to believe a word he says, other than those Liberals.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the other question, I just want to say that members are using the words "spreading misinformation". Both sides have used it over and over again, and I would just say that, again, it is similar to saying that someone is lying.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have been listening to this debate intently. There has been a lot of information that has come out over the last couple of weeks as a result of CSIS and The Globe and Mail. I am going to suggest that there is a disconnect between government, our security establishment and certainly the information that is being leaked to the media. There is only one option, and it is the only option that Parliament should be seized with, but also Canadians are showing a willingness and a desire for an open public inquiry into foreign interference, and I am wondering if my hon. colleague shares those sentiments.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, my friend from Barrie—Innisfil is right. A public, fair, free and open inquiry is absolutely essential. That is one small step that needs to be taken to help Canadians to restore their trust in our democratic institutions. Canadians cannot trust what happens here and Canadians, regardless of their political stripe, cannot trust what their Prime Minister says. We see increasingly this is the case, and that is not my opinion, that is increasingly what Canadians say when they are polled.

It is so deeply concerning about the future of our democracy, so we need that full, transparent and open public inquiry on this issue, and we need to ensure we get to the bottom of it, so that we can do the tough work to restore trust in our institutions, but we have to do so.

I would simply note that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has referenced how this case is only the tip of the iceberg of foreign election interference in Canada. That behooves each and every one of us to take seriously the fact that we have to get answers. We have to get to the bottom of this, so that we can preserve our democracy.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his great intervention.

Things have gone badly over the last eight years, and they are going badly. Inflation is rampant. The economy is struggling. Canadians are not able to keep up and are not able to make ends meet.

Members may ask themselves how are these connected to the intimidation campaign orchestrated by Wei Zhao against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and other members. They are more connected than we may think.

Governments work on many levels. We act locally with our neighbours, voters, Canadians who farm, Canadians who work in the energy sector and Canadians who care for our communities. As members of Parliament, we also have a role to play internationally.

The things that we say publicly have consequences that are substantially larger than they may appear to be at first glance. The Prime Minister and his ministers know this. What is worse is that they knew this when they were in the third party position in this House and they were willing to do anything to return to power.

In 2013, 10 years ago, the Prime Minister said, “There’s a level of admiration I actually have for China,” because of its basic dictatorship. It seemed foolish, did it not? It seemed outlandish and bizarre.

Inexplicably, Canadians who were too busy living their own lives, and not tuned in to the inner workings of politics, could not be faulted for missing that there was possibly something more behind it. Perhaps it was not spoken off the top of his head in an absent-minded moment. Perhaps it was an invitation.

Other governments listen. They listen to what we say in this House and in committee. They listen even closer to what we say in the media. They listen especially carefully when we say their name, is that not right, China?

Why should we care? We know they are listening. Here is why we should care: China will do what it always does. It acts in its own best interest. It will always look after its own best interest no matter the risk and no matter the cost, it will unabashedly do that until it gets caught, and even after it gets caught.

Why should we care? We have something to lose. We have a delicately crafted democracy. It is not perfect—

• (1310)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have a point of order.

The hon. government House leader.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment at the next sitting be 12 midnight pursuant to the order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the minister’s request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

Privilege

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, the question was this: Why should we care? We should care because we have something to lose. We have a delicately crafted democracy. It is not perfect, but we are proud of it and it is a democracy that we built together and one that we are proud of as Canadians. However, it is fragile. Threats to our democracy are real and they need to be treated as such.

We have heard stories over the last number of weeks about the intimidation tactics that Canadians from China and Canadians with family in China faced in the last election. We have had a member of the Liberal caucus leave the party among allegations that he was part of foreign interference by the Chinese Communist government. He stands accused of having a hand in delaying the return of Canadians held in China because it was politically valuable to the Liberal Party. Now, we have the Conservative MP for Wellington—Haltton Hills reveal that he and his family were targets for the Chinese state interference in 2021.

Why, though, did the Government of China want to ensure that the Liberals won the last election and, in fact, the last two elections? Here is why. The Conservative stance on the Chinese Communist government was too principles-based and the resolve of our party was too strong to be advantageous to foreign interference. The Conservative position was in line with 53% of what Canadians believe, which is that the government’s response to China in recent years has not been strong enough and that more needs to be done. In fact, a recent poll from the Angus Reid Institute shows that 69% of Canadians believe that the government is scared of standing up to China, including 91% of past Conservative voters, 62% of past NDP voters and 46% of those who have mistakenly voted for the Liberal Party at some point in their life.

Let us not overlook the recent activity with spy balloons that are in Canadian airspace and how our Prime Minister has little to say about the ongoing situation. We know that foreign interference can undermine the integrity of democratic processes, such as elections, by attempting to sway voters or influence political outcomes. We live in a country where corporations cannot legally provide any funding to political candidates. Individuals are limited to contributing \$1,700 annually. The reason for this is to prevent our politicians from being bought off by the big money of special interest groups and wealthy individuals. Canadians themselves can only contribute \$5,000 to their own campaigns and yet Liberals think that it is okay for the Trudeau Foundation to receive \$200,000 from two businessmen identified as being linked to the Communist government in China. That is utter, absolute nonsense. For those listening at home, the House ethics committee is probing a \$200,000 donation given to the charity by two men with links to the Chinese Communist government. The committee is deciding whether the donation was an attempt by Beijing to curry favour with the Prime Minister.

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If we can just for one minute cut through the political rhetoric and admit to ourselves, like all Canadians already have, that we know this money was intended to buy favour with the Prime Minister, ignoring the reality would be willful blindness on all of our parts. We are sent here to represent our constituents, Canadians, but also to defend our Canadian democracy. If the members opposite need to wonder why they are here or why they cannot stand in their places and say that, when a foreign government that the Prime Minister admires so openly donates a six-figure sum to a foundation in the name of his father and run by his brother, it is at best inappropriate and at worst foreign interference.

• (1315)

This is not just any country getting uncomfortably close with our Prime Minister. It is among the worst in the world for a government's treatment of ethnic minorities, shown by its treatment of Uyghurs, Tibetans and Falun Gong practitioners. If at any point we want to see how far the Prime Minister's admiration of the Beijing leadership goes, we can just ask him to stand up for Uyghurs, Tibetans and Falun Gong practitioners in a meaningful way when meeting with Chinese leadership. He will not. He is afraid. He is afraid that he will offend the country he so admires.

The ruling of the Speaker of the House is an important first step, but now the committee needs to be allowed to do its job, which is a tall order with this government. It seems that whenever a committee is trying to do its duty for Canadians and thoroughly investigate or review bills, the Liberals and their NDP coalition partners find a way to strangle the committee and steamroll democracy.

Here is an example of that: I sit on the public safety committee, and we are currently reviewing Bill C-21, the firearms legislation. It has been in front of us for quite some time. When Canadians hear that we have been at this for months, it may seem slow, but in fact, we are simply doing a job of government. The government put the bill forward as a handgun bill and then, in a move that can only be seen as averting democratic process, stuffed the bill full of other unrelated amendments, completely changing the scope.

What happened when we brought this it up? It was steamrolled by the Chair in a unilateral decision that it was in order when, in fact, we know it was not. That was upheld again by the Liberal alliance when we challenged the Chair. The Liberals and the NDP are preparing to quash debate on that bill and limit the opposition on each of their amendments to five minutes per amendment and then force votes.

Over in the PMO, there is—

• (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is proving, by the statements he is making, that more and more of his debate is not about the motion. The member is talking about other legislation. He is not talking about the motion at hand. He is either attacking the Prime Minister or talking about issues that are not relevant.

Some hon. members: Debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am able to make my rulings.

The hon. parliamentary secretary knows full well that there is some latitude during discussions in the House and that other matters get brought into the debates. I would say that this is what is happening, and the hon. parliamentary secretary has raised more a point of debate than a point of order.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner has the floor.

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I appreciate your ruling on this.

As I said before, the Liberals and the NDP are preparing to quash debate on Bill C-21, limit opposition to only five minutes per amendment and then force votes. As I said, over in the PMO, there is a Prime Minister proud of the basic dictatorship that he has created for himself.

When the Speaker of the House made his ruling, and in that ruling supported a prima facie case of contempt concerning the intimidation campaign orchestrated by Wei Zhao against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, it gave me hope and it ought to give Canadians hope.

The Speaker of the House and I are no different. We are two MPs, elected by our constituents to represent them here in Ottawa. We are both doing our best with the skills and experiences we have. We know that we have to go back to our constituents, face them and account for the decisions that we make in this place.

I speak here today with some hesitancy, as we are not immune to the intimidation that was faced by the MP for Wellington—Halton Hills and other members of the House. I know that speaking on this important topic opens the possibility of being put in the sight of the Communist government in Beijing, much in the same way that I can imagine the Speaker of the House had and was possibly thinking about when he drafted this decision.

For me and those in law enforcement, we have faced these decisions before. Back in the years I was in policing, I faced threats and intimidation, but I always knew that my brothers in blue had my back. There was a sense of being protected from those who wished me harm because we were a team, a family.

In this place we are a family too, but recently the trust that is needed to rely on each other as a family has been eroding. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and its cross-party membership is now in a unique position to rebuild that trust. It will need to look past party differences, just as the Speaker of House did and has been able to do. It will need to take the required time, debate openly and review the situation. It will have a chance to send back a decision that shows support to the MP for Wellington-Halton Hills and other members of the House who have faced the intimidation campaign orchestrated by Wei Zhao on behalf of the Communist Government of China, as well as the others who could possibly face that, moving forward.

This committee can show Canadians and the Beijing Communist government that, although we disagree on a lot, and I mean a lot, when it comes to protecting Canadian democracy, we are all unwavering. That would send a clear message to Beijing to stay out of our politics, and a strong message to all members of the House that we have each others' backs. Will we admit that we are susceptible to foreign interference, or will the Prime Minister instruct his coalition to continue to cover this up, to steamroll the committee, as they seem eager to do when it comes to domestic policy such as the example I gave with Bill C-21? Will the committee show the world that we are fractionalized with a system of government that can be influenced from the outside? Will the Prime Minister utilize his control through the basic dictatorship he has been building in China's likeness?

I hope that the members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs have the same sense of honour and good conscious that the Speaker of this House showed in the *prima facie* decision he made.

• (1325)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague, with whom I serve on the public safety committee. He reflected on his career in law enforcement and his profound shock and disappointment at the foreign interference and the intimidation of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. We all share that concern.

I also note that the member opposite spent a considerable amount of time talking about how much he supported the convoy that occupied Ottawa and how much time he spent with the organizers of that convoy. I would like to know if he is as concerned about the Russian foreign interference that took place during the support of the convoy—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is a point of order from the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, it is certainly over the top for the member to impugn the integrity of another member on this side with that question. He should take back that comment. I think that would be appropriate in this case.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This is another point of debate.

The hon. member for Vancouver Granville has the floor.

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Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member opposite, having supported the convoy, and having met with the organizers of the convoy, if he is equally concerned about Russia's interference in amplifying the message of the convoy. If so, what does he propose to do about Russia's interference in that situation?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I find the question odd. Distraction seems to be the common theme here.

Those involved in the “freedom convoy” were disgusted with the current government and their ability to continue to earn a living based on its vaccine mandates. The statement that the member made about the Russian influence in the “freedom convoy” has no basis in truth, and the evidence is suspect at best, so I do not know where he is getting this information from.

I will say that the foreign interference before the House, which we are seized with now with regard to the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills, is significant and needs to be given the full attention of this House. What I am disgusted with is the delay by the government. It knew for two years and did nothing about it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am glad to find out that the member has a seat on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, because I have some questions. What would make a Prime Minister ignore recommendations and special security intelligence concerning Canada? It all seems very alarming. I mean, is it not essential to listen to what CSIS has to say? How are we supposed to perform our duties as members if the recommendations made by the agencies created to protect us and keep us safe are ignored?

As a member of this committee, is my colleague not tempted to ask questions and make sure that the integrity of the role of member of Parliament is protected?

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, “willful blindness” is the term I would use to describe this. I trust implicitly the skill and ability of our national security apparatus, CSIS and others, to ensure that it gathers the information in an appropriate way. There is no doubt in my mind that CSIS provided the information to the national security adviser, who has admitted that it did, and others, in a timely way with exactly what was going on as it was happening.

For the Prime Minister and his office to suggest to Canadians that he did not know about it until Monday of last week, and I struggle with the right word to use so it is not unparliamentary, but I find it difficult to believe. The Prime Minister has a serious credibility problem, and this just amplifies what we have seen over the last seven and a half years with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad the convoy issue was raised because Americans came to my riding to be part of the illegal blockade along Huron Church Road at the Ambassador Bridge. There is certainly a record of those individuals.

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I am wondering whether the hon. member thinks those people should now be barred from coming into Canada. Similarly, and to our embarrassment, the Proud Boys went to Washington as part of the civil issue that is now quite public. Does the member think they should be banned from going into the United States, especially because our democracies are affected by the actions of those individuals?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, again the question is somewhat unrelated to our debate, but I will answer that any extremist group, left-wing or right-wing, that undermines our democracy needs to be dealt with and should have the full support of the House to deal with that in an appropriate way.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, there it is. We see members of the Liberal Party and the NDP focused on the freedom movement, which really stood up for freedom and what the current government was doing. My question for the member is related to this, because it shows the Liberals' level of disregard. Instead of looking at Chinese Communist foreign interference and dealing with that issue, they were attacking their own citizens at that time.

I was just at PROC, where we had two witnesses who testified three times. Every time they attempted to testify and speak, there was a broadcast interruption. I talked to one of the witnesses, who said that when she said she was going to testify, her computer went down.

If the current government would have taken foreign interference seriously, as the party across the way does, we would not be in this situation. Is the member confident that the current Prime Minister and the Liberal government have the backs of Canadians with respect to foreign interference?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I will say this: It is a sad day when the fine ladies and gentlemen of our national security apparatus find it necessary to go contrary to their oath of secrecy to get matters before the public's attention. They do so because the current Prime Minister and the government refuse to deal with the matters that come before them that impact them, make them look bad or mean that they are seen as having the advantage they have. Therefore, no, I do not have confidence in the government to properly deal with some of the issues, because of its own thirst for power and its inability to do anything that is beyond its own self-interest.

• (1335)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a lot of the speeches we have heard in the House on this topic centre on the idea of a public inquiry, and the member mentioned that. If a public inquiry were held and it upheld what has been said by the members on this side with respect to who knew what, heard what or participated in what and when, would the members opposite accept that ruling or would they say that there was something wrong with the public inquiry?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, that is a unique question, and I thank the member for it.

The issue is this: The evidence that has been presented is non-partisan, and it is pretty clear. Yes, I support a public inquiry. Therefore, my question back would be this: Would the current gov-

ernment actually act on the findings of a public inquiry to improve our country's ability to reduce, limit and stop foreign interference?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to draw this to the attention of my colleague: Was it not our government's decision to not allow the U.S. to open NEXUS stations in Canada because they would basically be American soil, yet we have allowed police stations from China to open up?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, on this side, as Conservatives, we have said that Canada is broken. The example my colleague mentioned is another example of Canada being broken under the lack of leadership of the current Prime Minister and the Liberal government. The fact that we can have foreign states operating with impunity on Canadian soil speaks to the depth and seriousness of where we find ourselves. Yes, it is disconcerting.

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak on the motion standing in the name of the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Like most Canadians, I was appalled to hear of the treatment of my hon. colleague, and I immediately presumed that the government would be taking firm action by expelling the Chinese diplomat responsible. That is what any government should do, especially when facts are clear. It should act immediately.

However, the Liberal government did not. It immediately went into its patented circle-the-wagons approach to try to obfuscate, deflect and then pay lip service. Promises were made to stand up to ensure the safety of all members of the House; however, such non-committal platitudes for the cameras were not backed up by concrete action. The NATO-esque mantra that an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us wears just a little thin. Moreover, one certainly hopes that no member is counting on such whimsical offerings of invisible protection.

Members deserve to know when a threat is made against them by anyone, whether foreign or domestic. They deserve to know who made the threat, when it was made and how the government will respond, hopefully in a timely fashion. This process clearly did not happen in the case of the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

When a member is the target of a threat, they should be advised. This should be carried out efficiently and in the most expeditious manner. The government, CSIS, the RCMP or any other of our security services should be involved. Yet, in this case, while the government indicated that it would stand up for the safety and security of a member, it then pawned it off on others to let the target know.

Information on a threat to the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills was known within CSIS and, at some point, within the PMO. The Prime Minister and his group of security ministers surely must have known. Why, then, did it take months for the member to be informed of this threat? Was it due to the government's ongoing reluctance to do anything that it thinks would upset the Chinese government? If the safety and security of members is said to be a primary focus of the Prime Minister and his government, one must question how much of a priority is really attached. Would this threat ever have come to light? Did the government adopt a wait-and-see approach? Perhaps it hoped that nothing would happen and that the matter would just go away.

What message does this lackadaisical approach send to Beijing? What picture does it paint of the government's first and foremost role to protect Canadians? It seems that foreign operatives can threaten our citizens at will, and maybe, in a couple of months, our government just might get around to doing nothing.

Perhaps some Liberal Party focus group finally indicated to the government that it should declare Wei Zhao to be *persona non grata*. However, the government was oblivious to supporting the opposition motion before the House calling for the exact same thing and a few other sensible measures to combat Chinese interference in our democracy.

After the vote passed, with the support of all members of the House except the Liberals and one independent member, the government stood up and announced that Mr. Zhao would be sent packing. It is not a contest. All governments have an obligation to put people before foreign operatives and party polling. Why are we still debating the creation of a foreign agent registry, similar to what the United States and Australia have? Why is the government so opposed to creating a public inquiry on foreign interference? With so much smoke, Canadians know that a good fire is smouldering.

Why is the government so reluctant to shut down Chinese police stations? The U.S. did not put up with this meddling in their internal affairs. The Chinese government would not put up with it for one moment if a few RCMP stations popped up in Shanghai. I do not know what is causing such a timid government response to confronting the issue of foreign interference. Is the government content to display to Beijing that our country is a doormat and will not stand up for MPs and Canadians across our country? Canadians deserve better. Hopefully they will get it, if Beijing allows.

• (1340)

I made reference to Australia. I want to do a Canada-Australia comparative analysis on fighting foreign interference. Both of our countries are resource-based economies. We are of similar size, population and land mass. Frankly, just like them, we have a lot of people spread out and dispersed outside of urban centres, and we share a lot of their multicultural characteristics. However, unlike Canada, Australia has created a foreign agent registry. The country has taken action, even at significant economic cost.

In 2022, over a quarter of Australia's exports, 25.9%, to be exact, went to China. For Canada, it is only 3.7% of Canadian exports. I want to reiterate something that an expert on Chinese Communist Party influence stated. Vice-Admiral Paul Maddison, formerly a commander for the Royal Canadian Navy, now retired, as well as

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Canada's high commissioner to Australia, stated this: "Exposure to economic coercion [of Canada] is much less than in [Australia], yet Australia has stood up to the CCP, absorbed the costs, diversified trade, and made it clear that no foreign power will be permitted to undermine its democracy and values."

Is it the government's intention to send a clear signal to Beijing that Canada is a doormat? How difficult is it to create a registry? Did the PSAC strike set it back a few weeks? How has the government stood up and confronted Chinese interference in Canada head-on? I shudder when I think about what our allies must be thinking.

The government recently expressed its desire to enter AUKUS, after the Prime Minister had initially dismissed the security partnership as just looking at nuclear subs. How could our allies trust us? What message does it send, when the Prime Minister seems more intent on communicating to NATO that we will not even bother with hitting 2%, although this is an international commitment that our nation has made?

I also want to address the issue of racism, because it is often raised as a rebuttal to criticize action, whether it be on a foreign registry or otherwise. Right out of the Chinese Communist Party playbook, the issue of racism is used to deflect when there is any sort of real legitimate criticism, whether it be against the ongoing Uyghur genocide or attacking and dismantling the democratic institutions of Hong Kong. China continues its aggression toward Taiwan, threatening any country and trying to intimidate anyone who dares to support the rightful membership of Taiwan in the WHO. This deprived the world of the expertise, lessons learned and best practices that Taiwan could have contributed to help fight the pandemic. There is also ongoing Chinese aggression in the South China Sea, despite UNCLOS, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

We must take action to address foreign interference, and we must take what the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills has raised very seriously. If we do not, there is a real cloud of racism that is in play here. It hovers over any Canadian of Chinese heritage or anyone who might look like they are of Chinese heritage. We need the government to return to its sunny ways and shine a light into the shadows where foreign operatives hide.

Because there are incredible Canadians of Chinese heritage, and because May is Asian Heritage Month, I want to take this occasion to speak about one of them. I want to highlight Lieutenant-Commander William King Lowd Lore. This hero had his application to join the Royal Canadian Navy rejected three times, in 1940, 1941 and 1942, until the chief of naval staff intervened.

Privilege

• (1345)

Lieutenant-Commander Lore went on to become not only the first Chinese Canadian officer in the Royal Canadian Navy, but the first naval officer of Chinese heritage to serve in any of the Commonwealth royal navies. There are Canadians of proud Chinese heritage who loyally served this country and continue to do so today. Lieutenant-Commander Lore forged a path for others to be able to follow in his footsteps, including myself, to be able to proudly serve in His Majesty's Royal Canadian Navy.

Speaking of brave leaders, I want to take the occasion to reiterate my support and admiration for the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. He is of Chinese heritage like me, but he has served in this House for much longer and has been a role model and a leader who has made it easier for someone like myself to be able to serve, because one cannot be what one cannot see. It is hard for kids growing up without seeing someone who looks like them in a particular role or job to be able to imagine themselves in that position. Whether it is Lieutenant-Commander Lore, whose descendants I had the honour of meeting, or the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills, they are trailblazers and leaders who made it easier for everyone who came after them.

I want to conclude. Yesterday we finally learned, after the government actually decided to finally do something, that the threshold to expel a diplomat is targeting an MP's family. This is a good first step, but I would argue that setting up illegal police stations in our country and intimidating our people on our soil also warrant action, not the least of which should include shutting down these police stations. Let us show these oppressive regimes that Canada is not a doormat.

I hope the federal government listens to the majority of parliamentarians, who voted yesterday for the Conservative motion on foreign interference.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to reinforce the fact that it has been very clear that the Prime Minister first found out about this just last week. I know it upsets a number of people in this chamber, but the fact is that the Prime Minister found out about it just last week. Since then, he has taken a number of direct actions to deal with the issue. Other issues, such as the registry and the public inquiry, could be dealt with by David Johnston, who was a Conservative Stephen Harper appointment. We will wait for that report to come. There is no denying that this government has been proactive on the file.

Does the member not believe, when he talks about the credibility and integrity of individuals, that all members in this chamber are honourable, and if the Prime Minister says he learned about it last week, that is a fact?

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I remain skeptical that the Prime Minister only just found out, because I have trouble reconciling the fact that his chief of staff said that everything that is put in front of her gets put in front of him.

Let us presume he really did just find out, and accept what my colleague just said. How is that a good excuse? An MP's family

was targeted, and only recently, after two years, did he just find out. That is not a good excuse, so either he was willfully ignorant or he intentionally decided not to hear it, or he was incompetent. Those are not good rationales to try to explain this away, and I would encourage my colleague to please drop that talking point.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, recognizing the member's history and his role in the military, and understanding the processes that happen, if we were to assume that the Prime Minister actually just knew about these things a week ago, what does it say about the system that has been set up for the Prime Minister to even know that information?

As the hon. member knows, as one follows through the ranking process and information is being shared, there is a process in place. I would like to hear his comments on this. If this is the case, what sort of denigrated structure is set?

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising a really good point. If, indeed, the Prime Minister only just found out, clearly the system is not working. Clearly, the information that is being assessed is not being passed on to the people who need to know. I think any time a member of the House and their family are being targeted in any way, they must be informed.

I truly hope that, when this government comes out and says, "We are going to change that", it actually will, because for the duration of this government, for more than just two years, the Liberals have come out and made some great promises, which sound really great and make exceptionally awesome headlines, but there is no follow-through and no implementation, and the execution continues to be lacking.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, as we are dealing with China in general, I wonder what the member's thoughts are with regard to the overall policy.

I remember this first being raised when I got here with China Minmetals. The government of the day, under Paul Martin, was selling our shares of Petro-Canada, and China Minmetals was buying up Canadian natural resources. I always thought it was odd that it was not okay for Canadians to own our own gas but it was okay for the Chinese to.

Later on, we saw policies under the Harper administration, when we had the largest delegations that went to China for investment opportunities, and a series of things have come out of that. It was actually to strengthen and grow some of our universities and co-operative programs, which are now being questioned by a lot of individuals.

I am curious as to whether we need to do something different in terms of how we approach this entire issue. I would conclude by saying that these are non-democratic governments, which is the context we have been raising it in, so I think it is larger than just China.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I agree that whether it is academic partnerships, research and development or corporate investments and so on, all of those have to be examined with a critical eye.

Statements by Members

It is not just the Chinese Communist Party. Frankly, influence, potential interventions and other nefarious approaches are being used and deployed by many other regimes. The IRGC is one that comes to mind. I think it is vitally important that, while we start with directly attacking this issue right now of Chinese Communist Party interference, we also keep in mind the full scope that extends beyond that.

• (1355)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, in responding to the question from the member for Winnipeg North, the member suggested that the chief of staff to the Prime Minister would have indicated that she forwards and shares all information with the Prime Minister. The only problem is that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills indicated recently in an interview that he was informed by the national security adviser to the Prime Minister that neither the Prime Minister nor his chief of staff, Ms. Telford, received any information with respect to this. To suggest that it was the chief of staff who just did not provide the information is not accurate, based on the facts that were stated by that member.

I wonder if the member would like to rephrase what he previously said regarding the chief of staff and the Prime Minister.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not sure who is yelling, but I would just say that if they want to speak, then they should wait until questions and comments.

The hon. member for Spadina—Fort York.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, speaking about rephrasing, I recall that, when this matter surfaced, the member for Kingston and the Islands had initially used the talking point to attack the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and his credibility. That is the thing that continues to stand out to me. I am glad he did end up rephrasing and apologizing for his comment, because I could not think of a more honourable and principled member than the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the member's speech, and I appreciate him as a member of Parliament. We have gotten to know each other during days at the range and different things.

The one thing the Liberal government wants to do is say, "Hey, sorry, guys, it wasn't us. The Prime Minister needs to be trusted and, look, he didn't get the information." I am going to ask the member a really simple question: Does he believe that the Prime Minister really did not get the information, straight up?

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, I remain skeptical and, frankly, the explanation that they did not know is not, in itself, a good excuse for not knowing something that is of the utmost importance, such as a member of the House and their family being targeted. Incompetence and ignorance are not an excuse.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member for Calgary Signal Hill that I can still hear him yelling. If he wants to raise his voice, he should wait until I ask for questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there have been a number of actions that the Prime Minister has actually taken.

This is what I find incredibly offensive. The members in the House are honourable members. There is no member, either the member who has just spoken or another Conservative member, who has given any sort of evidence whatsoever that shows that the Prime Minister is not telling the truth, yet they continue to spread misinformation, which causes more damage than I think members realize.

Would the member not acknowledge that the Prime Minister found out last week and that we have taken virtually immediate action, which ultimately led to a diplomat being expelled from the country?

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I guess the dynamic Liberal duo is back.

Speaking of offensive, there was nothing more offensive than attacking the credibility, as this member had tried to do, of the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. We cannot, on the one hand, try to say that everyone is super honourable, and then, at the same time, attack the honour of another member. This is rich.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

VESAK

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Vesak, also known as Buddha Jayanti or Buddha Purnima, the most important Buddhist festival, was celebrated on May 5 by Buddhists across the world. The festival commemorates the birth, enlightenment and death of Gautama Buddha. I had the honour to host Vesak day on Parliament Hill last Sunday with several hundred Buddhist Canadians. Buddhist temples in Ottawa and their followers participated with chanting of prayers, beating of drums and cultural performances.

I am thankful to Fo Guang Shan Temple of Ottawa, Ottawa Amitabha Buddhist Society of Canada, Hilda Jayewardanaramaya Buddhist Monastery and Hieu Giang Vietnamese Buddhist Cultural Centre of Ottawa for their participation. In particular, I am thankful to June Sun of Fo Guang Shan Temple of Ottawa for her hard work to make this beautiful event a success.

Statements by Members

● (1400)

AFGHAN REFUGEES

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, almost two years ago, Conservatives saw the warning signs in Afghanistan. We asked the government to put aside partisan politics and rescue Afghans who risked their lives to aid our military. However, despite knowing lives were in jeopardy from Taliban retribution, the Liberals took weeks to act. Even then, their promise to expedite applications failed. Many Afghans who managed to escape to neighbouring countries did so only with the financial and organizational help of former colleagues. Too many of them continue to wait in limbo, essentially homeless. They have no money, no jobs and little hope.

In February, we witnessed the desperate plea of an Afghan citizen in this gallery, begging the Prime Minister to help his family. Canada should prioritize those who bravely fought alongside our military. Instead, the government continues to break promises to the weak and the vulnerable, both at home and abroad.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are getting people to where they need to be in Newfoundland and Labrador, with significant investments in public infrastructure.

We are twinning more of the Trans-Canada Highway between Whitbourne and Grand Falls-Windsor for safer, more reliable travel. We are developing a shared-use path that will connect St. John's like never before. We are investing in eight accessible hybrid transit buses for the city. We are supporting new trails and planning in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's and Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove.

Our government is getting things done to ensure healthy, strong and vibrant communities, while also creating jobs along the way.

* * *

[Translation]

DAVID GOUDREULT

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I want to highlight the extraordinary honour recently bestowed upon Quebec poet David Goudreault, who now has his own entry in the dictionary.

The team at *Petit Robert* chose to add an entry about the slam poet from Sherbrooke in its literature and philosophy category, a commendable decision indeed. The dictionary will describe him as an ardent defender of the French language in his performances, poems and novels, adding that he is profoundly inspired by real life and unflinchingly describes marginalized people and the absurdity of society.

Goudreault is not the only new entry from Quebec in the dictionary, which will now include some of our homegrown terms, such as “mégenrer”, to misgender, “complosphère”, the conspiracy community, and “infonuaigique”, the cloud.

Speaking of clouds, David Goudreault is currently on cloud nine at the news that he will be in the *Petit Robert*. He will feel right at home surrounded by the things he loves, plays with and uses to express himself: words.

* * *

MARC LALONDE

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the memory of the Hon. Marc Lalonde, a distinguished Canadian statesman, lawyer, dedicated politician and Order of Canada recipient, who passed away on Saturday in Notre-Dame-de-l'Île-Perrot, with his wife, Claire, by his side.

Born in Île-Perrot in 1929, Marc was a lifelong learner, earning degrees from the Université de Montréal, Oxford University and the University of Ottawa. After completing his studies, Marc worked as an adviser to prime ministers Lester B. Pearson and Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In 1972, he was elected as the Liberal member of Parliament for Outremont, and he would hold five different ministerial portfolios over the course of his 12 years in office.

His work positively influenced the lives of millions of Canadians, and that work continued even after he left public life, as he remained actively involved in his community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

We will remember the Hon. Marc Lalonde. We will celebrate his extraordinary life, his devout commitment to public service and his dedication to this country that he loved so much.

May Mr. Lalonde rest in peace.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of Jewish Heritage Month, a time to celebrate and recognize Jewish culture, faith and history, and the community's immense contributions to the social and economic fabric of Canada.

This Jewish Heritage Month, we also celebrate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel. Against all odds, today Israel is a successful, prosperous and democratic state that honours the rule of law and fundamental freedoms. It has overcome wars, droughts and poverty with few natural endowments other than pure human grit.

This past month, I had the pleasure of joining the Israeli ambassador to Canada, Ronen Hoffman, for the flag-raising ceremony at Ottawa City Hall in celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut. The ambassador has done extraordinary work during his time in Canada, and I know all members are very sad to see him leave. As we celebrate Jewish Heritage Month, I want to thank the ambassador for his great contributions to Canada during his time here.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the end of an era for a business, and indeed an industry, in Kingston. Classic Video has been a landmark in Kingston for 35 years. This one-of-a-kind video rental store outlived all of its competitors and continued to thrive in the face of online streaming services.

For decades, Classic Video offered a vast array of video rentals as the premium choice of home entertainment for so many of its loyal patrons. Upon hearing of his intentions this week to close his store, customers formed lineups outside of Tom Ivison's quaint location on Clarence Street, just steps from City Hall. Hundreds of customers, new and old, paid one last visit to say goodbye, and often ended up purchasing their favourite film they had rented so many times before. It was indeed a testament to Tom's friendly customer service that was truly second to none.

I want to thank Tom for his dedication to downtown Kingston and his passion for film, and wish him all the best in the next chapter of his life.

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TASTE OF MANILA

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May is Asian Heritage Month and I would like to recognize the organizers of the Taste of Manila festival in Toronto.

Spearheaded by Rolly Mangante and other leaders in the local Filipino community, the first Taste of Manila street festival to showcase Filipino culture and cuisine was held nearly nine years ago in 2014. It has grown from there in leaps and bounds, attracting more than 400,000 in 2019 to become one of the largest Filipino street festivals in North America. Held in the heart of Toronto's Little Manila, there is no better showcase of Filipino art, culture and, of course, food.

During Asian Heritage Month, I wish to congratulate Rolly and all his team for their work to promote and showcase the best of Filipino culture, and I look forward to joining my Filipino friends for the next festival.

Mabuhay, Taste of Manila.

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CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in April 2017, Arianna Goberdhan and her family were eagerly awaiting the birth of her first child, a baby girl named Asaara. She was due to arrive in 20 days, and Arianna's estranged

Statements by Members

husband knew she was pregnant with their child, but then tragedy struck. After a physically and emotionally abusive marriage, Arianna's estranged husband stabbed his wife and unborn daughter 17 times, to death.

Six years later, the murderer has found a way to retraumatize the Goberdhan family. While serving his sentence at a medium-security prison, he is also looking for love on a matchmaking pen pal website for lonely convicts. His featured photo is none other than one from their wedding day. While the Goberdhans live with their pain every day, their daughter's killer seems to be moving on with his life as if nothing had happened.

A requirement for the sentencing judge to consider pregnancy as an aggravating circumstance in Arianna's murder should have been in place. The sentence should have matched the crime. It is time to pass the violence against pregnant women act.

* * *

GORDON LIGHTFOOT

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to pay tribute to one of Canada's greatest artists, the late Gordon Lightfoot, who passed away recently.

One of his most famous songs, "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald", is about a ship that sank not far from my riding. Many of my constituents, and visitors from across North America, visit Pancake Bay and go to the Edmund Fitzgerald Lookout to pay tribute to the 29 lives that were lost. This year, the Mariners' Church of Detroit, which rings its bell 29 times for those lost lives, rang it 30 times to pay tribute to Gordon Lightfoot.

Gordon Lightfoot was absolutely amazing. We all remember when the Edmund Fitzgerald went down, those of us who are of this age, and recall where we were when it went down and the severity of the storm. I thank Gordon Lightfoot. It is sundown and we hope he takes care.

Statements by Members

• (1410)

WILDFIRES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, wildfires are already causing a lot of damage in my neighbouring communities of McBride, Red Creek, Doig River First Nation, Boundary Lake and many other areas in northeastern B.C., but thanks to local McBride resident, Mike Savarella, who reached out to me and phoned me the evening of the fire, I was quickly able to reach out to the local MLA, Shirley Bond, who was able to reach out to the BC Wildfire Service to get much-needed resources to the fire. I also want to thank Mayor Gene Runtz of McBride for keeping me informed and updated.

Most of all, my thanks go to the BC Wildfire Service and the many people who stepped up to help their neighbours. This reminds me of when the member for Foothills and I were talking to farmers in the Upper Pine area, in my riding. At that particular time, a fire had broken out at a neighbouring farm. Quickly, neighbours responded and put the fire out, neighbours helping neighbours. I have heard similar stories around the riding of other neighbours helping others, and I just want to thank them for that.

To those who are still fighting fires in their area, we are with them. Most of all, they should report any fires they see to BC Wildfire Service at 1-800-663-5555. I hope they will be safe out there.

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CARBON TAX

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is feeling the pinch. Industries and transportation rely on fuel to support our very existence. Our fishery, mining, forestry, agriculture, tourism and offshore oil industries are heavily impacted by the cost of fuel.

The Liberal government wants to drive up the cost to do business and the cost to put food on our table, with the ever-increasing carbon tax. A Conservative government would axe the carbon tax to bring home lower food prices and make it more affordable to drive on our roads. We would bring home lower operating costs in our fishing industry, our mining industry, our forestry industry, our agriculture industry, our tourism industry and our oil industry.

It is time for common sense. Our Conservative leader stands for the common sense of the common people. A Conservative government would work for the common good of Newfoundland and Labrador. Let us bring it home.

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CENTRE FOR DISCOVERY AND INNOVATION

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes that investments in education and investments in Canada's future are one and the same. That is why we are proud to have recently made a \$20-million investment in Cape Breton University's new Centre for Discovery and Innovation. This facility, in the heart of Cape Breton—Canso, will deliver on Canada's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while welcoming and training the future workforce locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Investments like these will also provide folks from across Cape Breton—Canso with the comfort of knowing that the state of local education is in good hands. As a graduate of Cape Breton University, and as someone who has worked there for 10 years, I am excited to see what opportunities are waiting for tomorrow's students.

I will also say to all members of the House that I am proud to be hosting, along with the member for Sydney—Victoria, Cape Breton University on Parliament Hill today. I hope to see all of the hon. members for a Cape Breton ceilidh later this evening.

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[Translation]

PALESTINE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, May 15 marks the 75th anniversary of the Nakba, the great Palestinian catastrophe, an event that is etched in the memories of Palestinian families around the world.

From one day to the next, thousands of men, women and children were driven from their homes. The first refugee camps appeared. Many of those camps still exist and have transformed into small towns. Obviously, the situation deteriorated with the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. With the growing establishment of illegal settlements through violence, Palestinians are losing a little more of the land on which they live every day.

At the turn of the century, one of the slogans of the Zionist movement was “A land without a people, for a people without a land”. There was, and still is, a people in the land of Palestine: Palestinians.

The Liberal government needs to do a lot more, including enforcing the United Nations resolutions, voting in accordance with our own official positions at the UN and condemning the oppression, violence and discrimination that Palestinians experience every day.

* * *

• (1415)

NURSING WEEK

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, their names are Isabelle, Mélanie, Arianne. They are joined by Bruno, Pierre, Claude and thousands of names with the same reassuring faces. It is the face of the Quebec body of nursing, the face of women and men who are there for us when we are scared, when we suffer, when we are worried about our loved ones.

In emergency rooms, in operating rooms, in clinics, in obstetrics and at the end of life, from the first breath to the last breath, I have seen nurses hug those who are grieving, consoling and comforting them. I have seen them smile as they hand a new mother her newborn and share in her happiness. I have seen nurses work 16 hours in a row with the same energy, the same attentiveness and the same professionalism.

We owe an immense debt to these women and men. During this Nursing Week, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois I simply want to thank them for being there.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this Prime Minister is more out of touch than ever, and Canadians have no money. He has accumulated more debt than all the other prime ministers before him, and yet everything seems to be broken.

The government is increasingly taxing and clawing back the earnings of Canadians, making life more difficult. The dream of home ownership has never seemed more unattainable for most Canadians. The government has also driven up the cost of food with its ineffective policies like the carbon tax and the fertilizer tariff. Food banks, like Moisson Beauce in my riding, are experiencing unprecedented demand, and donations are running out.

At a time when Canadians cannot even get a passport, the Prime Minister has already taken his fifth vacation of the year.

Enough is enough. Canadians deserve better. That is why a Conservative government will fix what is broken and will again put Canadians first.

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MARC LALONDE

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart to honour the passing of a great man, a great Canadian and a titan in federal politics.

As the member for Outremont, Marc Lalonde dedicated himself to serving our community. During his time as principal secretary to Pierre Elliott Trudeau and later as a key member of his cabinet, Marc Lalonde played a pivotal role in shaping our society.

His unflinching commitment to promoting national unity and social justice are woven into our history. As our Prime Minister so rightly said, it is impossible to overstate the impact that Marc Lalonde has had on Canada.

As an aspiring member for Outremont and a lawyer practising international law, I had the pleasure of working alongside Marc Lalonde and getting to know him. I could never thank him enough for everything he did for me. He was a strong believer in helping young leaders, and he passed on to me, and to all of us, his vision of a just and united Canada.

May Marc Lalonde rest in peace. His love for our peace will continue to inspire future generations.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety told the House that the RCMP took decisive action to shut down the so-called Chinese police stations, but the Chinese government representatives operating those two illegal Montreal-area police stations thumbed their noses at the minister when they said, “We have not received any closure requests from the RCMP. Our activities are proceeding normally.”

Can the Prime Minister confirm that these illegal police stations are still open, and will he ask that they be closed?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is well aware that the RCMP is following up on the matter.

I would like to share a little update on Alberta, though. The governments of Canada and Alberta are working together to ensure that all those affected get the help they need.

[English]

The federal government will continue to work with provincial officials, municipalities and indigenous communities to support people across Alberta and across the country in any way we can. Of course, we encourage everyone to follow the advice of local authorities and stay safe, but know that all orders of government are working together to keep people safe through this difficult time.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-NDP coalition is clearly starting to crumble, because yesterday in the House, all opposition parties voted together in favour of the Conservative Party motion calling for a national, independent public inquiry into foreign interference and the closure of the illegal police stations in Canada. The Liberals do not seem to be in a hurry, and we know that has helped them in the past.

Can the Prime Minister tell us why no effort is being made to close the illegal police stations in the Montreal area?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party knows full well that the police in this country operate independently. They are expected to do their job to keep Canadians safe, and they will continue to do that.

The member is suggesting that we have done nothing about foreign interference. We have appointed former governor general David Johnston as an independent special rapporteur to follow up. We are establishing a foreign influence registry. We are defending the proper functioning of the House by expelling a Chinese diplomat, and we will continue to work to protect Canadians.

Oral Questions

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been eight days since we found out that a member of the House and his family were intimidated for a vote that he cast and two years since the government has known. The government finally expelled the guy who did it, and that is the very least it could have done.

We know more MPs have been threatened. We can ensure the government does not let it happen again by bringing in a foreign agent registry. Yesterday, every Liberal on the other side voted against that.

How can Canadians believe that the government is serious about national security when it ignored the problem for two years and then voted against fixing it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is being disingenuous. She knows full well that we are moving forward on establishing a foreign agent registry. We are doing it properly so that it actually responds to the needs of Canadians.

We will continue to ensure that we are standing up for our values, taking seriously these issues, which is why we did take the time to ensure, as we declared a Chinese diplomat *persona non grata*, that it was done appropriately.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is being disingenuous when he tells Canadians that he is taking this seriously.

We need a foreign agent registry, like the ones that exist in Australia and the U.S. We need a national public inquiry into foreign interference. We need to shut down the illegal police stations operating in Canada that harass innocent civilians, which the Minister of Public Safety told Canadians were already shut. They are not.

Once again, he has misled Canadians. When will he end this charade?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that foreign actors are attempting to monitor, intimidate or threaten Canadians is completely unacceptable. The RCMP has said that it is actively investigating these suspected stations. As it has done before, it will not hesitate to take action again.

Everyone should feel safe in this country. We will exhaust all efforts to protect them from unacceptable behaviour by hostile authoritarian states.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that the Prime Minister told Canadians that the 2001 report from CSIS was never shared. We know that is false, because we know the national security adviser had said so. She informed the member for Wellington—Halton Hills of the truth.

The Prime Minister is stalling on a foreign agent registry. He will not shut down illegal police stations. He does not have the courage to call a national public inquiry. Why would anyone believe that he takes national security seriously?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, when we took office, we committed to establish an

oversight committee by parliamentarians to see and engage with our security intelligence agencies every step of the way. The Conservatives were totally opposed to that kind of oversight by parliamentarians, but we moved forward with NSICOP anyway. This is a powerful tool that we have to ensure Canadians are being kept safe.

On top of that, we established a panel to oversee our elections in 2019 and 2021. That panel confirmed that the elections' integrity held despite attempts at interference.

We have always taken this issue seriously and we will continue to.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about interference. What interference are we talking about specifically? Are we talking about China's interference in Canada or McKinsey's interference in Canada?

McKinsey is behind the proposal to increase Canada's population to 100 million by the end of the century. The Prime Minister surely must have held consultations about such an extraordinarily important initiative. I would like to know what Quebec said when he consulted it about having a population of 100 million, or 500,000 more people a year, unless he did not talk to Quebec.

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our country's linguistic duality is an asset that we must protect. In that regard, Quebec establishes its own immigration targets, and it has the exclusive power to select the majority of its immigrants.

For our part, we firmly believe that we can grow our economy while protecting the French culture and language. We will continue to be there to defend Quebec's interests and to promote the importance of the French language across Canada.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I ask the Prime Minister a question and he replies by reading a *Heritage Minute*.

Quebec would have to take in 110,000 more people per year, but it cannot afford to do that because of the cost of services. Of course, it cannot do it because of the need to integrate immigrants in French. McKinsey did not take into account the specific reality of Quebec or the French language. Dominic Barton said as much in committee.

The Prime Minister is francophone himself. Why is he not taking Quebec's reality into account?

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Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always take Quebec's specificity into account. I get it. That is why we were the first federal government to recognize that not only do we need to protect both official languages across the country, but we also need to pay particular attention to this issue in order to continue to protect French in Quebec.

The decision on federal immigration levels was made independently. It is based on advice from departmental officials, organizations, stakeholders, provincial and territorial leaders and citizens from across Canada to determine the best immigration policy for Canada.

* * *

[English]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, foreign interference is a serious threat to our democracy. A member of Parliament and his family were targeted by a foreign government for his vote in the House. Imagine what it is like for thousands of families across our country that fled governments that were oppressive only to come to Canada and have those threats follow them.

The Prime Minister will not even call a public inquiry. How can he keep the rest of Canadians facing serious threats safe?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, we have always taken threats to Canadians around foreign interference extremely seriously, which is why we have created new mechanisms and new tools to counter foreign interference. It is why we have actually appointed an independent expert to look at the foreign interference landscape and to ensure that we have all the tools we need and to create more, including a public inquiry if necessary.

We will follow the advice of the independent expert. The expert is the one who is best placed to say how we move forward.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me help the Prime Minister. It is necessary. We need it.

[Translation]

Foreign interference has a real impact on people's lives. It has a real impact on the Chinese community and on several communities in Canada. Imagine what it must be like for families fleeing repressive governments. They come to Canada and the threats—

[English]

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt for a moment. I believe the translation is not working.

[Translation]

Is there interpretation now? Okay, it is working.

[English]

The hon. member for Burnaby South, from the top, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, we need a public inquiry. It is necessary.

[Translation]

Foreign interference has a real impact on communities across the country. We saw the impact on the Chinese community, but there are several other communities that are also suffering the consequences.

Imagine what it must be like for families fleeing repressive governments. They arrive in Canada and the threats continue. This government is turning its back on these people. It is radio silence. It is doing nothing to protect these families.

Why is the Prime Minister not calling a public inquiry and why is he not protecting these families?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague points out, the diasporas, whether the Chinese Canadian, the Iranian Canadian, Russian Canadian or Indo-Canadian communities, are often the first communities to be targeted by foreign interference.

That is why we have brought in measures to protect them. We will continue to work with them, not just to protect them from interference, but also to protect them from the unfortunate racism and discrimination they face from the public when they are suspected of being foreign agents. It is a problem we will continue to address.

● (1430)

[English]

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we would think the illegal operation of foreign agents in this country would serve as a good enough reason for the Liberals to appropriately intervene. Instead, the public safety minister chooses to mislead Canadians by claiming that the RCMP has shut down all Beijing-backed police stations, when in reality, two Montreal groups under investigation for hosting these stations have not received any closure requests.

How much longer do Canadians need to wait before the government finally closes down these illegal Beijing-backed stations?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by now my colleague will know that the RCMP provided an update that it has taken action to disrupt the activities of these so-called police stations. As we heard the Prime Minister say, it is this government's expectation that, if any such foreign interference activities occur or pop up again, it will take the necessary action to keep our communities safe.

More to the point, there is \$49 million to assist the RCMP in budget 2023. Instead of tough talk and sabre-rattling, Conservatives should support that budget so we can protect our communities from foreign interference.

Oral Questions

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. Canadians deserve no less. The government's apathy concerning the threats of foreign interference continuously fails to protect Chinese Canadians across the country. We have had enough with the smoke and mirrors.

Last week, on this very same topic, the minister stressed the importance of communication and transparency in the House. It is time for the minister to demonstrate it and finally answer the question: When will the government close down all of the Beijing-backed police stations in Canada?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that operational independence is a pillar of our democracy. We put our confidence in the RCMP and our national security apparatus to protect our communities from foreign interference.

Instead of misguided statements like the one the member opposite just said, he should put the work into protecting our institutions, including the people in this chamber. All of that is built on the foundation of the work this government has been doing since we took the reins in 2015.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it took two years for the government to do the right thing and expel the diplomat who was directly involved in interfering in our democracy and intimidating the family of a member of the House of Commons for a vote of his in the House of Commons. Meanwhile, the dictatorship in Beijing continues to operate illegal police stations in Canada, which are used to intimidate members of the Chinese diaspora community.

Are the Prime Minister and his public safety minister going to wait two years, or will they commit today to shutting down these foreign influence operations running out of these Beijing-backed police stations?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as long as we get the same questions, Conservatives will get the same answers.

The RCMP has taken decisive action in the foreign interference relationship to these so-called police stations and, going forward, will take the necessary steps to protect our communities.

Conservatives talk about apathy. They were apathetic for a decade when they held the reins of government, and they could have put in place the tools, measures and resources they are now asking the government to do. We are doing that work. They need to stop with the politicization, stop with the claims of political interference and get behind the work this government is doing.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we would like is for the government to actually start doing the work. Yesterday, all members on that side, including the public safety minister and the Prime Minister, voted against a public inquiry. They voted against expelling a diplomat. They voted against a foreign agent registry. All of these tools can be used to protect members of the Chinese diaspora community from intimidation from the Communist dictatorship in Beijing. It is operating here on our soil, and the government has the ability to stop it.

We have a very simple question. The minister says that, if we ask the same question, we will get the same answer. We would like some action to go with it. Will they implement a foreign agent registry and shut down these Beijing-backed police stations?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is the record of action that this government has taken. We declared the foreign agent *persona non grata*. That person is now on his way out of Canada. We have put hundreds of millions of dollars into the national security apparatus to give it the tools it needs to protect our communities against foreign interference.

Rather than continue to politicize this issue and make claims around apathy, Conservatives should take a look in the mirror at their own record, where for 10 years they did none of the work they are now asking the government to do. The difference is that we are doing it. We are protecting our institutions, and we are protecting the people in them.

• (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, the Prime Minister said that he would launch a national public inquiry on foreign interference if necessary. Who will decide if it is necessary? The decision will be made by a former director of the Trudeau Foundation, which received an illegal donation from the regime in Beijing. I can already guess what the special rapporteur's response will be and how much credibility he has.

Yesterday, we gave every member of the House a unique opportunity to vote in favour of an independent national inquiry on foreign interference. All members of the House, except the government members, voted in favour of that motion.

Why does the government show so little respect for MPs?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnston is a former governor general of Canada. He is independent and will soon present his action plan to counter foreign interference. As an expert, he can look at all of the options, obviously.

With regard to the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, it is an independent foundation in which the Prime Minister has no personal interest.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is saying that it is taking action. Taking action gets results, but to date, the government's score on foreign interference is 25%. That would not be a very good mark to get on a report card. Why?

The Liberals finally expelled a diplomat after two years, but they have done nothing to create a foreign agent registry, to conduct an independent national inquiry or to shut down the Chinese police stations.

Every time we ask them questions, they fail miserably at protecting Canadians. Our question to them is, why?

[English]

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was the critic of public safety at the time of Stephen Harper's government, and when Justice Iacobucci and Justice O'Connor issued their recommendations saying that urgent action needed to be taken, and that an independent parliamentary committee of parliamentarians should oversee every aspect of national security, they did nothing.

It was our government that brought in that body, which allows parliamentarians of every party to be able to see into every aspect of our national security. We acted on those and many other recommendations that the Conservatives opposite, when they were in government, sat on and did not act upon.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the Century Initiative. Many Quebecers and French Canadians are concerned about the federal government potentially tripling the population to 100 million by 2100 without any public debate. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship says his plan has nothing to do with the Century Initiative and he makes his own choices. Coincidence or not, his 2023-25 immigration targets are remarkably similar to those proposed by the Century Initiative.

Will he at least confirm the fact that his target, 500,000 newcomers in 2025, lines up with the proposal and actually goes a bit further?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the federal government's immigration plan is to grow our economy. People need to recognize that it is possible to grow the economy while protecting the French language and francophones' demographic weight.

We will continue to increase the number of francophone newcomers. That is good for official language minority communities and it is good for our economy too.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister brags about 4% of immigrants outside Quebec being francophone, but according to francophone and Acadian communities, they need 12% next year and 20% in the future just to slow the decline of French.

Quebec's Minister of the French Language calls it the most hare-brained idea of the century. He says it is not good for Quebec or for the Canadian francophonie.

Will the minister commit to not tripling the Canadian population to 100 million by 2100?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is very interesting.

It is clear that the hon. member has read the McKinsey plan and the Century Initiative plan. It is equally clear that he has not read the Government of Canada's plan. If he is interested in reading that plan, as I am and as our government is, I can easily send him an

Oral Questions

email with the chapter on francophone immigration after question period.

I have one priority: to increase the number of francophone newcomers and support minority francophone communities while growing the economy.

* * *

• (1440)

HOUSING

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a housing crisis.

It is virtually impossible for people in Quebec to find affordable housing. Three weeks ago, the National Housing Council stated that, although the federal government has built 115,000 units, Canada has lost a jaw-dropping 550,000 affordable housing units over the past 10 years. We are moving backward, not forward. For every new affordable housing unit, we lose five.

Before any talk about tripling the population, is there a single MP on the government side who has thought about where all those people are going to live?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

[English]

It is very important to understand that immigration is actually one of the tools among a number of tools in our toolset that we use to address the skills and labour shortage within the construction and building trades sector to actually build housing for Canadians.

I would invite my hon. colleague to look at our national housing strategy, the housing accelerator fund, the results we have delivered through programs like the rapid housing initiative and the Canada housing benefit to see the real effects on the ground to deliver more safe and affordable housing for Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to a constituent, he makes a decent living of around \$70,000 and lives within his means with no credit card debt, yet he and his wife are struggling. He states that there are no extras for the family, so they cannot afford the Liberal way of living and shelling out more and more.

This is a common cry from Canadians. However, the Prime Minister is too busy on vacations to listen to Canadians who are struggling. Will the Prime Minister land his plane and start doing his job?

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Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the minister for Alberta, I would like to take a moment to thank first responders across the country, and Canadians from coast to coast to coast, for working with Alberta and coming to support us as we face the crisis with the forest fires.

On the substantive issue of affordability, our government has introduced targeted measures to make life more affordable. Today, I was at the Senate finance committee, where we asked the senators to pass Bill C-46. They have done so, and it is now in front of the Senate for third reading.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, government policies have made life more unaffordable. They are not working for Canadians who are struggling or for seniors on fixed incomes.

The Prime Minister does not understand that 41¢ per litre being added to heat, gas and food does drive up the cost of living. Seniors' budgets do not have that flexibility. Why is the Prime Minister making life harder for seniors who are already struggling?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, we have been there, supporting Canadians, including seniors, by lowering the age of retirement back to 65; strengthening the guaranteed income supplement, which has helped over hundreds of thousands of seniors and has lifted 45,000 seniors out of poverty; and enhancing the Canada pension plan. All these measures, by the way, were opposed by the party opposite.

Budget 2023 continues to support seniors. Our new grocery rebate will put more money in their pockets. Our new dental care plan will give them the dental care they need. We are here, delivering for Canadians. The Conservatives can just say things that make no sense, but we are here, delivering.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents are sick of the Prime Minister's hypocrisy. With Alberta's average monthly salary at \$5,000 a month, many struggle to make ends meet while the Prime Minister spends more than that for a one-night hotel stay. It was \$6,000 for one night. His poor decisions demonstrate just how out of touch he really is with the average Canadian.

Why does the Prime Minister make Canadians pay for his lavish travel while they continue to struggle?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I greatly sympathize, obviously, as we all do, with Canadians. At a time of global uncertainty, with global inflation and the challenges it poses, they are expecting action. That is why they expect the facts to be presented to them, just as the action we are taking to help them should be fairly presented. The member opposite talked about the night the Prime Minister spent to commemorate the Queen's death and to be there. As I have iterated before, the fact is that there was security in that room. There was more than one room. They misrepresent facts, and unfortunately, they continue to be personally focused on the Prime Minister.

• (1445)

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is more out of touch than ever.

Canadians are struggling. Everything costs more: food, housing, heating. Meanwhile, he keeps going on luxury vacations and spending recklessly. He refuses to listen to anyone, not even his own party members, who tried in vain this weekend to convince him to balance the budget.

Will the Prime Minister get his act together and put an end to his ill-advised policies that are poisoning Canadians' lives?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Conservatives for underscoring just how wonderful our Liberal convention was. It was held here in Ottawa, and it was a great chance to gather together with Liberals from coast to coast to coast.

The facts show that Canada has the lowest deficit and the strongest economy of any G7 country. Our government is there to support Canadians.

The Conservatives oppose what we are doing, yet we are delivering results. This is our duty as Liberals.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve is one of the neighbourhoods hardest hit by Montreal's housing crisis.

However, the Liberal member for this riding, who is also the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Housing, refuses to meet with the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve housing committee. Not only that, but she has not provided the organization with any Canada summer jobs positions that would enable it to help renters in the parliamentary secretary's riding.

The Liberals claim that solving the housing crisis is a priority, but their actions say otherwise. When will the Liberals address the housing crisis with the urgency it deserves?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to make housing more affordable for Canadians, we have to build more housing faster.

That is why we are making unprecedented investments to quickly increase the supply of housing and put Canada on track to double the rate of housing construction over the next decade. That is what the federal government's housing plan looks like.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government announced some funding for indigenous shelters and transitional homes that it first promised two years ago. No shovels are in the ground yet, and it could take years before the money is spent. MPs declared the crisis of MMIWG2S an emergency, yet the Liberals have only spent 5% of the violence prevention strategy funding since 2020, plus they are cutting \$150 million from women's shelters in September.

Why are the Liberals not acting with the urgency this crisis deserves? Will they reverse the cut to women's shelters?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about the investments we are making and the announcement the government made just this week to fund 22 shelters, including shelters for women and for 2SLGBTQ people fleeing domestic violence and intimate partner violence. We have worked with communities to make sure these shelters will be appropriate and custom built. By the way, they will be supported with operational funding, so the communities will have the certainty that when there is trouble at home, there is a place to go.

* * *

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a strong believer that the right to choose for women should not be politicized, and I think that many Canadians without a doubt can agree with that. However, here we are politicizing how women can access health care and debating choices they have to make. I believe all Canadians deserve to know what the government is doing to protect the right to choose and access to important health care, including abortion.

Could the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth speak to how our government is increasing access to important health care services, including abortion?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, access to abortion is simply health care. That is why, today, \$4.2 million went to Action Canada and UBC to increase access to abortion.

Women's rights are being attacked everywhere, even in this country. An attack on women's rights is an attack on human rights. We will always unequivocally defend a woman's dignity and right to choose her own future.

Oral Questions

• (1450)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reports that the Prime Minister's carbon tax will cost families in Alberta an extra \$2,800 per year. For a hard-working dad in Airdrie, that could be a month's pay. For a single mom from Cochrane, that might mean two months' rent. For a senior in Crossfield, that is four months of old age security payments.

Because of the Liberal government, life costs more. Will the government finally show some compassion and axe the carbon tax?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this document, the platform of the Conservative Party during the last election—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to stop the hon. minister for a second.

Order, please. I want to remind all members that if they are referring to something, it is a reference, but as soon as they hold it up and show something, I am afraid it is a prop.

I will let the hon. minister put his document away and start from the top.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, the document from “the man with the plan” states—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I think we have everything in order. The hon. minister will start from the top, and I am sure everyone will be very quiet and listen to what he has to say.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, one would think the Conservative Party of Canada would be in agreement with the platform of the Conservative Party of Canada's last election, but maybe not.

Let me quote from said platform:

Our plan will ensure that all Canadians can do their part to fight climate change, in the way that works best for them, and at a carbon price that is affordable: ...increasing to \$50/tonne...

The document further states, “We will assess progress...[so] carbon prices [can be] on a path to \$170/tonne.” That is exactly what our government is doing.

They said they were in favour of it in the last campaign. What is going on?

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that sort of political answer is absolutely what makes Canadians lose faith in a government like that. The government is laughing at the discomfort Canadians are facing because they are struggling to pay their bills.

Oral Questions

If the member and his Prime Minister really believe in their carbon tax, why do they not at least show some solidarity with the one in five Canadians having to skip meals because they cannot afford groceries. Maybe they will show some solidarity and start skipping meals themselves, because those Canadians cannot afford to eat because of their carbon tax.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is no laughing matter. As we are faced with forest fires in Alberta and as people in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia are faced with flooding, climate change is costing Canadians. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, in 2021—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am having a hard time hearing.

The member for Niagara Falls is shouting in my ear, and I am going to ask him to maybe just keep it down. We will let the minister start over again.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, climate change is no laughing matter. People in Edmonton and around Alberta are being evacuated because of forest fires at the beginning of May. People in Quebec, Ontario and B.C. are being evacuated because of flooding. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that, in 2021, the cost to Canadians of climate change was \$20 billion. Climate change is no laughing matter. On this side of the House, we take the issue seriously. It seems that on that side, they do not.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the current government, it costs more to live. The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that if the Prime Minister triples the scam carbon tax to 41¢ a litre on gas, with tax rising on heat and food, it would cost average Alberta families an extra \$2,800. Food costs in 2023 are up an extra \$1,000 compared with last year. More Canadians are visiting the food bank just to get by. Will the Prime Minister end his plan to triple the cost of gas, groceries and home heating and cancel the carbon tax?

• (1455)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague, the Minister of Environment, pointed out just a few minutes ago, that member campaigned in the last federal election under a commitment to implement carbon pricing.

The reality is that we have discovered a way to make sure that we put a price on pollution that makes it more expensive for polluters to damage our atmosphere at the same time as we put more money in the pockets of families. From the moment we formed government in 2015, we have been laser-focused on affordability. We stopped sending child care cheques to millionaires and put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 families. We are putting forward a grocery rebate that is going to help 11 million Canadian households, and we are putting a price on pollution that will clean up our environment and leave families better off. I wish they would finally get on board.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ever since this Prime

Minister came to power, everything costs more. A family of four will have to hand over \$1,065 more for food. One in five Canadians is skipping meals, and more and more people are turning to food banks. What is this Prime Minister doing? He is making things worse by increasing the carbon tax. Contrary to what he is saying, this increase has an impact across the country, even in Quebec.

Will he finally get rid of these policies, which increase the price of everything we buy?

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, what Canadians know is that the country is currently grappling with forest fires, floods and the impact of climate change. What Canadians know is that a responsible government does several things at the same time, such as fighting the climate crisis and, with the measures in our budget, helping the people who need it most.

That is what a responsible government does. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have already said that they will vote against our budget and, therefore, against helping Canadians.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government finally expelled the Chinese diplomat involved in intimidating the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and his family. The government did that yesterday, not in 2021, when it found out what was going on.

In other words, the Chinese diplomat was not expelled for threatening the member in 2021. He was expelled because his threats have been making headlines for the past week. The Liberals' main concern is not that an MP was threatened; it is that the public knows they did nothing. That is one more reason they cannot be trusted to shed light on Chinese interference.

When will there be an independent public inquiry?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is taking this matter very seriously. As soon as we received confirmation, I quickly took action.

[English]

One does not get the attention of the Chinese government by yelling and screaming and by making noise on that side of the House. One gets the attention of the Chinese government by taking direct action, by expelling a diplomat and by doing it carefully and consciously. That is what we do on this side of the House. That is what—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary. We missed the last 15 seconds of what he was saying; if he does not mind, I would ask him to repeat it.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Mr. Speaker, this is a case in point. One gets the attention of the Chinese government to stop it from interfering in Canadians' lives by taking direct action and doing it carefully and prudently. That is exactly what the Minister of Foreign Affairs did this week when she declared a Chinese diplomat *persona non grata*. That is what we are doing on this side of the House. We do not yell. We do not scream. We get attention, and we are consistently effective in doing it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it did take two years. The Liberals do nothing about Chinese interference until it makes headlines. They were fine with holding a \$1,500-a-head cocktail party fundraiser with Beijing's buddies. They were fine with connections between a Toronto Liberal MP and the Chinese government. They ignored threats against an opposition member. That had to make headlines before the government started behaving like a government should.

The Liberals have no interest in casting light on interference. They would rather keep it all hidden and hope the media does not try to ferret out the truth. When will there be an independent public inquiry?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we took concrete steps to address Chinese interference. My colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, took concrete action. We are responding appropriately. All the opposition ever does is whine and complain.

* * *

• (1500)

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that he is investing in Canadians. In my community, people are struggling to make ends meet because of the government's inflationary carbon tax.

Adding to record deficits and national debt is not investing in Canadians. Everyone knows we cannot borrow our way out of debt. Life is simply getting more expensive under that government.

When will the government axe the tax and do something to help struggling Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, the Conservative member for New Brunswick Southwest said, “The backstop will kick in, the feds will take it over, and as part of that change-up ... cheques will begin to roll out to New Brunswick families.”

Well, dreams do come true, because the Conservative premier of New Brunswick said recently that they needed to make a choice that was “in the best interest of New Brunswickers”, when asking the federal government to apply its system of carbon pricing to New Brunswick. He went on to say, “What this does right now is provide relief” from inflation.

Oral Questions

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one is buying what the Liberals are selling, but they certainly are paying for it. The carbon tax is not a price on pollution; it is a price on people.

Canadians need a bailout, just like my colleague, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I do not know what it is today, but everybody knows what a prop is.

The hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, please continue.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I thought it was a very catching photo.

Canadians are out of money. Therefore, I will ask this of the government that is out of touch. When will it axe the carbon tax and give reprieve to Canadians?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Conservatives have amnesia when it comes to investing in Canadians.

In 2015, when the Liberals came into office, our country ranked 24th in the OECD in terms of child poverty. Since we have come into power, we have instituted the child benefit and we have instituted child care. We are making life more affordable for Canadian families. The Conservatives voted against this every single time. They do not invest in families. They do not invest in children. They do not invest in Canadians. They do not care.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is not doing anything to lower the cost of groceries for Canadians. On the contrary, it is continuing to implement policies that make food even more expensive.

The carbon tax and the tariff on fertilizer have tied our farmers' hands and driven up the cost of producing all foods. There have never been so many people using food banks, and one in five Canadians is skipping meals to survive.

When will the government put an end to these costly policies so that our farmers can do what they do best and feed our families?

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, he lives in a province where there has been a price on pollution since 2007.

Oral Questions

As my hon. colleague knows, we implemented a food bank policy during the COVID-19 pandemic that gave food banks across Canada \$30 million.

Once again, we are investing an additional \$10 million to help families put food on the table. I invite all food banks across Canada to apply by May 31.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act was introduced in the Senate on February 9, 2022. Between the two parliamentary committees, nearly 50 hours were devoted to the study of the bill, 80 witnesses were heard and 105 briefs were submitted for review in committee.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change update the House on Bill S-5?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking the member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill for her question and all of her work on Bill S-5 as a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

I also want to thank all the members of the Senate and House of Commons environment committees, who contributed immensely to enhancing this bill.

As my colleague said, 300 amendments were presented, 80 witnesses were heard, more than 100 briefs were submitted and the committees put in 50 hours of work.

I invite every member of the House to work together to ensure that the bill receives royal assent in the coming weeks.

* * *

• (1505)

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister is fangirling over celebrities in the Big Apple, it seems like this finance minister is auditioning for her next career. She showed up at Fenway Park to talk about her budget more times this year than she has to the finance committee. They are always out of the country and always out of touch, and Canadians are out of money.

After delivering one of the worst budgets in Canadian history, pile-driving every household with \$4,200 costs, she refuses to show up to the committee to answer basic questions about her failed budget.

It is easier to find Nemo than it is to find this finance minister at the finance committee.

Is she hiding because she is ashamed of her budget like the rest of us are?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is very

proud of our budget and it is wonderful to hear the Conservatives talk about affordability. Guess what the Conservatives want to talk about at the finance committee—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to have to interrupt the hon. minister.

I just want to remind the hon. members that if they want to ask a question, they should talk to their whip and get on the roster and then they can ask a question. While somebody else is answering, it is not parliamentary to shout across with a question.

The hon. minister, from the top, so we can all hear the answer, please.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of budget 2023 and all of the support measures in place to grow the economy, to support Canadians and to stabilize the health care system for a generation.

Here is what the Conservatives want to talk about at the finance committee: they want to talk about the crimson carpets, from the member for Abbotsford, and the benefits of a steady diet of eels, from the member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

These people are not serious. They are reckless. They are stopping the progress of supports for Canadians.

When will these people get serious?

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell us what we are talking about at the finance committee, the fact that the Minister of Finance has not shown up in six months and has had three invitations to attend and has blown them all off.

Since the Liberal government plans to spend \$3.1 trillion, answering a few questions in committee for two hours is the least she should do for her pay.

Will the finance minister stop hiding and testify for two hours, not one, on her failed budget at the finance committee, yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the failure of the Conservatives is to dictate that they are going to vote against a budget before they even see it. That is just the most ridiculous thing that we have seen in a long time in the House.

Let me make a pledge in the House to the Conservatives. Should the filibuster stop, the Minister of Finance is scheduled to appear at finance on Tuesday.

End the filibuster and they will be able to hear directly from the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister.

*Oral Questions***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in most jobs, if one showed up only a handful of times in the first five months of work, one would be fired, but that is exactly what the Minister of Finance has done. Then she has the audacity to ask Canadians to cough up \$490 billion but will not appear in front of their representatives for two hours. We know she has time, because she spent hours last weekend schmoozing with Liberal insiders and Liberal donors.

When will these Liberals and this minister finally put Canadians ahead of Liberal insiders?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to hear that the member opposite saw how successful a Liberal convention we had here in the nation's capital this last weekend. It was very energizing.

On this substantive matter, we are working every day to get the supports to Canadians. The finance minister is scheduled to appear at finance committee on Tuesday.

We hope the Conservatives stop the filibuster and listen to the minister.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day in our communities, we see the urgent need for safe and culturally appropriate housing—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yukon. I do not think everyone heard me the first time.

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Mr. Speaker, every day in our communities, we see the urgent need for safe and culturally appropriate housing for indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQI+ people fleeing family and gender-based violence.

They need safe shelter and a stable environment wherever they are in the country.

Can the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion please tell the House more about the important action we are taking to support survivors and ensure that they have the supports and services they need to recover from the trauma of their experiences?

• (1510)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Yukon for his strong advocacy on this important issue.

No relationship is more important to Canada than the one with indigenous people. We know that far too many indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQI+ people fleeing violence do not have the necessary supports. That is why yesterday I was pleased to join my colleagues to announce \$103 million to support the creation of shelters and transitional housing in 21 communities across Canada. These projects will be indigenous-led and will offer culturally appropriate wraparound support. This is the national housing strategy at work.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Timmins, Thunder Bay and communities across northern Ontario, the homeless crisis, coupled with the toxic drug disaster has created a social catastrophe. In Timmins, funding for the groundbreaking firekeeper patrol proposal is running out, even though it is keeping indigenous people alive on the streets. In Thunder Bay, the waiting list for housing is staggering.

Social service boards of first nations across the north are doing everything they can. The question they ask is where is the federal government?

Will the indigenous services minister commit to the firekeepers and meet with northern leaders to find a solution to the housing crisis?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me just thank the member for his constant advocacy for support and safety of indigenous people in urban settings.

This government has been a strong partner to provinces and territories to ensure that people, no matter where they live in Ontario; indeed, across the country, have access to supports and services that are culturally appropriate. I will commit to the member that I will meet with the firekeepers and we will look for a solution together. This must be work that the Province of Ontario and the federal government does together.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tenants on Webster Street in London were horrified to learn their apartment building was being sold to a corporate profiteering landlord. This month 20 people are being renocticed, including an 83-year-old woman on a fixed income. She will lose her home and simply cannot afford to move to a new place that will charge her double the rent.

Will the government follow the NDP's plan to put a moratorium on renoctictions to stop corporate profiteering on affordable housing stock and protect Canadians who desperately just want to stay in their home?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the hon. member's concern to make sure that we continue to protect vulnerable renters. That is why our government introduced the groundbreaking Canada housing benefit that is delivering rental supports to tens of thousands of vulnerable renters across the country. In addition to that, we introduced a top-up to the Canada housing benefit that has gone on to almost a million Canadians.

We will continue to make sure that we are there for Canadian renters. We will do our part to prevent renoctictions and the financialization of housing. Part of it is also building more rentals through the rental construction financing initiative through the national housing strategy.

Privilege

[Translation]

The Speaker: We have a point of order.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, misled the House, and I would like to set the record straight. With respect to the organization he was talking about in his question today, I have met with them twice since April 27. A meeting is scheduled for next week. The honourable—

The Speaker: That is a matter of debate. It is not a point of order.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on this issue. We are in incredibly challenging times. There is no doubt that, whether they are from Russia or China, foreign actors have the intent—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I just want to remind everyone that debate is taking place, so as members go out, please be very quiet.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we live in an extraordinarily challenging time. I would say it is also a privileged time. We get an opportunity to defend democracy here and to join in camaraderie with other democratic nations in ensuring that democracies thrive in pressure as the shadow of autocracy attempts to do great damage to our democracies. When we go back in time, the issue of foreign interference is not new. It is something that has existed for a long time.

As I referenced today in question period, when I was the critic for public safety, after Justice Iacobucci issued his report building on Justice O'Connor's report, there were essential recommendations, and both justices spoke at that time of the imperative nature of action and specifically the imperative nature of establishing a committee of parliamentarians that would have the opportunity to look into every aspect of security and intelligence.

Unfortunately, for years, those recommendations were not acted upon, and not only those recommendations, but many others. I am not going to enumerate them all, but it is fair to say that upon getting the privilege of becoming Canada's government, we immediately acted to create that committee of parliamentarians to make sure that every member of Parliament, regardless of what party they are from, has the opportunity to look into every aspect of security and intelligence so that they can know that there is no aspect of our security and intelligence that is under any shield.

On the important matter we are debating now, we respect the Speaker's ruling, and we are taking important action to deal with the foreign interference we are seeing. We saw the Minister of For-

eign Affairs declare the diplomat in question a *persona non grata*. The Minister of Public Safety has made it clear on numerous occasions that we will not accept any form of foreign interference in our country and that any foreign interference would be met with strict action that is taken proportionately and deliberately. One of the things that are so important is that as events unfold, it is important for us to validate facts, to have conversations, to fully think out the consequences of actions, and then to act, as we have in this case.

We have been debating this important motion already for 12 hours, and I do not need to remind members that the purpose is not to have a debate in this chamber, but to move it to the procedure and House affairs committee, which can do its important work and make recommendations. The longer we debate this matter, the more we simply do not have the opportunity to get what the members of the opposition in the Conservative Party are saying they want, which is recommendations, answers and actions. That is what we continue to focus on. The longer we are here and the more speeches we have, and we are already at 12 hours, not only do we not have an opportunity to act at PROC on that matter, but it stops this House from dealing with extremely important issues.

One of the things that were displaced was Bill S-5 and the debate we are having on the amendments to CEPA, which are putting forward incredibly important improvements to our Environmental Protection Act to make sure we are there and taking action on the environment. This is also stopping us from being able to take action on firearms and ghost guns, which we are hearing, from across the country—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1515)

The Speaker: I am going to ask members who are talking and are far apart to maybe sit next to each other and whisper, as opposed to talking loudly across four or five seats. That is just a reminder. I know we are all very friendly in here and we want to talk to each other, but we also want to hear what is being said.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, we hear near unanimity from those who are involved in keeping our streets safe that we have to act on ghost guns. That legislation is pending; it is waiting for action. The action to take on handguns is waiting; it is demanding action. Further, this House is set to try to deal with official languages in Bill C-13, making sure that we protect the French language and that we take important action there.

I am proposing that we take a short break from this debate. I am proposing that we do come back, but after 12 hours, I think it is also important that this Parliament act on those other issues.

If the House agrees, we can return to the question of privilege later on tonight, but for this moment, so that we can also do the other important work of Parliament, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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

• (1520)

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1600)

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

(Division No. 312)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gaheer
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis

Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauson
Lebouthillier
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Morrice
Murray
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Robillard
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi— 175

Privilege

Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Gallant	Garon
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin

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Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shipley
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer — 144

PAIRED

Members

Bibeau	Duclos
Fortin	Freeland
Liepert	Perron — 6

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 25—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-21

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 25, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will be now a 30-minute question period.

I will invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or use the “raise hand” function so the Chair can have some idea of the number of members who wish to participate.

The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things I would like the minister to address. I have many, many questions for him on his recent announcements, and his attack on law-abiding gun owners and the tools used by hunters.

However, in particular, there is something of a personal nature I would like to ask the minister. He keeps alluding to the Conservatives, and I, of course, am the lead on this file for our party. In his recent press conference, the minister insinuated that it was our fault Liberal members are getting abuse from some online. He insinuated there was violence as a result of, presumably, what I have been doing.

I would like to know if the minister would like to correct what he said because I take great offence to that, particularly when Conservative members have received significant abuse from folks who align with the Liberal side, yet I am not out here accusing the Liberal minister of his rhetoric being the reason that I have received death threats. It is obviously very personal in nature. I took great offence to that. The minister is taking this way too far, and I would like him to apologize.

• (1605)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows that I have respect for the work she does. She also knows that I am gravely concerned about any threats that have been made against her, as well as against any other member of Parliament in the chamber.

I would also point out that my colleague and parliamentary secretary, who serves on the Standing Committee On Public Safety and National Security, is among many women in the chamber, and they are the disproportionate recipients of death threats. We need to condemn that kind of behaviour. It is absolutely unacceptable. I will never apologize for standing up for the rights of every member, of every woman, to participate in this debate.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am, in principle, opposed to closure motions. I do recognize that Bill C-21 has been in front of the House for a long time, and I understand the difficulty that the larger parties have in sorting out how to work collaboratively in the interest of efficient handling of the legislation in this place.

Does the minister not think it would be helpful if Parliament decided to obey the rules of Westminster parliamentary democracies around the world and not allow written speeches? It is my view that, if members had to speak based on their knowledge of the subject matter, it might narrow down the field of the number of speeches we hear.

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Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I would want to go to great lengths to speak extemporaneously from my knowledge of this file. I will tell members, though, that, with regard to Bill C-21, there have been 15 meetings, 79 witnesses and approximately 40 hours spent, despite the fact that, at various junctures in this debate, we have seen the Conservatives filibuster in an effort to stop a responsible rigorous debate on gun control laws in this country.

This is not the first time this has occurred. This is consistent with a pattern of obstruction and obfuscation by principally one party in the chamber, which is the Conservatives. We want to protect Canadians, and we believe that, by passing Bill C-21, we will promote responsible gun control and save lives.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently in Surrey, the Minister of Public Safety announced that \$4.5 million under the safe communities fund will go to the City of Surrey. He is well aware that in Surrey, guns and gangs are one of the top priorities for my constituents. I would ask him how this bill would help the people of Surrey.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I have worked very closely with my friend and colleague, the member for Surrey—Newton, when it comes to keeping our communities safe.

As he knows, we recently made an announcement in his riding that will provide additional grassroots support to the organizations providing mental health services, educational supports and career supports, especially to those young people who are at the greatest risk of being exposed to gun violence.

I want to emphasize that this is a government that is squarely focused on three priorities when it comes to reducing gun violence: strong borders, strong laws and enforcement, and strong prevention. Together, with the support of a number of other opposition parties, it is my sincere hope that we will pass Bill C-21 so we can put in place strong gun control laws to save lives.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like the minister to comment on how important it is that we listen to law enforcement when it comes to ghost guns in this country. How important is this legislation and that we pass it in a timely fashion and have a proper debate? The Conservatives are still prohibiting that proper dialogue from taking place.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the NDP is correct. There has been obstruction from the Conservatives with respect to the debate on this bill, and on an array of priorities when it comes to delivering for Canadians. I would highlight that we have had 15 meetings, 79 witnesses and approximately 40 hours of debate, despite the obfuscation by the Conservatives.

I thank my colleague from the NDP, as well as my colleagues from the Bloc, with whom we have had constructive discussions on the next steps we need to take to strengthen the national ban on the AR-15 assault-style firearms, which have no place in our communities. It is only the Conservatives who are advocating for policies that would repeal that ban and make those types of guns, which were designed for a battle field, legal again.

• (1610)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the observations I have made during my time in this place is how

much the Liberal government loves to hinder Canadians and their freedoms.

We saw Bill C-11 get rammed through the House. We more recently saw how Beijing interfered in our elections in this country. An hon. colleague of mine, and his family in Hong Kong, were threatened and intimidated, and the government did nothing. We have seen the government move time allocation on bills over and over again to ram them through.

Specifically, with Bill C-21, we see a government that wants to take away rifles from hunters, again wanting to thwart the freedom Canadians have, and not entrust them with the tools for a basic lifestyle. I am curious as to why the government is so distrusting of Canadians.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Contrary to the ongoing efforts by the Conservatives to stoke fear, we respect gun owners, farmers and the first nations communities who use firearms responsibly. I have engaged with all of them, and we have gone to great lengths to make sure we are weaving their experiences into our laws.

Therefore, rather than stoke fear and disinformation among Canadians, it would be far more productive if Conservatives were prepared to have a debate based on facts, not fear. That is what we are doing with other parties in this chamber, including the NDP and the Bloc, and I want to thank them for their collaboration on Bill C-21.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could provide his thoughts on not only how important the legislation is, but also on bringing in closure, as we are doing right now.

Conservatives have made it very clear that they have no intention of passing this legislation, so without bringing time allocation or closure there is no chance we would see it get passed. Indeed, the legislation is a reflection of what Canadians want to see of the government.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, my colleague on this side of the government aisle is correct. The vast majority of Canadians, approximately 80% of Canadians, support a national ban against AR-15 style, assault-style firearms. They support a national freeze on handguns.

Handguns have become the number one type of gun used in homicides. Canadians support and want to see action that will allow us to reverse the disturbing and alarming trends of domestic abuse and the presence of guns. Again, women are disproportionately victimized as a result of the presence of guns. We want to reverse those trends.

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We want to save lives, which is precisely why we need to move forward with Bill C-21. Were it not for the Conservatives who continue to obstruct and obfuscate, we would be able to do that more quickly. That is why we are taking the step that we are today, and we will continue to engage with all Canadians so we can keep them safe.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have turned to their junior coalition partners to do their bidding at committee tonight. It is laughable that the NDP will call themselves the stewards of democracy and simultaneously support a motion like this.

The rural NDP members of Parliament, who all know Grandpa Joe, and once spoke for him, have completely abandoned him. The rural NDP members will need to go back to their communities to answer for this motion and for helping ram through this legislation in such a draconian way. It is simply not true that we are in charge of the government's legislative agenda and that we could somehow forever stop this legislation.

There are a lot of members who will have to go back to stand and explain why they did the Liberals' work for them by presenting this motion. They are the members for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, Courtenay—Alberni, Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, North Island—Powell River, Skeena—Bulkley Valley, South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Timmins—James Bay and Nunavut.

Can the Minister of Public Safety confirm that the NDP caucus, all of them, will be voting to support him and these Liberals in stripping law-abiding gun owners of their hunting rifles?

• (1615)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, that Conservative member knows full well that that is false. We are not at all targeting, with this legislation, law-abiding gun owners, and her repeated claims that it is true are simply misleading all Canadians.

Frankly, it is the other parties with whom we have been working across the aisle, and thanks to the advocacy of the extraordinary members of the Liberal caucus I get to work with, we are putting forward legislation that will save lives by ensuring that we take the next steps to strengthen a national ban on assault-style firearms, as the Mass Casualty Commission from Nova Scotia recommended that we do, by implementing, permanently, a national freeze on handguns, which have become the number one type of gun used in homicides.

Those are the types of responsible, evidence-based policies that will help to save lives. It is only the Conservatives who are out there in left field on their own on this issue, and they should be joining this debate to support these policies.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard the Conservatives name off a bunch of rural NDP riding members who have brought to the attention of the government the need to ensure that indigenous peoples and rural hunters can keep their weapons.

This motion will get us back to the discussion of the amendments that are needed to improve and strengthen the bill. However, Conservatives do not want to do that. They would drag the bill out until 2027, so it would never happen.

We want to bring forward solutions so we can strengthen the bill to protect farmers and indigenous people, and ensure that we have a strong gun law. We could tackle ghost guns and support law enforcement so they are not on the frontline facing dangerous weapons.

The law-and-order party abandons our first responders, the police, who are asking us to take action and move forward with the bill. Maybe the public safety minister could speak about those frontline officers who are asking us to make those amendments.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the question from my NDP colleague.

In fact, just yesterday, I joined members from our caucus in Peel region to announce \$390 million of support for the work of law enforcement, which they do each and every single day to keep our communities safe, including from gun violence.

My colleague from the NDP also mentioned his concerns with ghost guns, and I share those concerns. As a result of the ongoing and constructive dialogue we are having with the Bloc and the NDP on this side of the House, we will be able to take additional action against ghost guns. In fact, we just had the Americans in town a little less than two weeks ago, and we were able to reach four memorandums of agreement. One of those will be the use of new technology to crack down on ghost guns.

This is what Canadians want. They want parties to work together across partisan lines, and we are able to do that with the Bloc and the NDP. However, the Conservatives have only put forward simply stale and failed policies.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister why it is so urgent that we cannot have proper debate in the committee. It is not a proper process to program a committee to immediately begin a process where we may end up not even knowing what members are voting on.

The question is as follows. Will the minister own up to the issue that he has created a mess at the committee with his leadership on his bill, or will he actually stop, step back and allow the process to go forward, ending in legislation that we may not agree with but that will be better because it will have been examined correctly?

I would also point out that I agree with the whip from my party. There are many B.C. NDP members who should think twice about going along with this minister's plan. It is shameful for democracy, and it is shameful for the minister to be invoking closure on a bill that he has garbled so badly.

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• (1620)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, it would be bad enough if all that the Conservatives wanted to do was just protract the debate on this so that they could obfuscate some more, but no, that is not all. They have openly campaigned, repeatedly, on a commitment to repeal the policies the government has put into place, including wanting to make AR-15 style firearms legal again. These are guns that were designed for the battlefield. It was the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission, which I know you, Mr. Speaker, are very familiar with, that recommended we take additional steps to strengthen that ban so that we could protect communities from another tragedy like the one we saw in Portapique and Truro.

We have been able to have those discussions with our colleagues in the NDP and the Bloc, and for that, I am grateful. It is only the Conservatives who are bending over backwards, doing everything they possibly can, to frustrate debate so they can prevent the passage of this bill into law. I think that is wrong. The Conservatives should reverse course so that we would be able to put this law into action and save lives.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real privilege to talk about Bill C-21 and to really stand up against it.

Getting an honest answer from the minister is difficult. We have tried. I remember being the one in SECU who actually got the witnesses to admit that law-abiding hunters' firearms were on the banned list. The Liberals have tipped their hand, and most firearms owners across the country know that. I have spoken with Liberal members of Parliament who do not necessarily like the way their own government is going on firearms.

This is really a call-out to the NDP. I just heard members from the island. I have been to the Campbell River Gun Club, where people brought huge concerns forward around Bill C-21 and the freedom to access their legally obtained firearms. Again, these are citizens who are vetted on a daily basis. The stats support that people who have a firearms licence are far less likely to commit a crime than an average citizen is. These are impeccable citizens being shown complete disrespect by the Liberal minister.

Again, my question for the New Democrat members is whether they will finally stand with their constituents and oppose this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: I know the hon. minister is not a member of the NDP, but he is the one answering the questions.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, everybody will be appreciative of that clarification.

The Conservative colleague across the aisle talks about his experience. I have met with gun owners in the Eskasoni First Nation community in Nova Scotia. I have met with gun owners in the Yukon, in the Northwest Territories, in British Columbia, in Ontario and, in fact, right across the country, for the express purpose of making sure that we get this bill right.

If the member opposite wants to talk about being honest and straight-up, then what he should do is be straight-up with the work

that we are doing on this side of the House to make sure that we get this legislation—

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, when the member impugns my testimony, with respect to it not being straight-up, he is implying that I am lying to the House. I would expect that he would apologize for doing something indirectly that he is not supposed to do directly.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly rich that that member would make that point of order, when he is basically doing the exact same thing by saying that the minister is not telling the truth. He cannot do indirectly what he cannot do directly, and he was certainly doing it indirectly.

The Deputy Speaker: We are descending into the debate we are actually having. The hon. minister still had the floor, but I do not know if he was done. Okay.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, there is still an issue on the table: asking for an apology for impugning another member of the House. I would ask that he respect that and apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: When the minister stands, he can answer, or not, if he feels like it.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has the floor.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing today is the Liberals admitting they have no idea how firearms regulation works in this country and what it takes to lawfully obtain and transport a firearm.

When I was 12 years old, I took my hunter safety course, and then I had to apply for a possession and acquisition licence. There is an extremely arduous process one has to go through to get licensed and to be able to acquire a firearm, including background checks, checks that are run daily by the system.

My question for the minister is actually quite simple. Does he even have a possession and acquisition licence, or has he even taken the hunter safety course in Canada?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I have respect for gun owners. I know they place a premium on safety. I know that, when they apply for a PAL certificate, they follow all of the regulations—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1625)

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Public Safety has the floor.

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Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I realize there was a lot of enthusiasm for the answer I was just giving, naturally, because I was showing that we have respect for gun owners who do follow the law. This legislation is not about targeting them, and the more Conservatives try to spread that disinformation, the more they are just resorting to their same old—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, using “disinformation” was brought up earlier today. It implies that members across the way are lying. Especially being the Minister of Public Safety and knowing the law in this country, he should know the law in this place, which is that one cannot say indirectly what one is not supposed to say directly. I would ask, once again, for the member to apologize.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, if the member is correct and disinformation is not permitted in the House, virtually every single question from Conservatives during question period would be ruled out of order.

The Deputy Speaker: On the same point of order, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I am going back again to disinformation. We keep hearing Conservatives telling hunters and people who live in rural Canada that their guns would be taken away by this legislation, which is completely false. We want to get to committee to work through the amendments so we can ensure that hunters and indigenous people continue to obtain their right to hunt and that they not lose their weapons. In fact—

The Deputy Speaker: We are descending into debate.

On the same point of order, the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, the member should apologize as well. He knows very well that, at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, we proved hunting rifles were on the banned—

The Deputy Speaker: We are descending into the debate we are having. This is the interpretation.

The hon. parliamentary secretary, on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am just curious if there are any other members who should be apologizing to this member. Should the 337 of us all apologize to him?

The Deputy Speaker: How about this? On behalf of everyone, I will just apologize.

Let us just continue with the debate.

The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam has the floor.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we were in the House until midnight last night with the same sort of childish antics going back and forth. While these are going on, while people are asking to be apologized to and talking about their feelings being hurt, children in my community are being killed by guns, ghost guns, illegal guns. This is what we are talking about. We are talking about the balance between those law-abiding gun owners who deserve and want the right to be able to use their firearms in a responsible way and families who are losing children,

along with women who are intimidated and hurt by guns that are not legally allowed in this country.

If the minister does not mind, could he just explain again why we cannot go through 145 amendments at this pace and still save lives in this country?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I know my NDP colleague's concerns are genuinely felt in her community, as they are felt in mine and indeed right across the country.

With regard to her specific question on ghost guns, we recently had a cross-border crime forum summit here in Ottawa with our American counterparts. What we are seeing coming out of that are concrete results, such as more capacity to trace illegal guns and more opportunities to leverage new technology to go after ghost guns. Ghost guns are a concern that has been expressed to me by chiefs from law enforcement right across the country. It is by doing this tangible work in collaboration with the United States that we are going to be able to build on the record number of illegal firearms that were seized at the border last year and leverage new technology to go after ghost guns to keep her community safe, and keep all our communities safe, from gun violence.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, guns and gangs are a real problem in Thunder Bay. The other day, there was a shootout in a housing complex. People are genuinely worried about the problem in Thunder Bay.

Could the minister please talk about his announcement this morning about giving more money to police forces to deal with guns and gangs, and how this may help us in Thunder Bay to deal with this problem of guns?

• (1630)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, in fact, as I mentioned earlier during this debate, yesterday the government announced an additional \$390 million that will go directly to support law enforcement to dismantle and take down organized criminals who use guns. I would also point out that the original bill, in its proper form, includes raising maximum sentences against hardened gun traffickers as a means of deterring them. It also would provide law enforcement with additional tools around wiretapping and surveillance so that they can share information and use that to disturb, dismantle and stop organized criminal networks that use guns to support and supply their trade.

I have assured the member that we will work closely with the province and his community to see that their work in Thunder Bay is supported as well.

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a real problem with gangs and violence. Violent crime is skyrocketing. We are talking about Bill C-21, which talks about taking legal guns from legal gun owners.

I want to ask the minister, since the government uses evidence-based policies, what percentage of crimes are committed by people with illegal guns, and what percentage are committed by people who have actual legal guns? The answer to the second is going to be zero. After 35 years in policing, I know that answer. Why not put that money into education programs and forget Bill C-21? Scrap Bill C-21. It would not be effective.

I agree that we need to have gun laws, but the government is targeting people who have legal guns. Why not go after the ones who have illegal guns, the criminals?

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, there are at least two serious mistakes in the premise of the Conservative member's question. The first is that we are not going after criminals. In Bill C-21, as I have just mentioned, we would raise maximum sentences from 10 to 14 years for illegal gun traffickers. That is an important and powerful signal to anyone who would try to terrorize our communities that they will run the risk of going to jail for a longer period of time.

The Conservative member also referred to prevention. That is precisely what the government is doing with a \$250-million building safer communities fund. I would point out that the Conservatives have opposed the building safer communities fund's allocations, which will save lives through prevention by providing mental health services and other supports for people who are at most risk. The Conservatives are also against Bill C-21, which would give law enforcement the additional tools to go after criminals who use firearms to commit crimes. That is why their position is so misguided.

On this side of the House, we are doing the work. We are making sure that we pass responsible gun control legislation, but we are also taking action at the border and advancing strong prevention strategies.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could elaborate on the engagement and consultation that have been carried out with rural communities in general. I am thinking in particular of hunting organizations and sport shooting organizations, with engagement that has ultimately led to the bill currently under consideration, in its revised form.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague from London that, as he knows, we have been working with rural communities and first nations communities right across the country.

In fact, I have spent a good, considerable period of time with a number of experts in gaming and hunting in the Yukon, where I had a chance to see how they participate in their traditions. I have nothing but the utmost respect for the way in which they participate in their traditions in a way that is safe and secure. I have also assured them, as we have done with indigenous communities, that this bill would reflect their lived experiences. What does that mean in plain and simple terms? It means that this bill would not target them. Rather, it would go after criminals. It would go after AR-15 assault-style firearms. Yes, it would implement a national freeze on handguns, because handguns have been growing by approximately

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55,000 new registrations every year and they have concurrently become the number one type of gun used in homicides.

Those are the types of evidence-based, informed policies that are in Bill C-21, and that is why it would help save lives.

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is just so much wrong with this presentation. Under the Liberals, violent crime has gone up 32%; gang crime has gone up almost 100%. The minister just spoke about registered firearms, yet the experts who appeared at the justice committee, the police chiefs, said that illegal firearms coming in from the United States are the cause of this problem.

Would the minister acknowledge that his bill, Bill C-5, eliminated mandatory penalties for trafficking in illegal firearms, drive-by shootings and using a firearm in the commission of an offence? While he is talking about increasing sentences for certain crimes, would he also acknowledge that the maximum sentence has never been used for any of these crimes, and it will not be under these changes?

• (1635)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I will not predict what a court will do, because each case is taken on its merits. I suppose that is the biggest difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals. When it comes to the judiciary, we have faith in that institution.

My colleague knows that Bill C-5 was a response to the Supreme Court of Canada repeatedly striking down the failed Conservative approach to sentencing. This disproportionately impacted racialized Canadians and indigenous peoples.

Yes, we do need to make sure that we are putting in place the appropriate sentencing for hardened gun traffickers. I believe that by raising maximum sentences, we are sending a clear signal to the courts. This is an expectation that if people terrorize anyone with a gun, they will face stiffer jail sentences. However, we also need to take action at the border. We did that with the Americans. We also need to include prevention. The Conservatives have never supported that, but they should. That is what a comprehensive plan looks like.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

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. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, ideally, it would be carried on division. However, I have the sense that we are going to need a recorded division on this, so I would request a recorded division.

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The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1720)

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

(Division No. 313)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gaheer
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao

Miller
Murray
Ng
O'Connell
O'Regan
Powlowski
Robillard
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Singh
Sousa
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Trudeau
Valdez
van Koeverden
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Wilkinson
Zahid
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Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
Oliphant
Petitpas Taylor
Qualtrough
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara
St-Onge
Tassi
Thompson
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

NAYS

Members

Aboutaif	Albas
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Gallant	Garon
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Martel	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrice

Government Orders

Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	O'Toole
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Perkins
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Schmale	Seeback
Shields	Shiplay
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer — 146

Liberals and the NDP working together. They did not like that I was going on and on. I had a lot to say, so they voted to keep me quiet. I will be silenced, in essence, after these 20 minutes by the Liberals and the NDP, who are working together to ultimately ensure the slow and painful removal of hunting rifles from everyday Canadians who are trained, tested and vetted by police. That is just the context for folks so they know what is going on in this House.

Ultimately, Motion No. 25 is a time allocation motion, in essence. At committee, we are talking about Bill C-21 and the many amendments brought forward by the Liberals, the NDP and other parties, which are worthy of discussion, debate and questions for officials. If the motion passes, which it is sure to do because the NDP and the Liberals are working together so closely on this, it will severely limit our ability as opposition members to heavily scrutinize a bill that would impact 2.3 million gun owners, hundreds of millions of dollars in our economy and tens of thousands of jobs, not to mention the hundreds of years of culture and heritage in Canada. Just to be clear, that is what the Liberals and the NDP are working together on today.

The Conservatives have been relentless in standing up for rural Canadians and for law-abiding citizens. Certainly, I have been honoured to be given this role by our leader, the member for Carleton, but there are many other members in our caucus who have done extraordinary work for all firearms owners, hunters, farmers, sport shooters and indigenous Canadians. I want to make sure they are acknowledged, because they only reason we are here and have mobilized the country to pay attention to this injustice by the Liberals and the NDP working together is the work that has come from people before me and the work of committee members now. I just want to acknowledge them.

At the public safety committee, I have worked very closely with the members for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner and Sturgeon River—Parkland, and recently we also had on committee the member for Langley—Aldergrove. We have worked very hard over the last six months and over the year and a half I have been on committee. Certainly, we have gotten a lot of expertise from folks in our caucus who really live and breath this culture in Canada. They are a true testament to how important it is in Canada that we fight for this to maintain it. They are the members for Red Deer—Lacombe and Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

I come after very strong members of Parliament who have done extraordinary work. I have been able to stand on the shoulders of those who have come before me. Notably, the member for Lakeland is an extraordinary woman and did incredible work on this file. I am very honoured to follow her and follow in her footsteps in this role. There is also the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

PAIRED

Members

Bibeau	Duclos
Fortin	Freeland
Liepert	Perron — 6

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations, and I hope that if you seek it, you will find consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order, or usual practice of the House, following the disposal of Government Business No. 25 later this day, the House shall resume consideration of the privilege motion standing in the name of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 25—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-21

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to continue my remarks concerning what is, in my opinion, a very undemocratic motion put forward by the Liberals.

What just transpired in this House was a closure motion to basically shut me up and stop the discussion we began as a result of the

Private Members' Business

We have a team of Conservatives who are working on the right side of this debate. They are making history to stand up for a culture that continues to be kicked like a football, a political wedge, by the Liberals. Every time they are not doing well in the polls and every time our message is resonating, it is like they break out an emergency, and firearms is one of them. They spread misinformation, when really we know all of what they are doing does not impact the criminals who are shooting up the streets, and does not impact the gangsters who are in highly organized smuggling rings across the border to bring in the nine out of 10 firearms used in Toronto. The drugs and human trafficking are related.

This is rather than attacking those issues and repeat violent offenders, and it is a result of the government's catch-and-release bail system from Bill C-75 a few years ago, a Liberal bill that the police tell us over and over again is causing what is happening on our streets. We see all these repeat violent offenders stabbing people and wreaking havoc on our streets. Forty individuals in Vancouver were responsible for 6,000 interactions with police last year. This is a result of the reckless catch-and-release policies the Liberals brought in, and they were heavily supported, in lockstep, by the NDP.

While all of this is happening, our message is resonating and the public is concerned about public safety. However, what do the Liberals do? They bring in gun control, which we know really means they are going after heavily vetted, trained and tested individuals who are licensed to own firearms. They hunt, protect their livestock and represent us at the Olympics in sport shooting. These are the kinds of people the Liberals are targeting with Bill C-21, and the NDP is working in lockstep to slowly but surely, step by step, destroy this way of life in Canada.

• (1725)

Shame on the NDP. The New Democrats have plenty of rural and northern members whom they are failing given what they are doing with the Liberals. I am going to name a few of those members. There are so many, honestly. These are good rural people who are being failed by what the NDP is doing here.

We have the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking in Ontario; the member for Churchill—Kewatinook Aski from Manitoba, which is all of northern Manitoba, where they live off hunting; and the member for Elmwood—Transcona. I know there are a lot of hunters and sport shooters in his riding. We have the member for Courtenay—Alberni and the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford in B.C., and we have the members for North Island—Powell River, Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, Skeena—Bulkley Valley, South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Timmins—James Bay and Nunavut. People are being failed by their members of Parliament in this regard.

For a moment, we thought there was a light, and the NDP members were supportive, saying, “No, this is crazy.” I do not know what the Liberals are offering them, but then, all of a sudden, they completely abandoned the rural people they are supposed to represent, who are continuously kicked by the Liberal government. It is disgusting.

I have a lot to say with my remaining time. Again, I have been silenced and limited to 20 minutes now because the Liberals and

the New Democrats do not want to hear the facts. All they want to do is work together to destroy a way of life in this country that the Conservatives are very proud to protect and fight for. We will continue to do so.

Honestly, I had four binders of facts and data, which the Liberals pretend they care about while they follow the science. We will never get to that. We will never get to have the opportunity to talk about that because they have voted to silence the debate on this. I wonder why. They are running, perhaps, from the reality of what they are facing. They do not want to face the facts on the ground of what this means to the Canadians it impacts and what it means to let criminals off the hook yet again.

It is very disappointing that the Liberals are working with the New Democrats and that the New Democrats are going along with this. They should be ashamed. They should be ashamed that they are letting down rural Canadians in this way, who thought they had a voice when they voted NDP. Clearly they were wrong. I am very sorry to those voters, but we will have their backs. We will continue to have their backs, and we will also have the backs of all the folks in cities who are being misrepresented by the Liberals.

We will pick this back up in an hour.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[*English*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST PREGNANT WOMEN ACT

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC) moved that Bill C-311, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (violence against pregnant women), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to open what I seek to be a respectful debate on a private member's bill, Bill C-311, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding violence against pregnant women.

I stand this evening on behalf of pregnant women who have been and are facing violence while living in fear of injury or loss of their child. I stand humbly advocating on behalf of those who no longer breathe or have their voice and on behalf of their families, who have lost loved ones whose lives were taken in targeted violent crimes.

Private Members' Business

There are more than 80 cases in recent Canadian history of women who have been killed while pregnant. Each of these women was killed by men who knew they were pregnant. The killers intentionally sought to do harm to the pregnant women and, in many cases, end their pregnancies. As it stands at this moment, we in this place have failed them by not requiring sentencing judges to take these actions into account.

The violence against pregnant women act is simple. It would amend the Criminal Code to ensure that the act of knowingly assaulting a pregnant woman and causing physical or emotional harm to a pregnant woman are factored in as aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes. For a perpetrator who has been identified and found guilty, the sentence must be required to match the crime.

Every one of us in this place carries the responsibility as legislators to do everything that we can in our roles to denounce and deter gender-based violence in all of its forms. Canada is failing its pregnant women and the children they have chosen to carry to term. Bill C-311, the violence against pregnant women act, reflects our ability to fill this gap in the Criminal Code of Canada. The first question each of us in this place must answer to determine whether we seek to denounce and deter violence against pregnant women is this: Do we truly value women and their choice to be pregnant?

Jeff Durham and Sherry Goberdhan, who spoke to reporters this morning and were with us today, represent families who have been discouraged by the lack of will in this place to champion the choices of Cassie and Arianna to be pregnant and to raise Molly and Asaara.

Jeff said, "Part of what's been lost in this debate is viability of a woman's choice. Two sides of an option make up a choice. You can't protect only one and still call it a choice. It's crazy to me that the argument on one side is against the choice of a woman. I've been thinking about it a lot in terms of reproductive rights. Like, how can we call them reproductive rights and then not extend them to the ones that chose to reproduce. It is so absurd. Someone who believes that such a choice belongs to a woman should be the strongest advocate for something like this.

"The pro-choice community has become disillusioned. They are seeing themselves used as fodder for political gain by politicians, advocacy groups, media and the Prime Minister—all who refuse to value specifically protecting a woman's choice to be pregnant, to carry her child to term, to be protected from intimate partner violence, gender-based violence within Canada's Criminal Code."

Jeff is not alone. As a matter of fact, the vast majority of Canadians agree.

A position paper outlining six reasons to oppose this bill was sent to all parliamentarians, except me. The author, Joyce Arthur, executive director of Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, who supported this bill when it was part of Cassie and Molly's law, has changed her mind and validates that change of heart with the following reasons.

First, she says the bill is redundant, as other clauses in the Criminal Code section can cover pregnant victims. In researching through many references of previous cases, I saw that a judge's dis-

cretion in using other clauses or choosing to see pregnancy as an aggravating circumstance is truly wanting.

I will give only two of many examples. The first is R v. Cunningham, 2023. It is another tragic case of someone attempting to end the life of a pregnant woman. The appeal seems to hinge on the unfairness of the sentence, but what is interesting is that there are no indications that the fact she was pregnant factored into the sentencing whatsoever.

There is also R v. Kormendy, 2019. The judge there said, "The trial judge did not address the significance of domestic violence, including the fact that the victim was pregnant with the respondent's child, as well as that the attack represented an obvious desire to kill her to solve his own problem of unexpected parenthood."

Joyce Arthur also said that more effective measures are needed to address gender-based violence. I agree. I could not agree more. Any and every measure we can implement to better protect women when pregnant should be taken.

• (1735)

Last week, I had a call from a young woman who, while pregnant, feared for her life and the life of her child. With the challenges she is facing now, a limited income when food prices are skyrocketing, the inability to work because she wants to take care of her newborn, waiting for room in a shelter, finding a home she can afford, having all of her belongings, credit card and bank account stolen by her abusive and threatening husband, she is nothing short of a strong, determined and very brave woman.

Every measure we can implement to better facilitate pregnant women who are facing violence must be taken. This remarkable woman called me and thanked me for bringing forward the violence against pregnant women act.

And yet, what does Joyce Arthur say? She said that such protections could hypothetically include a degree of legal protection, but only if that would meet a real need according to the anti-gender based violence community, and only if the focus was on the pregnant person and their needs, and not on the pregnancy itself or the fetus.

Partner Jeff Durham, mother Sherry Goberdhan and this young woman who was assaulted and abused are clearly members of the anti-gender based violence community, and their extended families are clearly members of the anti-gender based violence community, yet their voices are being denied by what is truly an extreme claim that only one choice matters.

Private Members' Business

I encourage those who vote in this place to be brave enough to go to mollymatters.org to see and hear of the many more victims of gender-based violence who are shunned by this statement, which has further traumatized those being told they and their loved ones have no place within the anti-gender based violence community. They are the ones who have faced all this violence.

Joyce Arthur says that no anti-violence group is known to support this bill, and then she goes on to list organizations she is aware of that support the violence against pregnant women act. She defines them as anti-choice groups and implies that because they support this bill they are not anti-violence groups.

Merriam-Webster defines anti-violence as “acting against or opposing violence”, where violence is defined as “the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy” or “an instance of violent [harmful or destructive] treatment or procedure”.

Just as the majority of the pro-choice community is being misrepresented in these reasons not to support Bill C-311, the same can be said of the pro-life community, yet the desire to see pregnancy as an aggravating circumstance is supported by the vast majority of Canadians across the entire spectrum.

The bill has received and is receiving endorsements from other cultural and faith-based groups that support its intent to denounce and deter violence, such as the Overseas Friends of India Canada and the Pakistani Canadian Cultural Association. Pregnancy counselling centres, safe spaces for women who are facing violence during pregnancy, support denouncing and deterring that violence by seeing the violence against pregnant women act supported unanimously in this place, but what is the current government doing? It wants to revoke their charitable status.

On its website, Pregnancy Care Canada states, “for a woman to truly have a choice regarding her unexpected pregnancy, she must have authentic options to choose from—including the option to continue her pregnancy.”

I encourage those who will vote on this bill to review the findings in the 2016 Nanos poll “Canadians’ opinions on crimes against pregnant women”. Nick was surprised that it clearly indicated that 70% of all Canadians and 73% of all Canadian women want to see pregnancy as an aggravating circumstance in Canada’s Criminal Code. They believe in it and want it to happen.

Joyce Arthur says that the motivation behind this bill is suspect. Where have I heard that before? Where are we hearing it today? It is on all kinds of social media, painting the bill as dangerous. When she says that the motivation behind the bill is suspect, what she is really saying is that the bill is suspect because it was put forward by me. What a demeaning attitude toward an issue that is so important to women in this country, yet she supported this very bill herself when it was part of my previous bill that called for protections for pregnant women in the Criminal Code. She saw that unity among most Canadians existed then for what has now been written as the violence against pregnant women act, period.

• (1740)

Joyce Arthur expressed support for my previous bill, but only if the aggravating circumstances portion was kept. That is what Bill

C-311 is. At this point, she was onside with most Canadians. She stated, “Because pregnant women are more vulnerable to violence and abuse than non-pregnant women, they fit into the reasoning for aggravating factors.... ARCC would be willing to support it, especially if it might help give some redress and comfort to victims and their families.”

I can tell the House that victims and families across this nation have sensed anything but support from the Liberal government, when they have chosen to carry their children and face these kinds of violent circumstances that were no choice of theirs. It is deplorable. Yet, she did not stand in the gap and challenge the government of the day to support the bill going to committee to consider this amendment. I wonder why.

Unfortunately, and we will witness to what extent in further debate today, current members of Parliament either support or fail to represent the view of the majority of Canadians on the violence against pregnant women act.

Why do supposed anti-gender based violence organizations and politicians refuse to prioritize the safety and security of women when they are pregnant? What is going on there? Why do they choose to turn a deaf ear to the vast majority of Canadians, who want to see this bill passed? What is the motivation for that? Canadians have woken up to what some of that motivation is.

What I find most incomprehensible is when women fail women. There is no justification, for any reason, for any woman, including in this place, to sacrifice the choice of another woman to carry her child to term, to deny their value, to deny what we could do in this place to bring further protections to those women who are attacked, who are killed, who face all kinds of violence. We are ignoring them in this place for another agenda.

Joyce Arthur then says that the bill is already being used to promote fetal rights. I have something to say to that. It is also being used by those who deny fetal rights, and that is wrong on all levels. The majority of Canadians support this, which means that, across the entire spectrum of Canadians, whatever their views are, they see this as something that is absolutely crucial when a woman is pregnant, when she is carrying a child. I do not know about others, but with all these gender reveals, what do they do? They say, “I am having a baby, and I am calling him or her this.” Arianna named Asaara. Jeff and Cassie named Molly. This is normal behaviour, and we are acting as though it is something we do not want to see happen, that we protect these women.

Private Members' Business

Again, along with other significant findings, the 2016 Nanos poll “Canadians' opinions on crimes against pregnant women”, which members can look up, indicates that 70% of all Canadians and 73% of women in Canada want to see pregnancy as an aggravating circumstance in Canada's Criminal Code.

We, as legislators, must respond to the clear consensus of Canadians. It is fully within Parliament's role to amend Canada's Criminal Code to ensure that the act of knowingly assaulting a pregnant woman and causing physical or emotional harm to a pregnant woman is factored in as an aggravating circumstance for sentencing purposes.

I have a couple more thoughts.

Joyce Arthur ends with this final point of her six points, that two Liberal MPs immediately saw through the bill. Really? They saw through the bill. Apparently, today, a whole bunch more saw through the bill. At a press conference this morning, while mine was on, they were seeing through the bill. These two female Liberal MPs and others who are taking that stand, turning a blind eye to this—

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time is up.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was reported earlier today that the Conservative leader, the member for Carleton, will support Bill C-311. I would like to ask my hon. colleague if she can confirm that in the House, because the well-known anti-abortion group Campaign Life Coalition was very surprised by this news. It said that it was happily surprised, but even it was surprised by this news.

I would also like to ask my hon. colleague if the Conservative leader agrees with her statement that the lack of abortion law in Canada constitutes a “legal void”. These are the arguments that my colleague from Yorkton—Melville put forward to justify her bill, Bill C-311. Does the Conservative leader agree with that?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, my leader supports this bill. My leader supports the bill because it is reasonable and it reflects the views of Canadians, of valuing family. I was asked, at my press conference, if that means that everyone on my side of the floor is obviously going to support it.

An hon. member: A legal void.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I will get to that.

What I said to him, as we discussed this, was that we are different in the Conservative Party, very different. People see the difference. I said that I do not want anyone on my side of the floor in this party to have to feel what every other person in the House experiences when there is a vote that their leader has an attitude about. I said that I want every member of my party to have the freedom to vote their conscience. That is something that is dead in the House, except for over here.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, in her speech, my colleague from Yorkton-Melville talked about a majority of Canadians. She is certainly not talking about a majority of Quebecers. She brought up the Conservative difference; I am talking about the Quebec difference.

Recently, Quebec's minister responsible for the status of women expressed concern for women's right to abortion.

Does my colleague realize that her bill is truly a threat and could lead to a major setback for women's rights, which have been ardently defended by Quebec women for many, many years?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, that is pretty typical. It is hogwash.

These people are in government. They can make whatever decision they want in regard to abortion access. The majority of Canadians want access to abortion, but the majority of Canadians also want protection for women who choose to raise their children, to carry them to term.

That is what Jeff was saying, who was a pro-choice person, as was Cassie. He asked what has happened here. He said that the definition of pro-choice has been hijacked and he wants it back, because he lost Molly and he lost Cassie and they are totally disregarded by that community and by this government and the Bloc.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know my hon. colleague is very passionate about the issue, but I do not think it is the issue at hand. In fact, the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada opposes this bill and is urging MPs to oppose the bill. At the same time, anti-choice organizations, including the pro-life coalition, are cheering on the introduction of the bill because they see it as a step toward establishing legal protection for fetuses, which would pave the way for restriction on abortion.

I do not want to go back to a time when we had to use coat hangers in back lanes to get abortions. I do not want to go back to a time when we had to fight for little children who have been victims of sexual assault, including 10-year-olds, to have access to abortion, as we are seeing in the States.

I am going to ask a yes-or-no question. Does my hon. colleague support a woman's right to a safe abortion?

• (1750)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, it is time for this House, which has its own agenda, to stop gaslighting Canadians. It is time. There is a desire across this nation, regardless of perspectives. I can assure the member of that because I see and hear it all the time. A lot of the pro-choice community is still very nervous—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Private Members' Business

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-311, which was introduced by the Conservative member for Yorkton—Melville.

The bill amends the Criminal Code to specify that knowingly assaulting a pregnant woman and that causing physical or emotional harm to a pregnant woman are to be considered aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes.

At first glance, this bill seems like a well-intentioned measure to better protect pregnant women. However, a closer look at the bill's language and genesis suggests that its real purpose is to reopen the abortion debate in Canada.

[*English*]

Conservative Bill C-311 is the most recent iteration of a number of similar previous private members' bills. In 2016, the same Conservative member introduced Bill C-225, which proposed to add an offence for injuring or causing the death of a “preborn child” while committing an offence. That proposed legislation was defeated due to the concerns that it would have conferred rights on fetuses, thereby compromising abortion rights in this country.

While that Conservative bill explicitly mentioned preborn children, Bill C-311 seems to take a more indirect approach, but to arrive at the exact same result. I understand why my colleague felt it necessary to be so indirect in her tactics to further her goal. After all, the Conservative member's previous attempt, through Bill C-225, was soundly defeated, with members of all other parties in this House voting to reject that Conservative bill. Not only that, but over 20 Conservative MPs could not even bring themselves to vote for it. A few Conservative members even voted against it, including the member for Wellington—Halton Hills; I think this underlines why so many of us in this House think so highly of that particular member.

[*Translation*]

Now I would like to say a bit more about the reasons I oppose this Conservative bill. There are two major reasons.

First, this bill appears to be designed to serve as a stepping stone towards reopening the abortion debate in Canada, with the goal of—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could we have silence while the hon. member is making her speech? There was silence while the sponsor of the bill was giving her speech, and I would like to ask that the same courtesy be accorded to the current speaker.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, this bill appears to be designed to serve as a stepping stone towards reopening the abor-

tion debate in Canada, with the goal of conferring rights on the fetus.

Let me be clear. Our government firmly believes that the right to abortion is protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We will never compromise on that right.

Second, this bill contains errors that render it simply ineffective at achieving its intended purpose. I will explain how the bill would actually reduce the legal tools available to pregnant women who have been assaulted.

I recognize, of course, that violence against pregnant victims is a serious problem and a form of gender-based violence that requires a tough criminal response. The Criminal Code already includes numerous offences of general application that we can rely on in the context of gender-based violence.

Depending on the wrongdoing in question, offences such as assault, sexual assault and uttering threats could apply, as could other offences such as criminal harassment, which applies in cases involving ongoing behaviour that affects the victim's sense of physical or psychological safety. Aggravating factors already exist that can be invoked to increase penalties when the violence is committed against a pregnant victim. The relevant case law indicates that these cases are treated seriously by the courts.

In addition to a strong criminal response, I am sure we can all agree that strong non-legislative measures are also needed to address all forms of gender-based violence. That is why our government continues to implement its strategy entitled “It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence”. This strategy focuses on preventing gender-based violence, supporting survivors and promoting the necessary legal systems.

• (1755)

[*English*]

I want to speak more directly about the right to choose and abortion rights here in Canada. The Conservative member for Yorkton—Melville has stated in this House that her bill is meant to address the “legal void” around abortion in Canada.

The Conservative member created her own web page for this particular bill where she linked to a pro-life petition, which she also presented in this chamber in March. That petition advocates for Bill C-311, arguing that “preborn children” should be considered “victims”. This language has garnered public support from anti-abortion organizations that seek to strip reproductive freedom from women here in Canada.

Private Members' Business

When someone tells us who they are and what they are doing, we have to believe them. Just last week in this House, the member for Yorkton—Melville said, “Canada has no abortion law and it is still a huge discussion in our country.” Where is this still a huge discussion? Only the Conservatives want to discuss abortion law in this country. There is certainly no doubt that it is the Conservatives reopening this debate on the floor of the House of Commons here today.

Pro-choice organizations, including Abortion is Healthcare, a group from the sponsor's home province of Saskatchewan, and the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, have spoken out against this Conservative bill. Abortion is Healthcare called Bill C-311 a bill that is “slowly moving the fetus toward personhood.”

To be clear, abortion is health care in this country. A woman's right to choose is hers and hers alone. The government has no role to play in that decision. We, the Liberal government, will always stand with Canadian women in order to protect their rights.

For those who feel that the Conservatives' reopening of this debate in Canada is not something they should be worried about, I would like to share a part of the conversation on feminist policy that our Deputy Prime Minister had this weekend with Secretary Hillary Clinton. Secretary Clinton said, “there is a very significant historical struggle going on, about whether we move forward or the clock is turned back”. I raise this because just across our southern border, we see the clock getting turned back. We witnessed U.S. Supreme Court justices and politicians attempt the erasure of decades of feminists' struggle for a woman's right to make decisions about her own body. We know that Canadians fought tirelessly for this same right in our country, and we will never let it be weakened.

Finally, I would like to explain why this bill would actually endanger pregnant women. Bill C-311 would reduce the legal tools available to people who are assaulted while pregnant. Sentencing courts already treat the fact that a victim is pregnant as an aggravating factor in the common law. The factor that currently applies is similar to Bill C-311, but it provides broader protection, because it does not require evidence that the offender knew that the victim was pregnant. Therefore, I am extremely concerned that the bill's proposed aggravating factor could result in sentencing courts refusing to treat a victim's pregnancy as an aggravating factor in cases where there is no evidence that the offender knew the victim was pregnant.

I do not want pregnant women to suffer from less protection under the law because of this ill-conceived bill, Bill C-311. This Conservative bill would be a step backwards for pregnant women, for all women and for all Canadians. I will be voting against this bill and urge every single member of this House to vote against this Conservative bill.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, rising this evening to speak to Bill C-311 is utterly exasperating. The Criminal Code amendment in the bill would force the courts to consider the fact that an assault victim is a pregnant woman an aggravating circumstance for sentencing purposes.

I realize this may seem like a sensitive issue, but, as usual, the Conservatives want to reopen the abortion debate. This bill is the latest in a long line of attempts to grant the fetus legal status in order to undermine women's right to control their own bodies.

I will start by explaining the pernicious effects of this bill. Then I will go over the Conservatives' history of back-door attempts. Lastly, I will remind the House about this difficult struggle for women.

First, without explicitly naming the fetus, this bill seeks to create an aggravating circumstance when the offence of assault is committed against a pregnant woman. If passed, the Conservative proposal could strengthen the premise that the legislator's intent is to grant the fetus implicit legal status. The Bloc Qu b cois opposes any attempt at such legislation, which would set women's rights back.

It is important to point out that the Criminal Code already enables judges imposing a sentence to consider as an aggravating factor an offence that has a significant impact on the victim, considering their personal circumstances, including their health. The victim's personal circumstances can include pregnancy, and the court can consider that as an aggravating factor under the circumstances.

Femicides against pregnant women have been documented by Canadian police forces since 2005. According to Statistics Canada, in 2005, 12 pregnant women were killed by their intimate partner, and eight pregnant women were killed by someone other than their intimate partner. Let us remember that. Not one more.

In a 2021 ruling, the Court of Quebec examined this issue when sentencing a man who pleaded guilty to assaulting his ex-wife. The judge was unequivocal about the consequences of committing such a crime against a pregnant woman. Her condition makes her more vulnerable to assault and less able to defend herself. The Quebec and Canadian courts are therefore inclined to consider a victim's personal circumstances, namely, a pregnancy, when handing down a sentence.

Our society has a duty to punish violence against women, especially violence against pregnant women, but the mechanisms to do so exist already. While it may have been tabled in good faith, the amendment in the Conservative bill brings nothing new to the table. However, we have strong reason to believe that it may be part of an anti-abortion strategy.

Second, it is important to point out that the Conservative member is continuing her ideological war against women's reproductive health.

Private Members' Business

During the previous Parliament, she sponsored a bill to criminalize abortions performed on the basis of an unborn child's sex. Despite the Leader of the Opposition's claims about being pro-choice, his caucus is clearly divided on the issue and still includes anti-choice members.

The Bloc Québécois therefore opposes Bill C-311 given the bill's ulterior motive of securing legal status for fetuses. Bill C-311 is an anti-abortion bill. The Bloc will make no compromise when it comes to defending women's right to control their own bodies, their right to choose, and supporting free, accessible and safe abortion services.

The Conservatives are trying to do indirectly what they cannot do directly. This bill is nothing less than an attempt to amend Canadian law in favour of their outdated anti-abortion position, which Quebecers have rejected. If passed, this legislative amendment could set a dangerous precedent if a Canadian court were to rule on the issue of the right to abortion.

Our elected members have a responsibility to carry out their duties honestly and to state their real intentions when they engage in dialogue on behalf of the constituents they represent. This is necessary for a healthy democracy. Obfuscating the debate for purely ideological purposes undermines the effective functioning of our democracy. These tactics need to be recognized, called out and stopped.

• (1805)

The Bloc Québécois demands that the Leader of the Conservative Party publicly recognize that Bill C-311 is just a partisan strategy to attack abortion, that he call on his members to oppose it and that he rein in the member for Yorkton—Melville. If he does not, if he chooses instead to vote for Bill C-311, as he announced today, it says a lot about the influence of religious lobby groups on the Conservatives. In Quebec, we believe in secularism, which takes religion out of governance.

The member for Yorkton—Melville has previously presented anti-abortion bills. In 2016, she introduced Bill C-225, the protection of pregnant women and their preborn children act, also known as Cassie and Molly's law, which would have handed out a life sentence to anyone who “directly or indirectly causes the death of [a] preborn child”.

Is it not curious that the member for Yorkton—Melville never openly attacks the right to abortion, but that her efforts are somehow always directed at making this medical act a criminal offence with harsh sentences?

For all these reasons, we recommend that members vote against Bill C-311.

It is also worth noting that the issue of selective abortion is not new in federal politics. A Conservative member moved a motion to condemn it in 2012, reopening the abortion debate in the process. That motion came after Conservative Stephen Woodworth's motion on the rights of the fetus that called for a parliamentary committee to study at what point a fetus should be considered a human being for the purposes of enforcing Criminal Code provisions.

These tactics, aiming to surreptitiously criminalize abortion, were carried out despite former prime minister Stephen Harper's campaign promise to not reopen the abortion debate.

Third, I would remind members that women's right to access abortion in Canada is intimately connected to Dr. Henry Morgentaler's fight to legalize this medical treatment. Prior to 1969, performing abortions was illegal in Canada. Women died trying to perform their own abortions with knitting needles and coat hangers. Do we really want to go back to that?

In 1969, Parliament made several important amendments to the Criminal Code. The section on abortion, section 273 at the time, specified when an abortion could legally be performed. The section set out criminal sanctions for doctors who did not respect the strict rules.

That same year, Dr. Henry Morgentaler opened his first clinic in Montreal, where he performed abortions after doctors and groups had debated whether or not to approve it. A year later, he was charged with performing illegal abortions. After his appeal was dismissed by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1975, he served a 10-month sentence in prison.

In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms came into effect. In 1983, Dr. Morgentaler, along with two other doctors, was charged with performing illegal abortions at Dr. Morgentaler's clinic in Toronto. Although complex, the case rests primarily on one specific point of law, namely, whether the abortion provisions of the Criminal Code infringed in an unjustified way a woman's right “to life, liberty and security of the person” as guaranteed by section 7 of the charter.

Although the ruling is also complex, the court concluded that the abortion section of the Criminal Code infringed a woman's right to security of the person, that the process by which the woman was deprived of that right was not in accord with fundamental justice, and that the right to security of the person of a pregnant woman was infringed more than was required to achieve the objective of protecting the fetus, and the means were not reasonable.

In conclusion, over 30 years after abortion was decriminalized in Canada, the Conservatives are pursuing their anti-choice militancy by tabling a bill like this one in Parliament. Their attacks on women's rights are a political manoeuvre to pander to the religious right.

The Bloc Québécois must firmly resist the Conservatives' attacks on the integrity of women and their hard-won right to control their own bodies.

Private Members' Business

• (1810)

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am not pleased to have to rise today to speak on Bill C-311, another attack on a woman's right to choose, another attack on abortion as health care, another attack on abortion rights as human rights, which is something that women, in particular, led the way to have so that we would not go back to the dark times of what has been mentioned so many times today: back-alley abortions where women died bleeding to death; gruesome. We are talking about violence, and I cannot think of anything more violent than restricting a woman's right to health care, including the right to access a safe abortion.

Bill C-311 would amend the Criminal Code to specify that knowingly assaulting a pregnant woman and that causing physical or emotional harm to a pregnant woman are to be considered aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes. However, we know, as has been indicated over and over in this debate, that these changes are, in fact, unnecessary as judges already have the ability to apply more significant penalties for aggravating circumstances under section 718.2 of the Criminal Code.

In fact, no anti-violence organization has asked for this legislation. As somebody who has been on the frontline fighting against gender-based violence for many decades, I find it insulting to conflate an attempt to attack women's reproductive rights with true actions to end the ongoing crisis of gender-based violence. The federal government can and should pursue other ways of addressing gender-based violence, including reversing the plan to cut \$150 million to women's shelters in September. If we want to protect women, including women who are pregnant, we need to make sure that they have a safe place to go. Let us not talk about the safety of women when that is not what we are really talking about, when we are attacking a woman's right to make a choice about her bodily autonomy.

I call on all members of the House to instead focus their attention on pushing all levels of government to implement the 231 calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and strengthening the national action plan to end gender-based violence by adding timelines and accountability measures. Why are we not discussing that today? Why are we discussing a bill that would threaten a woman's right to health care, which includes a safe abortion? This is disturbing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. whip for the opposition on a point of order.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, we are here to debate a specific bill, and now speaker after speaker, including the present one is talking about irrelevant issues. There is nothing in this bill about health care—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows that there is quite a bit of leeway in how members approach bills—

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I am asking, Madam Speaker: Do you find this relevant?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have not listened to the past two minutes or so as I was in discussion with a table officer. However, before that, I thought it was relevant to the bill in question. I will pay close attention henceforth.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

• (1815)

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, anti-choice organizations, on the other hand, are cheering on the introduction of the bill. They see it as a step forward in establishing legal protection for fetuses, which would pave the way for legal restrictions on abortion. If the bill passes, it would be a victory for those who want to limit abortion rights and would not do anything to meaningfully address gender-based violence.

I am sorry to hear that the member for Carleton has not advanced in his position on women's rights and is actively supporting this legislation. He has a history of supporting legislation that violates a woman's right to choose. I would add that the member for Carleton also has a history of supporting individuals, including Jordan Peterson, who attack the trans community. He also has a history of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I need to interrupt the hon. member.

There is a point of order from the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, she is not referring to the bill at all. She is defaming and abusing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre was referring to the bill.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: She was referring to Dr. Jordan Peterson, who has absolutely nothing to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is debate.

The hon. member was referring to the bill two minutes ago, and I was listening. She was referring to the bill, and she is using arguments she is free to use to make her points.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: This has nothing to do with this bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. members have a certain capacity to use arguments to defend their points, and that is what the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre is doing.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

I know the topic is sensitive, but ever since the debate started, we have had to endure what we might describe as vocal interference from the Conservatives.

I consider it my parliamentary right to be able to listen to the debate without disruption. In my opinion, this crosses a line and intervention may be appropriate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is a different matter.

Private Members' Business

[English]

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I think you would agree with me it is my right as a member of Parliament to raise a point of order, bring it to the Speaker's attention when I think it is appropriate, and I will not be shut down—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mirabel was not referring to rising on points of order. I think the hon. member was referring to comments that were being made while other members were speaking.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, the member for Carleton has a history of supporting anti-choice legislation that impacts a woman's right to choose, including, now, his support of Bill C-311. He also has a history of backing up and holding up folks such as Jordan Peterson, who has spoken out aggressively against the trans community and its members' right to bodily autonomy. This is about bodily autonomy and the right to choose. It is very much a part of the debate.

The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada opposes this bill, saying “The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada opposes this bill and urges MPs to oppose the bill as well...The bill is redundant.” It goes on to say that the anti-choice movement is using it as a vehicle to advance fetal rights, saying, “Several anti-choice groups have been promoting this Bill C-311 as a means to recognize two victims. They are looking for a route to establish fetal personhood in law, and if this bill passes, they would leverage the bill for that purpose”.

This is very much an anti-choice bill. This is not coming from me, although there have been points of order raised. I know what I am saying might be troubling, but I want to let people know that the NDP opposes Bill C-311. We are committed to fighting for the reproductive rights of all Canadians. We oppose, and I am proud that we oppose, anything that restricts these rights, and we support expanding access to abortion services, removing barriers and protecting the right of women and gender-diverse people to make decisions about their own bodies.

That is what this debate is about tonight. From my perspective, and we have certainly heard from several experts in the field, this bill is the latest attempt in a long line of attempts by anti-choice Conservative MPs to undermine Canadians' reproductive rights. I know not all Conservative MPs are anti-choice, and I urge them to vote against the bill. It is unfortunate the Leader of the Conservative Party is supporting anti-choice legislation.

We are opposing the bill, as it does not provide pregnant women with additional protection, but it does provide anti-choice MPs and organizations a new tool to promote the legal restrictions on abortion.

Let us look at what is happening south of us. I am worried that we will have, just like what is happening in the States, 10-year-old girls who were victims of sexual assault being forced to carry babies to term. Do we want a country that forces that kind of abuse on

children? New Democrats are going to resist, vocally, any sort of attempt to limit abortion rights. We could ensure that a pregnant woman and others who experience gender-based violence are safe. That is not what this bill is about.

We could ensure that pregnant women are safe without undermining reproductive rights and the right to bodily autonomy for anybody, including the trans community. We know abortion rights are under attack. This is a real threat, even in this country. We must do more than oppose bad legislation. We already need to improve, for example, in real time, access to this right. There are places in Canada where people cannot access an abortion.

We have to ensure that we do not just recognize that human right, but that we ensure all women have access to the right. We know that Conservatives cannot be trusted on this issue. We know that. They have had several attempts to undermine women's and gender-diverse individuals' right to choose. We know that many Conservative MPs have introduced and supported anti-choice bills that would undermine Canadians' right to access a safe abortion.

Quite frankly, the Liberals have talked a good game, but their record is deeply underwhelming. While they pay lip service to defending abortion rights, they still have not removed the charitable status from anti-choice crisis pregnancy centres, and they do not enforce the Canada Health Act when provinces fail to uphold the right to access abortions.

● (1820)

They need to take action, not words, to ensure that a woman's right to health care, is available. Abortions are health care. We are going to continue to hold the government to account.

I will continue to watch the Conservative leader, the member for Carleton, who is actively supporting a bill that—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock has the floor.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to stand today in support of Bill C-311, the violence against pregnant women act, because I thought that is what we would be debating tonight. However, what I have been listening to is far from that. The speakers have gone far afield in their discussion of a bill that is squarely before them.

I want to thank the member for Yorkton—Melville for bringing forward this important legislation. It is my honour to second it at this stage of debate. I will speak to this bill, not some other bill or bills, or a history of bills. We are talking about Bill C-311, which would amend the Criminal Code to specify that knowingly assaulting a pregnant woman and causing physical or emotional harm to a pregnant woman would be considered aggravating circumstances for sentencing purposes.

I support this bill because mothers who have faced and are facing violent assaults need to know that they are heard and that the pain and depression caused by harm to their babies are not left unseen by others. I have fought for women's rights all my career as a lawyer, especially during my career as a family lawyer, and now as a politician. This bill is about the rights of pregnant women, no more and no less.

I am the mother of four children who I have been fortunate to raise into adulthood, but I was pregnant five times. My last child, a boy named Mackenzie, or little Mack for short, never got the chance to know his family, work, speak, go to school, play with friends or grow up. His waiting family, which was me, his dad, his brother and three sisters, never got to meet him. We lost little Mack halfway through my pregnancy because of the negligence of an intern doctor who wrongly handled an amniocentesis procedure and suffocated him in utero.

At the time, his loss sent me into a deep situational depression for months. I was off work for the first time in my adult life, and I grieved his passing desperately. I still do many years later. Because of this tragic event in my own life, I know and understand how the deliberate act of a person who knows that someone is pregnant and does harm to them and their baby impacts a mother and her family.

It is well documented that pregnant women in Canada are easy targets for violent assaults, yet the consequences of these offences have not increased. Just this year, the Court of Appeal for Ontario overturned a seven-year sentence for an offender who stabbed the pregnant mother of his unborn child in the neck and left her for dead. The mother lived, but the baby did not. This violent attacker's sentence was upped to 15 years when an appeal judge pointed out that the initial sentence did not address the issue of domestic violence or that the victim was pregnant with his baby. A violent crime against a pregnant woman needs to be treated as the serious crime that it is. Right now, criminal sentences in Canada do not consider harm done to a pregnant woman when an assault is committed.

Nelson Mandela said, "Safety and security don't just happen. They are the result of collective consensus and public investment." Violence against women, especially pregnant women, is not a private family issue. It is a public safety and security issue, and it needs the urgent attention of this House.

Among Canadian women who have reported being abused by an intimate partner during pregnancy, 40% said that the abuse began during pregnancy. In recent years, there have been more than 70 cases in which pregnant women have been murdered, and the effect of the death of the unborn child was not a factor at sentencing.

The story of Tashina General from Brantford is particularly disheartening. In 2008, a Brantford man strangled Tashina to death. She was his 21-year-old pregnant girlfriend. He then attempted to hide Tashina's body by burying her in a shallow grave. He committed this gruesome and horrific crime against Tashina, as the evidence came out, simply because he did not want to bear the responsibility of being a father, despite Tashina's choice to be a mother.

• (1825)

Only eight years later, this murderer was set free. Tashina's grandmother, Norma General, still wonders what her great-grand-

son would have looked like and what kind of personality he would have had. She never had the opportunity to hold her first great-grandchild because of the despicable actions of a misogynistic killer.

It is not only intimate partner violence to which pregnant women are vulnerable. Pregnant women are also the target of unprovoked attacks by strangers. Last year on Vancouver Island, a pregnant woman walking down the street with her four-year-old daughter had a brick thrown at her stomach in a random attack. The fact that the victim was pregnant was not seen as an aggravating factor. I will let that sink in.

In another case, a pregnant woman in Surrey was attacked at a bank. An unknown man approached her from behind and violently threw her to the ground. Women who are pregnant are vulnerable, and they should be treated as vulnerable when it comes to sentencing. Offenders will often cite an unplanned pregnancy or the stress caused by having to potentially financially support the baby as excuses for these crimes.

The uncaring government has turned its back on women who choose to have a child. Its members are blinded by differences with the member for Yorkton—Melville on other matters, and that is blinding them to this bill. A vote against this bill is a vote against choice and women, and it would be misogynistic. They say that they are for choice, but only if we agree with that choice, and that is no choice at all.

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 25—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-21

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be resuming, in the remaining time that the Liberals and the NDP have permitted me. Of course, they are silencing me in this debate in the House and they are going to be further silencing us in committee on Bill C-21, despite the millions of people whom this bill impacts.

Government Orders

I want to acknowledge that it has been a terrible year for police, to say the least. This comes during a violent crime wave across the country. We have seen a 32% increase in violent crime since the Liberals formed government about eight years ago. We are seeing the result of their soft-on-crime, catch-and-release policies that they work very closely on with the NDP. Those are coming home to roost, and people are being violently assaulted and murdered on public transit.

Our police officers, of course, are on the front lines, fighting these violent criminals. Often it is the same criminals every single weekend whom our brave, dedicated men and women in uniform are putting their lives at risk to deal with. They actually sometimes know these violent repeat offenders on a first-name basis.

I think it is important that we acknowledge, in the House, the failures of the policies of the current government, working with the NDP, and the consequences of that in real life.

Of course, there are multiple factors that contribute to violent crime, but we know, from police, that Bill C-75, which was a Liberal bill from a number of years ago, exacerbated the catch-and-release policies. This was evident on a Victoria police department news release that was talking about a vile rapist who committed 10 counts of sexual assault with a weapon, rapes with a weapon. On the bottom of the press release, because the police wanted to ensure that the public knew that it was not their fault that this horrible, vile man was being released, they said that this person was being released because of Bill C-75, the Liberal bill from a number of years ago.

The Liberals just passed Bill C-5, which I alluded to yesterday, and I talked about the series of violent crimes that no longer will have mandatory prison time as a result of Bill C-5. Talking about rapists, one result of Bill C-5 is that a man in Quebec who violently raped a woman will get zero days in prison, and gets to serve his sentence, a conditional sentence for 20 months, from the comforts of his home.

These are real consequences. As I mentioned, I know that there are a multitude of factors in violent crime, but we are hearing directly from police that the Liberal bills have impacted these things.

It has been a very tough year for police, and Bill C-21 would do nothing to solve the violent crime problem in Canada, because, when it talks about firearms, it goes after law-abiding citizens, who, of course, by definition, are law-abiding. That is why they have the ability to own firearms, because they have been proven and vetted to be law-abiding. They are the only people who would be impacted by the firearm measures in this bill.

Meanwhile, while this is happening, with all of these resources and all of this time and all of these announcements from the Liberals, who are targeting law-abiding citizens, we have had many police officers, just in the past few months, who have been murdered.

I would like to name them today: Constable Andrew Hong, September 12, 2022, murdered by gunshot on the job; Constable Morgan Russell, October 12, 2022, gunshot; Constable Devon Northrup, October 12, 2022, gunshot; Constable Shaelyn Yang, October 18, 2022, stabbing; and Constable Greg Pierzchala, whom I talked about yesterday. He was murdered on December 27, 2022,

by gunshot, by a man who was out on bail and had a lifetime prohibition against owning firearms and a very long rap sheet of violent crimes, yet was out on bail.

This is the state of public safety and crime under the Liberal government. Greg Pierzchala is dead because of our weak bail system. This is what we have heard from Toronto police, who deal with this on the front lines more than anybody else. There are more: Constable Travis Jordan, March 16, 2023; Constable Brett Ryan, March 16, 2023; Sergeant Maureen Breau, March 27, 2023; and Constable Harvinder Singh Dhami, April 10, 2023.

It has been a rough couple of years for police. The morale is very low. Recruitment numbers are very low, and, at the same time, Canada is dealing with 124,000 more violent crime incidents in 2021 than in 2015.

That is the record of this Liberal government. It does not like to acknowledge it. It does not like to talk about it. It likes to brush off responsibility and blame everybody else.

- (1835)

The fact is that, compared to 2015, there are 124,000 more violent crime incidents per year in Canada. Meanwhile, police morale is in crisis, recruitment and retention are in crisis, and police officers are being murdered every other week. However, we hear more announcements from the Minister of Public Safety about going after law-abiding citizens than about going after anybody else. I do not know how many times we have to say this. The Liberals are going after, and spending resources and precious time on, the wrong people, the most vetted people in the country, who, statistically, are one-third as likely to cause crimes as anybody else, than non-firearm owners. It is insane, if someone just looks at the raw data. These are heavily vetted, tested and trained Canadian citizens.

The Conservative Party firmly supports responsible gun ownership laws. We are talking about licensing, vetting and safe storage. These things are very important. Only responsible Canadians should ever come near a firearm. If there are any gaps in that, we are happy to have that discussion, but we have a very robust system in Canada.

We are seeing 124,000 additional violent crimes and hundreds of thousands of other violent crimes every year. They are going up every year as a result of the Liberal government's policies, as pointed out by many police forces. Of the hundreds of thousands of violent crimes that happen every year, do members want to know how many are as a result of long guns, for example, which have been the primary target of the Liberal government in recent months? I am referring to long guns belonging to law-abiding citizens, not criminals, because, of course, they do not listen to the laws. Do people know how many are a factor in those hundreds of thousands of violent crimes? It is less than 0.5%.

Government Orders

We also know that, of those who do commit violent crimes with firearms, the vast majority are not legally allowed to own firearms. Therefore, any law and all this time wasted would have no impact on them whatsoever. We are talking about a fraction of a fraction of people whom the Liberals are spending all this time and resources on.

I will remind the House that the Liberals are bringing forward phase two of their regime of confiscation of private property from law-abiding citizens. They call it a “buyback” program. They never owned the firearms in the first place, so I am not sure how they are buying them back. They are going to be spending billions of dollars on it.

There is an estimate from the Fraser Institute. Before the latest round of long gun bans coming forward with this so-called new definition and the hidden list that is being passed over sneakily to the firearms advisory committee, which would add hundreds of firearms to the ban list, the Fraser Institute estimated that the original May 2020 order in council, in essence, would be \$6 billion.

Do people know how much good could be done in fighting violent crime and gun crime by criminals and gangsters with \$6 billion? We could equip every port of entry with scanning technology. We could hire so many more police officers. We could heavily invest in youth diversion programs. We have seen that, in addition to the responsible gun ownership measures I have mentioned that have been in Canada for a number of years, which Conservatives firmly support, other measures that are important are getting youth when they are just getting led down the path of crime.

If we can get a 12-year-old when he is romanced by the gang to steal his first car, if we could just catch him then, extend a hand and show him a better way, speak to him in a way that is relatable, and have members of his community have the resources to support him, that young man could have a real life. He could have a family and a job, and be a responsible contributing member to his community. That is when we have to catch them.

If we could just take all the money the Liberals would be wasting, which would do nothing, as it says right in the data, to prevent violent crime and gun violence, we could do a lot of good. However, the Liberals are not open to that conversation. They do not want to talk about that. They are too busy fearmongering.

I mentioned this earlier, and I got a bit emotional about it, but the turn that the Minister of Public Safety has taken with his rhetoric against me and members of my party is very concerning. We can have a professional debate. We can have this factual discussion. We can have our viewpoints. They do not want anyone to own firearms, no matter how vetted they are. We believe in protecting the culture and heritage of Canadians. We can have that robust debate; we have been having it for decades. For him to have taken the turn he has taken, to go so dirty on this when I have done my best, as have members of our party, to ensure that this is a professional conversation and that we are leading and protecting people who are being kicked by the government and used as a political wedge on a daily basis, particularly in rural Canada, is very upsetting. I mean that very honestly.

• (1840)

I called him out on it today, and he did not apologize for his disgusting remarks. I found it very disappointing. Why can we not have a civilized conversation based on facts when it comes to this? I do not know. Maybe it is because they are not doing so well in the polls and we are doing pretty well. Maybe they want an election soon and this is a real winner for them, or has been in the past.

Now that we are building on the work of all the Conservative members and we are talking about the people this really impacts, it is resonating with people. Nobody believes it in the suburbs. Nobody believes it in Winnipeg. I represent an urban riding, and no one believes that Grandpa Joe and his hunting rifle are responsible for the gangsters in Toronto who are 3D-printing guns, smuggling guns, wreaking havoc and murdering innocent people and police officers. No one believes that going after hunters is going to solve that, yet we are seeing billions of dollars, countless resources, misinformation, disinformation and disgusting rhetoric from the public safety minister and others on the Liberal benches. It does not make any sense. There is no science or data to back it up whatsoever.

I could go on for quite some time, but of course I have been silenced by the Liberal-NDP coalition. In my remaining moments, I will move an amendment to the motion.

I move, seconded by the member for Peterborough—Kawartha:

In paragraph (a) by deleting all the words after the words “expand its scope” and substituting the following: “to (i) address illegal guns used by criminals and street gangs, (ii) modify provisions relating to bail rules in offences involving firearms to ensure serious, repeat, violent offenders remain behind bars as they await trial, (iii) bring in measures to crack down on border smuggling and stop the flow of illegal guns to criminals and gangs in Canada”;

In paragraph (b) by deleting all the words after the words “by the committee” and substituting the following: “the Prime Minister, the Minister of Public Safety, other ministers of the Crown and senior officials be invited to appear as witnesses from time to time as the committee sees fit.”;

In paragraph (c) by deleting all the words and substituting the following: “Standing Orders 57 and 78 shall not apply to the consideration at the report stage and the third reading stage of the bill”; and

by deleting paragraphs (d) and (e).

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
The amendment is in order.

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

Government Orders

• (1845)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the member for, I believe, over an hour and a half in debate on this particular piece of legislation. It is very clear that the Conservative Party of Canada just does not support the legislation and will do whatever it can in order to prevent its passage. Given that, one has to expect that, if the general feeling of Canadians is that we should be strengthening our laws, the only way we are going to be able to do it is through some form of time allocation or closure. Otherwise, the Conservative Party would never allow the legislation to pass.

Given that, can the member indicate why it is that the Conservative Party will do whatever it can to prevent this legislation from passing?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Speaker, actually, the member is misleading the House a bit. His own government spent \$200,000 in taxpayers' money on a consultation on firearms. There were 133,000 people who responded, and 77% of 133,000 respondents to the Liberals' own consultation said that nothing more was needed to limit access to so-called assault weapons. It is very interesting, because it is not what we hear from them, yet that is what their own evidence said. Again, "assault weapons" is a completely made-up term from that member and other members on the Liberal benches.

Further, of the 133,000 people they surveyed, 81% said no to limiting more handgun access, and 74% said the focus of any new measures should be on the illicit market, so I am not sure where he is getting his evidence. I am not aware of any other poll that polled 133,000 people, but the government's own consultation shows that he is wrong.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, which she started yesterday. I applaud her public speaking talent.

I agree with her on many of the points she raised, but I disagree on others.

I agree that the reason we have reached this point is that the government has been unable to do the work people need it to do. Bill C-21 was introduced a year ago. The amendments went back to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security last week. We have really only been working on Bill C-21 for less than a week so far.

Suddenly the Conservatives are filibustering. Things are not moving fast enough and this is urgent. The government is the reason it took so long. I agree with my colleague on that. However, I do not agree that this motion and Bill C-21 as written are still anti-hunter.

She asked officials some questions. She is well aware that the government backtracked on the infamous list it tried to put in the Criminal Code. At this point, Bill C-21 does not affect hunting guns.

I would like to know if she agrees on that much at least, because it is a fact.

[English]

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Speaker, there are a number of things to point out. The list, first and foremost, may have been withdrawn from public scrutiny, but we have heard from the Liberal parliamentary secretary that it is going to go over to this so-called expert firearms advisory committee. Yesterday in the House, she said that they will look at what they should ban from that list. Those were her words. Therefore, I do not think the list is gone; it is just going to an unelected advisory committee with less transparency. The committee will have meetings in the dark behind closed doors, so to speak, so there is that.

I think part of the member's question was in response to the Liberal member who asked me the first question, and I would agree with most of her assessment. The committee has been working very well. Had the Liberals not been so sneaky with their underhanded amendment in November, we would have been past Bill C-21 a long time ago. This is on the Liberals for being underhanded and sneaky, bringing forward the worst amendments to attack hunters in generations, at the 11th hour in committee. That is not on us; that is on them. They dragged this out.

The minister then made us wait for six weeks. Now we are re-summing. They call what the Conservatives have done a filibuster. The NDP lead on committee has spoken more than almost anybody else; I will make that very clear. It is ridiculous. Therefore, I reject completely that this is on the Conservatives. It is the Liberals' fault that we are in this mess with Bill C-21. People just have to look at the committee record to know that.

• (1850)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a lot of criticism reserved for the Liberals for when I give my remarks in a little bit, but I do want to turn to the remarks that were made by the member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

I will say, first of all, that I have great respect for her, and I enjoyed working with her at committee very much. However, I have to take issue with the remarks that she brought forward in the House when she said she is being silenced. I have spoken with the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, and on several occasions, he has tried to extend the sitting hours of the public safety committee to give the Conservatives and every party more time to look at these amendments. Every single time, the attempts were either rejected or filibustered. There were attempts made multiple times; that has to be made very clear.

Government Orders

I will wrap up with the second point I want to make. The member talks about rural communities; these communities also care about RCMP oversight and transparency, especially the indigenous communities in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. Why must they be made to wait for their turn to speak to Bill C-20, which has been waiting in the wings of the public safety committee and is an equally important piece of legislation? There has been ample time given. Why have the Conservatives not taken advantage of those offers?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Speaker, I have to say on a personal note that I do greatly miss the member at public safety. As the NDP lead, I found him to be more reasonable. He was strong in his own convictions, but he was reasonable to work with. I am just learning how to work with the new member, and I am hoping for the best. However, from the rhetoric, I have some concerns about what he said about Conservatives so far, because these things are not factual or true. However, I will get to that in a second.

In terms of what the member said on rural communities and the RCMP, I agree that we have to talk about oversight. However, the member has to send that question over to the Liberals. How dare they put the committee at a standstill for months? That is not on us; that is on the Liberals. They did this, and I know that he agrees, because he said as much. Again, the member's question needs to be directed to the Liberals on why they made this situation at committee on Bill C-21.

Overall, on the idea that Conservatives have voted down the new NDP member's efforts to extend sitting, and there have been two times that he has done that, when the Liberals delayed this, the minister made us wait six weeks to get started, and there were shenanigans. Again, we could have been done this probably before Christmas actually, because we were going quite well throughout Bill C-21, even though we did not all agree. We would have been done before Christmas. That is on the Liberals.

However, now that the bill is back, he was suggesting that we have to go all the way to midnight today, tomorrow and then Thursday. Why would the committee members and the interpreters and everything else that goes into it have to do nine hours straight three nights in a row because the Liberals held this up, because the Liberals blew this up? That is on them. All those questions need to be directed to the Minister of Public Safety and the Liberal parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. She is a real force and knows this file, and really what this comes down to is knowledge. It comes down to knowledge of the innocent people who are being targeted with the legislation. She knows them, and she listens to them; I think that is critical.

One of the things the member spoke about that I think is really important is the diversion and utilizing money, especially for young people, when we look at public safety, which is completely eroded in this country. In my own hometown, the police have basically had to put out a public awareness campaign about a violent offender whom they cannot hold on bail. That is how we protect our communities under the Liberal government; there is a public awareness social media campaign with a man's picture.

What does the member think we can be doing? What can the Conservatives do to undo this and divert young people especially to live a life of purpose instead of crime?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the member very sincerely for working hard on this alongside all the Conservatives to fight against what the Liberals are doing to law-abiding citizens while ignoring and abetting the easy release of criminals on our streets.

As the member mentioned, and she told me this earlier as well, the police in her community are so desperate because the bail system is weak that they are having to turn to social media. They say, "Here is a picture on social media, moms and dads, and hopefully you notice it. This is a vile criminal on the streets, and there is nothing we can do about it, because the bail system has been made so weak by the Liberals with Bill C-75." It is unbelievable that this is the case for members in her community. It is unacceptable.

Lastly, I would say that this is a Liberal government that has spent more money than any government in the country's history. If the government cared about youth diversion, it would be showing it. Yet, the government will spend over \$6 billion going after law-abiding citizens and not impact public safety one bit.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was just in committee to debate Bill C-21. I left so that I could come give this speech here, since the House is considering a government motion to speed up work on the bill.

The government claims to be moving this motion because the Conservatives are filibustering and trying to slow the work down at every turn. That is odd, because I have been on this committee for several years and I have seen the Conservatives engage in filibustering. However, this is not what I am seeing in committee right now. Everyone is acting in good faith.

When I asked a question earlier, I spoke briefly about the bill's history, but I will now speak about it in more detail. Bill C-21 was introduced on May 30, 2022. In a few days, it will be one year since the bill was introduced. One would think that one year is enough time for parliamentarians to debate this bill, hear from experts in committee, conduct consultations and study the bill clause by clause. Unfortunately, that is not what happened.

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Initially, this bill was about handguns. In the aftermath of a mass shooting at a Texas primary school, where several children were killed, the government rushed to introduce this bill saying that, at least in Canada, something was being done to counter gun violence.

The introduction of this bill was accompanied by a national freeze on handguns. When government officials announced this bill, they were backed by groups that supported the legislation, groups that want better gun control. These groups were behind the government when it made this announcement because it had made a promise to them. These groups, which were advocating for a ban on assault weapons, were told that the bill as it was drafted at the time did not cover assault weapons, but the government promised them that it would amend its bill to address both handguns and assault weapons.

The Minister of Public Safety and even the Prime Minister, if I am not mistaken, made that commitment, and those groups were hopeful that Bill C-21 would actually reform gun control in this country.

The government did amend its bill. It had made that commitment more or less publicly. Let us just say that it was not our understanding that the government would be amending the bill to ensure it addressed assault weapons. We were focusing on handguns.

In committee we heard from experts who talked about the impact of this handgun freeze in the country. Bill C-21 deals with many other things. I am thinking in particular about the “red flag” provision and the family violence protection orders. There are some rather interesting things in Bill C-21 and they could actually change things. That is what we were debating when parliamentarians were able to be heard in the House. That is what we were debating in committee. We wanted advice on these provisions from experts who appeared in committee.

In November, when this whole process ended, the government arrived with its infamous amendments on assault weapons. We are not talking about a minor amendment. It was some 400 pages of amendments. It was quite thick. The government presented these amendments saying that this was its measure for banning ghost guns, in other words, homemade guns. People order different parts online, build the gun at home and then take it out on the street. The government told us that the purpose of the amendment was to address that problem. We were okay with that. It is a growing phenomenon in the country.

However, we noticed that the amendment was a bit more complicated. It talks about a definition of banned assault weapons. I have to say that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of that. We have been calling for that for a long time, and it has been part of our election platforms. We have been calling for a ban on military-style assault rifles. We do not think that people should have weapons like that at home or that they should be on our streets. Civilians have no reason to have those kinds of weapons. We are not talking about weapons that are used for hunting, for example, so we are happy to see that a definition has been proposed.

The caveat is that the government is proposing a definition but then, in a schedule, it is proposing to include a list of hundreds of firearms in the Criminal Code.

• (1900)

When we have questions for the government, the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security are unable to answer a single one of our questions. They do not even know what they just tabled, what is in it, what impact it would have or what weapons are included. There was an outcry. Picture it: The Conservatives are asking questions, the Bloc is asking questions, the NDP is asking questions; everyone is trying to find out more about what is on this infamous list. The officials were supposed to support us in studying the bill but, in the end, they were answering for the Liberals, who were unable to explain their own amendments.

What we came to understand was that the government was trying to include weapons in the Criminal Code that were already banned by the order in council. The list included weapons that have been banned since 1990. It included firearms that were banned as a result of the 2020 order in council, which covered about 1,500 models of firearms. Others were added later. Close to 2,000 weapons are now covered by this order in council. The weapons covered by the 2020 and 1990 orders in council are part of the list.

We realized that there were about 482 new models that are legal right now that the government was trying to include in the Criminal Code. We thought that was odd. The government could have done this through an order, as it did for the other firearms, but it wanted to include this nearly 400-page list in the Criminal Code.

The list was rather difficult to understand. If a gun owner wanted to know whether their gun was going to be banned, they could do an electronic search for that model in the virtual document. If their gun came up in the search, they would be in a complete panic, thinking that the government wanted to ban that weapon.

However, from what we understand about the way the list is written, there were exceptions. As the officials explained to us, there were introductory paragraphs. There were lists of models of firearms, and then there was a paragraph that said, “with the exception of these models”. People were finding their firearms on the list and thinking they were going to be banned when that was not actually the case.

There was also quite a bit of confusion about the definition itself. People thought that a gun with a muzzle energy greater than 10,000 joules would surely be prohibited. In Canada, the firearms that were banned by the 1990 order in council often met this criterion. Normally, these firearms were already prohibited. This created a lot of confusion. It is not surprising that people were afraid that their legally owned firearm would end up on this list. I would add that the gun lobby did not really help matters by spreading disinformation, which was then picked up by the Conservative Party. Hunters across the country were convinced that the firearms they use to hunt would be taken away.

After asking the government repeated questions, we figured out that there were indeed some firearms on this list that were supposedly problematic, in other words possibly used for hunting. We were not able to get clear definitions for either a firearm used for hunting or an assault weapon designed for a military context. The government could not provide any clear definitions. We said that these weapons could all be lumped together. Some are reasonably used for hunting. Consider, for example, the SKS. This weapon was created by the Soviet Union around the time of the Second World War. It was created for a military context and was used during that era in a military context.

Today, it is an affordable gun that is popular among hunters and indigenous people. We figured that it ended up on the list because it is technically an assault weapon, but it is reasonably used for hunting. For its part, the government tells us that this gun was used in some shootings in Canada, and therefore, it needs to be banned. There were no clear definitions, however. The government was unable to say why this type of gun needed to be banned and another type did not. This caused a great deal of confusion for everyone. We told the government to scrap this list. We asked it to come back with a new proposal, because no one was happy about this one.

The Bloc Québécois made a suggestion. Since a lot of people did not get the opportunity to be heard on these new amendments, we said we should invite them to committee and reopen the study, so these witnesses could at least tell us how they would be affected by this bill, if passed.

● (1905)

The committee members agreed. We decided to hold four meetings so that we could receive indigenous groups, hunting groups from Quebec, Ontario and just about everywhere, and so on. Alberta's chief firearms officer came to testify. Gun control groups obviously came back because they had not been able to share their thoughts on assault weapons when we were only talking about handguns.

These people came back to testify in committee. When we asked them whether they had been consulted by the government before these amendments were introduced, they told us that they had not received a call. They had not been consulted at all, whereas normally, when the government decides to introduce new legislation, it does some work beforehand to meet with those concerned, to see how they can work together. It tries to determine whether the bill will work for them. The experts know the subject, they are the ones who are on the ground. They can point us in the right direction, or in a direction that is potentially acceptable. However, we were told that the government had not done any consultations.

The government was feeling a lot of pressure from all the parties, but also from within its own Liberal caucus. Some Liberal backbenchers had obviously not been consulted about the amendments. Some members who represent rural ridings did not agree that firearms that could reasonably be used for hunting should be considered restricted weapons under the Criminal Code. The pressure was mounting.

In a dramatic turn of events, in February, the government withdrew its amendments on assault weapons. We were left wondering whether we should continue to study the bill as it stood or whether

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we should wait. The government said to wait because it wanted to work on something. It wanted to reintroduce a definition of prohibited weapons and therefore a definition of assault weapons, and it wanted to hold consultations.

The minister travelled around Canada a bit. He met with indigenous groups and hunting groups to find out whether they agreed with him. It seems the consultations were not very positive. However, the minister did his job. It was a bit too late, but he did it. In my opinion, he should have done that from the start.

It took several meetings, weeks even, before the government came back with a new proposal. Last week, the Minister of Public Safety made a big show of announcing that he would return with a definition of prohibited weapons. As I said earlier, the first amendment also included elements about ghost guns, and everyone agreed on that. He also announced new complementary measures.

In our negotiations with the government, we understood that certain things can be done through legislation, through a bill, specifically Bill C-21, but it is not always so straightforward. Other changes need to be made through regulations, and the minister is the only one who can make regulations. Oddly enough, the same day he announced that the amendments were being reintroduced, he also announced that he was going to do some things by regulation, including a proposal that the Bloc Québécois had made on how firearms are classified.

I put this question to several witnesses who appeared before our parliamentary committee. Currently, a firearm can be sold on the market in Canada when it should be classified as restricted or prohibited. The RCMP will eventually realize that it is on the market. Why is it not the other way around?

I believe that the RCMP should approve a firearm and ensure that it is above board before it is put on the Canadian market. The process should be similar to the one for pharmaceutical companies. I believe that when a pharmaceutical company wants to put a new drug on the market, it must be approved by Health Canada before it can be sold. I made that comparison because it seems to me that it would be another safeguard that would prevent new, unauthorized firearms from being on the market.

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• (1910)

The minister made another rather interesting announcement. He announced that he was going to enact regulations on high-capacity magazines. That is one of the things the Bloc Québécois has been asking for. Many gun control groups have been asking the same because although a gun is designed to hold a magazine with five rounds, it can accommodate a magazine with 30 rounds. The magazines are often universal. This becomes fatal if the person holding the gun wants to kill several people in a very short amount of time. We felt that these high-capacity magazines needed to be prohibited. The Minister of Public Safety told us that they were already illegal in Canada, that it was not supposed to be like that.

What we learned because several groups told us and we saw it ourselves, given that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security recently visited the RCMP vault, is that some magazines can be blocked with the help of a small rivet. For example, a magazine with 30 rounds could be blocked and limited to five rounds. The magazine therefore becomes legal because it is technically a five-round magazine. This was still on the market and still legal. In some of Canada's well-known shootings, the gunman simply removed the rivet to create a high-capacity magazine and that cost the lives of dozens of people. We then said that this type of magazine needed to be banned. I am very pleased that the minister has made that commitment, but now he needs to follow through. It is nice to promise things, but I expect these regulations to come in to force quickly.

The minister also said that he would re-establish the Canadian firearms advisory committee. He is proposing to do so because it seems that when the government was considering what to do about the banned firearms and wanted to put the 482 models in the Criminal Code, there was a small lapse in political courage. The minister was unable to make a decision and said he would re-establish this advisory committee, appoint experts, people who support gun control, hunters and indigenous people and then ask them to make a recommendation about firearms classification, for example. He could then make a regulation or issue a new order in council.

That seems promising. We have always said that firearms classifications should not be up to politicians. This committee's mandate should be clear. The committee should be established quickly, it should make its recommendations quickly and the minister should move quickly.

As I said at the start, the Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of banning military-style assault weapons. By proposing his new prospective definition that will only apply to weapons that will come onto the market in the future, the minister is leaving 482 weapons on the market that he initially wanted to include in the Criminal Code.

The Bloc Québécois said that we needed to find a reasonable and acceptable solution. The government determined that approximately 12 of these weapons could potentially be used for hunting. It should have its committee look at them to figure out how to classify them. As for the remaining 470 weapons, the minister can ban them by order as of tomorrow. He can even do it today if he wants to. He does not need the House's approval to do that.

If the government is really serious about banning military-style assault weapons, it can do so immediately by order. That is what the Bloc Québécois recommends. That is the proposal that we made to the minister. I suggested that in a private conversation that I had with him. We said it in the media. We made the suggestion a number of times in a number of places. We made the suggestion publicly and I think that it is a reasonable one.

It really bugs me when the Conservatives argue that Bill C-21 and today's motion target hunters in Canada. That is not true. Thanks to pressure from the Bloc Québécois, that list was taken out of the Criminal Code. What we are saying is that the government needs to ask its experts what to do about weapons used for hunting. As for the other ones, though, the government should ban them immediately.

I do not think taking those kinds of intellectual shortcuts and fearmongering serves the debate. People are writing to their MPs. My Bloc Québécois colleagues tell me about the people who write to them. These people are worried. They have heard a Conservative MP give a speech or do an interview, and they are worried their hunting gun will be banned. They think the Bloc Québécois supports that. That is not the case. Thanks to the Bloc Québécois's work, hunting guns were taken out of Bill C-21. I think that is good news for hunters. Maybe more people need to know about that, which is why we will try to play a bigger role in this debate.

• (1915)

There is also good news for airsoft fans. Two days ago, we got air guns taken out of Bill C-21. The government wanted to ban them. This is good news for them too.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's comments in regard to the issue of perception or misrepresentation, because it does hit home when individual members of Parliament are using social media and other mediums to communicate a message that is not accurate. There are many Canadians, for example, who believe that this is a mechanism to take away hunting guns and impact indigenous communities.

I wonder if the member could reinforce or continue her thoughts in regard to the dangers of spreading that sort of misinformation and the anxiety that many communities and individuals experience as a result.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. It is dishonest to spread this information during the debate. I am not saying that the government is beyond reproach. After all, its original intention was to lump all guns together, whether they are used for hunting or not. It has backed down. That is good, and I applaud that. Now we need to take action.

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Those members' actions are not contributing to the debate at all. I am not afraid to call out the Conservative Party, because it is members of the Conservative Party who are using social media to scare people. Just yesterday, one of my colleagues was talking about how the Bloc Québécois was going after hunters, and he said that the motion we are debating today was another attack on hunters. I had no choice but to tell him that what he was saying was wrong. Sometimes people are good at playing with the truth and coming very close to lying, and sometimes it is just a lie. That is dishonest. I am talking about what is being said on social media, not here in the House. It does not contribute to the debate.

Let us be clear about what Bill C-21 does at this point. As I said, right now, hunting guns and air guns are off the table. This bill is about something else entirely. I want to be clear about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for addressing the problem with the Liberals putting us in this position. We are now debating and rushing through a very important bill that would impact over two million law-abiding firearms owners. It just drives me nuts that we have to rush this debate through because of the Liberals' inadequacies in bringing it forward in a timely fashion.

The member did a good job of that, but I have two quick questions for her.

First, she talked about the consultation process that the minister promised. I would like to know if she is aware of a single Bloc riding that was consulted. I can speak with pretty much 100% certainty that not a single riding held by a Conservative MP was consulted in this process. It is really not fair to the vast majority of firearms owners or Canadians that the minister and the government are not actually consulting with them.

Second, I take issue with the member's hunting rifle comment in that all of the firearms that were banned on May 1, 2020, were legal firearms for hunting and sport shooting. Can the member just name one that has been banned that was ever in use by the Canadian Armed Forces?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I noted several elements in that question.

I do think it is unfortunate that the debate is being rushed through. I thought that the study in committee was constructive, that we were asking officials and the government the right questions and that we had time to debate amendments.

There is one interesting fact that I did not mention, which is that Bill C-21 is not a huge bill. It has 74 clauses. The party that moved the most amendments was the Liberal Party. That shows just how unprepared the government was to table this bill. Why did it not wait a little longer? Why did it not hold consultations all across the country in order to table a sturdy bill without having to amend its own bill? That is rather curious. We would not be here if the government had been more prepared. We would be working with the opposition parties' amendments, and there were a reasonable number of them. I do not know if I am allowed to say how many

amendments were moved by each party, but it was a very reasonable number. I find that unfortunate.

I heard my colleague mention consultations. He believes that the Conservative ridings were not necessarily consulted and that the minister did not visit them. I do not believe that he came to any Bloc ridings either. Is that a coincidence? Let us say it was random. That said, I know that the government wanted to do better. However, as I mentioned, these consultations should have taken place at the outset, before Bill C-21 was even introduced.

• (1920)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are debating a matter of life-saving importance. It is a public safety matter. For better or for worse, the issue is complex and emotionally charged.

My colleague talked about the process and the fact that so-called alternative facts may have been spread over social media by certain members of one political party.

Three parties came to the House with a reasonable proposal that would move us forward and improve public safety. However, one party is filibustering and using this opportunity to raise funds. The longer the debate drags on, the more donations the official opposition, the Conservative Party, stands to gain.

With a majority consensus emerging in the House, should we not try to speed up the process and deny the Conservatives the chance to raise even more funds ahead of the next election?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, that was an interesting comment. I know everyone is trying to position themselves advantageously, if I can put it that way.

It is interesting that the member said some people are trying to slow the debate down as much as possible. Earlier I was in committee along with my NDP colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby. I think he spent just as much time raising points of order about how long it was taking, about how the Conservatives were not asking real questions, about how they were filibustering and about how this bill really needs to get passed. If we were to add it up, I bet he spent as much time talking about wasting time as the Conservatives spent asking questions. Sure, there is filibustering, and I have seen the Conservatives do it ever since I first came to the House, but things were actually going pretty well there.

I am surprised at the NDP's insistence that we speed up debate and at its motions to sit 10 hours a day and 24 hours in a given week. There are also the House of Commons resources to consider. I do not mind sitting all night. I am sure my colleagues do not mind either.

Nevertheless, officials are there to help us; there are also the interpreters and technicians. We must also think of those people before making somewhat extreme proposals. I would therefore be careful about that.

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[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, does the member believe that the Conservatives will, in essence, support the legislation, thereby lying down and just allowing the legislation to pass, or does she believe that the Conservatives do not support the legislation and would do whatever they could to prevent its passage?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I cannot predict the future. I do not know how the Conservatives will use the upcoming committee meetings or how they will use their time in the House when the bill returns. I cannot say in advance. I suspect that they will not support this bill. Is that a reason to reduce our speaking time on each amendment?

I have important amendments that I would like to move. Women's groups spoke to us. They want more protection. They do not feel protected by some elements currently in Bill C-21, which were introduced by the government.

We must take the time to debate these amendments properly. That is not what the government is proposing at this stage by claiming that the Conservatives could try to slow down debate. That is democracy. We must have a debate in committee. We must take the time to study this bill, which all my colleagues have said is very complex. It is not unusual to have questions for officials every time an amendment is moved.

I believe we must take the time needed.

• (1925)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague quickly addressed the issue of women's groups. She spoke about how the Bloc Qu eb cois has worked to reassure hunters. She also mentioned in her speech that women's groups are concerned about violence. A measure was proposed for women's groups, the red flag provisions, and we discussed it.

I would like my colleague to talk about that. Could she tell us more?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, that just happened in committee.

We looked at clause 4, the red flag provisions. It is a measure proposed by the government that seemed worthwhile at first. Now, women's groups from across the country have appeared before the committee or have sent letters to us and the Minister of Public Safety expressing their worries that this measure will relieve the police and law enforcement of responsibility, that this tool should not be included in the act and that it will harm rather than help women.

I heard that and I wondered who better to speak to that issue than women's shelters. I therefore voted against that measure. The NDP and the government voted in favour of it.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is hard to find the words to start given how long I have personally been involved with this piece of legislation. I know there are a few select members of this House who would agree with me. I think for each one of us, this has been our

own personal odyssey, and to get to this point is really remarkable. All of the different twists and turns that this one bill, Bill C-21, has taken are going to be studied in parliamentary procedure for years to come.

I have had the privilege of representing my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for three terms, now being in my eighth year, and I have discovered that in my time here, Parliament has demonstrated that it is indeed the last place to go for an open, honest and logical debate on firearms. A lot of the debate we have seen on this bill and on firearms regulations, policy and legislation in general has done a very real disservice to Canadians. Both sides of the issue have torqued up their arguments. There has been blatant misinformation and labelling, and this has really descended the level of debate into something that I think a lot of Canadians would quite rightly be disgusted by. It is very difficult in this place, when we have all of these torqued up emotions and political agendas, to have a reasoned debate on firearms. That certainly has been the story.

I know a lot of people on Twitter are following this debate very closely. I would say that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security is probably the most watched committee of them all, and I know that my words right now are being analyzed and tweeted about, even in real time. I just want the people who are listening to brace themselves, because I have equal amounts of criticism for both the Liberals and the Conservatives as to why we now find ourselves in this place.

I first want to start by talking about the committee, because ultimately today's motion is one of instruction to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. One could be forgiven for thinking that all this committee does is study policy and legislation surrounding firearms, because that is indeed all it has really been consumed with since the bill was referred to the committee late last year. In fact, we started Bill C-21 at committee in October 2022, and here we are now, well into May 2023, and we are still only at the clause-by-clause part of the bill.

I think it is useful for people to understand what the mandate of this committee is. It is responsible for reviewing legislation, policies, programs and expenditure plans of a whole host of different government departments and agencies that are responsible for not only public safety, but national security, policing, law enforcement, corrections, the conditional release of federal offenders, emergency management, crime prevention and of course the protection of our borders. When we are doing things like the estimates for the spending plans of Public Safety Canada, quite often we have representatives included from the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the Parole Board of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

What I am trying to underline here is that this committee is an extremely important committee of the House of Commons, and all the work it does in all of these different areas in looking after our intelligence gathering, law enforcement and border protection has been sidelined by the incredible amount of time that has been consumed. Time is our most valuable resource in Parliament, and once we spend it we do not get it back.

Because of the shenanigans that have occurred with respect to Bill C-21, the public safety committee has quite correctly been prevented from examining all of these other different areas, keeping tabs on those different departments, examining different pieces of legislation and keeping tabs on what the government's policies and practices are going to be with respect to other key areas. That is an important element that we first need to establish when we are talking about where we are today.

● (1930)

As many members will know, including members in my own community, I used to be our party's public safety critic. I found my time on that committee to be personally quite valuable. I found that the subject matter we were dealing with was quite intellectually challenging and stimulating, and it is important work.

I know from my interactions with other members of the committee, whether on the Liberal, Conservative or Bloc Québécois side, that they all conducted themselves very well, and I enjoyed my working relationships with them. That even goes for our work on Bill C-21.

Believe it or not, there was actually a time when Bill C-21 was progressing through committee in relatively good order. We concluded roughly eight meetings with witnesses. The committee then had time to come forward with its amendments, and there seemed to be an acknowledgement that aside from a few differences with a few clauses here and there, the bill was probably on schedule to be reported back to the House for report stage and eventually third reading sometime in December.

We then got to November, and all hell broke loose. This was when the eleventh-hour amendments were dropped by the Liberals. I should correctly say "the Liberal government", because I do not think they were, by design, from the Liberal members of the committee. They did come from the government.

I do not want to go into the details of the bill too much, because I think that is a well-trodden path and a well-known story, but allow me to take this moment in my speech to levy what I think are some well-earned criticisms on both the Liberals and the Conservatives. I know some of my colleagues will probably laugh at this, particularly the member for Hamilton Centre, because he has heard me joke about this before.

I often feel like the character Mercutio in Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*, when he is expressing his frustration with the Capulets and the Montagues, because I feel that same frustration with the Liberals and the Conservatives. It is difficult sometimes to watch the shenanigans between those parties and the way our level of debate around this issue descends into the depths and scrapes the bottom of the barrel.

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Let me start with the Liberals. One day, someone is going to write a book about this sorry episode, and it is probably going to be titled something like "How Not to Amend One's Own Legislation". It is going to be a warning guide for governments in the future on what not to do and how not to spring a surprise on an unsuspecting committee when they have not done their homework, when they have not done consultation and, most importantly, when they have not consulted with the members of the committee who are actually responsible for shepherding those amendments through.

I want to caution members: My comments are not, in any way, directed to the colleagues I work with, but more to the Liberal Party brain trust. I understand the reasoning behind where they are coming from. Gun violence in our major urban centres is a very concerning thing. It needs to be dealt with appropriately. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the extreme grief that is out there within so many families who are dealing with a loss due to firearms violence.

Sometimes the road forward for the Liberals has been paved with good intentions, but it has led to some pretty awful results. I would ask them to step back and try and heal some of the wounds that exist in that divide between urban and rural Canada. We need to understand that yes, firearms violence is a big issue, but there also has to be a level of respect afforded to Canadians who are lawful firearms owners, who play by the rules and who have done everything right. I would encourage the Liberals to consult more with their rural MPs.

● (1935)

When the Liberals introduced those amendments, one of the groups that were leading the way was indigenous communities—not only hunters and farmers, but indigenous communities, not the least of which was the Assembly of First Nations. In an extremely rare move, the AFN came out with a unanimous emergency resolution on the last day. That is almost unheard of. They were going after the government for those ill-thought-of eleventh-hour amendments.

No consultation had taken place. One could make a legitimate argument that the Liberals, in bringing in these amendments, were not respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or even the legislation we have passed that enshrines that within our own laws to make sure that all federal laws are in harmony with the declaration itself. It went against the spirit of that.

Now I will turn to my Conservative friends.

What do we say about the reams of ridiculous hyperbole we have seen from that party on Bill C-21? The bill has been a fundraising boon for the Conservative Party. That giant sucking sound we hear is Conservatives hoovering money from the harvest of their rager-farming operation around the bill, and I think a part of me wonders whether the Conservatives do not want to see the bill go forward because it has been so financially viable for them. The evidence is all out there. I do not think there is any interest at all in trying to move the legislation forward, because doing so would essentially stop the goose from laying golden eggs for them. It has been an incredible money-maker for them.

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When I look at some of the misinformation that has been put out by the Conservative Party around the bill, I see they are fanning flames of rage over amendments that no longer exist and incorrectly saying that the government wants to take away all their guns. It is just completely off-the-wall bonkers stuff that can be easily disproven, and it is completely not helping the standard of debate we expect of our parliamentarians. It just makes the rest of our jobs harder when we have to fight that completely untrue disinformation that is being actively fanned on social media.

Yes, it is a sorry state due to the actions of both parties in so expertly playing politics with the bill, and that is a large part of the reason we are here today.

We know that the problematic amendments were withdrawn by the Liberals. That is fact number one. All current owners of long guns in Canada are not going to have those firearms impacted, because the problematic amendments were withdrawn. What we now have being proposed as an amendment to the bill would go after firearms that will be manufactured in the future, after the bill receives royal assent. There is also an important amendment, I understand, that would make sure that nothing in the bill takes away from the rights of indigenous peoples. That is recognized and affirmed under section 35 of our Constitution.

Of course, there are incredibly important amendments dealing with the exponentially growing problem of ghost guns. This is a problem that has been brought to the committee's attention repeatedly by law enforcement agencies. I would hope that more attention is paid to those particular amendments, and of course we, the remaining members of the House of Commons, have to reserve our judgment on the bill until we see the final version that the committee ultimately reports back to us.

Now let us turn to the motion of instruction and what it would do.

First of all, we have to understand that as of this morning, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security had already spent approximately five hours on clause-by-clause consideration. If they had been able to complete their meeting this afternoon, and I know it was interrupted by a series of votes, that would have brought the total to eight hours, which is roughly equivalent to four full meetings. The motion being debated today would add a further 17 hours to that, bringing it to roughly 25 hours, which is the equivalent of 12-and-a-half meetings.

● (1940)

I understand from the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, our member on the public safety committee, that he has tried multiple times to extend the sitting hours of the public safety committee so that Conservatives, the Bloc and New Democrats could have additional time to look at the amendments that are being proposed by various members. I understand that in each of those instances, these attempts were either rejected or filibustered so that the committee ultimately could never get to a vote. To hear Conservatives complain that they are being silenced in the House when they have, in fact, had multiple opportunities at committee to extend the sitting hours of that committee does come across as a bit rich.

I would say that because I have had my staff look at bills similar in size and complexity to Bill C-21, Bill C-18 comes to mind. That particular bill, when it went through clause-by-clause study at its committee, had seven meetings, the equivalent of 14 hours, for clause-by-clause study, so that is more than enough time to get through it.

I know from my own experience, because I used to be a member of the public safety committee and have seen a lot of these amendments, that are a lot of them are very technical, small changes to the bill, especially the parts that deal with ghost guns. Not a lot of debate is going to be required on them. In fact, the committee can probably get through them in short order because they are repetitive and many different areas of the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act have to be updated to make sure that those existing statutes are in harmony with each another.

The other thing I want to turn to in my final three minutes goes back to the earlier part that I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, the overall mandate of the public safety committee. We have two really important pieces of legislation waiting in the wings, waiting for their turn to be examined at the public safety committee. They are Bill C-20 and Bill C-26.

Bill C-20 is going to create our first-ever public accountability and transparency network that is independent of the RCMP and the CBSA. In fact, the CBSA has never had an independent oversight mechanism. Looking at the public safety committee's report from the previous Parliament looking at systemic racism in policing and looking at all of the instances of injuries and sometimes death that have happened to people who had been in the custody of the CBSA, we see that these are important measures. We have had so many racialized Canadians, so many indigenous Canadians who have been calling out for these types of oversight measures for years. Why should those pieces of legislation continue to be pushed back while we draw out this process on Bill C-21?

Bill C-26 is an important piece of legislation, which I will be the first to admit needs a lot of work at committee, but it is going to really bring in line a lot of the cybersecurity requirements that are needed for some of our critical sectors, be they in banking, transportation, energy and so on. It is going to be a requirement for many of those private actors to bring their systems in line with a standard that is acceptable to the federal government. Again, a lot of work is needed, but no one in this House can deny or absolve themselves from the fact that these are important issues that deserve to have their turn at the public safety committee.

My ultimate motivation for this motion today is to get Bill C-21 on its way. We have had enough time at the committee. It has occupied so much time at the public safety committee, and it is time for the public safety committee to move on to other bills that are equally important to many other Canadians.

In conclusion, I ultimately am going to reserve my judgment on Bill C-21 until I see what the committee reports back to the House, but I will not agree to let that committee continue to be bogged down, especially when there is so much other important work to be done.

With that I conclude. I welcome any comments and questions from my colleagues.

• (1945)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief question.

I always thought that it is a positive thing when a government is prepared to entertain and bring forward amendments, in the sense that this often reflects concerns that have been raised by MPs, other stakeholders or people who make representations at committees.

Would the hon. member not agree that it is a good thing when government listens, brings forward amendments and supports even opposition amendments?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to disagree with the principle that I think is behind the parliamentary secretary's remarks and question.

Of course, amendments are always welcome, and they should be informed by feedback received from the public and committee, but I have to draw the line at the particular amendments that were introduced in November because those took everyone by surprise, and not just the committee members. They took indigenous communities by surprise. They took hunters and farmers by surprise. It was such a huge overreach from the bill we originally thought we were debating at second reading. When we started debating Bill C-21, its main provisions were on airsoft, red flag laws and a handgun freeze.

I want to take a moment to also thank members of the committee for passing my amendment on airsoft. That amendment was passed, and I am happy to report to the airsoft community that the offending section of Bill C-21 has now been removed, thanks to an NDP amendment. That is definitely a bright light in this whole journey.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a respected critic for public safety. We talk about surprises, and I was surprised.

I wonder if he could tell the House why he was removed as critic and why the leader of the NDP removed him at the height of Bill C-21, seeing as he represents rural Canadians so well in his riding, and replaced him with the NDP House leader, who is really an urban MP. I wonder if the member could explain that logic to the House.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I do enjoy working with the member from the Conservative Party. I too have seen the rumours on Twitter and have been greatly amused by all of the different reasonings out there.

Let me say clearly and for the record that my moving off the public safety committee was done by mutual agreement. I am still a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. If the member will recall, at the time, I managed to bring forward two successful motions, one in the House of Commons and one at the agriculture committee, that focused the committee's investigative efforts on the role that corporate profits are playing in driving inflation, which is a huge issue not only for my constituents but also for the member's constituents.

Government Orders

It was agreed between me and the leader of the NDP that it was important for me to refocus my efforts on an issue that was affecting so many Canadians because of their purchasing power, their inability to buy sufficient groceries for their families and the incredible climb in food bank usage. That is the reason. It was mutual agreement and I had other extremely important work to take care of.

• (1950)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the very end of his speech, my colleague touched on the issue of red flags.

Between the Conservatives' disinformation and the lack of political will of the Liberal-NDP coalition, there was a great deal of concern coming from women's groups. The issue of red flags was not clear.

My colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia talked about it earlier. This happened quickly this afternoon. Women's groups, including shelters, have reservations about the impact of this red flag provision.

For these reasons, given these reservations, my colleague would have voted against. I would like my colleague to tell us why the NDP voted in favour of a measure that is causing concern among women's groups and does not reassure them at all.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I am no longer a member of the committee, but I can say from my time there and through close consultations with my NDP colleague from Winnipeg Centre, that many women raised concerns with the red flag provisions because many women right now have an incredibly difficult time trying to access basic protection from their local police service. I have heard those same arguments from many women's organizations. Their argument is a solid one. Their main question is this: If police services are inadequate and not living up to a standard that we all expect, why would someone in a domestic violence situation, under fear of their own life or fear of a loved one's life, be forced to go through an already overburdened court process to apply for a protection order?

During my time at committee, with many of the amendments that I put forward, which I cannot speak about in detail because they still have not been dealt with by the committee, my focus was very much on the yellow flag provisions, strengthening licensing requirements and empowering authorities to remove licences when there were definite examples of domestic violence and threats of violence. I want to particularly thank the National Association of Women and the Law because its submissions to our committee were extremely helpful in guiding many of our amendments.

Government Orders

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard today, in the many interventions, of the technical aspects of this bill, the rights of hunters and farmers, the use of the tools and the specifics about the guns, but I do not think we have heard enough about the victims of gun violence. I am somebody who has had the heartbreak and tragedy of having attended funerals for gun violence. I think about Marley Rowe in 2014, and I think about the mass shooting that happened more recently in Vaughan, where my dear friend Doreen Di Nino was one of the lone survivors.

I wonder if the hon. member could reflect and re-centre the impact of gun violence on victims and on the work that he would wish to share for the benefit of this debate on the consultations that he has had with victims of gun violence. This intervention seeks to reduce the circulation of guns, introduce some kind of manufacturing accountability to tackle this new phenomenon of ghost guns and the idea that anybody at home with a 3-D printer can manufacture their own type of weapons. Could the hon. member just re-centre on the victims and talk about the ways this would hopefully help offset future tragedies?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, the member for Hamilton Centre has a very thoughtful question, and he is extremely right. I am very fortunate to live in a riding that does not suffer from firearms violence, so I personally have never had that opportunity to grieve with families in my riding.

However, that does not take away from the testimony that we have heard at committee. It really goes right to our hearts when we hear survivors talk about their personal experiences, or the loss of a close personal friend or loved one within their family. All of us would do well to remember that ultimately our main goal is to make our streets safer for those people.

The member is also very right in raising the issue of ghost guns. We have heard testimony from multiple police agencies that this is an exponentially growing problem. The fact that people could construct a fully functioning firearm with zero traceability and no serial numbers or anything, all with the benefit and aid of a 3-D printer, is a very scary prospect. Police are on the record asking us to tighten up the legislation so we clamp down on who is able to import trigger assemblies, barrels and slides, and all of the other components that are necessary to manufacture a working firearm.

That is the important part of this bill that a lot of people are missing in all of their focus on the other aspects of this bill. There is still a lot in this bill that law enforcement has specifically asked for, and which I believe needs to be put up on a pedestal, on an equal plane of importance as all of those other elements.

• (1955)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start by talking quickly about why I suggest every member should get behind this legislation. We hear about ghost guns. This problem is growing across Canada. These 3-D printers are capable of printing what we call ghost guns. No matter which municipalities one looks at, one will find stakeholders, including police and first responders, who say that the number of ghost guns is growing at a very concerning rate. These are untraceable because

they do not have serial numbers. This is something very tangible that this legislation attempts to deal with, in good part.

Only the Conservative Party does not want to recognize those sorts of facts and allow the legislation to pass. The NDP speaker addressed it, at least in part, when he talked about the issue of money and fundraising. For those who are following the debate today, I would suggest that they not underestimate how much money the Conservatives have raised as a direct result of guns and rifles, and the type of misinformation they are prepared to share with Canadians to generate the money they have raised over the years. We are talking likely into the millions of dollars.

I became an MLA back in 1988, and the Polytechnique shooting occurred about a year and a half after I was elected. That is when the whole issue, from my perspective, came to the fore. Many people might not necessarily realize this, but after it came to the fore, it was a Progressive Conservative government, and I underline the word “progressive”, under Kim Campbell, that received the recommendation from a Conservative senator for a gun registry. They were moving toward it. That is probably not very well known in the reform Conservative circles today.

Today's Conservative Party is very different from the Progressive Conservative Party. Its members are far to the right. They have recognized this is an issue they can manipulate to get people angry, but to do that, they need to give out misinformation. A tangible example is that they will give the impression it is affecting hunting rifles. This is not in any form or way an attack on law-abiding gun owners, but we would not know it by the propaganda of the Conservatives.

They know this would not affect hunting firearms. They know that, but if we check social media, we will see what it is they are actually saying—

• (2000)

The Deputy Speaker: I believe there is a point of order from the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, surely you must have heard some unparliamentary language in that discourse, which was full of misinformation, and quite frankly, full of lies.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member for Calgary Centre should withdraw that comment.

Mr. Greg McLean: I do withdraw it.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. That was not a point of order. It was a point of debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my friend should take a look at many of the things Conservatives say, whether in question period or in other debates. I am being somewhat mild in my comments. I am being truthful, but mild.

There is a general feeling from Canadians that this is good legislation. It is legislation that should pass. It is with pleasure that we can say that we will finally see some movement on it. That is good for all Canadians.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 8:02 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 25 now before the House.

The question is on the amendment.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the amendment 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. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote please.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (2045)

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

(Division No. 314)

YEAS

Members

Aboultiaf	Albas
Allison	Arnold
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Berthold
Bezan	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chambers	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
Deltell	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz

Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shiple
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Government Orders

Nater
Patzner
Perkins
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 112

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cornier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gaheer
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns

Government Orders

Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lemire
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Medicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Rayes	Robillard
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Sorbara
Sousa	Ste-Marie
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thompson	Trudeau
Trudel	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi — 203	

PAIRED

Members

Bibeau	Duclos
Fortin	Freeland
Liepert	Perron — 6

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main 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.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, we request a recorded vote.

● (2055)

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

(Division No. 315)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gaheer
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lemire
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse

Mathysse
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Robillard
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sousa
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vignola
Virani
Wilkinson
Zahid
Zuberi — 201

May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Petipas Taylor
Powlowski
Rayes
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Villemure
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Morrison
Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shiple
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Privilege

McLean
Moore
Morrice
Mutz
Nater
Patzner
Perkins
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viensen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer — 114

PAIRED

Members

Bibeau
Fortin
Liepert
Duclos
Freeland
Perron — 6

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

REFERENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to discuss the motion before us, which is a privilege motion raised by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I am so pleased to engage in this debate and to be here in support of my friend, a fellow member of Parliament who, very clearly, has had his privileges as a member of Parliament violated. It is that motion that is before us today.

Members will have noticed that over the last month, when I have spoken in the House on different occasions, I have spoken about whom Canadians can trust. Whom can Canadians trust with their privacy, for example, or with their economic prosperity? Of course, each time, the conclusion I have reached is that we cannot rely on the deeply flawed, failed Liberal government to be a trustworthy defender of Canadian interests.

Today, I would like to continue that thought as we talk about whom we can trust to defend Canada's national security and sovereignty and our fundamental democracy. I would like to suggest, again, that we cannot trust the Liberal government to defend the most cherished institution in the country, which is our democracy and our right to vote, to think and to speak freely.

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Bezan
Bragdon
Brock
Caputo
Chambers
Cooper
Dancho
Deltell
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferrerri
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Lloyd
Maguire
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)

Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Berthold
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Généreux
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lobb
Martel
Mazier

Privilege

Recently, a very serious vulnerability in Canada's security and democracy was exposed. It turns out that my friend and colleague in the House, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, had his family, his extended family in China, threatened and intimidated. This was because he, as a member of the House, promoted and voted for a motion that effectively declared that the persecution of the Uyghur Muslim minority in Xinjiang, China, amounted to a genocide.

That is what we do in the House. We make judgments. We weigh evidence and information that we receive, and we come to policy conclusions. We pass legislation. We pass motions in the House. That is democracy in action, but it appears that the Communist regime in Beijing did not take kindly to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills actually supporting this effort and voting in favour of it. It appears that a diplomat here in Canada, for the Chinese government, promoted the intimidation of my colleague's family members overseas, as well as aiding and abetting in threatening them.

The Speaker recently ruled that this, in itself, was a prima facie case of privilege, which required redress through the procedure and House affairs committee, as well as a debate in the House. That is the debate we are having today. I would love to flesh out exactly why it is that member after member of our Conservative Party has been engaging in this debate tonight.

● (2100)

The motion we have before us is a very serious matter; it affects one of the most respected members of the House. We have heard from all parties in this esteemed House that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is one of the most knowledgeable, competent, capable and ethical members of this House, and we all have great admiration for him. He does his job on behalf of his constituents extremely well.

We found out that this member is being attacked by a foreign government because that government does not agree with Canada's human rights regime or that member's views on what constitutes true freedom. That member stands up in this House and speaks to and defends the rights of the Uyghur minority in China to be free from forced labour and from persecution. When he is then attacked by a hostile foreign regime, this House needs to take action.

It turns out that the government should have known about this over two years ago. In fact, we know that CSIS became aware of intelligence two years ago that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was being targeted and that his family members were being targeted with intimidation and threats because of the position the member had taken in this House supporting the Uyghur motion. However, the Prime Minister did nothing about it.

Our Prime Minister claims that CSIS never brought it to his attention, but that is simply implausible. It is something of a critical nature, going to the very root of our democracy. It is about the right to vote freely in this House, to speak our opinions, to take positions and to shape the policies of our country. These things are of such importance that the intelligence would have been brought to the attention of the Prime Minister. There is no doubt in my mind.

However, we are told in this House day after day that the Prime Minister did not know about this until a week ago. Over time, more and more Canadians are realizing that the Prime Minister cannot be believed. That is why it goes to trust. I started off by saying that the question Canadians are asking themselves more and more often is whether they can trust the Liberal government. The answer we are hearing more and more is “no”. People cannot trust the current Liberal government anymore; it is not transparent about what it does as a government or about what it says here in this chamber.

The government would have known, at least two years ago, that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was being targeted by a hostile foreign regime, and it did absolutely nothing to inform the member. In fact, do members know how the member for Wellington—Halton Hills actually—

● (2105)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, as you know, we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly. By saying the Prime Minister knew about this and the government knew about this, the member is essentially saying the Prime Minister has lied to this House, when the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I think what the member was trying to convey is that Liberals are like atoms: They make up everything.

The Deputy Speaker: That was not appropriate. Let us just say that was not a point of order and neither was the other one.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat this, and I want to do it unambiguously so there is no mistake about what I intend to say here. The Prime Minister knew over two years ago that our colleague in the House was being targeted by a hostile foreign regime, and the Prime Minister did nothing to inform our colleague in the House about that threat and intimidation. It was only recently that we learned about it, and not through the Prime Minister or any minister of his government. We found that out through the media, The Globe and Mail.

That should never happen in this country on something as critical to our democracy as the right of each member in the House to vote freely without intimidation. That should be unchallengeable, yet the government and the Prime Minister failed to advise our colleague of this threat to his family. I find it incomprehensible that we as MP colleagues in the House would do that to each other. That should never happen.

Privilege

Yesterday, we found out that the diplomat involved in promoting this threat and intimidation against our colleague was expelled by the Prime Minister. All I will say to that is it is too little, too late. The damage is already done with the threats and intimidation. This should not have happened. The least that the government and the Prime Minister owed to our colleague was transparency and the right for him to be informed the moment that CSIS became aware of this and the communication went to the Prime Minister's Office.

I have already mentioned that what is at stake here is not only our right to vote in the House freely, to express ourselves freely, to take positions that are consistent with human values and to do so without the threat of intimidation. It goes far beyond that. Every single Canadian who is watching these proceedings will be asking themselves, "Well, hold it. Am I at risk? Could a hostile regime from around the world, from elsewhere, say Russia or Iran, interfere in my life and threaten me in that way to try to achieve some nefarious outcome that is in their interest and against my interest?" They could say that, yes, and Canadians across this country should be concerned.

However, do members know who should be really concerned? It is Canadians of Chinese background who are concerned that agents of the Communist government would seek to influence them here in Canada to promote the interests of Beijing rather than the interests of Canada. That is what is at stake here.

I fear for our country if we as members of Parliament cannot even ask or expect our government to notify us as these threats emerge. I have no doubt that CSIS would have communicated this to the Prime Minister's Office. I have no doubt at all.

• (2110)

We know from the Prime Minister's chief of staff that the Prime Minister reads everything. Yes, that is what she said. She said he reads everything, as if she looks over his shoulder every waking moment of the day. However, that is what she said. That was her testimony at committee, and I take her at her word. The Prime Minister reads everything, and no doubt this would have come before him because of the serious nature of this threat to the members of this body, this august chamber.

Let me talk about why we have focused on the Communist regime in China. It is this regime that actually perpetrated this violation of our colleague's privileges in this House. I did mention the publicly acknowledged genocide of the Uyghur minority population in China, but this regime is also responsible for many other threats to our country.

We know that there have been at least eight different foreign police stations established by the regime in our country, and to date, no one has confirmed that all of them have been shut down. We have been pleading with the Prime Minister for months to shut down these foreign police stations that Beijing has established here in our country in violation of our sovereignty. The latest report has it that at least two of these foreign police stations are still operating in Canada. That should not be happening in our country, but it is happening under the Liberal government.

What about the two Michaels? It took forever to repatriate those two Canadian citizens because of bogus charges levied against them in China.

We know there has been election interference. By the way, that is another case the Prime Minister has said he was never advised about. There was election interference during the 2019 election and the 2021 election, but he said that nobody ever told him. Really? There were two elections and there was foreign interference in each one. CSIS knew about it and never brought it to the attention of the Prime Minister's Office. We know he reads everything. It is implausible. It is unbelievable that he would not have known, yet to this day he denies actually knowing about that.

We know that with that election interference, at least 11 candidates were targeted in order to be defeated. The conclusion has been drawn that the overall election results were fair and represented the right outcome. I am not challenging that conclusion at all. What I am saying, however, is that for those 11 candidates, like my friends Kenny Chiu in Richmond and Alice Wong in Richmond, it made all the difference because they are not in this House today. It is election interference that the Prime Minister and his government did not take seriously. Bob Saroya is another one of our colleagues who is not in this place. The overall election might have been fair, but for those three individuals and the other eight, it made all the difference. We have to take foreign interference in our elections seriously.

To close, I am going to talk again about what is at stake for our country.

Our national security is at stake. Our economic security and prosperity are at stake because these hostile foreign regimes have been active in intellectual property theft, stealing our research, breaking contracts and violating the international rules-based order. That is serious stuff. That is something this House has to take up and take seriously.

• (2115)

With respect to the personal security and safety of Canadians, I have already mentioned my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills. His family was threatened by a hostile foreign regime. It is critical that we take this seriously.

Other things at stake are human rights, freedom, the rule of law and democracy. That is what is at stake here in this debate. I encourage all my colleagues to support this motion and vote in favour of it.

• (2120)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it incredibly rich that, on the one hand, when I made a comment that was interpreted to mean the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was not telling the truth, all hell broke loose on the Conservative side of—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Speaker, that was unparliamentary language by the member across the way.

Privilege

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. I did not hear any language that was unparliamentary.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I will rephrase it. When I did that, the Conservatives lost their marbles, but when the member says—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame has a point of order.

Mr. Clifford Small: Mr. Speaker, he is being derogatory to people who suffer from mental illness.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, when I attempt to challenge the member after he accuses the member for Papineau of lying in this House, suddenly it is completely okay to suggest that somebody is lying. The only problem with his comments about the Prime Minister lying is that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills himself said in an interview two days ago that the Prime Minister and his chief of staff did not know about this. Not only is he contradicting the words of the Prime Minister, but he is contradicting the words of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, who sat down with the national security adviser and was told all of this.

I am curious as to how he is able to square away that comment given the fact that it does not reflect reality and the vast majority of people in this House do not believe it.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that members on this side of the House who believe in the truth do believe it.

Having said that, I believe it is Canadians who will judge for themselves. They have seen this movie before time and time again, with the Prime Minister prevaricating, exaggerating, denying and then being found out. Then it is oh well; too bad, so sad. This is the Prime Minister who twice has been found in breach of Canada's ethics laws. He just swats them to the side as if he can get away with that. We can do better than that as a country.

The member should take this debate seriously, because it is our national security, our sovereignty as a country and our democracy at stake. These are not trifling arguments that I have been making. I have been very serious about them. I hope that he and the rest of Canadians actually take this seriously.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was looking forward to my turn to speak.

I want to congratulate the member for Abbotsford on his speech.

The current chair of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation appeared today before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. Here is another example of someone willing to testify about this foundation who either has no conscience or has done very little self-reflection. Perhaps it would help him to have a conscience if he took a look, hard look in the mirror.

That said, Mr. Johnson appeared before the committee and said that everything was fine. There was never a threat of interference. CSIS had never sounded the alarm or warned of any risk of Chinese interference through the foundation. He found a way to throw former CEO Pascale Fournier under the bus. He denied just about ev-

erything she said. He also lambasted the media. Edward Johnson was a member of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's team in the early 1980s. He was also a senior executive at Power Corporation. Obviously, he is not the kind of person who likes to pull strings and stay close to the circles of power. I found it interesting that he was lambasting the media for their work on this.

I would like to ask my Conservative colleague if the Conservative Party sees that as a good opportunity to ensure that Canada's news media is well protected by robust laws so that we have quality journalism and support journalists in this investigative work.

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree that we should be ensuring that journalists and journalism have a good future in our country. What I will not agree to is anything that smacks of censorship. That would be the government using the strong arm of the law to try to coerce the media to act in any particular way. The freedom of the press needs to remain sacrosanct.

Having said that, I do want to address the other issue the member raised, which is the national inquiry that the member's party and mine have been calling for, a national inquiry into foreign interference in the affairs of our country. We note that the Prime Minister has, time and time again, refused to call such a national inquiry. Finally, he was under so much pressure, that he asked his friend, Mr. Johnston, who is a former member of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, to investigate and determine what further steps should be taken to address foreign interference.

I think we could have saved ourselves all of that effort by simply doing what Canadians have asked for and Conservatives have asked for, and that is to immediately call a national inquiry into foreign interference.

● (2125)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, in my short political life, I have experienced two events where I felt that our democracy was under threat. The first time was the “freedom convoy” last winter and the second time was when there was a breach of privilege found. Both times, it has been frustrating to see such a lack of seriousness that the government has taken in responding to both of these events.

I wonder if the member could share with the House what signals that sends to the international community and how that puts Canada's democracy at risk.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, the member may have had a short political life in this chamber, but she has already distinguished herself as an excellent member of Parliament.

The Liberal government has actually distinguished itself in a very different way, and that is its unserious nature. Everything it does is about virtue signalling rather than the substance of the policies that Canadians need to drive prosperity, to drive our national security, to protect Canadians against crime and to re-establish our reputation on the international stage. Our reputation on the international stage, which is what I think the member was getting to, has been badly tarnished and besmirched, quite often by the actions of the Prime Minister. I wish it were different. I wish I could stand here in this House and say Canada is doing well, Canada is so well respected all around the world, but that is not the case.

Bridges that used to be available for us to cross have been burned by the government time and time again. What a tragedy. Yes, we can do better.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of debate in the House over the last few days over misleading comments, as to whether someone was telling the truth or not telling the truth, a lot of heated heckling back and forth as to what was being said, whether it was parliamentary or not, and what we should and should not believe.

I will quote the words of the Prime Minister from 2013 when he stated, “There’s a level of admiration I actually have for China. Their basic dictatorship...” Is that something that we should discount in this House or is it something we should continue to believe from what we have seen over the past months, especially over the past couple of weeks with the revelations that have been coming out in the news stories?

I would like the member to comment on that.

● (2130)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I do believe the comment that our Prime Minister has been quoted as saying is somewhat telling. I think it is instructive as to why he takes the positions he does toward some of the hostile regimes around the world.

The fact that our Prime Minister would have this abiding admiration for the basic dictatorship that is China because of its ability to get things done is not what we should be aspiring to promote when we are promoting Canada’s interests.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks this evening by thanking our Speaker for yesterday’s ruling on the question of privilege from the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

This was an important moment and important decision because it brought into sharp focus the intimidation by foreign agents operating in Canada. Even tonight, the House, a day later, is still gripped by this decision. That is relevant to members who are participating here tonight and who have participated up until now on this question.

As a past member of the Canada-China special committee, I know from the evidence submitted to Parliament that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is not the only Canadian to be targeted. At committee, we heard from Canadians, particularly from Canadians of Chinese ancestry, about tactics used by the Chinese Communist Party to intimidate and silence our democracy.

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We have witnessed, over the past two decades, how Beijing’s Communist Party revealed itself not only to be at odds with international laws and norms, but also be opposed to accountability, openness and even the basic rights of people, including mainland China’s own citizens.

Like a few other members of Parliament, and many hundreds of thousands of Canadians, I have had the pleasure and privilege of living in Hong Kong. That territory is an amazing place. I was fortunate enough to be on hand for the handover from Britain’s rule to the People’s Republic of China on July 1, 1997. It was a heavy moment with feelings of both apprehension and opportunity.

Afterward, I visited Asia frequently once I returned to Canada a year later, and I have fond memories of both rural and urban mainland China, energetic Hong Kong and even remote Tibet.

Today, sadly, I would not travel to any part of mainland China. This saddens me because I have deep affection for the Chinese people. One cannot travel for days, weeks or months at a time and leave untouched by their hospitality, fondness for family, tradition and remarkable cuisine. I also deeply admire China’s culture and long history of struggle, perseverance and many great accomplishments.

However, I know that travelling to mainland China is something I cannot do anymore because of my committee work in Parliament. Today, I am prohibited by Beijing from entering the country. I called for a free and democratic China, and because of that, I am in violation of Beijing’s draconian national security law.

I uttered the words that I believe China would be better served by being democratic and by directly electing its leaders. I said these words on Canadian soil and in Parliament, yet the national security law, according to the regime in Beijing, applies anywhere around the world. By uttering those words, a call for democracy in China, I have broken that law. I view it as an immoral law, but as we saw with the two Michaels who were arrested and detained, that means nothing when faced with the dictators in Beijing.

I know that many members on this side of the chamber, and probably many who have served with the government since 2015, would have never believed that it could take the Government of Canada two years to expel a foreign diplomat sent here by Beijing’s Communist Party who planned and executed an intimidation and harassment campaign against the family and loved ones of a fellow parliamentarian, our colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills.

It happened. This is a Liberal disgrace and it must be investigated. I want to take a moment to repeat some remarks from the member for Wellington—Halton Hills when he addressed the House last week and provided the basis for our ongoing debate.

● (2135)

The member noted that on March 6, 2012, our then Speaker rightly said:

Those who enter political life fully expect to be able to be held accountable for their actions to their constituents and to those who are concerned with the issues and initiatives they may advocate.

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In a healthy democracy, vigorous debate on issues is encouraged. In fact, the rules and procedures of this House are drafted to allow for proponents and opponents to discuss, in a respectful manner, even the most difficult and sensitive of matters.

However, when duly elected members are personally threatened for their work in Parliament, whether introducing a bill, making a statement or casting a vote, this House must take the matter very seriously.

It is right for this to be debated, it is important that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs investigate and it is necessary that Parliament gets to the bottom of this and discovers the truth.

CSIS discovered, as reported by *The Globe and Mail*, that multiple members of Parliament have been targeted by Beijing's Communist Party. Indeed, this privilege motion we are debating is, as we see on our screens, "Intimidation campaign against members of Parliament." Who would have thought such a debate would be necessary in Canada or that we would be tasked with discovering what happened?

Members of all parties in the House of Commons should be questioning why the government was so keen to permit a foreign diplomat sent here by Beijing to remain here and continue intimidating and threatening the family and loved ones of not only a parliamentarian but several parliamentarians it seems, as well as Canadians across this country.

Either the government takes prompt measures to uphold our rights and protect Canadians from harassment or foreign nations that wish to undermine us and do us harm will double down and threaten more and more Canadians, yet whenever it comes to issues relating to Beijing's Communist Party, the Prime Minister does not feel any urgency to act. He deflects, denies, blames and does nothing unless absolutely forced to by opposition parties and ultimately Canadian voters.

We see this with the Uyghur genocide recognition motion that the Prime Minister and his cabinet abstained from when the vote was held in this Parliament. We see this with the Winnipeg lab document leak motion the Prime Minister and his cabinet voted against and to this day is still buried. It is an issue meant to be resolved by a special working group of parliamentarians working with an oversight committee to release documents, but that has disappeared. It is one more issue the government prefers to sweep under the rug.

We see this with the Prime Minister and his decisions not to apologize for the comments made by several Liberals in this chamber that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills knew about the threats against his family and loved ones and did nothing. It is a disgraceful misrepresentation meant to obscure what had happened.

The government's response to these allegations in *The Globe and Mail* has been evasive and inconsistent, with simple questions about its knowledge of the situation going unanswered. This all raises additional concerns about transparency and accountability.

At first the government announced that anyone violating the Vienna convention would be expelled, so we waited. Days passed without new information or an expulsion. Later the Prime Minister claimed to be unaware of the allegations until they actually appeared in the newspaper, asserting the same applied to other executive branch members in his cabinet. He also mentioned that CSIS

determined the issue was not significant enough to warrant escalation and still no expulsions took place.

● (2140)

The narrative shifted again when it was revealed that the security briefings did not even leave CSIS; they did not reach the national security adviser and other government departments, the government maintained, yet of course we discovered they had reached the highest echelons of the public service, and the government was somehow in the dark.

Despite no expulsions occurring, the government raised concerns about the possible consequences of expelling a People's Republic of China diplomat, leading to questions about its intentions and resolve. More false accusations were made against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, with the Prime Minister participating in the attempts to undermine his credibility and the seriousness of the CSIS reports. It was all, and remains, a bloody mess.

For these reasons and others, it is imperative that Parliament explore the violation of our privileges and the threat of election interference through the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Leaving this to the government bench alone is, without question, the wrong move. The government simply cannot be trusted. It is why Conservatives also continue to call for an independent, public inquiry into Beijing's foreign interference in our elections.

There are so many inconsistencies that have surrounded the Liberal government's handling of the situation that it is right to question its judgment. For example, it is just not credible to believe that CSIS would brief the member for Wellington—Halton Hills on a serious issue of interference and intimidation without informing the national security apparatus and the political level of the current government. Of course, this was recently corroborated by Cherie Henderson, the assistant director for requirements at CSIS, who said, at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, "I can say that we definitely have seen specific cases of hostile activities of states against politicians. In those specific cases, we definitely brief our government on the challenges that are being faced."

To be clear, the government's pattern of obfuscating information from parliamentarians has been evident in previous scandals, such as the SNC-Lavalin debacle, the WE Charity scandal, and, just last week, with the Trudeau Foundation. Why would anyone think this situation is any different?

The debate's significance lies in the need for the procedure and House affairs committee to address the issue, as well as the ethics committee's focus on foreign interference. Despite multiple committees investigating foreign interference, the government has not initiated an independent inquiry, and it should do so immediately. An independent public inquiry would help assess the impact of the Beijing Communist regime's interference in Canada.

Our former colleague Kenny Chiu has discussed the fear and intimidation tactics employed by Chinese mainland officials in Beijing, including misinformation and disinformation campaigns against members of the House during recent elections. Mehmet Tohti, a leading advocate for the human rights of Uyghur Muslims in Canada, shared his experience of Beijing Communist officials monitoring his calls to relatives in China in an attempt to intimidate him. There are still an unknown number of Chinese Communist Party police stations operating in Canada. These serve one purpose, and that is to intimidate citizens and landed immigrants who live here, in what should be a free and democratic Canada.

There is a pattern of pandering to Beijing, which appears to have begun when the Prime Minister won the Liberal Party leadership. A large donation was soon made to the Trudeau Foundation, and questions have arisen about the receipt issued for the donation. Parliamentary committees are studying that as well, urging the CRA to investigate that to get to the bottom of any undue influence on our democracy and the Prime Minister.

This pattern of influence must be investigated further, because it undermines democratic institutions, the electoral process, and, of course, faith in our democracy. At the same time, it is important to recognize that many Chinese Canadians live in our country in fear, and may not participate fully in the electoral process due to potential retribution.

• (2145)

That is where we are today. Our government and Prime Minister took two years to act and to expel a diplomat for meddling in Canada's democracy. Because the Liberals finally declared one diplomat from Communist China not welcome in this country, they think they should be congratulated, after waiting two years. The Liberals had ample evidence of Beijing's diplomats interfering in elections, particularly from its Toronto and Vancouver offices, yet, when questioned about this at the procedure and House affairs committee, the foreign affairs minister claimed there was no evidence. However, they did possess evidence about a foreign diplomat sent here by Beijing's Communist party, which had been known for two years.

The Liberals might claim that the information never made it to the Prime Minister's desk, and that is why we need an investigation to find out what happened. If that is true, that is still the government's responsibility. If the Liberal government is not capable of overseeing the security of this country, it should be held in contempt for its inability to govern well and responsibly.

It took a report from *The Globe and Mail*, and pressure from the opposition and Canadians at large, for the government to finally act. Why was there this long delay? It is unacceptable for Beijing diplomats to facilitate funding for political candidates, to target Conservative candidates, or any candidates for that matter, in this

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country, and then to boast about defeating disliked incumbent MPs. It is equally intolerable for them to organize illegal police stations to harass and intimidate Chinese Canadians, and to threaten MPs and their families.

Canada has a long-standing commitment to accountable government. We must uphold and preserve that. Canadians should be informed of the recent security lapses. Instead, the Prime Minister continues to put electoral decisions ahead of national security. This is the most serious failing of anyone who occupies the government benches under the Liberal government.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions amongst the parties, and if you seek it I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order, special order or usual practice of the House, not later than 11:59 p.m. or when no member rises to speak to the motion under consideration, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary's moving the motion will please say nay.

Agreed.

[*Translation*]

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

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, the debate on foreign interference is a strange one. It feels as though we are floating. It is as if we are all wearing rose-coloured glasses when it comes to Chinese interference, especially the government. This has been going on for months. An elected official in the House and his family were harassed by the Chinese state, but that was just the tip of the iceberg.

Over the past few months, Chinese balloons have been seen flying over North America. It was never clear what became of that. TikTok, which was installed on the phones of every member of the House, was banned. There was a case of spying in Quebec, at Hydro-Québec, which is a major corporation. We learned that a Chinese spy was working there. We also learned that there were Chinese police stations. How can we tolerate community centres where the Chinese state can put pressure on Canadians who have family there?

The situation is really very serious, but it seems that the government on the other side of the House does not realize it. Does my colleague agree that we are all wearing rose-coloured glasses with respect to the possibility of a state as powerful as China intervening here in Canada?

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• (2150)

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with the member. I think this is a very serious issue, but the government is not taking it seriously.

[*English*]

This is something that I think the government has known about for far too long and has preferred to turn the other way, to ignore it, because it was either not capable of dealing with this or was not willing to make some of the tough decisions that are required to ensure that Canadians remain safe. However, there is no doubt it is a mess, and it is one that has unfolded slowly. This did not just appear one day, but it is story upon story. We must get to the bottom of it.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, the member talked about the incredible beauty, hospitality and kindness of the people of China when he visited there. Then he spoke, of course, about the need for the public inquiry. I certainly hear this from people in my area who are of Chinese descent and background, Chinese Canadians. They have been standing up against the racism and discrimination that they have experienced because of a lot of this uncertainty.

Could the member talk about the point that, in a public inquiry, we could get to the bottom of a lot of this and help fight against anti-Asian racism?

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, the member's point is spot-on. That is one of the benefits of having a proper public consultation. We would hear from the public, and more and more Canadians would come to realize that the primary target of mainland China, the Communist regime, has been Canadians of Chinese heritage. Those are the people who are not able to fulfill their democratic rights because of intimidation from police stations that operate here illegally, because of intimidation tactics from Beijing's diplomats.

I appreciate the question. It is a great point. We want to make sure this is about the regime in Beijing, and we will hear from Canadians of Chinese descent, who will reinforce the message that they, too, support democracy and freedoms that are the bedrock of this country.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure to work with the member on the special committee on Canada-China relations in the last Parliament. We got a lot of important work done. In particular, we began a study, which was interrupted by the election, highlighting the national security threats that were associated with Canada's relationship with the PRC. What struck me about some of the work we did at the time was how many everyday Canadians are impacted by these threats, these instances of foreign interference.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has recognized as well that, as he faces these threats, he has a position that allows him to bring attention to them, but many people have suffered in silence. There are many stories we have heard, but there are many stories we will never hear, of people who have been victims of foreign interference and have not been able to bring the attention to the situation that should have been brought to it.

I wonder if the member has thoughts and reflections, as we address this privilege issue involving members of Parliament, on how we can stand with everyday Canadians who face worse threats and do not have the same opportunities.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, there is a brief answer to that excellent question, which is to give them a platform to speak, to give Canadians who have faced intimidation and threats from Beijing a platform through Parliament and the Canadian government, and give them the opportunity to stand up and be heard. That would do more to help rectify the situation and correct the many errors that the government made.

We must not forget, and I will remind my colleagues, that the Liberal government actually sued the Speaker prior to the last election, to prevent information that the Canada-China committee had discovered, an outrageous move to protect itself and not ensure that Canadians had the truth.

• (2155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on what my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert was saying. He talked about getting the sense that people are wearing rose-coloured glasses, but I am getting the sense that people are worried. I am concerned about how the government is handling issues that are more serious than pretty much anything we have ever seen.

I remember the WE scandal from a few years ago. The government did all it could to cover everything up, to sweep things under the rug over and over until hard-working reporters and opposition members managed to uncover the details. It was appalling. It was even worse than everyone thought initially.

Now we have these allegations of Chinese interference. The more we dig, the more outrageous things we find, yet the Liberals and their Trudeau Foundation friends keep burying their heads in the sand. They act like nothing happened and they never do anything wrong, but actually, something very serious happened.

The government needs to be transparent and collaborate to get this all out in the open and reassure people. The whole situation is extremely worrisome. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[*English*]

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, again, I could not agree more. Our strength as a country and a democracy rests on our openness. The weakness of the Communist regime is its insistence on lies and keeping things hidden. We must, as a democracy, ensure that what has happened is known by Canadians so they can hold those who failed in their duty accountable and ensure we have a government here that will stand up for the interests of this country and voters right across the country.

Privilege

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, in this debate, I would like to say that as an MP, I am very worried about the state of democracy.

Can my colleague say whether he feels any pressure? Does he feel threatened? If so, how does that affect him and his ability to perform his role as an MP? As we know, several ridings were targeted. If he were one of those targeted, how would he be able to play his role independently? Fundamentally, it is our democracy and the integrity of the House that are being attacked.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, to date that has not been the case. I have no problems doing my work in my riding.

That said, we can think of Kenny Chiu, a former member of the House of Commons who was targeted by Beijing's attacks. There are some very serious examples. Some members are no longer in this place because of the Communist Party's efforts to ensure that they lost their election and could no longer return to the House to defend their political ideas.

That is very serious. The government says that this did not influence the election, that it did not really change anything. However, some members are not here because of the Communists.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to start off with an excerpt from a *Globe and Mail* article from February 2019. It reads, "The allegations reported in the story are false. At no time did I or my office direct the current or previous attorney-general to make any particular decision in this matter".

This is, I think, what starts our debate here and takes us into a concern for many Canadians, which I am hearing from across all party lines, about where we are with China and the information that is slowly coming out from the PMO. If we are trying to compare this to something like SNC-Lavalin, we truly cannot. It is one of those pinnacles, one of those things that is so high. This is about democracy, integrity and the work we can do as parliamentarians without fear for our families.

I started reading these stories once I heard about the allegation about the foreign interference with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, and I came to this very simple point: How can we do our jobs when we do not feel safe or when our families are threatened, whether here in Canada or in China? This is something that the government must take seriously.

I am looking at all the members who are here tonight, and their things that are important, but when it comes to our families, for many of us, that is the bottom line, and it changes everything. It is the fear and the love for our loved ones. How do we ensure that they are safe?

I look at what the Prime Minister said back in 2019, just sloughing it off, and months later, we find out that everything he had said was inaccurate. This is what concerns me today as we are having this debate. I fear that these same issues of "I didn't know" and "everything is false" may be the same situation here today. I think that is the big concern here.

I will go back to some information on this, but I would like to start with the fact that our Conservative critic for foreign affairs has done such an exemplary job. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills is extraordinarily respected in the House by not only members of his own caucus but also the individuals he comes across, whether stakeholders meeting with him on key issues, somebody chairing a committee or a minister being asked hard questions by the member. There is a respect because of the way he proceeds, holds himself and shows the value of what democracy really is.

The member shared with us the reason his family came to Canada, why they wanted to come and why his father chose to have a better life here in Canada. It is like so many other fathers and mothers who are descendants, and why so many people came to Canada to find a better life. Unfortunately, some of these bad actors and some of these things follow people. When we look at what happened to this member, we have to understand that it did not just happen to this member, but to the rest of the 337 of us as well.

I spoke to one of my colleagues who happened to be one of the 49 members who were also briefed on this defence and what was happening. He shared with me that, if he were to rate it, it was a one out of 10 when it came to security and safety and making him feel that it was a great threat. I think if someone had maybe provided more information to let people know who was being targeted, they would understand that this really was not a one out of 10. Perhaps for that member who had a similar briefing it was a one out of 10, but for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, I do not think that is the case.

We have to look at the fact that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills stood up against Chinese influence on Canadian institutions. He has criticized the Prime Minister for cash-for-access fundraisers, which had been done with Chinese-Canadian businessmen. He has fought against the ties of the government, and the Prime Minister specifically, to the Chinese Communist Party. He has called for a stronger stance on human rights, trade violations and cybersecurity concerns, which are all related to China. When we start looking at this, it seems pretty clear why the member was targeted. It is because he is a man of principle, and he is a man who will stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves.

● (2200)

This leads me to a concern, because one of the things he was bringing forward was genocide and things that are happening in China. From just a few months ago, I remember a member from the Liberal Party who was clearly so cheerful because his private member's bill had also gone through, and it targeted that. I do not know if that member of Parliament has been or is being targeted, but when we know this is happening to good people who are working for vulnerable people, we should assume it may be. This is where I am hoping the Prime Minister, the national security advisers and the cabinet will not just worry about politics, but about the people within their own caucus.

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I do not know the situation there, but I really do fear what is going to happen to that member. Knowing that our own member was targeted, what is happening to the Liberal members in their own benches?

Let us go back to the questions and this timeline. Every day there are new questions about the federal government and how it handled the Chinese government's plot to target MPs. All of this came out, and we talk about the security briefing received by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and the information that was provided by the Prime Minister just two days apart. It is very concerning. We have a Prime Minister who is saying he knew nothing, that CSIS did not release the document and that they did not see it as a big issue. Of course, I am not quoting right now, but that is the overall essence of it. However, we then have somebody, who came to give our member an intelligence report, who is saying the exact opposite the next day.

I am not indicating necessarily that the Prime Minister had read it. Although, as everybody has said in here, and as we have heard his chief of staff, Katie Telford, say, the Prime Minister reads everything. We have heard her say that. We must understand that, if there had been a briefing, he must have read it, because that is his job. This is not just because Katie Telford said so, but because his job as the Prime Minister is to read security briefings, not only because this is a democracy and he should be sure everybody is safe, but also because it is his job to ensure Canada is safe. If there is a security briefing that is coming in, he needs to take the time to read it.

All that was said last week continues to be contradicted, and I think we have to look at where this conversation started. Last Monday, I was watching everybody debate this, and we saw members of Parliament get up and not answer the questions. The minister for the government was not answering specific questions, and we could see that intensity. We know the government had to make a choice on what it was going to do, but two days later we actually saw its members double down.

I saw the compassion from some of those members on Monday, who recognized that one of their own colleagues in the House was targeted, but we watched the government members, two days later, double down, and all of its members and parliamentary secretaries were providing the same answer. That means they are working together to try to redirect this conversation, and the good work promised by some of the members over there had to be halted because it was against their political agenda. Those are things that concern me.

When we know that a person has been here and has targeted members of Parliament, why have they not been immediately removed? It took the government over a week, and as we have heard, it was not just a week, but two years and a week, because the government knew beforehand. However, we have to look at things that were also said in here, and if we are talking about democracy and coverups, we had the parliamentary secretary to the leader of the government in the House of Commons, Senate, state:

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills had a defence briefing on this two years ago, so he knew about this when it actually happened.

My question for the member is this. When did he find out about it? Did the member for Wellington—Halton Hills bring it to his attention at any time prior to the media doing so?

I am going back to a simple comment that was made by my colleague, who said that they were briefed, and it was like a one out of 10. If people are giving general information, that is a problem, and I think, when I hear from one member that it was just such an overlay, I understand. However, I know this person did not go forward and ask, but if the government was worried, why did it not do something about it? If it knew there was more, why did it not press go to try to start on foreign interference by looking into this?

I think it comes down to the fact that we have a Prime Minister who is so entangled with the Chinese government because of his admiration for that country that sometimes he cannot see right from wrong, because it is more about popularity and polling than it is about leading this great country. I feel sorry for some of the members I see over there who are having to applaud a Prime Minister who will not stand up for members of Parliament and will continue to wipe things away.

● (2205)

However, we have a Prime Minister who was part of cash-for-access fundraisers back in 2016. That all ties into the Trudeau Foundation and the money that was given from members of the Communist Chinese government via conduits so that the money could get in there and a statue of the Prime Minister's father. Those are all wonderful things. They are everything that is great to make an ego shine. That is what we are selling off. We are selling things off such as Canadian democracy for egos.

That is why I have a problem with this. I feel that we have not taken the Chinese government seriously for the last eight years. Throughout these question periods the government members have asked repeatedly, multiple times what our government did about it, and they have said that it did nothing about it. They and I know that, like Facebook since I joined in 2007, things have changed and things progress with IT and all of the things that are available to us in this world. Of course we have to narrow and change the ways that we are doing things.

Canada had a different relationship with China prior to the current government. Prior to the government's coming in, we always tried to work, but we were trying to build strong relationships where we both were separate and we had a sovereign democratic country for Canada. However, we do not see that with the Chinese government anymore.

With respect to the Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, when somebody had said something bad, the Canadian ambassador to China made an inappropriate comment, and he was accused of being too cozy with the country's authoritarian government. We saw the firing of the ambassador to China happen because the Chinese government spoke up. When the Chinese government is not happy with what Canada does, it calls the Prime Minister and fires the Canadian ambassador. However, when this is happening with our own Canadian member of Parliament, we do not see the same thing occurring. These have to be discussed.

I want to continue, as we are discussing this, looking at the connection between this Prime Minister and the judgment that he is using throughout these cases. We have talked about the seriousness of these allegations and we have already talked about how people are not taking this seriously. That is so concerning. We saw fewer voters from the Chinese community come out in the last election because their democracy was stolen from them by foreign agents coming to their doors, knocking on their doors and advising them on whom they had to vote for. We know that people were targeted through group chats. It is not just our members of Parliament who are targeted, but it is Canadians who were being targeted in the last election.

We have people who were fearful of voting. That should never happen here in Canada. We understand that some countries tell people what to do. Here in Canada, we are supposed to be a country that has freedom of expression, freedom of speech and a democratic process. We know that in the last election that was not the case.

I appreciate this time. I will continue to fight for democracy. I will continue to fight for transparency and accountability from the current government, specifically on the case of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, but I will fight for every Canadian who should be free of any interference from abroad.

● (2210)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite's speech here this evening was very informative and very well put together. We keep hearing that there are 11 individuals who were in some way influenced or compromised or whatever in the 2019 election and the 2021 election. I do not know who those 11 are. I do not know if the member knows. However, the member who we do know was interfered with by threats from the Communist Party of China is the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Does the member know who any of the others are? I, for one, would like to know who all 11 people are and to see exactly how they were compromised.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the excellent question. That is what we should be asking. We know that there was interference. I can name three members. We have Nelly Shin, Kenny Chiu and Bob Saroya. They are three outstanding members of Parliament with whom we recognize that there was interference. There have been investigations done there.

Like this member, I am very concerned as well. We want to know who these other members are. We need to ensure that they are protected and that is something that I am hoping the government will wise up to.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London for her speech. I truly appreciate this member. I think she is a sincere person who comes to work here for the right reasons, to represent the people in her riding.

She mentioned a gentleman whom I greatly respect, Kenny Chiu. I worked with him in the last Parliament. I have the impression that what happened to my friend Kenny is not being taken seriously on the government side, which is rather unfortunate. I think it is sad

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that the government is taking something like what happened to Kenny so lightly.

I think an independent public inquiry is absolutely essential, precisely so that these things are taken seriously. This will shed light on a few things, including what happened to Kenny Chiu, a very respectable former member of the House, a very sincere man who was here for the right reasons.

● (2215)

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, it is extremely important that there be an inquiry into this and that we get to the bottom of this.

Kenny Chiu deserved to be here. Voters have the right. There is democracy, but we know that there was a lot of influence that was going on, which changed the voter turnout. We need to work hard for all and, as we continue this, we need to work together. We need to all work together, because I do think they are not taking this as seriously as they should.

I do see some members across the way who do understand the importance of investigating this. I really do. I think of one of my friends who is from the Montreal area and I can imagine him being targeted because he is very open with his opinions. We should never fear that way. We should have the right to freedom of speech. When we disagree, we should not have a Chinese government interfering in our elections.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, as members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, we are doing a lot of work on looking at the multiple countries that are creating really strong systems of trying to interfere in other countries' elections. It is really concerning.

When we look at this particular case, one of the things that really concern me is that there is not a comprehensive response to really let the member know what is happening, the information that they need to know, and how that impacts not only them and their families in Canada but any family members they have who are in another country. This is such an important issue that we are dealing with right now.

I am wondering if the member could speak about what she would like to see happen in PROC and how we can deal with this in a more fulsome way, so that we get the outcomes that we need for all Canadians, especially for members of Parliament who are serving.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, hold your boots, because the government actually did one thing right, very late, but the fact is that MPs need to know immediately, and that was something that the Prime Minister actually said. It is great that he said it. Now he needs to act on it.

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The member for Wellington—Halton Hills should have a full briefing, knowing exactly what happened and understanding how his family was targeted. The other members in the chamber who have also been targeted must be ensured to be notified. I think it is really important that the procedure and House affairs committee is advised and that they have access to that information on what ridings were being targeted, to ensure that the process worked and to ensure that the safety of those members is secure. I think that has to be looked at.

If they targeted them back in 2021, what are they doing today? We do not know, so I think we all need to be on high alert.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, foreign interference impacts many different communities in Canada. I know the member has a very close relationship with the Muslim community in her riding, and I have had a chance to visit the mosque there. The Muslim community has been targeted with foreign interference by the Chinese government when people have been involved in advocacy around the Uyghur issue.

I know there is a student club at McMaster University, which is not quite in her riding but maybe there are students from London who go there. The club was hosting an event to discuss the Uyghur genocide, and there was attempted interference by the Chinese consulate in Toronto, which was asking people to monitor who was there, to see if any university officials were there and if any international students were there, in an attempt to undermine this event or discourage people from attending it.

I wonder if the member could share just a bit more about what she is hearing from people in her riding about how these efforts to suppress the voices of people who are involved in human rights advocacy are impacting people from a diversity of communities in her riding and in the region.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for sharing the story of what is happening at those universities. These are exactly the types of things we are hearing. People are being muzzled and they are not able to speak because they are fearful.

I think of all the students who go to Western University. We have a very large population of international students. I fear for their safety as well. These are things where it becomes a distrust. For Chinese Canadians, it has been one heck of a difficult time under the government. It has been made worse, and that is what I am hearing from the people I represent.

I have heard from a really wonderful man I have always been involved with, who has worked as part of the Chinese community. He shared with me his concerns, like COVID and the lack of us knowing, all those different things. There are a lot of trust issues with China and I think we had better open our eyes.

• (2220)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I know that, in this case, there needs to be a fine balance between ensuring that parliamentarians get the information they need and making sure that national security is not put further at risk.

Can the member share how that fine balance can be used in this case?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I am going to put on my FEWO chair hat. We are able to take in information that is confidential. As a member of Parliament, I came to this place and took my oath. My oath is to this country, and that is what we are. When we are provided confidential documents, it is up to us to ensure that those documents are secure, that they are not shown out. I think there are different measures we can take to ensure that we do our job without having to break confidence.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a very concerning issue that we are dealing with here. Basically, it was an attack on one member of this Parliament.

This being an attack on one member of Parliament, is it viewed as an attack on all members of Parliament?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, the answer is very simple: absolutely. When one member is being attacked, it is an attack on us all. I look at our relationship with the member of Parliament. There is a closeness we have when we work within caucuses. The discussions that we have are on a very different level when working with caucus members. We are trying to make sure there is good legislation and laws for Canadians. The impact to this member impacts us all. We know that if his leadership is squashed, it hurts the entire country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Like my colleagues, I rise today to speak about China's interference in political and public affairs and the breach of privilege of a member of this House. Obviously, it is one member, but all of us are under attack in this situation.

I will try to make this quick because I understand that people are waiting to hear from my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean, whose expertise is in great demand. I think that there are some things that need to be said.

As we know, for several years now, a number of expert reports have highlighted China's actions, going so far as to accuse it of interfering in the political affairs of several countries, including our own. There have been reports of cyber-attacks on Canadian government institutions, businesses and universities, as well as other suspicious activities, such as manipulating social media and disseminating disinformation.

There are Chinese police stations that are operating while the Prime Minister looks on. There have been debates in the House on the active participation of Chinese government agents in the federal election and the controversial \$200,000 donation to the Trudeau Foundation, which raises many questions about how much the Prime Minister knew about these matters.

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These activities are extremely disturbing and raise questions about the integrity of our democracy and our electoral processes. We cannot allow foreign powers, no matter how big or how influential, to interfere in our political affairs and disrupt our democratic process. The Liberal government has gone from being disconcertingly naive about the Chinese Communist regime to inexplicably inactive in the face of China's repeated attacks on our democracy.

The straw that broke the camel's back was *The Globe and Mail* article about a CSIS report from 2021 stating that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills and his family in Hong Kong were being threatened by a Chinese diplomat who was still in Canada. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills had just voted in favour of a motion condemning the genocide of the Uyghurs by the Communist Party of China.

These are all very serious allegations involving troubling information that could have a potential impact on our parliamentary duties. The Speaker's ruling on this matter is exemplary, and I agree with the conclusion that an entity like China intervening with retaliatory measures against an MP and his or her family represents an attack on our collective ability to carry out our parliamentary duties unimpeded.

That is simply unacceptable and must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. It is our duty to protect our democracy and defend our colleagues' privileges. We must work together to strengthen our national security and protect our democratic institutions from outside threats. We must also support our colleagues and give them the means to fulfill their democratic mandate without fear or intimidation.

The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this motion because it has already debated these issues favourably in the public arena. First, when it comes to the foreign agent registry, I will not list all of the opportunities that the government has had for serious reflection since the member for Wellington—Halton Hills moved a motion in 2020 concerning Huawei's involvement in Canada's 5G network. Obviously, time has proven him right.

The Bloc Québécois has expressed its support for an independent public commission of inquiry into foreign election interference. That position is shared by other opposition parties that think that the recent leaks about China's attempts to interfere in our elections require an independent public inquiry.

Former chief electoral officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley has expressed his support for such an inquiry. According to him, Canadians have the right to know everything about what happened, and the lack of a public inquiry will only prolong the consequences for those who were affected. Kingsley also rejected the argument that a public inquiry could compromise public safety. He stated that public safety is there to protect democracy, not the other way around.

The government has sought to put off a public inquiry for a long time citing public security concerns. However, that has not prevented many people, including the former director of CSIS, Richard Fadden, from joining in the call for a public inquiry.

• (2225)

Overall, it is clear that the calls for a public inquiry into foreign interference in elections are growing stronger. Canadians have the right to know if their democratic process is under threat from foreign actors and what steps their government is taking to protect democracy and the interests of their country.

Can we get the truth on the closure of the covert police stations in Canada and on the threats against people who return to China or who have family in China?

This is not the first report we have heard about persecution and repression of certain people who criticized the Chinese government or who were considered dissidents.

The Chinese government also brought in a social credit system that can affect people's ability to travel, find work and access certain services based on their behaviour and their political leanings. It is important to note that these operations are often carried out covertly and the information is often difficult to verify. However, there is enough evidence to suggest that these threats exist and that governments and citizens should be aware of these risks.

The government's attempts to lower the temperature and stonewall are eroding our confidence in it. Its handling of the expulsion of Chinese diplomat Zhao Wei has been embarrassing.

We must be proactive. We must take steps to strengthen our national security, and we must shield ourselves from foreign attacks. We must also continue to strengthen our ability to identify, report, monitor and counter cyber-attacks. They can be extremely difficult to detect and thwart, but we must be ready to face these threats and to protect our institutions against malicious attacks.

The case of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills raises a bigger problem in a world that is becoming more complex. With the growth of social networks, it is getting easier and easier for malicious people to target and harass elected officials, journalists and other public figures. The threats and attacks can be deeply disturbing and have real consequences for the safety of the individuals concerned. This is our cue to rethink our society and even our use of social media.

Increasingly, we tolerate threats because they are just threats. If we do not tolerate threats towards our colleague, we should not tolerate the threats we are subjected to on social media, either.

Our world is entering a new era. China may be using an old way of doing things right now, but new ways of influencing our elected officials will be found. They will become increasingly insidious. Our lives are showcased on social media. Hackers are finding new ways to go even further in getting data.

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Just imagine. A fraudster can practically create a new identity for themselves using data leaked from a bank or government. If a member of Parliament is targeted, what impact will that fake identity have? How will a new power be able to influence elected officials?

I serve on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, and these are issues that must be discussed during our study of Bill C-27. We need to ask ourselves whether the government has really made all of the connections that need to be made between all of the laws in order to strengthen the protection of Quebecers and Canadians.

When it comes to protecting ourselves from China, there is also the Investment Canada Act, which may not go far enough in protecting our vital areas, our supply chains. These are things that I have a lot of questions about.

With the arrival of even more powerful technologies, such as quantum computing, we know that a lot of our data is stored on servers and that China will not hesitate to check that data and use it against us, of course.

Consequently, and in conclusion, we have to equip ourselves with all the tools available to fight foreign interference. That starts with solidarity with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

• (2230)

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I look around, I have to wonder how seriously the government is taking Chinese interference here in Parliament. I think it is a serious issue. I wonder how seriously the government is taking it.

I have a question for my hon. colleague. How seriously does he think the Liberal caucus is taking what is going on with Chinese interference in our Parliament?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. I think that in the current context, his question answers itself. It is extremely worrisome.

I admit that, as an MP, I feel concerned. Obviously, I have no ties to China. However, I am not surprised by the example from the member for Lac-Saint-Jean and his leadership on the issue of the Uyghurs and protecting these people. The Uyghurs are under pressure because the Chinese regime is trying to wipe them out, and their safety and survival are truly at risk.

As a Parliament, we are going to need to take strong positions and accept the consequences, as the member for Lac-Saint-Jean did. The member for Lac-Saint-Jean is leading by example. Obviously, he can no longer visit China, and these types of threats are absolutely unacceptable. We must stand firm in solidarity.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, that may be the only time my friend from Lac-Saint-Jean is ever on the government's side, but I know there was a lot of space over there he was doing his best to fill.

I want to ask about the Hong Kong national security law, because this is an important aspect of the issue of foreign interference.

Many flights transit through Hong Kong, of course, and Hong Kong's national security law effectively claims a universal jurisdiction. If I get up and give a speech in this House and say certain things about the democracy movement in Hong Kong, theoretically that law claims the right to arrest and prosecute me if I transit through Hong Kong. It is really an incredible disregard for national sovereignty in other countries shown through this law and is an explicit in-statute claim to interfere in the affairs of other states.

We heard during previous testimony at the Special Committee on the Canada—People's Republic of China Relationship how indeed this national security is a threat to members of Parliament in every part of the world as it is in particular a threat to the people of Hong Kong. What should we be doing to respond to this law and to stand up for the freedom of people in Hong Kong?

• (2235)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his comments and his foresight, and especially for his willingness to educate all Canadians and members of the House of Commons about the importance of protecting themselves.

I do not think that denying this information is the answer. On the contrary, I think we need to pass it on and address it. As far as China is concerned, I cannot help but think of all the facial recognition systems that can identify and register individuals as they pass through an area. Police officers can quickly descend on a location to intercept and arrest these people. We know about the arrest of the two Michaels and all the arbitrary processes they faced.

Now there is a third Michael, the member for Wellington-Halton Hills, who is also being subjected to retaliation. Everyone must be extremely vigilant. They must think about their own safety, but under no circumstances should silence be part of the solution.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a serious issue. I think everyone in this House is very concerned with this. We know this is a serious issue that keeps coming up again and again and again. What we need is transparency. Could the member talk about why a public inquiry is so important, even more so now as we discuss this matter of privilege?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her concern for this issue.

Yes, transparency is part of the solution, because without transparency, we are sure to repeat past mistakes.

Let me draw a parallel with the holding of a public inquiry in the world of sports. We want this kind of inquiry because we want strong recommendations that will have the force of law. We want to get to the bottom of things and encourage people to come forward who may be too scared to speak publicly but who can confide in an authority they trust. We need a robust system, reliable mechanisms and independent people. A public inquiry can do this, but what we really need is for a country like Canada to take a strong stand.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to point out that the speeches in the House today are excellent. I want to congratulate my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for the overview he just provided.

What happened is serious. I will try to summarize what happened recently, but also what happened in the years that we have been talking about interference here in the House.

Yesterday, in the late afternoon, diplomat Zhao Wei was declared *persona non grata* in Canada by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We believe that was a very wise decision. We applaud the government's decision, even though it was made two years too late. Now that it has been made, we must say that it was the right thing to do. I believe that is what all opposition parties were asking for. The Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois were asking for it and, I believe that the NDP also supported this decision, which we applaud.

Now we are talking about a member of Parliament who is being threatened with retaliation. Honestly, there is reason to be concerned about more parliamentarians and about democracy in Quebec and Canada. The article in *The Globe and Mail* referred to a number of MPs in connection with the motion on the Uyghur genocide. I had the honour and privilege of making an amendment to that motion in 2021. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills allowed me to do that. That amendment was adopted and then the motion was unanimously adopted, even though all of the government members just happened to abstain from voting. Perhaps they had a stomach ache that day.

Let us review the facts. It seems as though the main person involved, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, has been targeted by the Chinese Communist Party since he sponsored that motion in 2021. Let us recall that the motion described the treatment of Uyghurs in China by the Chinese Communist Party in power as a genocide. As I said, an overwhelming majority supported that motion. Once again, it is important to point out that the government members showed a complete lack of courage by choosing to abstain from the vote.

I have the good fortune of representing my political party on international human rights. I am a member of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. I had the opportunity to be invited by my Uyghur friends to attend various panels abroad, including in Europe twice. I can say that the government's lack of courage has reverberated around the world. The people I talk to on these panels come from different parliaments around the world, including in the United States, but also many parliaments in Europe and even in Asia and in Africa. These are people who come together to discuss the situation of the Uyghurs in China. They are very

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aware that when the motion was moved in the House, the Liberal government ensured that its executive, or the ministers, the Prime Minister and the parliamentary secretaries, abstained from voting. That was noted around the world.

That is Canada's international reputation, now. It has a reputation as a government that lacks courage when the time comes to stand up to torturers and dictators who violate human rights, as the Chinese regime in power is currently doing against Uyghur minorities. I want to note that it is also committing these acts against other Turkic peoples in Xinjiang, which my Uyghur friends call East Turkestan. Simply put, this government lacks courage in every regard and on many files.

I could talk about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, we are not here to talk about that, we are here to talk about Chinese interference. This shows that the government lacks courage. However, back in 2015, when talking about Canada's international reputation, this Prime Minister said loud and clear, "Canada is back". Some people believed him. Let me share a little secret: I believed him, too. The Conservative government's nearly 10-year reign had just ended, and that government had failed to distinguish itself internationally or in terms of human rights. After years of the Harper government, we thought that Canada would finally regain its place on the international stage and restore its historic reputation in the area of international human rights. This is coming from a Quebec sovereignist.

• (2240)

We know that Canada is not considered a military power. We know that it is not considered an economic power. However, Canada, and therefore Quebec, does have a history of leadership in the area of human rights when we had to stand up to state criminals.

I will give an example. Lester B. Pearson was a Liberal. The idea for peacekeepers came from Canada. As a kindness to my Conservative friends, I will cite the example of Brian Mulroney, who took a stand when the time came to condemn the odious apartheid system in South Africa.

The first person to take a stand was a Quebecker. It was the mayor of Montreal, Jean Doré. He was the first to stand up against apartheid in South Africa. Brian Mulroney took up the cause and amplified it around the world. He convinced the United States and Great Britain. At the time, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were not exactly keen on opposing apartheid, but Brian Mulroney finally convinced them. Then history took its course. After Nelson Mandela was released, the first trip he took was to Canada. Believe it or not, his plane was scheduled to land in Ottawa, but while he was en route, he asked to land in Montreal so he could meet Jean Doré, the mayor of Montreal, the person who got the ball rolling.

Privilege

It might seem like I am getting off topic, but this is in my speech, and it is related. I am making a link with what is happening right now in terms of Chinese interference. What happened to my good friend from Wellington—Halton Hills is awful. Imagine being in his shoes. I think that is the problem. The Liberals are good at lecturing anyone who will listen, but they are not so good at putting themselves in the shoes of anyone who is suffering.

I have to wonder about something. When they heard about the CSIS reports aimed directly at my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills two years ago, I wonder whether things would have been different if it had been a Liberal member. I will say it again, but not too loudly: I doubt it. I have a feeling that if a CSIS report had found that a Liberal MP and his family in Hong Kong were being targeted by the Chinese authorities, we would not be here today, because the government would have acted much more quickly. I am sure of that.

It makes us think. It shows that the government is simply not serious about dealing with Chinese interference and that it does not concern the Liberal Party. It is pretty shocking. When the Liberals found out that a Liberal candidate might have been funded by the Chinese Communist regime, they did nothing and said nothing. They let him get elected. When a Conservative candidate like my friend Kenny Chiu was defeated in the election, presumably because the Chinese Communist regime financed his defeat, they did nothing either. It all worked out for them because he is no longer in the House to defend himself.

Then, when it happens to our Wellington—Halton Hills friend, no one says anything, even though his family was allegedly targeted. Frankly, that is not acceptable. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills is a sincere and respected individual. He and I are at odds over only one thing: My friend voted against the motion that recognized the Quebec nation. We will not go down that road. He and I still have to have a conversation on that.

Let us remember one thing. We were elected. We were trusted. One of the first things we were elected to do is to uphold democracy and institutions in our country, and to defend democracy, freedom and our democratic institutions. Right now, we need an independent public inquiry because this government is not getting the job done.

• (2245)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his work. It is a pleasure to work with him on the matter of Uyghurs' rights and other important human rights issues.

[English]

It is important to underline how the threats that were made against the member for Wellington—Halton Hills followed the leadership he showed in recognizing the Uyghur genocide issue. The fact is that Canada's Parliament was the first in the world to pass this motion. In a way, this is a recognition of how important that moment was in catalyzing the global response. It was a proposal vote that had such an impact on the discussion that it catalyzed some of these responses and threats. However, the government still has not been willing to take the step of recognizing that.

Does the member think that now would be a good time for the government to recognize the importance of this issue and recognize the Uyghur genocide?

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for his question. I work with him on a lot of files. I know that he does meaningful work on those files. He is very organized and easy to work with.

He makes an excellent suggestion. Unfortunately, I have to tell my colleague that we have already seen how the government reacts when we ask it to stand up and act courageously on human rights issues.

I agree with my colleague that this would be a good time. It is time for the government to show that it is capable of doing something. Unfortunately, I have some bad news for my colleague. It is not going to happen. The government is not going to just suddenly find some courage hidden away in its backpack today.

I am sorry. We can ask the government, but it is not going to happen.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, as a member of PROC, I really look forward to getting this in front of us so we can do the important work that needs to be done to honour this member's privilege in this place.

I am curious about whether the member could speak a bit to this: A lot of people are calling my office who are worried that this discussion around foreign interference is becoming too politicized and not really focusing on the core issue. Of course, what Canadians want to know is that they can trust their institutions and that there are actually processes in place to address this issue. Does the member agree with me and the NDP that calling a public inquiry will help take it out of this political institution and put it in a place that can be accountable to all Canadians.

• (2250)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, that is another excellent question. We are fortunate this evening.

I think that the Bloc Québécois shares the same position as the NDP. We like working hand in hand with our NDP friends. There needs to be an independent public inquiry. This would completely depoliticize the debate since this inquiry would be independent.

Appointing someone who was a director of the PM's father's foundation is not going to make the public believe in what we are doing. I think it is a mistake. There needs to be an independent public inquiry.

I have had discussions with my Tibetan friends, with my Uyghur friends, with my Hong Kong friends, and they all tell me that they want this inquiry.

Can we listen to the minorities who are the primary victims of this Chinese Communist regime and ensure that this inquiry is launched?

[English]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean for his friendship. Even though he is a sovereigntist Quebecker, I can say that I worked with him on the Special Committee on Afghanistan and the immigration committee, and it is fun to work with him.

He mentioned Kenny Chiu. I want to correct him, through you, to say that the fellow who was elected in Steveston—Richmond East was born in that riding, worked hard in that riding and raised money on his own. I can say that he is a deserving candidate; the people of Steveston—Richmond East voted for him to be here, and that is why he is here.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker. I love my colleague. I understand his question. He just demonstrated why we need an independent public inquiry.

Yes, he might be a good guy, but Kenny Chiu was also a good guy, and we do not know what happened because we are unable to shed light on the situation.

My hon. colleague's question comes back to what we have been saying from the outset along with the Conservatives and the NDP. We need to have an independent public inquiry to clear the names of several people, but also to understand what happened so it never happens again.

[English]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Red Deer—Mountain View.

Today, we are discussing this question of privilege. It is interesting that we use this term around privilege because the privilege that we speak of is for a member of this place to exist and do his job without any fear or intimidation from a foreign entity. That is the question of privilege. That seems like something we should be able to take for granted, something that we should just be able to count on, day in and day out, not only as members of this place but as members of the general Canadian public. Why should we be able to count on that? Why should that be our reality? It is because we belong to the country of Canada.

As citizens of this fine country, we should have a government in place that prioritizes the safety and security of Canadians. Why? Because the safety and security of Canadians is the foremost job of any government, no matter its political stripe. If it does not keep its citizens safe, if it does not secure our borders, which are not just land borders but borders as in the security and safety of persons, we have little else as a country.

Without safety and security being achieved, we are not able to pursue economic well-being or prosperity. We are not able to dream of a vibrant future and what is possible. We are not able to implement environmental policies. Without the very basics of safety and security it is impossible to be the prosperous nation that it should be. It is interesting that we are talking about this as if it is a privilege when in fact the safety and security of members of this place and all Canadians should simply be their right based on citizenship.

Privilege

What prompted this debate today? It is because a member of this House, a colleague, has come under fear and intimidation from Beijing. We do not know about this because the government informed this member of Parliament, though it knew about it. We know about this because of a journalist who released the story. The journalist knew about it because of a brave whistle-blower who released CSIS documents into the hands of the media, and from the media into the public. That is what has allowed us to become aware of this.

As a side note what is interesting to me is that the Liberals just met this last weekend to talk about policy at a policy convention. During that convention they put forward a policy that would require journalists to give up their sources in order to be published online. If journalists chose not to give up their sources then they would not be publishable. That is a direct attack on the freedom of the press. That is a direct attack on journalistic independence. That is a direct attack, therefore, on Canadians because Canadians rely on journalists to tell stories. They rely on journalists to tell the truth, to reveal things that the government might want to hide or that other corrupt actors in this country might not want Canadians to know. When the government wants to hinder the ability of journalists to tell the stories that need to be told, that is very disconcerting not only to me as a member of this place but to Canadians at large because it concerns their freedom, their ability to access information that is then put at stake.

We are here today because we found out that this colleague of mine, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, was the target of intimidation tactics and threats, as well as his family. These attacks came from Beijing. We know that the Prime Minister knew about this two years ago. We know that because intelligence documents told us that, yet the Prime Minister chose to remain silent and did not give the member a heads-up. When did the member find out? The member just found out about a week ago, when a journalist gave him a call wanting him to comment on this news. We can imagine how shocked my colleague was finding this out from a journalist. As time has gone on, more of the story has been revealed. The reality is that we know this is not the whole of the story. We know that this is actually only one part of Beijing's larger interference plan, with silence and inaction by the government.

● (2255)

With regard to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, what might be the reason Beijing would target him? Well, we suspect it is because of a position he took on a motion that declared the Chinese government's attack against the Uyghur people, a minority group in China, a genocide. Members of this place voted for that motion, with the exception of cabinet. Cabinet stayed silent; they stayed mum. I wonder why they failed to take a stand for this repressed group.

Privilege

When I say “repressed”, I do not mean a bit hard done by. When I talk about the Uyghur people of China, I am talking about a minority group that essentially lives in enslavement. They live in prison camps. I am talking about a group whose human spirit the Chinese government is looking to destroy. I am talking about a group that is forced into mass sterilization. That is genocide. I am talking about a group whose children are separated from their families. I am talking about a group that is physically tortured, mentally tortured and sexually abused. Women are raped. I am talking about all of this being done at the hands of Beijing while these individuals are herded like cattle in these concentration camps, these encampments.

This place debated this motion, and out of that, my colleague, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, took a very strong stance calling this oppression against the Uyghur people what it is: a genocide. Now, of course, from there these threats ensued.

Again, I come back to the fact that the government knew for two years that this was happening and said nothing. However, it gets worse, because it is not just my colleague who came under this pressure or these threats from Beijing. We know that many Canadians reported coming under similar sorts of threats.

We also know that Beijing donated \$144,000 to the Trudeau Foundation. We know that the Prime Minister's brother, Mr. Alexandre Trudeau, to be clear, was the one who signed off on that donation, yet the Prime Minister claims to have no affiliation whatsoever.

Further to that, we know that the Prime Minister was actually briefed through our intelligence agency in this country with regard to Beijing's interference in our 2019 and 2021 elections. We know that money was filtered illegally from Beijing businesses into Liberal campaigns in Canada. We know, again based on CSIS documents, that it was the intent of the Beijing government to make sure the Liberals won the election.

I wonder why they would be silent. I wonder why they would do nothing. After all, it is the government's responsibility to keep Canadians safe and secure. However, members sat on their hands. Perhaps it was a \$144,000 donation to the Trudeau Foundation. Perhaps it was the fact that Beijing was funnelling money into campaigns, hiring interns and putting them in campaign offices. Perhaps it was because Beijing was actively working to suppress candidates from other parties. Perhaps that is why the government forgot its first promise, which is to keep Canadians safe and secure and to make sure that the citizens of this great country are respected and that our democracy is upheld. Perhaps it was simply worth a piece of silver.

• (2300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and her awareness of such a fundamental issue.

I have asked this question several times today, but it is absolutely fundamental for me. As a member of Parliament, what aspect affects her work? Does she feel completely capable and independent

to make decisions, or does she feel some pressure and a threat to her independence and her ability to make decisions?

What would happen if she or members of her family received such threats? Are we adequately protected?

Is the government doing enough, or should we have an independent public inquiry to make sure that we put in place the necessary framework to allow us to do our jobs properly?

[*English*]

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, while I appreciate the member's question, I will just take the attention off of me because it is not about me. It is about Canadians. It is about the responsibility of the government to keep Canadians safe and secure. That is the foremost job of the government. That is prime.

The government has failed to do that by allowing Beijing to intimidate not only a member of this place but also many Canadians across the country. Furthermore, to intervene in our election process is absolutely wrong and should never be permitted.

The larger question here is what Canadians deserve, and Canadians deserve a public inquiry.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I appreciate that the hon. member shares the NDP's view that a public inquiry is absolutely necessary. I do have one question, though.

I know transparency is super important, but one other way to protect our democracy is to make sure that we have a sense of national security. I wonder if the member could share with us how we could make sure that there is a fine balance between protecting our democracy and making sure there is a good sense of national security without sharing too much information that protects us.

• (2305)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I genuinely appreciate the question. I think it is a very good one.

There is this balance between protecting individuals' privacy and access to information and data ownership. Those are all definitely very important questions. There is also this question around safety, security and transparency.

I think what is at stake here is not necessarily the individual's privacy. Rather, we are asking for there to be greater transparency around what happened. Why is it that the government was aware, for more than two years, that there were threats being made against my colleague? Why is it that the government knew there was interference from Beijing in the 2019 and 2021 elections and did nothing?

We know that the Prime Minister had access to those documents, and we know, based on the testimony of his chief of staff, that he reads everything that he is given. We have no other conclusion to draw than the fact that the Prime Minister had the documents, read the documents and did nothing. Canadians deserve better.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate that my colleague put an emphasis on the reason why the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was threatened. He was threatened because of his leadership in standing with victims of genocide.

Through the motion that he put forward, the motion that was adopted unanimously, though with cabinet abstaining, Canada's legislature was the first in the world, but it started a global movement of other legislatures recognizing the Uyghur genocide. This was a consequential moment of leadership for that member and this Parliament, in spite of the inaction of the government. The threats this member has faced underlines just how consequential that moment was.

I want to thank the member for raising that issue and just invite her to add additional measures, perhaps, that the House needs to take and the government needs to take, to stand with the Uyghur people. The House has spoken on this multiple times, but the government has been far behind.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, my colleague highlighted something really important and that is that the motion that was at hand had to do with calling what is happening to the Uyghur people within China, at the hands of Beijing, a genocide. This place passed a motion to that effect, which means the government has a responsibility to act, and it has not done so yet.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Lethbridge for sharing her time with me and, of course, for her great words.

I would like to take some time this evening to comment on the point of privilege from my colleague, the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. Let me start by expressing, not just for this House but for all Canadians, the admiration that I have for the hon. member. There is no finer gentleman to have ever graced these halls.

Last week, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills spoke in this House about the intimidation tactics of the People's Republic of China and how these tactics are being deployed against many Canadians of Chinese descent in diaspora communities across the country. That motion went further, emphasizing that such tactics have been widely reported and well established through House of Commons committee testimony. It was also reported by Canada's security establishments that families of members of Parliament had been subjected to an intimidation campaign orchestrated by various actors out of Beijing's consulate in Toronto.

The hon. member articulated the need to create a foreign agent registry, similar to the registries of Australia and the United States of America. Of course, with the myriad of intimidation infractions that the committee had heard about during previous elections, the member discussed the establishment of a national public inquiry on the matter of election interference in the name of Canadian sovereignty.

The next main point related to the unbelievable development that the People's Republic of China was operating police stations here on Canadian soil. The realization that this was only considered because we were alerted by the Americans does not really give us a

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strong sense that the Liberal government is on top of things. The final point was the need to expel all the diplomats from the People's Republic of China who were responsible for, and involved in, these affronts to Canadian democracy.

Much has been said of the interactions and interventions made by senior members of the Liberal Party in their attempt to sweep a serious international transgression under the rug once again. To put blame on the member for Wellington—Halton Hills was the lowest of lows. However, to his credit, at least one Liberal recognized that his usual partisanship was offside and apologized to the member. That was the member for Kingston and the Islands.

My educational background is in mathematics, science and agriculture. China's contribution to mathematics, science, engineering and health over the last 3,000 years has been phenomenal. Sadly, the 112 years that have elapsed since the creation of the PRC during the Chinese Revolution in 1911, and the subsequent fall to Communism of mainland China in 1949, have placed an iron grip on the once-proud Chinese people.

This closed society has taken away so many remnants of the past. Whether it was an array of binomial coefficients, the standard conversion of rotary and longitudinal motion, or ploughshares of malleable cast iron, China was the first of firsts. However, over the centuries, these contributions have become as much a surprise to the Chinese people as they are to westerners. The reason I mention this is that there is a definite distinction between the genius of the people of China and the oppressive Communist regime of the People's Republic of China.

How do we deal with a dictatorship that has used its massive authoritarian rule over its own people and then chooses to use the same tactics on other foreign nations? My feeling is that we stand up to them and do not back down. We have seen the consequences of capitulation around the world, whether they involve taking over such infrastructure as ports, exploiting foreign natural resources using child or slave labour, or de-engineering patented products to compete against original designers.

Such actions should not be rewarded. However, because China supplies us with many products, we tend to turn a blind eye to these transgressions. The most serious of these is their mocking of environmental standards as they flood the world with products; countries like Canada give them a pass while, sadly, treating them like a poor country cousin in need of charity. This current action is but one more transgression to which the free world must react.

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• (2310)

We now know that CSIS was aware two years ago that family members of the member for Wellington—Halton Hills were being targeted by the Chinese Communist government because of his role as a member of Parliament. We know that there were election irregularities where members of the Chinese diaspora were being targeted and told not to vote for particular candidates during the last federal election. I know an amazing entrepreneur and community advocate of Chinese descent who was targeted in the last municipal election in my riding of Red Deer—Mountain View, where lies and disinformation were commonplace. It is a real problem.

Why must we address the actions against our esteemed colleague as a question of privilege? If we are weak when it comes to our actions, this will never end. Any one of us could be subject to these tactics. The results would be the silencing of the voice of the people. If our government does not take this seriously and chooses to minimize these actions because it has an affinity for the present Chinese government, whether out of admiration or fear of reprisal, then this truly becomes a question of privilege.

The Prime Minister, his cabinet and his Liberal caucus all need to take stock of their actions. The Prime Minister and cabinet chose to abstain on the question of Uyghur genocide by the Chinese government. He lectures Canadians as to the bar that the term “genocide” must reach to be accepted internationally while seeing no problem using such terminology against our own ancestors. Is that the real reason for abstaining, or was it fear of reprisal from a Chinese government that had helped fund certain pet Liberal projects? If the government is in any way compromised and is not taking actions because of that, we also have a serious problem.

Two years after the government became aware of an MP and his family being targeted, it took a full week for the government to do the bare minimum and do what it should have done long ago. This Beijing operative should have been ejected when his intimidation actions became known to the government. For the government to rise and oppose the Conservative motion that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills presented perhaps shows its unserious commitment to our democracy. This must never happen again.

• (2315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I mentioned earlier that I think this is a really important debate. The situation is quite serious.

There was an article in the Journal de Montréal a few weeks ago about the election of a city councillor in Brossard who may have been assisted by individuals working for the Chinese state. Those individuals were sending messages in Mandarin on the WeChat platform controlled by the Chinese state to people in Brossard's Chinese community. Their candidate was elected. The mayor of Brossard has launched an investigation, and it has been documented in the newspaper. This is something that happened in Canada.

The Special Committee on the Canada–People's Republic of China Relationship heard from representatives of Hong Kong Watch. They have been documenting this kind of Chinese state interference in municipal and provincial elections for 30 years. It has yet to be

proven, but they suspect it is happening in federal elections as well. This is a very serious matter.

What we have seen over the last few weeks and months could be just the tip of the iceberg. I am a bit disappointed that our Liberal friends are completely absent from tonight's debate.

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, the discussion we are having is simply about how the government has reacted to the fact that a member of Parliament has been pointed out and his family has been forced to suffer. However, it is not just members of Parliament. If we allow that to continue to happen, it makes it easier for the regime to continue some of the outrageous things it is doing at the provincial level and the municipal level.

I saw some of the documentation being presented around the small town of this individual, and basically it was all lies. Fortunately he topped the polls, but the point was that nobody believed that any of it was true. That is one of the things we all have to be aware of. It is so important. Folks like the gentleman I am speaking of have contributed so much to our country, and they want to do that and be away from the dictatorship and oppressiveness of the Chinese Communist regime.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, since the member mentioned the foreign agent registries in Australia and the U.S., I wonder how he would consider those registries to be effective in protecting our national security and to make sure these registries are effective in informing Canadians about lobbying efforts by foreign agents.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, that is so important. If someone who works for a small community organization wants to lobby the government, the person has to register. To think that someone might be on our soil from another country and could have come without any type of scrutiny is just unreasonable.

We see a model. We see what Australia has. We understand that the United States also has this. Australia is very close to China, and it sees a lot of the problems and issues that are associated with that. The U.S. has constantly been back and forth, especially on some of the things I have mentioned as far as patents are concerned, and it takes this rather seriously. I think that is the least we can do.

• (2320)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time.

This is a critically important debate. We are debating a question of privilege, which means that we are debating an instance in which the rights and privileges, and the ability of a member or members of this Parliament to do their job, were threatened.

In particular, we are dealing with a situation where, incredibly, a member of Canada's Parliament and his family were threatened by a foreign government. We have to contend with the reality that a member of Parliament was threatened by a foreign government, the People's Republic of China, Beijing's Communist Party. Why was he threatened? He was threatened because he stood with victims of the Uyghur genocide.

As the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, this is deeply personal for me. I grew up hearing stories from my grandmother not only about the persecution she and her family faced, but also about the stories of politicians, everyday leaders, church leaders and everyday people in Germany and throughout the world who were willing to stand with her and stand with other victims of that genocide. Their courageous witness for justice, for universal human dignity, is part of what contributed to my grandmother surviving the war, and to me being alive today and able to give this speech.

I honour and recognize the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for, just like courageous those heroes of the past, being willing to stand with victims of genocide in our own day and bearing the costs of that. He has faced threats. He has faced intimidation from the government of China, a loss that I think is challenging for all of us to understand. There is now an inability, for instance, to safely visit his ancestral homeland and show it to his family. These are real sacrifices, and the member has shown significant courage in taking this stand.

The fact that the government of a foreign state would presume to threaten a member of Parliament here in Canada should underline the new reality we are facing in the world today. It is the reality, sadly, of a new kind of cold war where we have fierce ideological, economic and other forms of strategic competition between a free democratic bloc, on the one hand, and a group of autocratic revisionist powers that seek to reverse and undermine the international rules-based order on the other. In particular, it seeks to overturn the idea that borders should be set through agreement and through the sovereign will of the people, not by force.

These revisionist powers seek to overturn that long-standing consensus. They do not have any respect for national sovereignty, which is why they presume to not only dictate other countries, such as in the case of Russia's actions to invade Ukraine and the cases of the PRC's action to threaten Taiwan and the sovereignty of various other countries in the area, but also intervene and try to stealthily control and direct our institutions here. This is the reality of the world today. It is one of intense strategic competition that I think could be appropriately and honestly described as a new kind of cold war.

The outcome of this competition between free democratic values and this emerging authoritarian revisionist bloc is not certain. We cannot presume the triumph of the values of democracy and liberty. We must struggle, work hard and make the sacrifices necessary to preserve our way of life and spread the cause of freedom to expand the space of freedom to more people around the world. This is something we can hope for, but we cannot presume will happen unless we fully commit ourselves individually and collectively to the pursuit of this end.

Privilege

I believe the system of free democracy is superior. It harnesses the energies and the creativity of more people and it will prevail under the right circumstances. A critical part of that circumstance is that we summon the courage required to meet the challenge.

I want to speak specifically tonight to the virtue of courage. Courage, quite simply, is the virtue of being willing to risk important and valuable things in pursuit of greater things, in pursuit of things that are good, true and beautiful. It is a willingness to risk our own safety, security, comfort or economic well-being to pursue greater and more important goods. That is the preservation of democracy and of liberty, and a system that recognizes universal human rights and the rule of law. It requires courage and a willingness to sacrifice, if we are going to prevail in the midst of this.

● (2325)

This story of what happened with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, with the threats he faced and the stance he has taken, is about courage. It is about a contrast in courage, sadly, between the stand he took and the positions the government has taken.

The member, in working with other parties, especially other opposition parties, put forward a motion to recognize the Uyghur genocide. It was telling the simple truth that Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in China are victims of an ongoing genocide. That motion passed because the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, all members of the opposition and some members of the government were prepared to stand up and say it was true and that Canada has obligations under the genocide convention to act for and stand with victims of this genocide. Cabinet did not show the necessary courage. It showed cowardice. Its members remained in their seats and abstained on that all-important vote.

That took courage, because it involved sacrifice. It led directly to threats made against the member and his family, but it also led to legislatures around the world following Canada's example and recognizing this genocide. It was a crucial step in helping people everywhere understand what the CCP is really all about and what its agenda is: The CCP is using the latest technology to inflict a campaign of genocide against an ethnic and religious minority.

That vote was a crucial moment. It took courage and it had consequences: challenging consequences for the member and his family, but positive consequences in terms of advancing awareness and action in response to the still ongoing Uyghur genocide.

I think the response by the government to the threat also tells an important story about courage and cowardice. Because the government did not act, the member was not informed, and when he was informed this past week, when the information was out on the news, the response from the government was to say that it cannot take certain actions, or that it at least has to be very careful to take certain actions because there might be retaliation.

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It is the old logic of appeasement, the logic of Neville Chamberlain, to say we do not want to annoy our adversaries in this global reality of competition because they might do things back to us. We will therefore tolerate such outrages as threats to members of Parliament, and we will not take action in response.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs at committee said that we have to consider this very carefully because China might retaliate. We should have the courage to say it is a fundamental point for us here in Canada that we will not tolerate threats made against our citizens, whether or not they are members of Parliament, and we will expel diplomats who engage in that behaviour, period, full stop. That takes courage. That takes a willingness of the government to draw a line. If this was a government of courage, we would not have gotten this far in terms of the vulnerability to these threats.

If the government had courage, we would have had our government recognize the Uyghur genocide. We would have taken strong measures to combat foreign interference, including bringing in a foreign agent registry. We would have taken those measures years ago. However, the government, in a pretense of sophistication, says it cannot do that because we have to think about it carefully and they might retaliate and so forth.

This is fundamentally the logic of weakness, and I think it is so important for us to reflect on this issue of courage and what strength or weakness looks like in the challenge in front of us. I think we will face in the years ahead an ongoing competition between free democracies and revisionist authoritarian powers. We can win this struggle if we collectively have the kind of courage that has been shown by my colleague on this side, and if we have the kind of courage to say we will make the sacrifices required, we will stand up for what is right, we will tell the truth about genocide, we will protect our country and we will protect our citizens.

• (2330)

If we have, collectively, the courage to take that stand and to make the sacrifices associated with it, we will preserve freedom and democracy for generations to come. If we do not, if we buy into the logic of appeasement that refuses to act and that is calcified in faux sophistication, then we will not prevail.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like him to talk about how he sees the attack on our democracy. It is something that I keep coming back to but that is essential for me.

Does my colleague see a threat? What can we do? Has he been pressured? Since it is dangerous to remain silent, how can we talk about this to ensure that precedents are not set?

We are talking about China right now, but it could be any other country. Russia is allegedly responsible for interfering in elections in the United States. Pretty much all of us have been banned from visiting Russia.

If we were the ones being threatened, how would we react? How would the member react?

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, in terms of ensuring that these things do not happen again, we have to recognize the reality that we are going to see attempts at this kind of interference. We are going to see interference in the lives of members of Parliament, but also in the lives of other figures in our society, such as elite figures, university officials, people at other levels of government and everyday citizens.

We are going to continue to see these kinds of events, because this is the new reality. It is a reality in which there is intensified competition, but also a much higher degree of mutual penetration, between the different blocs than existed in the last Cold War. We are going to see these challenges intensify, so what do we do in response to that?

We need to undertake many of the measures that have been proposed, and many more, to make our societies stronger and more resilient against these kinds of threats. It is not just a matter of policy. There are policy changes that are required, the foreign influence registry and others, but we need to build a kind of social mentality that is resilient to these kinds of threats.

On the issue of misinformation, for example, government regulation is not the solution to misinformation. The solution is an informed, engaged and aware citizenry where the government is being frank and honest about those kinds of interference. It is something we all need to collectively respond to together.

We are going to continue to see these threats. We are going to have the struggle. This is a critical challenge that Parliament must meet in the days ahead, and we can meet it together, but the government has to step up and lead.

The other thing that is frustrating is that we hear members of the government complain about partisanship, yet they are doing nothing. It is our job to challenge them to take action, and when they take action, we will celebrate that action, absolutely. It was far too late, but it was a small step in the right direction to declare the diplomat in question *persona non grata*, but there are so many more steps that are required.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's very thorough speech causes all of us to take time to reflect and think about the seriousness of the matter we are facing right now, and also about the absolute critical importance of Canada to do everything it can to restore its place on the international stage. What I mean by that is so that our allies have confidence in dealing with us as it relates to security matters, and so that we will be invited back to those key tables of influence.

I wonder if the hon. member would like to share some thoughts on the importance of re-establishing our credibility as it relates to protecting our sovereignty and our security.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, there have been many failures from the government in defending our security, as this debate demonstrates. The evidence is there in terms of how our stature in the world has not been helped by the government; however, we should not be looking at our stature in the world as an end in and of itself. We should be recognizing how strengthening our real contribution to the advancement of freedom of democracy is going to both build our stature but also advance and protect our security.

What jumps out at me most in this context is the signing of the AUKUS agreement. The United States, the U.K. and Australia are coming together and saying that they are going to have an intelligence-sharing agreement, where they are going to work together and collaborate. It is great for them to be collaborating, but that intelligence sharing is supposed to be happening at the Five Eyes. We have three of the Five Eyes coming together, apart from the other two.

This should raise important questions for Canada. Why is Canada not at that table? Why is Canada not engaged in these important discussions? Why is Canada not more engaged with the Quad? Again, it is not engagement as an end in and of itself, but as a means to effectively standing up for our democratic values. The government's focus in the world has been trying to send signals and look good, but not to actually achieve concrete results, and it shows.

● (2335)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight in the House once again to represent the people of the North Okanagan—Shuswap.

I will also state that it is even more of an honour to rise on this occasion to speak on the important ruling of the matter of privilege raised by my colleague, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. In this ruling, the Speaker found a prima facie case of breach of privilege. It is an honour to stand here tonight and speak to defending our democracy in Canada, for Canada and for freedom and democracy everywhere.

I do not know if anyone in the House ever takes for granted the significance of our roles here to carry out the business of one of the freest countries in the world. I know that I never take it for granted; what an honour it is to defend our freedoms. They are the very reason we are here as elected representatives of the common people, freely elected through a democratic process and not appointed by a dictatorship.

We are here as elected representatives because the voters in our communities have entrusted us to carry out the democratic process without undue influence of money, undue influence of power and, especially, inappropriate influence or threats to our families. However, that is why we are here tonight, late at night, debating a point of privilege raised by one of us. A fellow parliamentarian was fairly elected through our democratic process, and this member has learned of alleged attempted influence on him through his family.

There was a report in *The Globe and Mail* on May 1. It claimed that there were CSIS documents from 2021 stating that the Communist government of China sees Canada as a prime target for interference. That report also stated that the family of the Conserva-

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tive MP for Wellington—Halton Hills was targeted by a Chinese diplomat, Zhao Wei, because of how the hon. member had voted on a motion in the House.

The Prime Minister claimed that the note did not leave the CSIS office; top security officials have confirmed that this claim is false. The note was widely dispersed among government departments and the Prime Minister's national security adviser. In addition, *The Canadian Press* published a story earlier this week saying that, despite what the Minister of Public Safety claims, Chinese police stations are still operating in Quebec.

What is most troubling about this situation is that we, as elected members, continued to come to the House to work in our democratic process for almost two years after CSIS raised the alert about this foreign attack on our democracy. We believed that, in a democratic country, we were safe from intimidation as elected members. From this report and subsequent releases, we learned that the threats and intimidation occurred almost two years ago, and yet the member directly affected was not informed until he learned of it in the news, nor were the remainder of parliamentarians alerted to the threat.

These alleged threats to the family of a member do more than just influencing one member of the House. Any attack on one member is an attack on all members of the House, as well as an attack on the rule of law and on Canada's democracy overall.

I cannot imagine the stress that the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills must be going through knowing what has happened. Family is our sanctity. It should always be the reason for doing what is right. It should never be the reason for feeling threatened or pressured into doing something we know is wrong.

It has been two years since the government became aware that the MP and his family were being targeted by the regime in Beijing, and a full week after the information became public. We have learned now that the government has finally made the decision that should have been made on the day it found out about this attack on a member of the House of Commons.

● (2340)

It is unacceptable that the government has known that an MP and his family had been targeted by the Communist regime in Beijing for two years and it did not inform the member or the members in this House about the threats posed to that member's family. It is even further unacceptable that the government continued to provide diplomatic immunity for an agent of Beijing for two years after learning he was using his position to harass Canadians and their families.

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Chinese Canadians and all Canadians across the country deserve to know that the government takes their safety and security seriously. While the government has finally taken action against the diplomat who threatened the member of Parliament, it has failed to shut down Beijing's police stations operating in Canada and failed to protect members of the community from harassment and intimidation. We know the government is slow to respond to threats to our security, and this must change. It took it years to respond to concern over Huawei's influence on the 5G network, something our allies had acted upon much earlier. The government lagged behind and, no doubt, caused concerns for our allies' joint security because of Canada's failure to act.

The fact that this interference ever occurred and it took this long to take action is proof of the government's incompetence in fulfilling its basic responsibility to protect Canadians. The government must take the other steps that the House voted on this week, including a public inquiry that will lay out what the government knew about Beijing's interference in our democratic process. This is the bare minimum it must do in order to restore any amount of trust from Canadians of any and all races, ethnic backgrounds, religions and spiritual beliefs so they will be free from undue foreign government interference. I fear for what could happen to us as Canadians and freedom across the world should the government fail to act.

It is very late and there may not be many people in this country watching at home right now, but my hope is that Canadians across the country will be watching and listening and will hold the government accountable, especially its leadership, for its actions and especially its inaction on issues like this that threaten Canada's security and the freedoms that people from around the world migrate to and aspire to. My hope is that Canadians and people around the world will be watching and will hold the government accountable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, indeed, it is late, but it is never too late to talk about issues as serious as this. What I have wanted to know since the start of this whole thing is how seriously is the Liberal government in power taking this issue. If we look at the measures this government has taken from the start, they coincided with the release of new information in the media every time.

The Liberals have known things for years, but, as long it does not end up in the papers, they do nothing. To me, that is not taking things seriously. It may even be an attempt to cover things up.

My question is simple. Does my colleague not believe that an independent public inquiry would shed light on all of this and that this issue will finally be taken seriously?

• (2345)

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, the question is whether the government should take this issue seriously. Very much so, it should take this seriously. It concerns me, as a member of Parliament, that as this debate continues, we see members on the government side smirking and chuckling about the debate that is happening here. It is shameful that Canadians and parliamentarians have to find out the truth through media stories and not be informed by the government.

Information was provided to the government about members who have had their families threatened, and yet the government withheld that information for almost two years, until it came out publicly and, finally, the government was caught once again trying to hide its corruption.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, I note the seriousness of the subject we are tackling here this evening. Having this happen to one of our colleagues, a member of this House, has sent shockwaves throughout the country and among fellow parliamentarians.

The fact is that there was a delay in the response, and I believe others around the world are looking at Canada's response to this and saying they do not know how seriously the government is taking it. They are asking why it took so long to make things right and deal with things properly.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has some comments related to the response and how long it took once we knew these things and they came to light?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question about why it took so long for the government to respond.

We can only speculate about that. If I was to speculate, I would say the government was hoping that it could be hidden and covered up and that nobody would expose it. It took two years for it to come out in the media, and it was finally exposed. That is why we are only just hearing about it and debating it now.

That is speculation, but I believe that the hope on the other side that it would never come to light is why it has taken this long for any action to be taken.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, one point I want to add as more of a comment is that with critical G7 meetings coming up in Japan, I think it is very important for free democracies to work together on a coordinated response to transnational repression. That includes us learning from our allies by implementing measures such as the foreign influence registry. It also includes having a coordinated approach among allies on combatting forced labour in our supply chains. However, especially on this issue of protecting free democracies from foreign infiltration, I think we have a lot to learn from like-minded partners. It is very important that this is a priority on the agenda in those upcoming meetings.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Speaker, certainly we can learn from other countries, but hopefully we are not learning from dictatorships. Hopefully we can learn from democracies around the world, from other countries that are putting a spotlight and close eye on the wrongdoings of dictatorships like that of the Communist Party of China. Let us keep Canada free and keep Canadians feeling safe and secure in their own country.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. There being no further members rising for debate, pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion in relation to the breach of privilege in the name of the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills now before the House.

• (2350)

[*English*]

The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 10, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

We have a point of order from the hon. Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

Good night, everybody.

(The House adjourned at 11:51 p.m.)

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