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CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 217

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to section 11 of the Lobbying Act, the report of the Commissioner of Lobbying for the fiscal year ended March 31.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 13 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

ENHANCING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ACT

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-52, An Act to enact the Air Transportation Accountability Act and to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Canada Marine Act.

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of tabling nine reports from the very active Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

As members know, parliamentary diplomacy is extraordinarily important, particularly with our largest ally. I want to commend all of the members who participated in this extraordinary work over the last year.

The first report I will be tabling is a report on the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary congressional visit in Washington from May 23 to 26.

The second report pertains to the congressional visit to Washington from February 6 to 9.

The third report is on the congressional visit to Washington from September 12 to 15, 2022.

The fourth report is the National Governors Association annual summer meeting in Portland, Maine, from July 13 to 15.

The fifth report is on the Council of State Governments national conference in Hawaii from December 7 to 10, 2022, which was one of my favourites.

The sixth report is on the annual legislative summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures in Denver, Colorado, from August 1 to 3, 2022.

The seventh report is on the 76th annual meeting of the Council of State Governments Southern Legislative Conference in Oklahoma, from July 9 to 13, 2022.

The eighth report is on the 31st Pacific North West Economic Region annual summit in Calgary from July 24 to 27, 2022.

Finally, the ninth report is for the Council of State Governments Western Legislative Conference annual meeting in Boise, Idaho, from July 19 to 22, 2022.

I thank members for their patience. As I said earlier, these reports represent extraordinary work by members in this House and the Senate as well. The U.S. is our most important ally, and parliamentary diplomacy is never more valuable than it has been in these exercises.

Routine Proceedings

● (1005)

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, entitled “The Government of Canada's Planned Phase-Out of Fossil Fuel Subsidies and of Public Financing of the Fossil Fuel Sector”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a dissenting opinion to present from the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in response to the committee's report, “The Government of Canada's Planned Phase-Out of Fossil Fuel Subsidies and of Public Financing of the Fossil Fuel Sector”.

It is the Conservative members of this committee's belief that the report falls short in a number of critical areas, starting with the lack of a definition for what a fossil fuel subsidy is. Climate challenges must be addressed using concrete solutions, not ideological platitudes, and our dissenting opinion outlines some of our thoughts on the matter. However, I believe the summary of this report would be best summed up by a quote from somebody who is a bit ironic for a Conservative to quote on this matter, former Liberal insider and environment minister Catherine McKenna. She said as she was leaving office, “we eliminated all of the fossil fuel subsidies at the federal level”.

It is an honour to table this dissenting opinion on behalf of members of the Conservative Party.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled “The State of Canada's Access to Information System”.

While I am on my feet, I want to thank the members who participated in this report and the witnesses. I also want to thank Nancy Vohl, the clerk, and the analysts, Sabrina Charland and Alexandra Savoie, for their work on this.

I hope this report reflects the seriousness of the current state of the access to information system. The recommendations in this report are meant and designed to fix what is a broken system.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA SHIPPING ACT, 2001

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill

C-346, An Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 (certificate of competency).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing this bill today for workers and employers in the marine industry, a key industry in the Lower St. Lawrence and many other parts of Quebec and Canada that provides employment for many people and is a huge part of our daily lives.

Today, the industry is facing a serious labour shortage. Vacant positions are not being filled, which weakens the whole supply chain. Given that just one missing crew member can bring an entire vessel's operations to a standstill, it is vital that we do everything in our power to ensure that we have new people to fill those positions in the marine industry and in our supply chains that depend on it. The government already held consultations in that regard in the spring.

The bill that I am introducing today will be of real assistance to the government. It is a ready-made bill that proposes real action to solve a real and immediate problem that the government is already aware of. I therefore invite the government and all members of the House to set partisanship aside and accept the help that I am offering today so that we can work together, help, support and ensure the sustainability of our marine industry. Let us pass this bill quickly to save our marine industry and ensure that it has the labour force it needs.

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

* * *

● (1010)

[English]

TRANS CANADA TRAIL DAY ACT

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce an Act to establish Trans Canada Trail Day.

She said: Mr. Speaker, the Trans Canada Trail is the world's longest trail, stretching over 28,000 kilometres from coast to coast, and four out of five Canadians live within 30 minutes of it. The trail was officially connected on August 26, 2017, after 25 years of work by countless Canadians to make it a reality. In recognition of that, this bill would establish the 26th day of August as Trans Canada Trail day.

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to orders of the day.

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 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.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1055)

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

(Division No. 389)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	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
Mathyssen	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Miller

Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh	Sorbara
Sousa	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
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Routine Proceedings

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Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Doherty	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Ellis	Epp
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Fortin
Gallant	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Martel	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Morrison

Government Orders

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Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shiple	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ONLINE NEWS ACT

BILL C-18—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the stage of consideration of Senate amendments to the bill; and

That, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration of the said stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or use the “raise hand” function so that the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

[*English*]

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, this bill deals with a very important topic, which is the sustainability of journalism in Canada. There have been many stakeholders from across the country who have expressed deep concerns, and I also note that, at various stages of the debate, there were many witnesses from different regions, different demographics, who participate in media in Canada who were not allowed to testify at committee.

My concern is that, if the government is curtailing debate on this without a chance for every member to speak to the amendments that the government is suggesting it either will or will not support, the voices of regional Canadians who are engaged in the media will not have a chance to be adequately debated in the House.

I am wondering, with the decline of local media in Canada, why the government is choosing to curtail debate on a bill that could, in fact, have some censorship provisions at this juncture.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is a reason why the bill is here in front of us, and that is because there is a huge power imbalance between the tech giants and local journalists. In the last 15 years, we have seen around 500 newsrooms close their doors: big and small; in cities and rural areas; English, French and different languages. That is hurting our democracy.

This bill is absolutely essential. It is essential that we move forward. We had the chance to debate it here in the House. We debated it in committee for a long time. We went to the Senate. It was debated in the Senate. It was debated in committee at the Senate. It had the chance to go there. It is now time for us to pass the bill.

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really do not like that they are imposing time allocation. I think it is an insult to democracy and parliamentary privilege.

That said, I do not agree with my Conservative colleague who said that people were not heard in committee when it studied Bill C-18. I think everyone spoke to that bill. The committee heard as many people as possible and we had ample time to debate the bill.

The bill was debated in the House and it was studied in the Senate. This week, the government is moving forward by imposing time allocation, and I find that deplorable. I would like to ask the minister if he believes that we could have dealt with Bill C-18 in the House this week without resorting to time allocation. Or, on the contrary, does he believe that the Conservatives would have done everything possible to drag things out to ensure that the bill, which they oppose, does not pass?

I deplore time allocation. Was it absolutely necessary to use it today? Could we have dealt with it this week in the normal course of debate?

Government Orders

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I will make an exception to the rule. I usually have kind words for my colleague. I still have very kind words for him, but the Bloc Québécois is being a little hypocritical. Bloc members never like time allocation, but they want to take credit when a bill is passed. They say that it is thanks to them that a bill is passed, and that they moved heaven and earth to do it. However, when it is time to vote for a bill to pass it, they hide. Let them show some backbone. Either they support it or they do not. It is one or the other.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, as my colleague from Drummond just mentioned, we had dozens and dozens of witnesses. Two of the key witnesses who came forward about Bill C-18 were from the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association and the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association. These newspapers, independent outlets right across Alberta and Saskatchewan, are the ones that cover cities and other places represented by half of the Conservative caucus, and they said Bill C-18 needs to be put in place, adopted as quickly as possible.

We have Alberta community newspapers and Saskatchewan community newspapers saying the bill needs to be brought in, and we have Conservative MPs who represent those ridings fighting tooth and nail to block this bill completely, refusing to allow it through. To me, that seems to be hypocrisy and a clear contradiction of what Conservative MPs should be defending, which is their communities' interests.

Why are the Conservatives blocking a bill that their community newspapers are calling for?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and his party for their incredible work on this bill. I thank the Bloc Québécois too, with the little exception here today. Its members did a good job too, because this bill is fundamental.

The question is a very important one, but I have no answer for it because I do not know why the Conservatives are blocking such an important bill. This bill is good for big cities and small communities, and for papers and radio stations across the country. Why is it? It is because big tech is getting all the money, as 80% of all advertising revenue is going to two companies: Google and Facebook. The Conservatives seem to be comfortable with that. They are super happy. They stand up for the tech giants all the time, instead of standing up for small papers and small community radio stations. They do not have the guts to stand up for local journalism. We will stand up for them.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, here we go again. I have supported time allocation in the past. The budget implementation act, for example, took us months to get through, and it got to the point where I felt it was appropriate to say that we were hearing the same speeches over and over again and that we should move on. I also just finished supporting moving to orders of the day, because I also recognize we are at a time when there are a lot of partisan antics going on here.

That being said, this is the fourth sitting day in a row when we are voting on limiting debate again. In this case, the Senate amendments came back last night. We heard one speech from the minister

and one from the official opposition, and now we are being told to limit debate again. Does the minister recognize the implications this approach has for our democracy?

• (1105)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, this bill is important for our democracy, because the media are disappearing. Almost 500 newsrooms have disappeared across the country: big ones and small ones; in cities and small communities; and in English, French and indigenous languages. So many have disappeared.

That is why it is urgent to move forward. This bill has been studied in the House, in committee, in the Senate and in the Senate committee. It has come back here and it is time we move on, because too many newsrooms have closed their doors. We need a solid, independent, non-partisan news system in our country. We need the tech giants to contribute. That is why it is so important to pass this bill now.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is not about a power imbalance but the refusal of the legacy media to innovate. It is not up against links, as Facebook and Google do not advertise newspaper links; rather, it is up against Kijiji, Craigslist and, in Petawawa, even Jennifer Layman's Forward Thinking, where everyone in the valley goes to advertise or find a job.

What this is really about is preventing news from getting to the wider population through the end result of not having news links on Facebook or Google. This means that Canadians do not get all the news that is going on.

Why does the minister want to stifle the debate on the ability of Canadians to learn what is going on in their own country? What do the Liberals have to hide?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, history will remember the Conservatives as those who stood up for tech giants and forgot about all the media outlets in the different regions, including the regions they represent.

Small media outlets from everywhere across the country, including in their ridings, have been coming to tell us that they are disappearing. Our bill will help those media outlets to survive and thrive, whether in English, French, indigenous languages or other languages. We need those small and big traditional media outlets because they are here to ask the tough questions. The Conservatives hate that. They do not want those media outlets to come here and ask the tough questions.

Of course it is tough. Sometimes, it is not fun to answer the questions, but that is our job, and the Conservatives do not want to do it.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, let us cut to the chase. We are not talking about the bill itself here. I think that the Bloc Québécois, through my colleague from Drummond, has shown how hard it is fighting for passage of this bill and the good reasons why we must pass it.

What we are talking about here is democracy and, for the last few weeks, the repeated use of closure motions and the repeated imposition of time limits on parliamentarians' debate. Limiting debate time is an attack on democracy. When I hear some members of the opposition rise to denounce it, I wonder why they unequivocally support each closure motion.

We need to change our parliamentary rules to ensure that we have time to debate such important government bills, instead of seeing yet another closure motion being imposed at the last minute, which is anti-democratic.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, what I like about this is that the Bloc Québécois wants to have its cake and eat it too. On the one hand it is saying that this bill is very important, but on the other hand, it is saying that we must not move forward with it, that it is not voting with us on this motion, and that it is giving up on us and abandoning the people it wanted to support.

The Bloc has done remarkable work. The member for Drummond has stood up the entire time. He was remarkable, as was the Bloc Québécois. However, now that it is time to move, there is a problem. It is one or the other. Either we end the debate and move forward with the bill, or we do not. The Bloc cannot have it both ways. It is hypocrisy pure and simple. Those members need to stand up and show some backbone.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, this debate is important to my riding. I met with Terry Farrell from the Comox Valley Record and Peter McCulley from PQB News. They talked about the sense of urgency right now, because they cannot compete with Google, Facebook and so on. PQB News had to lay off Scott Stanfield, one of the top local reporters in the Comox Valley, who has covered really important and critical stories. Now it is short-staffed and does not have the capacity to cover as much as it would like to make sure that the people in our communities are well-informed and not at a disadvantage.

What we are seeing from Conservatives and finding out is that they are the gatekeepers for Google, Facebook and the big web giants.

Scott Stanfield has lost his job, and we know there are going to be more if we do not make sure that local media outlets can produce good local media in our communities. Can the minister speak about the sense of urgency to get this legislation passed, so local media outlets get the proper financial supports?

• (1110)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and the New Democrats for their overall work on this very important bill. I can say that they get it.

His question points to why the bill is so important. It is not a silver lining for now; we need more, and we are doing more as a government. For example, we put in place a tax credit on labour. We put in place local journalism initiatives. We have the Canada periodical fund. These will support everything we are doing, and we are open to doing more.

One thing we are not willing to do is to just stand down like the Conservatives and say that we are not going to do anything for our local media. That is totally unacceptable, and history will remember it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the minister could reflect on how, when the leader of the Conservative Party had a press conference in regard to the budget bill, he said that he was going to speak and speak.

His intentions were to prevent the bill from passing until the Prime Minister made changes to the budget. Now we have the Conservatives opposing this particular bill. They have already expressed an interest in terms of speaking and speaking in order to prevent the bill from passing.

Would the minister not agree that, just as when the leader of the Conservative Party vowed to speak endlessly, without the time allocation, we would never have been able to pass the budget and we would not be able to pass Bill C-18? Would the minister provide his thoughts on that issue?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, this is a very important question. I want to thank my colleague for his work on this bill and the overall work of the government. He is a key member of the government team.

Sometimes, it is necessary to use time allocation. With this official opposition, it may be used more, because they like to filibuster. The opposition likes to play with the tools it has to hurt our democracy.

Bill C-11 is an amazing bill that is asking the streamers that we all love, such as Disney, Netflix and others, to contribute to Canadian culture, which is a good thing. Normally we would all agree on this. I know the NDP agrees. I know the Bloc agrees. The Conservatives are not too sure. That bill spent more time in the Senate than any other bill in the history of this country, because it was blocked by Conservative senators under the order of the leader of the Conservative Party. That is totally unacceptable.

The Conservatives are trying to do the same thing on Bill C-18, with the budget and other bills. They are hurting our democracy.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, that is incredibly rich coming from a minister who used to decry any closure motions when he was in opposition.

Government Orders

I want to point out that, from the time of Tommy Douglas to the time of Thomas Mulcair, over those 14 Parliaments, the NDP only supported closure 17 times. With today's vote, we are at over 40 times in the past two years that the NDP has supported its Liberal partners in shutting down democracy and debate in this Parliament.

That is shameful behaviour. How can the NDP members stand over there and decry and heckle me now, while they are supporting one of the most unethical and most corrupt governments that we have seen in Canadian history?

On the issue of the bill, I will just say this: The minister stands here and says he is supporting local media. The Liberal government has not supported our local community newspapers or stood up for the local content creators. By going forward with this bill, it is putting more power in the hands of Rogers, Bell and the CBC, rather than actually supporting those local content creators. They are demising our democracy in this country by shutting down freedom of the press through this bill, by cutting off the voices of those who want to be independent on the Internet. That is—

• (1115)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members not to be heckling or trying to yell out answers or questions while others have the floor.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, the exact reason for this bill is to support the different media in our communities.

As I have said, it is not the only thing the government is doing. We have put in place a tax credit on labour to help our newsrooms. This is money for our newsrooms. We also put in place the local journalist initiative for small outlets in different regions. We did this because they are absolutely essential. We have the Canada periodical fund.

Those are three key programs, and this bill reinforces them. We have met with local small media outlets from across the country, from each of the ridings, from everywhere, and they want this bill. The bill also allows for collective bargaining. Small media outlets could get together, with 5, 10 or 100 of them, if they want, to negotiate as a group with the big tech giants, because, of course, there is a power imbalance there.

This bill is extremely important for those small media outlets. If we look at what happened in Australia, because they have a similar bill in place, proportionally, the small media outlets got more than the big ones.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I find this incredibly rich in the wrong sense of the word, this conversation going on about our small local news outlets and whatnot.

This is absolutely not true. The Liberal government is never there for the smaller entities that represent our communities. They have asked for support, and they have gotten next to nothing. As a matter of fact, our local papers are required to even put how much funding they have received from Canadian Heritage on each one, which is minuscule compared to the billions of dollars the government has handed out to the big guys.

I have trouble with the fact that we are shutting down debate on this issue. What I am hearing from the minister is not accurate, according to my riding.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, what is accurate is that this bill is there to support media across the country. As I said, around 500 media outlets have closed their doors. Big ones and small ones, in regions and in cities everywhere, have closed. It has a huge impact on our democracy that they are not there to tell their stories. In some regions, there is no more coverage, so the population does not know what the local MPs do in Ottawa. People do not know what the local provincial MLA goes and does in the capital. They do not know what the city councillor is doing in terms of making decisions. That is bad for our democracy. We have to be there.

Contrary to what my colleague said, there are many programs in place. As I said, we have a tax credit on labour and local journalism initiatives, as well as the Canada periodical fund. There are many projects, and this would reinforce all those programs.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is some context that is important to remember here. We are using closure to protect Canadian jobs. We are using it to stop influence from web giants and international conglomerates that are impacting our democracy, our way of life and our ability to influence our communities. It is ironic that the Conservatives complain about that. They used closure against women's rights, a number of court cases in which the Supreme Court even ruled against them and a series of different negative things. This closure is meant to adjust and for us to have some independence from the international conglomerates that are influencing us right now. It is also to protect jobs, which is a much more progressive use of closure at this point in time.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I agree.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are already seeing the ramifications of this piece of legislation. There are many small online news outlets that are already being blocked by Facebook. For example, there is Pipeline Online in Saskatchewan. Its users are already getting a message saying that, in response to Canadian government legislation, Facebook is restricting the sharing and viewing of news content from pages connected to news outlets in Canada. What does the minister have to say about that?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, the difference between us and them is that we are standing up for our independence. We are standing up for our sovereignty, and we are standing up for our democracy.

Therefore, we do not accept the fact that some tech giants are threatening a government of a sovereign country. We do not accept that they are trying to intimidate Canadians or that they are trying to intimidate senators.

However, for the Conservatives, it is perfectly normal. From day one, they have been supporting whatever the tech giants do. They even take their talking points and repeat them time and time again. We will always stand up for freedom and democracy in our country.

Government Orders

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to come back to the minister's heated reaction. We know he is quite a passionate man and that this bill is important to him, but I believe he misunderstood the meaning of my question earlier. I really want to refocus my question on the concept of a closure motion.

In its entire history, the Bloc Québécois has supported under 10 closure motions. When it did give its support, it was because it was truly crucial that the bill being considered at the time be freed up. In 2021, in regard to Bill C-10, the Bloc Québécois even suggested publicly that closure be used and recommended that the Liberals impose a time allocation motion because the government had lost control of the agenda. Something needed to be done to move the bill forward.

Right now, the government has not lost control with Bill C-18. Everything is going pretty smoothly. We are in the final stage and there is no need to, say, free up something stuck somewhere due to filibustering. Earlier, I asked a question about the fact that we have two or three days left to debate Bill C-18.

Yes, I want to see it passed this week at all costs, but my question was whether the minister had given up hope of having the bill passed in the usual manner by the end of the week and that was why he was imposing the closure motion today.

I would like to hear from the minister on this.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois will be delighted to hear what I have to say.

My colleague just said that he supported the concept of closure when the bill is essential. Bill C-18 is certainly essential to our newsrooms across Quebec and Canada.

The Bloc Québécois members ultimately lack that little bit of courage to say that it is important for them, even if it is no fun to limit debate. No one likes it, and no one got into politics to invoke closure. At the end of the day, they just do not have the courage to say that this step is necessary to get the bill.

Right now, they want Bill C-18, but they do not want to do anything to help the government pass the bill. They do not want to help. They could stand up today, vote with the government and the NDP, and show how important it is to pass it before the summer break. If they do not do that, then the Conservatives will block it all week.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, there is no respect for democracy in blocking every piece of legislation that the majority of members of Parliament want to adopt, and that is what Conservatives have done systematically. I remember the dismal decade of the Harper regime. The Conservatives imposed closure 150 times, and destroyed pensions, environmental protection, all kinds of awful things.

We have a bill that is supported heavily by Alberta and Saskatchewan community newspapers. They have been saying for

months that the bill needs to be brought in. How can members represent the communities of Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Medicine Hat and Swift Current by blocking bills for which those community newspapers are calling? It makes no sense at all.

My question for the minister is simply this. Why are Conservatives blocking something that stands up for their communities and is good for their community newspapers?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind hon. members, especially one in particular who mentioned that he was being heckled a while ago, and now he is doing the same thing to that exact member, not to heckle or try to answer questions and comments while someone else has the floor.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I would never heckle personally.

However, the question from my colleague is extremely important. I really do not understand why the Conservatives from all those small communities are fighting this bill, which is there to help local media in their own communities. How can they do that? Why are they doing that? Only they can answer that.

We can only look at the pattern of how often they only side with tech giants, repeating their points, to understand part of the question. They are not there to support local media. They absolutely do not care, which is a shame. Therefore, we will stand up for them.

• (1125)

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have just heard some comments about newspapers in Saskatchewan and Alberta, but not one of those are in my riding. I talked to those newspapers and asked what they wanted, and they told me. They are independent and do not belong to that group. They want the \$60-some million back that would be given to the foreign nationals. They want that money for advertising, the 30%. They do not want that to be given to internationals.

Also, when the minister said that we supported tech giants, he should go to committee and listen to my comments about big tech. It was the Liberals who agreed with me on big tech, while hammering away at it. You did not find me in the committee supporting big tech. We did not do it. I did not do it. The Liberals agreed with me on how I opposed the big tech. Therefore, when you keep saying that things like that, you should listen to the committee and my comments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sure the hon. member was not referencing me when he was saying "you". I would ask the member to address his questions and comments through the Chair by using the correct words.

The hon. minister.

Government Orders

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I do listen to what is happening in the committee. It is very important for me, being the Minister of Canadian Heritage. I have a lot of respect for the work of the committee, and I have had the chance to go committee many times.

However, there are many programs for local papers. As I said before, there is the tax credit on labour, local journalism initiatives, especially for small communities. There is the Canada periodical fund. We are open to work with the other parties to come up with other solutions. However, Bill C-18 is one of those solutions. It is there, it is ready, it has been studied in the House and in the Senate. It is time we move on.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister has disingenuously stated that the bill is about helping local newspapers, when, in fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is a non-partisan figure of this place, has reported that with the bill, the tune of 75%, the funding would go toward CBC, Bell Media and Rogers. These are the three big broadcasters. I would ask the minister this. Does that sound like newspapers to him, because it sure does not to me?

To the point from the hon. member who went before me, for our local newspapers in ridings like Lethbridge, where we have towns like Picture Butte, Coaldale or Coalhurst that are trying to make a go of it with one journalist, the bill would leave them out in the cold. There are hundreds, if not thousands, across the country that are in a similar boat. Does that sound like supporting local news to the minister?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, that is a bit rich coming from a person who quotes the tech giants all the time. She has been using their speaking points from day one. We are there to support media in all communities. Also, if the member looks at the example of Australia, the system we are basing ourselves on—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Why do you not answer the question? Just answer the question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. I want to remind the hon. member for Lethbridge that she had an opportunity to ask a question. Whether she likes the response or not, she should not be heckling or trying to ask other questions.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: That was very impolite, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Just answer my question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If the hon. member for Lethbridge does not want to abide by the rules of the House, she can step into the lobby and air her views there.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, when we look at the example of Australia, which has a bill similar to ours—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Which failed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, the hon. member for Lethbridge is not respecting the rules of the

House. If she continues, she will not be recognized for any questions or comments for the rest of the day.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, in Australia, looking at its results at the end of the day, when all the deals were concluded, proportionally small media got more money than any of the big media. That is a big example—

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Oh, that is such a lie.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Lethbridge will not be recognized for the rest of the day.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Even in a heckle, the member for Lethbridge used a very unparliamentary word. I know you have already indicated that she would not be recognized, but I do believe she owes an apology for using the word “lie”.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the hon. member for Lethbridge to rise and apologize, please.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I said that the minister lied.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am asking the hon. member to apologize.

• (1130)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Madam Speaker, I will apologize for using that word. He misinformed the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member that her apology was not quite what we were looking for. However, I do want to remind all members that there are rules of the House. Those rules include respecting the members who are speaking whether we like the answers or not. To challenge the Chair and not respect the rules of the Chair is not acceptable as well.

I again want to reiterate that the hon. member will not be recognized for the rest of the day for questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

[*Translation*]

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

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded vote, please.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1215)

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

(Division No. 390)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
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	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh	Sorbara
Sousa	St-Onge
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo— 170

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
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	Fortin
Gallant	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Martel
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier

Government Orders

McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Poillievre
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	Webber
Williams	Zimmer— 144

PAIRED

Members

Champagne	Garon
Hoback	Joly— 4

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

BILL C-18 — SENATE AMENDMENTS

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of the motion respecting Senate amendments to Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, and of the amendment.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to pick up where we left off last night.

I have to say I was a little disappointed. We had a great opportunity to debate Bill C-18 last night, but we were cut off at about 6:30 p.m. in the middle of my speech. I had about 12 minutes to go. The classy thing to do would have been to let me finish my speech before interrupting the proceedings. Let us not talk about that right now. Let us talk about Bill C-18 for the time we have left because, as everyone knows, the House just voted in favour of time allocation.

During the debates on Bill C-18, there was a lot of talk about money. Basically, people talked about the financial difficulties news outlets have been experiencing for decades, ever since the web giants came on the scene and helped themselves to the lion's share of advertising revenue. People have talked a lot about money, which is certainly important because that is the crux of the matter, obviously. That is what news outlets need in order to succeed and keep providing the essential service they provide: high-quality, in-

dependent, fact-checked, thorough information; essentially, news that meets recognized journalistic standards.

Bill C-18 will benefit the news sector. It will most likely help save many news businesses. That is the objective of the bill, and I think that it will largely achieve that objective. Today, I also wanted to talk about something else that Bill C-18 will help preserve or even save, and that is journalism itself. We have heard all kinds of things about eligible news businesses and which businesses would benefit more than others from this bill and from the regulations and regulatory framework that will be put in place by Bill C-18. However, we are forgetting to define and discuss journalism itself.

With the advent of social media and digital platforms, it is true that we have seen the emergence of new types of news media, new types of businesses, new ways of disseminating information. However, we have also seen more news businesses engaging in what we might call advocacy journalism. In some cases, it could even be described as activist journalism, a form of journalism that involves embracing a cause and using the medium to provide news to the public in a way that is biased in favour of that cause. One example would be environmental journalism. We agree that the cause is worthy, but environmental journalists will always deliver the news with an activist slant. I have nothing against that, but is that journalism in the true sense of the word? No, not really, in the same way that a certain type of media outlet might have a political bent. I know some people will say that CBC/Radio-Canada has a pro-government, pro-Liberal bias.

What is journalism, really? Journalism is a profession that demands a lot of meticulous work and a lot of passion. It has certain standards, certain rules that I would hazard to say are accepted around the world. Its first guiding principle is independence. What does independence mean for journalism and for journalists? It means the ability to work unfettered by the influence of a government, company, movement or cause. That is what journalistic independence means. The second guiding principle is handling the news in a meticulous way. That means having an almost obsessive passion for truth-seeking and fact-checking, while remaining objective.

● (1220)

The other guiding principle is respect for individuals and groups and respect in handling sources.

Government Orders

These are the guiding principles of the journalism profession. I am not saying that advocacy journalism, activist journalism or opinion journalism are bad. However, they are not necessarily what we are trying to protect through Bill C-18. That is why we included eligibility criteria in Bill C-18. News outlets eligible under the regulatory framework proposed by Bill C-18 will have to espouse a code of ethics. The code in question may not necessarily mirror the journalistic standards and practices of CBC/Radio-Canada or the ethics guide of the Quebec Press Council. However, the media outlet would need a code, even one scribbled on a piece of paper, that reflects its commitment to complying with the guiding principles of journalism.

I think this should offer some comfort to people who think that Bill C-18 will favour certain large media outlets that they believe show a bias for the government and could act as a conduit for the government's opinions.

I do not think that what I am about to say will be a big surprise to members who did not participate in the debates on Bill C-18. My Conservative friends were not very supportive of this bill and they do not generally like what we call the mainstream media, the major news media outlets. I am talking about traditional media companies like CBC/Radio-Canada, Vidéotron, Bell Media and Québecor, of course. I am talking about these major companies that produce the news. The Conservatives find them biased because, in general, they take positions that are not relayed as the Conservatives would like, for all sorts of reasons. Generally, the populist spin gets filtered out in the mainstream media, which adopt journalistic standards and adhere to broad journalistic principles.

I will now digress briefly, since we are talking about CBC/Radio-Canada. I know someone who has worked in the news service for a good part of his career and who received complaints from the public. On the French side, Quebec separatists have often accused Radio-Canada of being federalist and not reporting the news or doing so in a biased way when it comes to the separatist cause. Conversely, Quebec federalists find that Radio-Canada is a gang of separatists. This person I know told me that when it comes to the news, if he receives the same number of complaints from people who complain that they are being too federalist relative to those who complain that they are being too separatist, he feels that they did a good job, that they worked objectively and that they were "on the right track," as my friend, the House leader of the Bloc Québécois and member for La Prairie might say. In short, it is all a matter of perception.

However, there is something that is different about the mainstream media. I do not want to advocate for CBC/Radio-Canada, but in general, these major media companies are objective. Obviously we see biases from time to time, but not serious ones. These major media outlets must change course and correct the situation when they make a mistake, when they err, when they are, for example, partisan, or biased, or handle a news item badly. They all have mechanisms for receiving complaints, processing them and making retractions as needed. Knowing how to make retractions after recognizing that a mistake was made is also one of the major principles of journalism.

I am talking about mainstream media, but I also spoke earlier about the new media, new forms of news media that we have seen

emerge, media of all kinds. There is a lot of opinion news, as I said. I wondered whether these media had to be neglected. The answer is obviously no.

• (1225)

Changes are happening in the news sector. Everyone acknowledged that when we studied Bill C-18. A lot has changed. The fact is that news companies need to adapt, transition to digital technologies and make sure they reach people where they are.

Consumer habits have changed in recent years when it comes to the news. People get their news on social media. They go on Facebook, for example, or they search for a particular piece of news or subject using Google. These are now the ways we get our news. What is more, these outlets and general content companies sell huge amounts of advertising, since 80% of advertising is said to now be in the digital sector. I think it is normal that these outlets and these companies, which profit heavily from the news sector and the content generated by newsrooms, contribute to the content they are benefiting from. It is the least they can do.

I am well aware of the fact that Bill C-18 will not solve all the issues with the news sector, the media in general and culture, the latter being addressed more specifically in Bill C-11. Bill C-18 will not solve everything. There will still be problems and challenges. In my opinion, it is normal that governments come to the aid of a sector as fragile as the news sector. It is a fragile sector, but it is essential.

Clearly, we will need more tools to help the media. That is obvious. The fund the Bloc Québécois is proposing would be a very effective tool, allowing us to collect royalties from the digital giants that are making outrageous profits and use them to support more fragile media, such as regional media. I think that would be a good solution.

Once again, the Bloc Québécois is the party proposing solutions rather than simply opposing suggestions and obstructing Parliament. I would be very pleased to discuss this with my colleagues and to make a more detailed proposal to the government.

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. I very much enjoy working with him on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I enjoyed his description of journalists and what they do for our society. I wanted to ask him what he thinks will happen if we do not adopt Bill C-18 and if we do not support our journalists. What will happen to our democracy?

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. I too enjoy the work we do and our close collaboration at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Most of the time, our work has been constructive.

Government Orders

There is a reason journalism and news are called the fourth estate. The news media has a duty and an important role to play in society. I said “important”, but I really mean “essential”.

If Bill C-18 is not passed, more media outlets will shutter, continuing a more than decade-long trend. The news media are in trouble. Bill C-18 is one of the tools we need to ensure their survival. If it is not passed, we could lose more media outlets, including regional media, which would be especially unfortunate.

• (1230)

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member for Drummond. On the committee, we shared similar philosophies and asked lots of questions.

The member has many small communities in his riding, as I do. We heard that of most of the money, maybe upwards of \$350 million, 70% to 85% had already been negotiated to go to the big guys, like Bell, Rogers and CBC. What does the member think might be left for our small publishers, like the one-reporter papers? The Conservative motion to support those was voted against.

What does the member think might be left for some of the small papers with one journalist, which I know he has in his riding?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Bow River because he is a staunch defender of small media outlets and the regional media, the local papers he talks about so passionately. He did a great job of defending them and representing them during the committee study.

Originally, long before Bill C-18 was tabled, the Bloc Québécois's idea was that we should create a royalty fund financed by the web giants' profits. That is not what the industry wanted, so the Bloc got behind the idea of a bill based on what Australia did. That is what the industry and the whole community wanted.

However, if there are smaller media outlets or outlets that are not eligible but are still essential to regional news coverage, then we should implement emergency measures to help them and support them financially. The fund I was talking about earlier could be added to a measure like Bill C-18. It could target and clearly identify small media outlets, like the ones my colleague from Bow River was talking about, that will have a hard time of it because they cannot get ahead. Once the bill has been implemented, I think that there might be more of an appetite for that type of proposal.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about the value of investigative reporting. *The Fifth Estate*, for example, and *Marketplace* are well known for their contributions to protecting public safety. I think back at the work that was done with the Toyota Prius situation, where public safety was very much influenced by the fact that the CBC broke that it was not coming forth. Our consumer laws are very much antiquated in Canada. I would like to give my colleague the opportunity to reflect on investigative reporting and its value in this debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I think that every form of journalism that respects the fundamental rules of integrity, independence, meticulousness and respect for people and sources is essential. In-depth reporting by investigative journalists striving to dig deeper into the stories is also essential, and we need to keep it alive as well.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was so eager to hear the end of my colleague's speech because he is proposing solutions. In the Bloc Québécois, we do not just pick fights. We propose solutions and stay positive.

Now, we know that there is filibustering going on. We know that the official opposition does not support this bill. However, the committee heard from Mr. Sims, the father of the Australian bill. Yes, there were fears following that bill, but there are things that Bill C-18 fixes.

Can my colleague tell us how this interview with Mr. Sims went and why Mr. Sims was unable to convince everyone?

• (1235)

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Repentigny for her question and her hard work.

It is good to talk about Mr. Sims, because he gave us the Australian perspective. Australia is much further along in applying its code. Talking to Mr. Sims gave us a different perspective and insight into what our next steps would be. True, Australia has run into issues, but this did not diminish Mr. Sims' strong support for these regulations.

I do not know why he was unable to convince those who were not already convinced. This is often how it goes. The parties have already made up their mind at the outset. The other side can make all the arguments they want, but it takes a modicum of good faith to accept them, and there may not have been any.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is very unfortunate that the Conservatives are trying to block this bill, because it would have benefits for community newspapers.

I have great respect for the member for Drummond. As he well knows, the NDP moved amendments to ensure that small newspapers across the country could benefit from this bill.

I know that my colleague knows the regions of Quebec well, as do I. I would like him to talk a bit about the impact that this bill will have on Côte-Nord, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, Gaspésie, Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Centre-du-Québec, Estrie, and all the other regions where community newspapers are struggling because the web giants are collecting all the advertising revenue.

Privilege

How will this bill have a positive impact on these regions?

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, when a journalist loses their job in a region like Côte-Nord, it is not just serious, it is tragic. The news that comes from community media or other small regional media outlets, which are often newsrooms run on a shoestring budget, is vital.

It is these news media outlets, which are often run by passionate people covering three or four jobs in the radio station or the small local newspaper, that transmit critical news to residents. If this service disappears because Google and Facebook act in bad faith and neglect these media outlets in negotiations or simply skip over them and ignore them under any pretext, such as a lack of money, something absolutely must be done. We need to be there to support them and help them survive.

It is not the size of the media outlet that is important, or the number of journalists in the newsroom. As I was saying, they too must be saved because they are essential. Whether there are one of them or 12, they provide a service to the public that must be maintained at all costs.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have time for a very brief question from the parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know the Bloc is against the time allocation but does the member really believe that, without time allocation, we would not be able to get this bill passed before the summer?

Does he think that the Conservatives would stop—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Drummond.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, it was very brave of you to ask my colleague from Winnipeg North to ask a very brief question, but he managed it, and I congratulate him. My answer will be brief.

I do not know. We will never know, because of the time allocation motion adopted earlier. I would have liked to give democracy a chance over the next few days to extend the debate into Thursday or Friday. We could have done that, correct?

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED BREACH OF MEMBER'S RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is not with pleasure but dismay that I rise to add to the question of privilege first raised last Thursday by the member for Calgary Nose Hill and discussed yesterday. I have now also received information from an access to information request, and it is my earliest opportunity to bring forward my concerns regarding a breach of my privilege. The package shows that the government deliberately held back information I sought from the Minister of Natural Resources

through written Questions Nos. 984 and 1050, which were submitted on November 17, 2022, and November 30, 2022, respectively.

We all know that normally, OPQs come back with information responding to questions, which is my right as a member of Parliament to know. Most importantly, it is my duty to get answers for my neighbours in Lakeland and other Canadians about the Liberal government's plans and promises.

I filed these OPQs to ask about the status of LNG projects. They are very important to the communities where they are languishing and to our country's future. They were also about the costs that the federal government cites relative to environmental targets in Canada.

The information from the ATIP reveals that staff from Natural Resources Canada deliberately attempted to deny me answers, and therefore all Canadians, by using vague language and redirecting to publicly available Government of Canada and external non-governmental sources. In fact, in both instances, the replies did not include a single specific figure that was explicitly requested.

Privilege, in my view, is what enables me to work on behalf of the people of Lakeland who sent me here, and this breach of my privilege is not the first time the Liberal government has tried to avoid answering questions from members of Parliament. On February 2, the Speaker ruled on a point of order made by the member for Calgary Nose Hill at that time and said that providing the House with accurate information is “a fundamental [right] and it is a central accountability mechanism”, a concept with which I think all of us agree. Recently, on June 5, my colleague and neighbour from Battle River—Crowfoot raised similar concerns about the status of OPQs, and now we have this, in my case. Unfortunately, it is a pattern, really, of blocking the legitimate right of MPs to ask questions of the government on behalf of the Canadians we represent and to whom we must be accountable, which is really, in my view, the most important aspect of this debate.

I have also learned that, in my case, I was specifically targeted in this disinformation campaign in the government's preparation of the response to Question No. 984. A departmental comment in the ATIP says that Natural Resources Canada and Environment Canada will only reference public sources and use “the same response in the inquiry of ministry.” In the response to Question No. 1050, the parliamentary affairs unit's notes state that the language used in response to this question was reused from a similar response, saying the “Minister's office confirmed approval of language, and the response was submitted to the Privy Council Office.”

In this ATIP file, it is apparent that there are several records of discussions and meetings held to strategize about how to withhold information from opposition members of Parliament. Notably, in this case, it was from Conservative members of Parliament.

Page 85 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states:

...when it is alleged that a Member is in contempt for deliberately misleading the House: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House.

It is certainly not my place to interpret or declare how that ought to be read, but I must say that insofar as the request for information was made to the minister, it seems his staff, acting either on his behalf or independently, is deliberately blocking or limiting the information in responses, so that part seems uncomfortably relevant to me.

• (1240)

Members have often raised concerns about inaccurate and omitted information in responses to Order Paper questions, but recently these responses are even worse, as highlighted by the ones I have received, and it is now clear why: Deliberately misleading members is apparently a priority topic of discussion among senior staff in the minister's office and the departments. These discussions clearly demonstrate a deliberate plan to present information better suited to the communication needs of the minister instead of a commitment to providing complete and accurate information to Parliament and therefore to all Canadians. Unfortunately, it is a fact that this seems to reflect a pattern overall, which is the opposite, of course, of openness, transparency and accountability, as the Information Commissioner has noted frequently over the past eight years and also recently.

I find it very concerning that the specific conversation among staff on Friday, January 27, 2023, completely acknowledged that there was a “communications risk” for the use of “high-level limitation language that does not answer the written question from an MP.” In considering that risk to them, the deputy chief of staff to the Minister of Natural Resources said, “I'm expecting the Speaker to tut tut and then say it is not for him to judge the quality of a response”. Therefore, political staff are intentionally weighing the publicity and PR risk in providing the important information I am entitled to as a member of Parliament, importantly on behalf of the people I represent.

What is interesting in the correspondence regarding this ATIP request is that it acknowledges that the ruling is clear and that previous rulings have said, “There are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions.” The Speaker has referenced this exact wording 13 times since the Liberals took power. However, what is now explicitly clear, as highlighted by the exchanges in this ATIP, is that senior political and departmental staff are using that ruling to withhold information. They are also presuming that they know how the Speaker will respond to and rule on insufficient answers to Order Paper questions from members of Parliament. I think it is quite serious that ministerial staff are using previous Speaker rulings as a shield from doing their job and fulfilling their responsibility to provide the accurate, complete and fulsome information requested by MPs for all Canadians.

Privilege

I want to close by making clear why this is so deeply concerning to me. As a member of Parliament, best representing my constituents is my absolute number one priority. It is my guiding light and the whole and only reason I am here. I trust that the Speaker will take under due consideration in deliberations what this kind of opaqueness and this deliberate attempt to withhold information really say about the ability of members of Parliament to do the core, fundamental, highest-priority, all-consuming duty and responsibility we have to do here on behalf of the people we represent.

• (1245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for her words. They will be taking under due consideration.

The hon. member for Saskatoon West is rising on the same question of privilege.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to comment on the question of privilege raised by the member for Calgary Nose Hill on June 15 and again on June 19, as well as the subsequent interventions by my colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola on June 19 and the one we just heard from the member for Lakeland.

On June 9, the answers to four Order Paper questions that I had previously submitted were tabled in this House: Question No. 1435, which was about a further breakdown of application processing times; Question No. 1436, which was about IRCC spending on settlement services; Question No. 1437, which was on other departments' spending on settlement services; and Question No. 1438, which was for the temporary resident to permanent resident program, with specific questions about the Whitehorse office. For everyone's information, I am going to review these in reverse order.

In my opinion, Questions Nos. 1438 and 1437 were answered thoughtfully and thoroughly by the government. Questions Nos. 1436 and 1435 were not, which is why they are relevant to this question of privilege.

Question No. 1436 came back with the following answer:

...Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, IRCC, undertook an extensive preliminary search in order to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the question and the amount of time that would be required to prepare a comprehensive response. IRCC concluded that producing and validating a comprehensive response to this question would require a manual collection of information that is not possible in the time allotted and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

Privilege

Question No. 1435, answered by the same department, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and signed by the parliamentary secretary, suggested that I look up a website, as they did not want to actually provide the information in written form.

Madam Speaker, I believe if you examine Questions Nos. 1437 and 1436, you will see that IRCC deliberately set out to avoid answering the questions. That is why they are relevant to this question of privilege. We should remember that I said that Question No. 1437 was answered thoughtfully and thoroughly by the government. The wording of Question No. 1436 is exactly the same as that in Question No. 1437, with the exception that Question No. 1436 applies to only one government department, IRCC, and Question No. 1437 applies to every other department within the Government of Canada.

There are instructions in Question No. 1437 to every government department on how to answer the question, and to the credit of every department, with the exception of IRCC, they all answered the question. If every government department can run the same searches, collate the information, put it in a spreadsheet and answer Question No. 1437, then why can IRCC not answer the same question in Question No. 1436? Question No. 1436 already asks for information that the government breaks down in its estimates and the public accounts generally, but not to the degree that I was looking for. I asked the question on the assumption that if IRCC tracks this information for reporting to Parliament in the estimates and public accounts, then it should not have an issue breaking this information down further, especially as we are in the main estimates cycle.

Madam Speaker, I believe that once you take a look at these two questions and answers side by side, you will see a clear case of obfuscation on behalf of IRCC to answer Question No. 1436. Therefore, Order Paper Question No. 1436 must be looked at as part of my colleague's question of privilege.

I will quickly touch upon Order Paper Question No. 1435 and the answer that came back from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. I believe you must also take that into consideration during your deliberations on my colleague's question of privilege.

As you are more than capable of reading the answer for yourself, Madam Speaker, I will quote part of the answer:

...IRCC undertook an extensive preliminary search to determine the amount of information that would fall within the scope of the request to provide details of the tables provided in annex A in response to Order Paper question Q-1146 broken down by category and country of origin. The data elements identified for this response would be too large to provide and could lead to the disclosure of incomplete and misleading information.

However, application processing times for selected categories are available by country at the IRCC Check Processing Times – Canada.ca website.

You will note from this answer and my original question, Madam Speaker, that I was asking for further information from a previous Order Paper question that I had asked, Question No. 1146. If you were to look at the answer tabled for Question No. 1146 on March 20, 2023, you would see that IRCC made a concerted effort to actually answer this question in a thoughtful manner. Indeed, it was the thoroughness of this answer that prompted me to ask Question No. 1435, which simply read, "With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the government's response to Order Pa-

per question Q-1146: what are the details of the tables provided in Annex A, broken down by category and country of origin?"

● (1250)

It is a department whose job it is to track people by country of origin and immigration stream; I simply asked the department to provide that information, based upon a search it had previously conducted for Question No. 1146. Indeed, according to IRCC's departmental plan 2022-2023, which has been tabled in the House and forms part of the estimates, the department has three core responsibilities, including no. 2: immigrant and refugee selection and integration. This question goes to the very heart of the department's core responsibilities. Therefore, the department officials' deliberate decision to, in Questions Nos. 1435 and 1436, withhold information that they had access to is relevant to the question of privilege raised by my colleague from Calgary Nose Hill.

On June 22, we are coming to the end of the supply cycle, and, as members of Parliament, we will be asked to vote on tens of billions of dollars of money for the government to run various government departments. Written questions are one way that we, as MPs, are able to get information from the government in order to make informed decisions when we vote upon those estimates. I framed my Order Paper questions with the understanding that a) this information was available and within the scope of what Parliament was entitled to while examining the estimates; b) that the government would not intentionally block a member of Parliament from doing their job; and c) that there was still a modicum of respect left in the House of Commons, from the government to opposition MPs, to allow us to do our job and to hold the government to account.

With the extra information I have provided, and with all due respect to you, Madam Speaker, I urge you to look at the pattern of disrespect that the government has shown to the opposition throughout the Order Paper question process and to rule in favour of my colleague's question of privilege.

● (1255)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):
That will be taken into consideration by the Speaker.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Government Orders

[Translation]

ONLINE NEWS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion respecting Senate amendments to Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, and of the amendment.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-18. I hope that this will be the last debate in the House about this bill, because, as we all know, it is extremely important.

For years, newspapers have been talking about the importance of passing a bill like this one. For months, the Conservatives have been trying to block the bill at every step. They wanted to block it in committee, they wanted to block it in the House. Now that the Senate has given its preliminary approval and we are at the last step, sending the bill to the Senate for final approval, the Conservatives want to block it again.

I will talk about that later, because it is important to point out the differences between what the communities represented by Conservatives are calling for and what the Conservatives are giving them.

The most important thing to realize is the devastating situation community media are facing across the country. We are talking about 450 local newspapers and community radio stations that have closed in the past decade, losses that have taken a heavy toll across Canada. Why?

We know full well why. It is because the web giants have eaten up all the advertising money. We are talking about billions of dollars that have been taken away from our communities and sent outside the country, to web giants that pay little if any income tax, make no contribution to Canada, and simply want to funnel our money across our borders. It was important that the government took action.

The NDP has been saying so for years. We should have taken the appropriate measures years ago. We would not have lost the 450 local newspapers and community radio and television stations that closed because of the legislative vacuum that enabled the web giants to do whatever they wanted. Finally, the government did something. I say “finally”, because it usually takes the Liberals time to act. The NDP and the Bloc Québécois, through my colleague from Drummond, really pushed for action.

The bill is finally here, but the Conservatives, for reasons I do not understand, have systematically blocked it. Once again, I will say that there are two Bloc parties in the House. Of course, there is the Bloc Québécois, but there is also the “block everything” party, the Conservative Party, which blocks anything that could benefit all Canadians, which is unfortunate.

That is just what the framework would do. I want to talk about what it could represent for French-language newspapers in Acadia and even in western Canada. We can see the benefits for all the regions of Quebec and northern Ontario and the benefits for French-language newspapers everywhere. For them, it will make a big difference.

[English]

Let me tell the House about what a difference it makes in New Westminster—Burnaby. I mentioned earlier that a bit more than 450 news outlets have closed over a bit more than the past decade, because of the billions of dollars that have been siphoned out of this country, vacuumed out of the country by big technology companies that pay very little or no income tax and do very little to benefit the country. All they want to do is take money out. Bill C-18 would finally level the playing field so news outlets could actually negotiate. I will come back to the moment when the NDP achieved the transformation in Bill C-18 so that it really would do what it was intended to do.

However, out of those 450 outlets, I want to talk about two that were in my riding, the Burnaby News Leader and the New Westminster News Leader, two of those outlets that simply had to close because big tech was taking all the money out of my riding.

● (1300)

The reason I am supporting Bill C-18, from a personal standpoint, is that I see those publications that remain, like the Burnaby Now and the Royal City Record, doing remarkable work every day, reporting on our communities, and I see new news outlets that are also looking to take advantage of Bill C-18 and to finally start to get the money that has been vacuumed out of the community. The Burnaby Beacon and the New West Anchor are terrific new publications that are really exciting our communities.

The important thing is that, when we see the onslaught of hate provoked by foreign troll farms in the United States or the far-right troll farms we see out of Moscow's Internet Research Agency trying to pull apart our communities, what we need are good local journalists bringing our communities back together. That is the counter to the amount of devastating homophobia and transphobia, the anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, the racism and the misogyny we have seen across this country, deliberately fomented through the big tech giants that do not seem to want, in any way, to stop this flow of toxic hate.

The antidote to this is local community journalists' telling us about each other, telling us about our neighbours and bringing our communities back. For the crisis we have of toxicity and hate, created by the far right in a deliberate way, the antidote is reinvesting in community journalism that brings people back together. Within the four publications I have just mentioned in the communities I represent proudly, New Westminster and Burnaby, those journalists and those publications every day do that work to bring people back, and this is essential. That is why we are so supportive of Bill C-18.

Government Orders

Before I talk about what the NDP achieved, I want to come back to the issue of community representation and what it means when we see Conservative MPs trying to block this bill for months and months at every single step. I want to mention two of the most compelling witnesses we had before the Canadian heritage committee about Bill C-18, representatives from the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association and the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association. Both of them said, on behalf of publications from across Alberta and across Saskatchewan, that this bill is absolutely needed. They said there need to be some improvements, and I will come back to that in a moment, but that this bill is essential. They told us to get it passed.

That was the message they sent to all of us, though it is fair to say it was to the New Democrats, because of our long roots in Saskatchewan and also because of the breakthroughs we have seen in Alberta. As members know, since the recent Alberta election, every single MLA in the city of Edmonton is now a New Democrat. There were no Conservatives elected at all, provincially, in Edmonton. Most of the MLAs now representing Calgary are from the NDP as well. There are a few Conservatives left, but not many. That new breakthrough in Edmonton and Calgary is important, so we take the issue of community representation very seriously. When the Alberta community newspapers and the Saskatchewan community newspapers speak out, we believe they need to be heeded.

I think it is fair to say that even though the Bloc does not have any members in Alberta and Saskatchewan, they understood. The Liberals understood. The Conservatives represent those communities, and let us mention the communities we are talking about. In Alberta, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat are all proud communities with important publications, and they are represented by Conservatives. What did Conservatives do? They said they are going to block this bill, that they do not care about community publications and that they are going to everything they can to block this bill, rather than work with the other parties to actually get it through. Let us talk about Saskatchewan. Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, North Battleford, and Swift Current, again, are communities that are currently represented by a Conservative MP who was trying to block the bill that the newspapers within the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association were trying to get passed.

What did the NDP do? The NDP, more than any other party, brought forward amendments to improve the bill. We wanted the bill to work. The Conservatives have mentioned a PBO report. The PBO, of course, references the old bill. The Conservatives do not point that out, and for full disclosure, they really should say “the PBO report that was published prior to the NDP members’ working, as they always do, as the worker bees in Parliament, to improve the bill to make the bill much better”. A PBO report today would show what we did, and what we did was allow for that input of community newspapers.

• (1305)

The reality is that now a community newspaper, a one-person, sole-proprietorship that has a half-time journalist, would be eligible for the program. Because of the NDP amendments, they are covered by the bill. The NDP worked hard to include those smaller publications from communities across Alberta and Saskatchewan.

We followed what the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association and Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association called for. When we put that into place, we made the bill better.

The NDP had more amendments to the bill than all the other parties combined, and we are proud of that record. As worker bees, that is what we do. We take legislation, and we make it better. Members realize that the NDP are the workers bees of Parliament. We are here to get the job done and make things better. Bill C-18 is absolutely one of those examples.

Members would think that the Conservative MPs who represent those communities would say, “Golly gee, you New Democrats have done amazing work again and have made the bill reflect my community’s interest. I am going to vote for it.” However, they did not. On the contrary, they said, “No, we’re still going to block because we do not really have a reason. We just like blocking stuff.”

There are two Bloc parties in the House: the Bloc Québécois and the “block everything” party. The “block everything” is the Conservative Party, which just blocks legislation, whether it is dental care, child care or providing support to their community newspapers. Conservatives say that they are going to block everything. They do not know why. They just like to block stuff.

I guess the voters will make their choice. We certainly saw in the Alberta election that Edmontonians and Calgarians were saying that they did not like the Conservatives anymore and elected New Democrats right across the board in Edmonton and Calgary.

However, we made that difference and improved that legislation, which is really our job. Now, the important thing is to get it implemented.

I also want to comment about how some of the web giants have been acting, such as Google and Meta, in trying to threaten this country and Parliament by saying, “Hey, we have taken these billions of dollars out of Canada for years. We have not put anything back, as we pay very little or no taxes, but we want the status quo to continue.” Members will recall that they did the same thing in Australia.

They basically said to Australians that they were not going to respect their democracy or their democratically elected Parliament. They were going to monkey around with their algorithms to make sure they monkey-wrench the legislation. However, for members who may be attentive to all of these trends internationally, the Australians said that, no, they had to respect their democracy, and the Australians held firm. These big technology companies were forced to respond.

For example, Country Press is a consortium of independent smaller publications from across rural Australia, which faced many of the same challenges that we have seen with the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association and the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association. It responded by calling on parliamentarians to adopt the legislation and improve it. In Australia, it was a similar sort of dynamic with money being siphoned out of Australia and small publications going under, but not as many as in Canada. We have lost 450, but they did lose a lot. However, Country Press came together and now, as testimony before the heritage committee showed, there is a very vibrant news sector in Australia with over 125 publications in rural Australia that are thriving because the Australians held firm.

In Canada, unfortunately, we have seen the big tech giants, which seem to be accountable only to themselves. As I mentioned and will continue to mention, they pay very little or no income tax in this country. They take from the country, and they do not give back.

• (1310)

They are trying to pull the same trick. Like they did with Australia, they are trying to threaten the country and threaten Parliament. They are going to monkey around with their algorithms, but they will call them tests. These are the same companies that do not crack down on the toxic hate that often helps to contribute to their profits.

Just as a short side note, the Stop Hate for Profit campaign has come out of the United States, and the NDP supports it. These big web giants are earning additional money from the so-called engagement that comes from the rampant and disgusting homophobia and transphobia, the appalling misogyny and racism, and the disgusting anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. It helps to foment their profits. Whether it is the Internet Research Agency in Moscow, run by Putin's regime, or the American far right troll farms in the United States, run by Republicans, all of them help to contribute to their profits.

The Stop Hate for Profit campaign wants to crack down on that. It says that what they are doing is unbelievably toxic to democracy and to human rights. Big tech companies say that these algorithms are out of their control, and there is nothing they can do about it. Then this bill comes forward, and is voted on democratically by parliamentarians, and all of the sudden they are willing to change their algorithms. They are willing to intercede, push back, threaten Canadian parliamentarians and keep Canadians from their news sources, to cut them off and censor them by using those algorithms.

There is censorship going on. They are being gatekeepers, yet Conservatives would never, ever say a word against big tech. Not a single Conservative MP has stood in the House to denounce these practices of gatekeeping and censorship when it comes to fomenting hate and lies. Not a single Conservative has done that.

It is clear hypocrisy that they can all of a sudden adjust their algorithms, allowing them to all of a sudden cut off and censor, but they are not willing to do it to stop the hate, and they are willing to do it when they want to disrespect this Parliament. I think everyone can draw their own conclusions.

Government Orders

The reality is that, as parliamentarians, we have stand up to these threats. They are threatening Parliament because we are asking them to give some of the money that they have taken out of the country back. They have taken between \$8 billion to close to \$10 billion, and 450 news outlets have closed as a result. One-third of the jobs in journalism across this country have been eliminated as a result, yet they are not willing to put back some of the money they have taken from us.

I think it is fair to say that, when the average Canadian is asked, they want us to stand up against big tech. They want us to provide supports to our local journalism sector so that, as in the case of my community, the Burnaby Now, the New Westminster Record, the Burnaby Beacon and the New West Anchor can do that work, each and every day, that is so important to bring our community back together again.

We have been hit by a lot of things in the last few years. We have been hit by COVID. We have been hit by the catastrophic impacts of climate change, including the heat dome that killed 600 people across the Lower Mainland at a time of intense heat. We are also subject to the hate and lies that come through the big tech companies that say they cannot control it.

Now, as a Parliament, we have the ability to stand up to big tech to say, first, that we do not believe they cannot curb the hate and lies that are run on their platforms, and second, now they are going to contribute to legitimate journalism across the country. Whether we are talking about New Westminster—Burnaby, Alberta, Saskatchewan or anywhere else in this country, they are going to have to contribute so that our communities are better and our country is better. That is why we support Bill C-18.

• (1315)

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague is also on the Canadian heritage committee.

I really love that he highlighted how well this legislation worked in Australia to support smaller news outlets and how the big tech companies fought back with intimidation tactics. We are even seeing similar intimidation tactics here in Canada from those same big tech giants. At our committee, we saw some of those intimidation tactics.

However, we are hearing the Conservatives using those tactics as some sort of justification to not go forward with this legislation, saying, "Oh, Google blocked the news, so we better get rid of Bill C-18."

What does the member think of the tactic being used by the Conservatives?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I think it is a repudiation of community representation.

Government Orders

They have local newspapers in their communities, whether they are in Alberta or Saskatchewan, and that is where half of Conservative MPs come from, and the local community newspapers are saying that they really need this, that we need to start reinvesting. Rather than letting big tech continue to have its way and take money out of our communities, let us have some of that money put back. A Conservative MP who represents that community then says, no, they are not going to. They are not going to stand up against big tech. They are not going to stand up for their local newspapers. They are not going to stand up for their local community radio.

I just do not understand how that person could run for office, say they represent the community and not heed the call from the publications in the community to support Bill C-18.

They will have to live with the consequences of their actions.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's work on the committee, but I remember that the Conservatives put forward an amendment to have one newspaper reporter. He lists many papers, and they are not the non-daily papers in my riding. I have many who are single, yet he voted against having a single reporter qualify for this.

He takes great pride in talking about the worker bees and that we got it to one and a half but I am asking this: What about the ones in my riding? There are not any of the papers he has named in my riding. He has named papers in major cities, not in the small communities that I support.

Why did he vote against our amendment to support the small weekly papers like in my riding?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for that member and really enjoy working with him on the Canadian heritage committee. He is correct that the Conservatives did present that amendment. I thought the amendment the NDP presented was better. As he knows, any sole proprietorship that hires, even at a quarter time or half time, a journalist to go out there will qualify for the program. That includes the publications in his riding as well.

The NDP amendment was better and, I think, more complete. We have worked together to get a much better bill in front of Parliament. It is going to be a bill that helps community publications right across this country.

As I know, he approached the whole negotiation and the amendment process in good faith. Why is he voting against the bill now when the bill does so much for community newspapers, not only in his riding but also right across Alberta and Saskatchewan?

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank and congratulate my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby for his speech. We certainly did work hard on Bill C-11 and Bill C-18 at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage with the other committee members. In general, we worked in a very constructive manner. I really appreciated that.

In September, I had the privilege of attending Mondiacult, a world conference on culture, in Mexico City. While I was there, I met with representatives from African countries, who told me that

they were keeping an eye on the work that we are doing here in the House of Commons to regulate the news sector and the cultural sector with respect to the web giants. They told us that they are watching us because they do not have the same weight as Canada in terms of negotiating deals and in taking measures. They told us to stay strong.

Now we are seeing Google and Facebook threatening to remove or block access to Canadian news content. That is what Meta recently did. I would like to hear my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby's opinion on this. How important is it to take a firm stance with the web giants, knowing that we are setting an example for other countries and other nations that will soon have to make their own laws?

• (1320)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the work of my colleague from Drummond.

I will also note that French-speaking Africa is a place where the francophone population is growing incredibly quickly. There will be millions of new francophones in the coming years. That is why Africa and the media presence in Africa are so important. Just as Australia served as a model for Canada, it is only right that Canada should serve as a model for other countries, such as the African countries.

Meta and Google siphoning off all the money is not just a problem in Canada or Australia. This is happening all over the world. Now the web giants need to pay their fair share. By passing Bill C-18, we will set an example for other countries.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the clarion call the member for New Westminster—Burnaby has issued against the corporate gatekeeping that is present in places like Twitter, Facebook and Google. He talked about the misinformation, and we see that spill over into our politics. In the by-election in Portage—Lisgar, the biggest issue between the Conservatives and the PPC was the World Economic Forum. That is the height of intellectual debate in the Conservative movement right now in that riding because of misinformation.

This is a time when we do have to invest in our local media. I am always amazed at the difference between the conversations I see on Twitter and the ones I hear in real life when I am back in my riding speaking to real people. I think of news organizations like the Cowichan Valley Citizen, the Chemainus Valley Courier, the Lake Cowichan Gazette, the Goldstream News Gazette and Island Social Trends and the struggles they are all experiencing in reporting local news.

Could the member expand on how these local organizations are such a powerful antidote to that misinformation we see online?

Government Orders

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford is one of the best members of Parliament in the House. He works extremely hard in his community. The publications he has just outlined are some of the best community publications in the entire country. I am proud he represents that riding and those publications. They do terrific work.

He cites the issue of the Conservatives and misinformation. Stephen Harper was on the right hand of the World Economic Forum. That is what Conservative ministers did for a decade. Now they are pretending that somehow they have no connection with the World Economic Forum. It is crazy. It is a conspiracy theory for Conservatives to deny their past. I hope they will come clean to the Canadian public some day.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to read something for the member, because he has brought up a really interesting point about why Conservatives will not support this and why they seem uninterested in this bill.

This is from page 155 of the 2021 Conservative platform, which states, “Canada’s Conservatives will: Introduce a digital media royalty framework to ensure that Canadian media outlets are fairly compensated for the sharing of their content by platforms like Google and Facebook.” To me, this sounds exactly like what we are debating today.

This is not the first time the Conservatives have, in a very aggressive manner, gone after legislation on which they literally ran. We know it was the same thing with the carbon tax. Now they are doing it on this issue.

I wonder if the member from Burnaby can shed some light on this as to why the Conservatives would be so abjectly against something they ran on less than two years ago.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, he is referencing a platform that came from the member of Parliament for Durham as leader, and I have a lot of respect for him. He allowed us to unanimously support the ban on conversion therapy, which is extremely important.

Now there is a new leader, and the new leader, the member for Carleton, seems to be competing with Maxime Bernier to see who can be further right, who can be further extremist and who can talk more against the World Economic Forum and conspiracy theories. The old Conservative Party seems to be dead and a new Conservative Party is unfortunately very—

• (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do plan to expand on that point shortly, but before I do that, I want to provide a bit of a different perspective on how important Bill C-18 is. It needs to be placed in the real world context to see how it would protect our national community news agencies and media. It is so very important.

I often will go to a lot of events, as members on all sides of the House do. Often it is the community news people who are at those events, taking pictures, doing interviews and so forth. If it is a local basketball game or championship game at a local high school, it will be the local newspaper that highlights it.

I go to many different types of ethnic events. Whether it be the Pilipino Express News Magazine, Filipino Journal, Punjabi Today or CKJS radio, these community-driven news agencies, newspapers, radio and media are reporting on the things taking place. There are pictures and everything else incorporated.

While visiting constituents in their homes, I often see that they have a newspaper produced in the community. They will show me where their son or daughter's name is in that community newspaper or where a local community event is being profiled in the paper.

It does not matter whether people are from urban or rural communities, whether they are from the east or the west or up north, these small news agencies play a critical role in our community development and society as a whole and, absolutely, 100% with respect to our democracy. One of the fundamental pillars to a healthy democracy is to have a healthy media. That is why the minister of heritage has often talked about the importance of supporting journalism, supporting those news media outlets.

I believe the minister referenced the year 2008, a year when just under 500 media outlets of different sizes from different areas of the country completely disappeared. We should all be concerned about that. Local media is how we often find out about the birth of a child, or that someone has died or an announcement about a parade to be held in our community. It is often how we will hear about grand openings and so many other things. Not to mention that elected officials will often take political accountability by providing writing or commenting through local media.

I want people who are following the debate to understand just how important it is that we as a government are here to support our media. We are not the first government in the world to do so. We have heard about Australia and France. I believe that many countries around the world are following the debate on Bill C-18.

I am disturbed by the Conservative Party's approach to this legislation. All of us should be. Is it working with the giant tech companies? Has it been intimidated by the giant tech companies?

• (1330)

The member for Kingston and the Islands raised a quote. I would like to reinforce that. For my Conservative colleagues across the way, I suggest they look at that election platform, the platform that they shared with millions of Canadians in the last federal election.

Government Orders

Page 155 of the 2021 Conservative platform, which has a picture of the former leader on the front of it, says, “Canadian media is in crisis. The loss of digital advertising revenue to American tech giants like Google and Facebook is putting local newspapers out of business, costing Canadian jobs, and undermining our ability to tell local, Canadian stories.” I agree with that. In fact, if I did not tell people it was coming from the Conservative platform, I would feel very comfortable making that statement.

I will continue to read from the Conservative platform. It says, “Canada’s Conservatives don’t believe that the solution is for the government to provide direct funding to hand-picked media outlets”, and I disagree with that as I see the value in CBC and I will provide further comment on that shortly, “something that undermines press freedom and trust in the media. Instead, we will secure a level playing field for Canadian media, ensuring that Canadians are paid fairly for the content they create while encouraging the creation of more Canadian media and culture.” I have some difficulty with some of the things in that statement, but the Conservatives raise the importance of the issue.

It goes on to say, and this is the platform's bold statement, “Canada’s Conservatives will: Introduce a digital media royalty framework”, and that is what we are debating in Bill C-18, “to ensure that Canadian media outlets are fairly compensated for the sharing of their content by platforms like Google and Facebook.” If members were to review Hansard and the debate we have had on this, what are the two platforms we are talking about? Google and Facebook. This legislation is, in essence, taking what is in the Conservative platform.

It goes on to say, “Adopt a made in Canada approach that incorporates the best practices of jurisdictions like Australia and France.” Members on this side of the House have said that. The legislation and establishment of the framework is based on what has come out of Australia and France. Our legislation goes even further. It would ensure there is a higher sense of accountability and transparency.

Let us go back to the last federal election. In that election, Conservative candidates, 338 of them, had a platform document. Every one of them campaigned on that. The legislation we are debating, what we are proposing to do with this legislation, is fulfilling something they committed to doing. I would have thought the Conservative Party would have supported Bill C-18.

Why are the Conservatives not supporting it? We listened to the critic. We listened to a few other Conservatives. We get the impression that they have been intimidated by giant tech companies like Facebook and Google. What is the other option? That they agree? What about the commitment they made to Canadians? This is in opposition to that.

This is not the first time. They did the same thing on the price on pollution. They made a commitment and they broke that.

• (1335)

I would argue that this is not the same Conservative Party from the past. This is very much a Reform Party and maybe even further to the right than the Reform Party was. This is what Canadians need to be aware of.

Why would the Conservatives not want to protect the national interest and give more strength to our democracy by supporting Bill C-18? They have gone out of their way to protect those giants. I would be disappointed if the government were to back down because Facebook says it is going to pull its news ads. I am not a computer tech person. I know there are all sorts of things people can do through the computer and maybe they have ways they can pull out the news ads; I am not 100% sure how that works. However, what I do know is that I am not going to be intimidated, whether by Google or Facebook. If Facebook operators believe that they do not need those stories in order to sustain the type of growth that they have experienced and wealth that has been generated because of journalism that has been utilized through their companies at no cost, I will stand by Canadians. I am going to stand by our democracy. I am going to stand by the jobs and the importance of that industry because I recognize its importance.

The Conservatives have now said they are going to pull all stops out. They do not want this legislation to pass and they have been very clear on that.

I had posed a question in regard to the budget implementation bill when the leader of the Conservative Party had a big press conference. In the press conference, he said he was going to speak and speak. He has unlimited time on the budget implementation bill. He was going to continue to speak until ultimately the Prime Minister backed away and changed the budget, even though hundreds of millions of dollars are flowing through the budget implementation bill in order to support Canadians. A few hours later, that kind of fell flat. Why was that? It was because not only did the Liberals see through the charade, but opposition parties outside of the Conservatives saw the charade and the propaganda stunt that the leader of the Conservative Party was trying to pull off.

Just yesterday, with respect to Bill C-42, the corporations bill, the Conservative Party actually supported the legislation. Everyone supports the legislation. However, the Conservatives want to apply that very same principle in terms of what they want to apply to Bill C-18, and that is to prevent government legislation from passing. Therefore, the Conservatives continue to put up members to speak and if it were not for time allocation, again, that legislation would not have been able to pass.

Now, the Conservatives are shocked or at least surprised that the government has brought in time allocation on Bill C-18. They should not be surprised. After all, they just need to look at their record; they try to frustrate the House of Commons, to deny Canadians the opportunity to have legislative measures that are going to protect their interests. We have consistently seen that from the Conservative Party. The Conservatives put their political party and their fundraising ahead of the interests of Canadians.

Let us listen to the first question, when the Minister of Heritage was answering questions as to why time allocation was necessary. The first person up for the Conservative Party asked why the government was bringing in time allocation, saying that they should be allowed to have all of their members speak to the legislation.

Government Orders

• (1340)

They should do the math. If every member speaks, that means how many hours of debate? How many more hours are there before the summer recess? It is not a question of whether the Conservatives will allow the legislation to pass before the summer break, they want to kill the bill. They do not want the bill, period, end of story. That is their intention.

That is why I posed a question to my Bloc friend. The essence of the question was whether the member believes that the Conservatives, had we not brought in time allocation, would have allowed this bill to pass before the summer recess. If the member from the Bloc were to be honest with the chamber, he would probably recognize that the Conservatives have no intention whatsoever to pass this legislation, definitely not before the summer break. If we did not have at least one opposition party supporting what we are doing, this legislation likely would not see the light of day in terms of its passing.

I need to remind the Conservatives, as they like to remind us, about the last election and there being a minority government. In a minority government, we have to continue to be focused on Canadians, delivering legislative and budgetary measures and working with the opposition. Fortunately, most opposition parties have a more co-operative attitude and recognize that they too have a role to play in a minority government. It is not just the government's responsibility.

The only party that has failed to recognize that fact is the Conservative Party of Canada. It continues to believe its only role is to prevent legislation from passing. Then it criticizes us for bringing in time allocation motions and trying to limit debate on important pieces of legislation or budget measures. It is hard to take Conservatives seriously on things of that nature when we see them delay time and time again, such as with concurrence in committee reports. One of my favourites is when a Conservative stands and moves a motion for another Conservative to speak. Then there is a vote, which causes the bells to ring. Instead of debating, they try to determine which Conservative member should filibuster or they decide we are done for the day and move a motion to adjourn, again causing further delay. These are the types—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I am very entertained by my hon. colleague's speech, but I was wondering when he might discuss Bill C-18.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sure the hon. member will get there in the time he has remaining.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate input from the leader of the Green Party. I am not sure if she was here for the beginning of my comments. The bottom line is that it is important for Canadians to realize the degree to which the government is working with some opposition parties in this House in order to pass important legislation.

I indicated at the beginning of my remarks just how important our community media outlets are. With this legislation, we have the opportunity to ensure that Facebook, Google and the big giant tech companies are paying for what they are receiving and utilizing through media news outlets. We are attempting to ensure that we have healthier community news and a healthier democracy, as a direct result.

I indicated earlier that I would talk about CBC. We have a government that is committed to supporting CBC and I would love, during questions and comments, to hear some Conservative members make the commitment to support CBC Radio and CBC Television. I will not hold my breath on that point, but it sure would be nice for them to support that, if not Bill C-18.

• (1345)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I worked for community newspapers for more than 20 years. I believe the member is misleading Canadians when he said that this is somehow going to be a salvation for community news, as the vast majority of papers will not see a dime of this money because 70% goes to Rogers, Bell and large tech companies. The small community papers in our rural ridings with one journalist do not even qualify for this program.

I will tell the member this. The three things that really impacted community journalism and those community papers were the costs of using Canada Post and accessing the Internet; the CBC, which undercuts the advertising ability of small and medium outlets because they cannot compete with a subsidized giant like it; and the government withdrawing all of its advertising dollars from those small community papers that relied on those advertisements.

If the member thinks community journalism and community papers are so important and the heartbeat of our communities, how much money is the government spending on community papers through federal advertising dollars?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the federal government continues to support our community and news outlets in many different ways.

I guess that can be reversed. The member said he is concerned about the community news media outlets, yet even though Conservatives made an election platform promise, they reneged on that commitment.

At the end of the day, we have not only shown budgetary measures to support media outlets, but we have now also provided legislative outlets.

As the NDP House leader has very clearly indicated, whether with respect to the Saskatchewan or Alberta community newspapers, the New Democrats support this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his speech. He talked a lot about the Conservative Party's position, but also about time allocation. I would like to talk about the Bloc Québécois's position.

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A royalty fund financed with the revenues from Facebook and Google is being planned. Will local weekly newspapers be able to access this royalty fund? Maybe not. That is why the Bloc Québécois is proposing that a royalty fund be created for local weeklies.

A local weekly is extremely important for the life of the municipality. It reports on what is happening with the municipal council, in local businesses and in the local area. We are talking about everyday life in the municipality.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on the Bloc Québécois proposal to create a special royalty fund for local weeklies and small municipalities.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we went through quite an extensive process at the committee stage. I suspect the member will find that many of the concerns the Bloc had raised have already been addressed by the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

I recognize that the members of the Bloc support the legislation, but I question to what degree they support the speedy passage of the bill. We want to see it pass before the summer break.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I note that in his speech today the parliamentary secretary specifically talked about Conservatives now compared to those from back in the day and former Conservatives. He and I have spoken a lot about this in the House. However, what has been reported today are some comments from a former Conservative prime minister.

The CBC reported the following:

Former prime minister Brian Mulroney mounted a defence of one of his successors Monday, saying...the current Prime Minister has delivered on the “big ticket items” and history won't look kindly on Parliament Hill denizens who push “trash...rumours” and “gossip.”

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary has any insight into who he thinks the former prime minister is talking about when he makes reference to those who are spreading trash rumours, given that he is speaking so glowingly about the Prime Minister and the work this government has done.

• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that Brian Mulroney was a Progressive Conservative, as opposed to the current leader, who is kind of a Conservative-Reform-far-right leader. I would, first, start by saying that I do not think they are the same political entity.

In regard to his comments, we have, as a government, carried out some wonderful things with the support of Canadians, whether it is securing health care funding for future generations, \$200 billion to the establishment of the first-ever national housing program or the first-ever child care support program. These are national programs, not to mention the supports we have put in place for seniors going into the pandemic.

No government in the history of this country has signed off on as many trade agreements throughout the world, ultimately supporting Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it.

We want a government and an economy that is going to be there for all Canadians. That is what we have been striving for, while the Conservatives seem to be more focused on raising money than doing what is politically correct. That is why they are in opposition to this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member lamented that we were opposing and stalling their legislation. There is good reason for that: It is horrible legislation. It seems that what this bill is actually going to accomplish is to really muzzle Canadians from speaking, from sharing links and other news media. This is basically a muzzling of Canadians.

Does the parliamentary secretary not recognize that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think the legislation that the member is referring to is Bill C-11; on that bill, the Conservatives said that we were trying to muzzle Canadians, that we were not going to let them upload their cat videos and things of that nature. It is about misinformation.

Of course that was absolute hokum, misinformation. I suspect that the Conservative Party made a lot of money on Bill C-11, in terms of fundraising, by spreading misinformation. I do not know how long that particular piece of legislation was held up for. I think it was a record in terms of how long it was held up in the Senate.

The bottom line is that this is good legislation. All they need to do is read their election platform to see what they told Canadians in the last federal election, recognize the true value of this legislation and support it. It is not too late. One can always flip-flop again and support this legislation.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his intervention—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am going to interrupt the hon. member.

Order, please. Could members listen to the question being asked by the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about humility in the present context. I think this bill calls for that much-sought-after quality in our parliamentary debates. Humility is also about recognizing everyone's mistakes. In the present context, I think everyone agrees that the Bloc Québécois has contributed to and helped advance this legislative process.

However, it is nearly June 23 and we are down to the last minute. The government controls the order of business. The bill was sent to the Senate in February. Why has this been left to the last minute like this? Why did we not work on it earlier? If it was so predictable, why was the bill not fast-tracked through the order of business in the Senate so that it could be sent back to the House sooner?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think one has to look at it from the perspective of how the government has a finite number of hours in which we can actually have government business come before the House. Opposition members know that. That is one of the greatest tools that an opposition member has. I was in opposition for over 20 years. I understand the tool.

At the end of the day, if one continues to bring up concurrence reports, to move motions that other members be able to speak and to bring up dilatory motions in order to prevent debate from taking place, it is destructive. I agree that it is not the Bloc that is doing it and that it is the Conservative Party; that is why I emphasize and focus attention on the Conservative Party's irresponsible behaviour so much of the time. It is a destructive force here on the floor of the House of Commons. I too enjoy a good debate.

* * *

• (1355)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORDER AND DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a serious point of order with respect to the right of the member for Lethbridge to speak during the debate that is currently on in the House.

At the end of the time provided to question the Minister of Canadian Heritage for his use of time allocation on Bill C-18, the online news act, there was a heated exchange between the minister and the member for Lethbridge. It is no secret that the member for Lethbridge is a fierce critic of the minister and has opposed his legislation every step of the way. She makes the point that Bill C-18 is the next step in the government's censorship of the Internet. The member has repeatedly argued that the minister is the one rewarding tech giants, as he will give them more power with Bill C-18. The minister accused the member for Lethbridge of using the talking points of tech giants in opposition to the bill. In response, the member for Lethbridge accused the minister of lying.

We know that term is unparliamentary, and I accept the decision of the Assistant Deputy Speaker to call her to order. It should also be pointed out that, when one member makes a false claim about another member, it is not uncommon for disorder to follow. The member for Lethbridge did the right thing when she said clearly, "I will apologize for using that word." She went on to say, "He misinformed the House." This is a matter for debate, although for my part, I agree with her.

The Chair took exception to that comment, informing the House that the member for Lethbridge would not be recognized for the remainder of the day. To be clear, the member did not accuse the minister of deliberately misinforming the House. She simply made the point that the minister was misinformed and brought that misinformation to the House. At most, this is a point of debate. It is not something that a member should be sanctioned for.

The irony is not lost on me that the member is being censored during debate on what amounts to a censorship bill. In my view, this is a heavy-handed response from the Chair, given the poor be-

Points of Order

haviour of Liberal members in recent days. The Chair has accepted apologies for behaviour that is far more egregious without Liberal members attracting any sanction.

We can take the member for Kingston and the Islands as an example. Last week, he gave me the middle finger when I called him out for denying a unanimous consent motion that called for Paul Bernardo to be put back in maximum security. That member gave the most insincere apology I can recall in the House. There was no sanction for him. In fact, later that day, he was given the floor in the debate.

Therefore, I would expect that the apology from the member for Lethbridge would be accepted by the House and that the Chair would allow her to participate in the debate this afternoon. Further, the House would benefit from even-handed application of the rules that is not seen to benefit one party over another. I would like the Speaker to clarify how the rules should be applied, regardless of who is presiding over the debates.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order.

I was able to witness the whole process, in terms of what had taken place. There was no "heated exchange" between the two members; the minister was giving a response to a question, and he was constantly being heckled.

The Speaker at the time gave not one or two, but several warnings. They were not warnings about unparliamentary language; they were because the member continued to heckle, and she was warned to stop heckling. The unparliamentary language was only one part of it. She was actually told that if she did not stop heckling, then she would not be recognized.

It had nothing to do with the unparliamentary language. In fact, while the Speaker was making that ruling, I focused my attention on the member for Lethbridge, who did not stop talking. Reflecting on what took place, I do not think what the opposition whip has put on the record is fully accurate.

• (1400)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order.

I just wanted to make a point that the New Democratic Party would like to reserve the right to come back to speak to this issue at a later date.

Statements by Members

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I will speak to this now. In fact, when the Speaker thought the member was heckling and asked her to stop, she did not continue to do so. She was speaking to a colleague. However, when we consider the outrageous interruptions that came from the member who just spoke and the member for Kingston and the Islands during our leader's four-hour speech recently, when they would not allow him to even get through what he had to say minute to minute, we are talking about the acceptance of an apology that was given when demanded. It was accepted that the language that was spoken had been unparliamentary, and the apology was given. It is not consistent ruling for the member for Lethbridge to be told she cannot participate in debates afterward.

The Speaker: Not having been here in the chair when that was happening and not having witnessed it, I am hearing a he-said-she-said type of argument. I am going to need to go back, watch the video and consult with the table officers who were in the chamber to find out exactly what happened and how it evolved. I will come back at my soonest opportunity. Unfortunately, we do not have a lot of time left before the end of the year, and I am not sure how long it will take by the time we go through all the information, but I will be back as quickly as is humanly possible.

In the meantime, I want to remind all sides to please not call each other names or disrespect each other. Question period is coming up. Because both sides are so concerned with what is going on in the House, I am going to expect both sides to be very respectful of decorum, not shout at each other and be very respectful of the process.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as we approach the recess for the summer months, I usually look forward to a time of peace and reflection and to enjoying good weather, but this summer will be different. Due to the baked-in increase in temperatures resulting from our addiction to fossil fuels and our failure to act, we are going to have a rough summer. To all of my colleagues and everyone in their constituencies, I hope that they are spared climate events that are terrifying.

We know that the rest of the summer will continue hot and dry, which means more forest fires. In some places, it will be hot and wet. The Atlantic basin is hotter than it has ever been, which suggests that we are going to have a worse hurricane season. We are looking at climate threats of all kinds, and at this point we can only ask that we take care of each other, fortify our communities in resilience, and finally act to address the climate crisis.

* * *

FORCED LABOUR AND CHILD LABOUR

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month Bill S-211, the Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act, passed in the House and

received royal assent. The bill is now law. It is designed to rid our supply chains of slave products.

Simultaneously, in the town of Markham, Shein, a company notorious for selling products made by slaves and child labour at cheap prices, opened up a 170,000-square-foot distribution facility. Ordinary citizens have been protesting on the streets of Markham against having such a company in their community.

It is intended that Bill S-211 will be fully operational by this time next year, and the executives of Shein will have to file a compliance transparency statement to the Government of Canada.

The additional question is this: How did a company of such a notorious reputation get a building permit for a 170,000-square-foot facility in Markham? Does no one care, or is “cheapest product, any place, any time” the law of this land?

* * *

MILITARY HELICOPTER CRASH

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament of the riding that is home to Garrison Petawawa and the 450 Chinook Tactical Helicopter Squadron, it is my unfortunate duty to rise and acknowledge the training accident that occurred early this morning, involving four aircrew members of a CH-147 Chinook helicopter.

The training exercise was taking place at Garrison Petawawa along the Ottawa River, with the helicopter crashing into the water. At the time I received this information, two flight crew members had been rescued and two are unaccounted for.

As the representative of the close-knit military community at Garrison Petawawa, I know we all feel the effects whenever tragedy strikes any member of our military family. To the families of the 450 Chinook Helicopter Tactical Squadron and the families of the aircrew, the prayers and best wishes of the nation are with you at this time.

* * *

● (1405)

SICKLE CELL DISEASE

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was National Sickle Cell Awareness Day.

Sickle cell disease is a debilitating, inherited blood disease that causes those impacted to suffer from chronic pain, fatigue, social rejection and discrimination. Thousands of Canadians suffer from it, and support and treatment options have not improved for decades. Research and increasing awareness are critical.

Last week I attended the Sickle Cell Parliamentary Breakfast, which was hosted by the African-Canadian Senate Group. There I heard first-hand what this community needs and how we can best support them. It was an incredibly moving experience.

[*Translation*]

I thank the passionate supporters of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada and the Sickle Cell Anemia Association of Quebec for their work in raising awareness and creating a national sickle cell patient registry in co-operation with the Ottawa Hospital. I encourage all of my colleagues to learn more about this disease and to support the efforts of groups working toward better treatment options.

* * *

**FRANÇOIS PICARD, LIONEL BOURDON AND
HÉLÈNE BORDELEAU**

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to brag, but I sincerely think that my riding is home to the most incredible people in Quebec, people who are committed and involved in their community. Among them are three exceptional individuals whose work I want to recognize today because they are retiring.

The first is François Picard, who is retiring on June 30 after 41 years of service in Quebec's weekly newspaper industry. I want to congratulate him.

The second is Sergeant Lionel Bourdon, from the Longueuil police department, who retired just a few days ago after, believe it or not, 58 years of loyal service. He now holds the record for longest-serving police officer in Canada.

The third is Hélène Bordeleau, from the Table Itinérance Rive-Sud, who has worked for community organizations that strengthen the social safety net for nearly 40 years.

Today, before all of my colleagues here, I want to tell them how inspirational they are and how much their work has done to change the lives of the people of Longueuil—Saint-Hubert. I sincerely thank them.

* * *

[*English*]

BOLESŁAW JULIUS FUJARCZUK

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the life of Boleslaw Julius Fujarczuk, who passed away June 6, in his 99th year, after a long and remarkable life.

From proudly serving during the Second World War to earning notable commendations such as the Polonia Restituta Cross, the British Defence Medal and the British General Service Medal to becoming a successful businessman and prominent community leader, Boleslaw lived an extraordinary life.

Although he was involved in many Polish organizations in Canada, his most notable involvement was in the founding of St. Maximilian Kolbe church and the John Paul II Polish Cultural Centre in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Statements by Members

Our thoughts and deepest sympathies are with his loved ones and the entire family at this trying time, in particular with his children Richard, Teresa and Theodore.

On behalf of the people of Canada, I thank Boleslaw Julius Fujarczuk for his services. May he rest in peace.

* * *

BARRETT FAMILY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the saying goes that we cannot choose our family. The family that was chosen for me includes my grandad Francis and my late grandma Betty, who passed five months ago.

Married for more than 71 years, they dedicated themselves to community and family. Grandma was a dedicated daily volunteer at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish in Vanier, and grandad was dedicated in his work with the RCMP and CSIS.

An avid follower of politics and a proud Conservative, my grandad is my number one supporter and is counted among the family of members from all parties who are CPAC's most loyal viewers. Today, he might have a better view than watching on CPAC, and I am so proud to have seen him and my dad Chris on Parliament Hill today.

Who is his family? They are Betty, Greg, Chris, Anne, Audrey, Brian, Elizabeth, Matthew, Sulin, Allison, Kyle, Jeffrey, Vanessa, Neil, Kim, Daniel, Alexandra, Daniel, Aubrey, Luke, Ama, Michaela, James, Nathan, Santiago, Beatrice, Jack, Maggie, Bentley, Paisley and Keegan.

We do not get to choose them, but I know he does not have to grin and...bear it...because it is a blessing to be counted as a part of this family.

* * *

● (1410)

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS NEWMARKET

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Newmarket—Aurora has once again been provided with an uplifting musical experience courtesy of Visual & Performing Arts Newmarket.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary, the "Three for the Show" concert series has hosted some of the most celebrated and gifted classical and jazz music talent on the scene today.

The concert and its 25 years of musical performances serve as a reminder of the essential cultural importance and historical significance of music in building whole communities.

My gratitude goes out to the gifted performers and to VPAN for providing a platform to the brightest and most gifted in the performance arts industry today and the most promising young musicians of tomorrow.

Statements by Members

I thank VPAN and the Three for the Show committee of Erika Kerwin, Margaret Barkman, Judy Craig and Marcia Sinclair for their beautiful concert series.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EVENTS IN ALGOMA—MANITOULIN—KAPUSKASING

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is officially the first day of summer. There is no better place to spend those long summer days than Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

Whether we are talking about festivals, powwows or fairs, people can attend events all over Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

[*English*]

Next week, Elliot Lake will celebrate Uranium Heritage Days with special events and activities leading up to Canada Day. Hearst continues to celebrate its centennial with tons of activities during homecoming week.

Do you love powwows? There is one almost every weekend, from Sheguiandah First Nation to Michipicoten First Nation.

Do you love boating or camping? There is no shortage of lakes, including Lake Huron and Lake Superior.

Winnie's Hometown Festival in White River is the perfect place to celebrate the world's most famous bear, and the Wiikwemkoong Annual Cultural Festival should not be missed.

People will also find several agricultural fairs from Providence Bay to Bruce Mines. For music lovers, the Go North Music Festival, the Manitoulin Country Fest and Rockin' the Rock are a must.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, AMK is the place to be for fun in the sun, so come on over.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling with the cost of food, gas and housing expenses, but the Liberal government continues to tax Canadians, not once but twice, with a carbon tax.

The Liberal government has racked up a record amount of national debt, doubling it in recent years. We all know about carbon tax 1, which puts 41¢ a litre on gas. It is evident carbon tax 1 will cost \$1,500 per family after rebates. Now we have the sneaky carbon tax 2. The Liberals call it the fuel standard. Once again, Liberals leave families with nothing left in their pockets.

Do the Liberals know how much this will cost Canadians? No, they do not. It is a clear choice for Canadians. Do they want a Liberal government that taxes Canadians and puts our nation into greater debt, or do they want Conservatives, who will balance the budget, reduce debt and axe the tax?

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS IN SCARBOROUGH NORTH

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the school year concludes, allow me to recognize the hard work and achievements of students in my riding of Scarborough North over the past year.

Through the African-Canadian Christian Network, Black youth on the Umoja robotics team are being celebrated on the heels of their stellar performance at the provincials.

At the Spelling Bee of Canada regional competition, school-aged children spelled their way to success, with first-place winners moving on to the national championship.

Then there are extraordinary young leaders like Anastasia-Lina Hamici, graduating from École secondaire Étienne-Brûlé with a 95% average. Defying societal expectations, she is a young woman entering first-year engineering on a full scholarship, having founded a technical team and supported other girls passionate about STEM.

Congratulations to Anastasia-Lina and the thousands of students in Scarborough North and across Canada who are graduating this month. I am wishing them every success on their journey ahead.

* * *

● (1415)

FOOD INFLATION

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, food bank usage in Canada has reached record highs. According to Second Harvest, a not-for-profit organization, food banks are expected to serve 60% more people per month this year in comparison to 2022.

It is not only low-income people who are struggling. Many of those accessing the food banks are employed. Dalhousie University's "Canada Food Price Report 2023" stated that food inflation exceeded 10.3% in 2022. Unfortunately, halfway through 2023, it does not look any better, as the prices for fruits and vegetables are continuing to rise 7% with no end in sight. Consequently, it is harder for Canadians to meet their nutritional goals and properly nourish their families.

Whether people are buying for their own table or donating to the food banks for the millions of Canadians who rely on them, it is getting more difficult to keep up to the cost of groceries. These Liberal policies have evidently made life harder for everyone, regardless of income. It is imperative that the government reverse the inflationary spending and give Canadian families a break.

*Statements by Members***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my favourite season of the year: rodeo season. Next week, I am off to the greatest show on dirt: the Williams Lake Stampede. After that, it is Billy Barker Days and the Quesnel Rodeo.

There are only two things on everyone's mind back home, and those are the fast-paced, world-class rodeo action and what a disaster the current Liberal government has been.

The Liberals' carbon tax and massive deficit spending have the Cariboo bucking like a bull rider in the Sunday finals. After eight years of this Prime Minister, the cost of everything has doubled: housing, doubled; mortgages, doubled; rent, doubled; down payments, doubled. When mortgage renewals hit in four years, it will be like we are riding bareback without rigging. After eight years, it is time to cowboy up, trash the Liberal government and get Canada back on track to their home, my home, our home. Let us bring it home. Yee-haw.

* * *

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is privilege for a member of Parliament to introduce a private member's bill and work with colleagues toward a common cause. I am honoured to soon have this opportunity. During the last federal election, the Liberal Party shared with Canadians our ideas and our visions, one of which I am now working to advance.

Many Canadians have expressed concern about the export of horses for slaughter. Other countries have banned this practice, and I believe it is time for Canada to do the same. I proudly stand in this chamber to announce that when the House resumes for the fall session, I will introduce my private member's bill to ban the export of live horses for slaughter. This practice must stop.

As a sitting member of the agriculture committee, I look forward to working with my fellow committee members as well as members of Parliament on both sides of this House. I also look forward to hearing from Canadians, stakeholders and advocates to advance this important piece of legislation. I ask my colleagues and Canadians to join me.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the current Liberal government, the ultra-rich are getting richer and hard-working Canadians are falling further and further behind. The top CEOs are now making 243 times more than the average Canadian worker at their company. Loblaw CEO Galen Weston is paid \$11.79 million a year in salary, which is 431 times more than the average income of an employee at that company.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals and the Conservatives have repeatedly voted against making CEOs and big corporations pay their fair share. Instead of defending the rich, as the Liberals and Conservatives are doing, it is time we tipped the scales in favour of Canadians.

[*English*]

Today, I introduced a plan to fight corporate greed and end outrageous pay for CEOs. New Democrats believe, we believe, that Ottawa should work for hard-working Canadians, not for wealthy CEOs.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREST FIRES

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, wildfires continue to threaten my riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. The last evacuees are returning home, but we are certainly not celebrating yet, because they may have to evacuate again if the current dry weather conditions continue.

I want to thank all the firefighters who have come from abroad and from other provinces, as well as the military, for being there to help us fight these fires. I also want to thank everyone directly or indirectly involved in the evacuation and reintegration process.

A big thank you to the mayors of the cities who took in evacuees, namely Chibougamau, La Sarre, Val-d'Or, Senneterre, Quebec City, Roberval and Chicoutimi. Many thanks to Chantiers Chibougamau and Barrette-Chapais, who dug trenches to stop the threatening fires.

Finally, a special thank you to the mayors of the communities in my riding that were evacuated. They have acted quickly and with remarkable professionalism. The Bloc Québécois is with them in this critical situation. I thank them.

* * *

● (1420)

[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, either people gain control of their money or their money will control them. Thanks to the wasteful spending of the Prime Minister, Canadians' debt is controlling them with crippling interest rate highs. It is a broken promise, an empty promise that said the government would balance the budget or have Canadians' backs.

Oral Questions

However, since COVID-19, the Prime Minister has spent \$205 billion of taxpayer money on debt, apart from on COVID-19 problems, like how he spent \$27 million on bonuses for CMHC executives during the worst housing crisis in Canadian history, and \$8.6 million to renovate his taxpayer-funded cottage at Harrington Lake. In addition, \$210 million went to the corrupt and Communist Beijing-controlled Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Inflation makes Canadians' money worthless. It is theft and it is the direct result of a reckless government that spent \$100 billion before COVID-19. A promise made is a debt unpaid, and empty promises by the government are leaving Canadians with empty wallets.

* * *

BREAST CANCER SCREENING

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2020, 5,100 Canadian women died from breast cancer, and 12% of women in Canada will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. They are our mothers, sisters and daughters. They are all among us. Breast cancer screening is important for women of every age. Screening guidelines must be up to standard and based on science, because we know that early detection saves lives.

The government recently announced half a million dollars in funding for the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care to expedite the update of the breast cancer screening guidelines. This could not have been done without the voices of doctors, patient advocates and survivors like York Centre constituents Shira Farber and Adina Isenberg, broadcaster Kim MacDonald, and Ottawa advocate Julie Booker, who are among the many, many Canadian women from coast to coast.

We will keep working together to empower women to protect their health and choose evidence-based preventative health tools for early detection. Together, we can and will continue to work towards a brighter, cancer-free future for all Canadian women.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we need to restore confidence in our democracy after it was shaken by Beijing's interference.

That is why I have already spoken to the other opposition leaders and a minister in the Prime Minister's government about a public inquiry. The Conservative Party is prepared to share the names of non-partisan individuals acceptable to all members of Parliament as soon as the Prime Minister announces a public inquiry.

Will he do it now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said all along, foreign interference should not be a partisan issue. That is why, in the coming days, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities will con-

tinue to consult experts, lawyers and the opposition parties to determine the next steps and the best person to lead this work.

In the meantime, we will continue working to combat foreign interference in our democracy, as we have done since taking office. We hope that the opposition parties will treat this issue with the seriousness that it deserves and that Canadians expect.

* * *

● (1425)

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, eight years of this Prime Minister's promises and actions have brought suffering to Canadians.

In a letter to one of our MPs and the Journal de Montréal, Émilie Choquet said that rising interest rates will soon force her family to sell their home because monthly payments have increased from \$2,300 to \$3,700. She may lose her home because this government's inflationary policies are boosting interest rates.

Will he reverse his policies so people can keep their homes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government implemented concrete measures to help families like Émilie's. The Conservative Party voted against those measures.

For example, the dental benefit will help Émilie's kids and those of families like hers. There is also assistance for low-income renters and the grocery rebate. We are making these investments to help families get through this. Meanwhile, we are building a stronger economy with good jobs for years to come and investing in housing.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claimed that the government would take on debt so Canadians would not have to, forgetting, of course, that it is Canadians who pay all of that debt through their taxes, and now they are paying it because they have the biggest household debt of any country in the G7. In fact, family debt in Canada is bigger than our entire economy, prompting our banking regulator, today, to force banks to take on more of a rainy day fund to face down future defaults that they expect will rise as a result of growing interest rates.

The Prime Minister's inflationary policies are driving up interest rates on Canadian mortgage holders. Will he balance the budget to bring down inflation and interest rates so Canadians can keep their homes?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling, and that is why we continue to step up with investments to help them out: with dental care, with support for low-income renters, with investments in housing and with investments in supporting families. At the same time as the Conservative Party is proposing cuts and austerity, we are continuing to invest.

If the Leader of the Opposition really wants to come clean with Canadians, will he talk about whether he is going to cut child care for families, dental care for children or better health care services? These are the things he will be cutting.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, after eight years, is imposing austerity on Canadians.

I just told the story, in French, of a Quebec family that has seen its mortgage payments rise by 64%. The mother of that family is living austerity by having to cut back on her expenses and probably move into a tiny apartment as a result of the Prime Minister's inflationary spending. Even the finance minister admits that deficits drive inflation and that inflation drives higher interest rates for families just like this one.

Will the Prime Minister reverse his deficits and balance the budget to bring down inflation and interest rates, so Canadians can keep their homes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is proposing cuts in supports to Canadians at the same time as Canada actually has the lowest deficit in the G7, has the best debt-to-GDP ratio of the G7 and has preserved its AAA credit rating. That is so we can continue to be there to support Canadians with investments in them, in their families, in housing and in the kinds of supports that the Leader of the Opposition would cut.

The Leader of the Opposition is just continuing his attacks to try to distract from the underwhelming election results he got last night.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is overwhelming is the debt he has imposed on the backs of hard-working Canadians, Canadians who now face the loss of their homes as a result of his inflationary policies. After eight years, the cost of rent has doubled. After eight years, the cost of a mortgage payment has doubled. After eight years, the needed down payment for the average house has doubled. Now, because of the massive mortgages he told Canadians would be consequence-free, which they now hold and now pay higher interest rates on, many could lose their homes.

Will he reverse these inflationary policies so Canadians can keep their homes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, see how quickly he pivoted away from the disastrous by-election results they got last night.

The fact of the matter is that we are going to continue to stay focused on investing in Canadians, on putting forward a positive vision of this country that is resonating from—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1430)

The Speaker: I am sorry; I am going to interrupt the Prime Minister.

I want to remind the hon. members that, this morning, there was a dust-up over name-calling and shouting. After hearing a point of order, I really expected everything to be calm, and it started off that way. I feel silly standing up here asking members not to call each other names or to yell at each other.

I will let the Prime Minister continue.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to put forward a positive vision for Canadians for the future, investing in great jobs, investing in fighting climate change and supporting families through the challenging times they are in right now. While the Conservative Party continues to promote cuts, division and anger, we are going to continue with a positive vision for the future.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were prepared to give the government the benefit of the doubt. Its plan to avoid an independent public inquiry on Chinese interference at all costs was hardly a resounding success. Its approach, which consisted of appointing a special rapporteur reporting exclusively to the Prime Minister, was an abysmal failure.

Then, all of a sudden, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities showed some openness to a public inquiry, just as the House prepares to rise for the summer. Honestly, some people are starting to wonder whether the House and the media are being taken for a ride. When is the government going to launch the inquiry?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after the opposition parties turned this issue into a partisan free-for-all through personal attacks against the former governor general, we offered to work with them to create a process that everyone could agree on and that would not be spoiled by acrimonious partisan debates. That is why we are currently discussing positive proposals with the different parties to find a way for everyone to take this matter seriously, as we, the government, have done from the start.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc has taken the high road throughout this debate.

It is a strategy as old as time: lip service to appease the opposition until the end of the session in the hopes that media attention will be elsewhere in the fall. Even worse, he could try to convince his good friends in the NDP to settle for a parliamentary committee over the summer instead of a full-fledged inquiry—a classic move.

This needs an inquiry now, with a chair appointed now and voted on now by the House, not parliamentary “arguing”, not offloading responsibility. It is now that it is happening—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after the partisan excesses that the other parties have been responsible for in recent months, we are here to work together with them to show that we can all take the issue of foreign interference seriously. That is why we are working with them now to determine the next steps. We have always taken this issue seriously, and we will continue to do so, regardless of the partisan games the opposition parties play if they come back to this.

* * *

[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, countless affordability societies warn of the repercussions when people have to spend more than 30% of their income on rent, but in Toronto, over 40% of people exceed that amount. Things are getting very, very difficult for Canadians. While corporate landlords are making massive profits, Canadians are struggling.

When will the Prime Minister understand we are on the verge of a catastrophe?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know Canadians are struggling with the cost of housing, whether it is a young family looking to buy their first home or a student struggling to pay the rent. That is why we have been taking action on many fronts. We are helping Canadians save up for their first home. We are investing in building and repairing more homes, including through supporting local governments to fast-track the creation of 100,000 new homes. We are providing support for low-income renters. We are also ensuring that houses are used as homes by curbing unfair practices that drive up prices, including with a foreign homebuyers ban and a federal anti-flipping rule.

We will continue to support Canadians challenged with housing.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Liberal government are not responding with the urgency that Canadians need.

[Translation]

July 1 is just around the corner. In Quebec, July 1 is not only Canada Day, it is also moving day.

The Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal has been contacted by 314 families who are losing their housing. The city expects to be able to provide emergency housing to around 40 families.

Does the Prime Minister realize how stressful this is for these families?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to be there with programs and plans to address this housing crisis across the country.

Our plan is to collaborate with the municipalities, including by investing \$4 billion to speed up residential construction approvals, and by creating 100,000 new housing units. We are tying infrastructure investment to housing. We are helping Canadians save money to buy their first home. We are providing help to low-income

renters, and we are converting surplus federal lands to affordable housing, among other things.

We will continue that work.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety peddled fiction on his rifle hunting ban, he peddled fiction to a judge and he peddled fiction to the families of the victims of a murderer and serial rapist. It is either gross incompetence or a deliberate attempt by his own staff to protect the minister with plausible deniability. Both seem to be a pattern in the government. They do not read emails, they do not get briefed and they do not know anything.

How many times can one minister peddle fiction in his or her portfolio until the Prime Minister fires somebody in the government? Maybe the direction is coming from the top.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is reckless to public safety is when we have a Conservative Party of Canada that proposes to make AR-15-style firearms legal again. On this side of the House, we propose to ban them and buy them back to protect our communities. What is reckless is when one either introduces legislation that is unconstitutional or just filibusters. That is what is reckless to public safety.

On this side of the House, we put forward legislation that is there to protect Canadians. We do it in a way that is constitutional. That is my focus, and that is the focus of this government.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one would think that at this point the minister would stop peddling fiction.

Oral Questions

The minister knows that he can mandate that offenders like Bernardo be kept in maximum security, not the individual but a class of the most horrific offenders. The Liberals would know that they can step in and do something about the transfer, like the last Conservative government did in 2013. The minister actually discussed options with his own staff, but he did not do anything and he knew for three months. Now they are saying they have a brand new system in place that will tell them what is happening in their own ministries.

They owe the families an explanation, but at the very least he owes this House a resignation.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is preposterous to hear the Conservatives continue to stand up when their record is one of cuts. In their last year of government, in 2014-15, they cut \$300 million from the Correctional Service of Canada. We put that money back and we continue to invest in that institution so we can protect Canadians. That is our focus: protecting Canadians.

The Conservatives can go on with cuts. They can go on with filibustering. Canadians will see through all of that. On this side of the House, we will continue to focus on protecting Canadians.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are wondering why the Prime Minister has not done more to safeguard our democratic systems. We know that he was briefed on foreign interference six times in the last five years, we know that members in this very House have been intimidated by Beijing and we know that on two occasions this House has directed the Prime Minister to have a public inquiry on foreign interference.

Will he commit to having a public inquiry on foreign interference today?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always taken the issue of foreign interference seriously. That is precisely why, since our government was elected, we put in place measures to strengthen our democratic institutions.

We are continuing to work with opposition parties because Canadians expect all people in this place to put partisanship aside and put the values of protecting our democracy at the forefront. Members opposite can laugh, but we take foreign interference very seriously.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is evident that they do not take it seriously. After eight years, the Prime Minister has yet to call a public inquiry into foreign interference. In fact, he continues to stand in the way and enjoy the status quo because it benefits the Liberals. After seven months, all he did was appoint a special rapporteur, one who had to resign as a result of a conflict of interest.

After seven months, two votes in Parliament and no public inquiry, will he stand up today and support a public inquiry on foreign interference, yes or no?

• (1440)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really disappointing to see the Conservatives back to their partisan games when it comes to foreign interference. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has been consulting with all parties in this place because we want to get to a place where Canadians can have trust in these institutions and where we can tone down the political rhetoric.

I am very disappointed to see the Conservatives with their personal attacks instead of rolling up their sleeves and getting to work to ensure that all Canadians have trust in their democratic institutions. That is precisely what we are focused on, and we are not going to be distracted by partisan games.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for weeks we have been asking for a public inquiry into foreign interference in the affairs of our country. The many stories that have been made public are worrisome. For example, members of the House and their families have been victims of an intimidation campaign. That is significant.

No one can understand why the government continues to ignore the House's calls to get to the bottom of this matter. What is stopping the Prime Minister from backing down and ordering a public inquiry?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is having positive discussions with the opposition about this matter.

We will look for the best way to engage with Canadians in order to spark a constructive conversation about how we can build on our efforts to fight foreign interference. Enough with the game-playing and squabbling. That is what the Conservatives are focusing on. On this side, we will keep working to protect our democratic institutions.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think I am squabbling with anyone.

There is another troubling matter I want to raise. Paul Bernardo got permission to leave his maximum-security prison and transfer to a more lenient one, despite the horrific crimes he committed. We know that the Minister of Public Safety has the power to stop this transfer. He can issue directives to this effect, and has done so in the past. However, he refuses to do it now. This is just one more item to add to his long list of bad decisions.

Does the Prime Minister still have confidence in his Minister of Public Safety?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I was informed on May 30 of Mr. Bernardo's transfer, I took action by contacting the board. Now a review is under way.

I have also issued new instructions to the department to ensure that victims are informed before decisions like this one are made. We will continue to make the necessary investments to keep our communities safe.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for Quebecers, July 1 is not a day to celebrate; it is a nightmare. July 1 is just a week and a half away and hundreds of people do not know where they are going to live because we are in the midst of a housing crisis. In five years, Quebec will be short 50,000 social housing units. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer's 2021 findings, if we rely on funding from Ottawa, we will not have any more social housing units.

The federal strategy is a failure that barely maintains the status quo. In other words, there will be no more housing units available in the future than there are today. When will this government truly address this housing crisis?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take it personally when I hear the Bloc Québécois saying that July 1 is a nightmare. I take that as an attack and an insult against Canada. We live in a country is celebrated around the world, a country where people can live with dignity and where governments are there to support their society. It is a country where we stick together and help each other out, where we can be different, but equal, and live together in harmony.

I know that the Bloc Québécois wants to get away from Canada. However, Canada will be there today and tomorrow, whether the Bloc likes it or not.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I invite the minister to come and walk the streets of Longueuil on July 1. He will see whether it is a nightmare or not.

The Liberals' investments are barely enough to maintain the status quo. We have no new affordable housing. They say that everything is going well for families in greater Montreal, who the federal government is forcing to compete for the same housing that keeps getting more and more expensive, but let them come and tell that to the people of Rimouski, Granby and Drummond, where the vacancy rate is 0.4 %. Anyone who manages to find housing there should go buy a 6/49 lottery ticket.

We are in an unprecedented housing crisis. When will the federal government make investments to adequately address this crisis—

• (1445)

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I would like to tell him that I have toured a number of regions in Quebec and that I am very aware of the vacancy rates.

That is why we have put in place a housing accelerator for municipalities, and they are very happy to have this fund. They can start sending in applications immediately.

We will continue to increase the supply of affordable housing across the country, including in Quebec.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, “low rental housing stock disproportionately impacted low-income renters.” This is not from the Bloc Québécois, but rather from CMHC's annual report.

The federal corporation itself has found that the federal strategy is abandoning the less fortunate. We need 1% for housing. We are not talking about housing for the wealthiest 1%, but about 1% of federal revenues invested in housing, with Quebec's share transferred to build social and community housing.

We are in a housing crisis, so it seems to me that 1% is not too much to ask.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that housing is a provincial jurisdiction, and that we are very pleased to be able to work with the provinces and municipalities.

Unlike a party on the other side of the House that insults municipalities, we want to work with all municipalities and stakeholders to build the housing that everyone needs.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from big cities to small towns, everyone is paying the price of Liberal inflationary deficits. After eight years of the Prime Minister's spending, Canadians are feeling the pain. The devastating reality is that those Liberal policies are the direct cause of Canadians' hardship, resulting in record food bank usage and housing becoming unaffordable for regular Canadians.

The Liberals, propped up by the NDP, just poured another \$60 billion of fuel on the inflationary fire. When will the Prime Minister end his inflationary spending so Canadians can keep their homes and afford the basics?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night voters in Winnipeg, in Montreal and in historic numbers in Oxford showed up to vote against the reckless austerity, partisan populism and ugly American-style attacks of the Conservative Party. Thousands of Canadians looked at the Twitter attacks, the video stunts and the artful alliterations of the Conservative leader, saw them for what they were and opted to support a real plan to support Canadians, to invest in communities and to build an economy that works for everyone.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe two Conservatives were successful yesterday.

Increasingly, from across the country, we are hearing from Canadians who are hurting. Mortgages have doubled, rents have doubled and Canadians are visiting food banks in record numbers. One has to ask what the cause of this pain is. Experts agree that the cause is the Liberal government's inflationary spending.

My question for the minister is simple. Will he rein in the deficit spending that is causing inflation?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite said is completely false. You are a fantastic referee, but let us bring in an international referee on the health of Canada's economy.

A report today from the International Monetary Fund said that Canada has an enviable fiscal position, the best fiscal position in the G7. Members do not have to take it from us. They can take it from the IMF. That means we can invest in Canadians, grow the economy, stabilize health care and not take any lessons from the Conservative austerity caucus.

The Speaker: Before we go to the next question, I just want to point out that we started off really well and things seem to be deteriorating. I just want to ask everyone to take a deep breath. It is almost like a rumble in the background. I also want to point out that, while it is nice to see both sides talking to each other, members should not shout across the floor.

The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

* * *

HOUSING

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, Liberal-driven inflation is costing Canadians. The Prime Minister's massive deficit spending has caused record inflation and resulted in repeated interest rate hikes. Canada's housing market is now the most at risk of any developed country. The latest rate hike is devastating for the nearly half of all homeowners who are already struggling to keep up with their mortgage payments.

Will the Prime Minister stop spending so that Canadians can keep a roof over their heads?

• (1450)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the member seems to be talking about are things that we are doing for Canadians, like the Canada child benefit, the Canada workers benefit, the climate action initiative, dental care, rental and grocery rebates. One thing we know is that this government, since 2015, has had the backs of Canadians.

When it comes to affordability, what speaks more than child care? We are glad that the NDP, Conservatives, Bloc Québécois and Greens all voted together to make life more affordable for Canadian families through child care and a publicly-managed, primarily not-for-profit, system that benefits our children, families and Canadians.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even the Liberal finance minister has admitted that her government's deficit spending is fuelling inflation, but the Liberals

Oral Questions

just keep pouring fuel on the inflationary fire. After eight years, Canadians cannot afford it. The more that those Liberals spend, the more costs go up, and the more unaffordable it is for Canadians to feed and house their families.

Canadians need the Liberals to finally show some restraint. When will the Prime Minister end his inflationary spending so that Canadians can finally feel some relief?

[Translation]

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, Canadians remember how Conservatives handled things before 2015. Their cure-all for tough times and economic uncertainty was always cuts. The problem is that cuts hit the most vulnerable and needy the hardest.

Members on this side of the House will always be there to help people in need with dental care, child care rebates and all the other measures we have introduced since taking office in 2015.

* * *

[English]

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new study from the Breakfast Club of Canada shows that 84% of Canadians want a national school meal program implemented immediately. The Liberals promised to create the program two years ago, but they still have not delivered. Meanwhile, schools are cutting services that feed kids, because they cannot afford to pay for the program due to the rising cost of food.

When will the Liberals keep their promise and implement a national school meal program?

Oral Questions

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that times are tough for Canadian families right now, and we know that we need to ensure that our most vulnerable, our children, are protected. That is why, since 2015, we have been working to reduce child poverty and support the families that need it the most. We have done it through the child Canada benefit, we have done it through other measures, including affordability in child care, and we will continue to work.

We know that school food programs are important, and that is why we continue to work together across the aisle to ensure that we meet the needs of Canadian children.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Edmonton now has one of the fastest-growing monthly rent prices in the country, increasing nearly 16% over the last year. Young people cannot keep up, and Liberals are not doing anything. They will not protect young people from corporate landlords, who are handing out eviction notices to jack up the rent. They are not investing properly into building affordable units. They are leaving young people to fend for themselves, while corporate landlords keep getting richer.

Will the Liberals invest in safe, affordable, community-based housing so that young people can actually afford to rent in Edmonton?

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Across the country, Canadians are having a hard time paying the rent or even just finding housing they can afford. We pledged not only to build more housing faster, but also to deal with renovations through legislation.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the modernized Official Languages Act has just been read the third time and passed in the Senate. I consider this a major step forward towards the substantive equality of both of our official languages. Could the minister tell us how this legislation will enable us to support official language minority communities, promote our two official languages, and better protect French across the country?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is some good news: The Senate has just confirmed that Bill C-13 has received royal assent. I am extremely proud of the work we accomplished to modernize the Official Languages Act. This legislation will better equip us to slow the decline of French and more effectively protect our official language minority communities. It will also require the adoption of an immigration policy, strengthen the powers of the Commissioner of

Official Languages, and provide official language minority communities with new tools to maintain their vitality.

Today is a good day for official languages.

* * *

● (1455)

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the current government, Canadian farmers are literally paying for the Liberals' carbon tax failures. Canadian farmers will pay \$150,000 a year in carbon taxes alone, but the Liberals have not hit a single emissions target.

What is better than making farmers pay for one failed carbon tax? How about two? On July 1, the Liberals are introducing a second carbon tax that will increase the price of feed, fuel and fertilizer, which will also drive up the cost of food at the grocery store.

With more than eight million Canadians already relying on a food bank every single month, my question for the government is this. How many farmers are going to go bankrupt and how many Canadians are going to go hungry paying for another failed carbon tax?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, my colleague is twisting information. He is talking about a typical 5,000-acre farm. The average farm in Canada is 809 acres. He is presuming that farmers will not make any effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but they are always doing precisely that. They are the first to be affected by climate change. They are the first to want more information, to want to adopt good practices and acquire new technologies.

We are there to help them with a \$1.5-billion investment.

[English]

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see that the minister is not denying that Canadian farmers are being punished with two carbon taxes. In fact, they are facing the highest inflation rates in 40 years. Nowhere is that more acute than with the price of food, which is already up 10%.

However, rather than offering support for Canadians, the Liberals are doubling down with a second carbon tax. What will that do? We are seeing forecasts that food prices will go up another 34% over the next two years, adding another \$5,000 to the annual food costs of Canadians.

Oral Questions

Again, when the government introduces a second carbon tax, how many farmers will go broke and how many Canadians will go hungry?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member from across would really like to talk about the clean fuel regulations, let us talk about that. It is kind of interesting, because Alberta itself has clean fuel regulations. What does that do? It actually incents cleaner fuels, but it also works to support emerging industries, like biofuels, which I think are quite popular in his part of the country as well.

What we are doing is not just regulations. There are incentives and supports to make sure we have an all-encompassing program. It is not only going to reduce emissions, but it is also going to create new industries and new renewable fuels, which are so important for our future.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is official Liberal policy to make energy more expensive.

It takes energy to manufacture fertilizer. It takes energy to ship fertilizer to the farmers. It takes energy to spread fertilizer. It takes energy to harvest crops. It takes energy to ship crops to processors. It takes energy to process crops into food. It takes energy to ship the food to stores.

Why does the Prime Minister not understand that higher energy prices lead to higher food prices, forcing Canadians to go hungry?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a clean technology program. We are talking about half a billion dollars' worth of investment in clean technology. One of the innovations that could be deployed across the country is the use of agricultural manure as a source of energy. There is tremendous potential in this area for our farmers.

We will continue to support them in that regard.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government does not have a plan for making food more affordable. The many carbon taxes and the fertilizer tariff have only increased the price of food from farm to table. In Canada, production costs keep increasing, and farmers have been completely abandoned by this government.

That was evident in the last budget. Less than 1% of the budget was allocated to agriculture. The Liberals are ignoring a real economic driver.

When will the government implement real measures to support farmers and make production more affordable?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that my colleague should show a little more humility and look at the history of the last Conservative government, which cut hundreds of millions of dollars in

risk management programs and hundreds of millions of dollars in research and innovation programs.

Our government is there, and we are investing. We increased funding for the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership by half a billion dollars. We are investing \$1.5 billion in clean technologies, new practices, and research and innovation to help the sector be more resilient.

* * *

● (1500)

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the forest fires are having a major impact on Quebec's forestry industry. It is too early to assess the losses, but it is already too late to guarantee that our producers will resume operations in time to save jobs. The Bloc Québécois has proposed solutions in partnership with the Association québécoise des entrepreneurs forestiers, which represents Quebec forestry companies.

There needs to be compensation for the loss of equipment, including the cost of deductibles. We need to have programs like the ones we used during the pandemic to cover fixed costs and provide a wage subsidy to keep workers employed. Will the government work with us to bring in these solutions?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the wildfires have had an impact right across the country, and are having an impact on residents but also on businesses in every part of the country. Through working with our provincial partners, the disaster financial assistance arrangements will be there to support those businesses and communities for eligible expenses. We also know that we have to invest in future resiliency in our provinces as well.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the forestry producers are worried, as are the workers. The seasonal workers in the forestry sectors are all at a standstill with no prospect of returning to work. They are worried because all the hours they are losing today will not count toward the EI threshold at the end of the season. The government is being flexible in the short term, and we applaud that. Will the government extend the qualifying period to 104 weeks to prevent these missing hours from putting our workers in a precarious position in the fall?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague just said, we will all be there for all the provinces, including Quebec. We are of course working with workers' associations and with employers to ensure that the workers get the support they need during these difficult times. We are working with Service Canada to ensure that the workers have access to EI, and we will continue to do so.

Oral Questions

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as summer starts, the Liberals are going to rain on everyone's Canada Day parade.

On July 1, Canadians will be forced to pay a second carbon tax. Combined with the first carbon tax, gas prices will go up eventually to 61¢ per litre. It does not stop there. They are going to raise both of the carbon taxes so that every Saskatchewan household has to pay another \$3,000 per year.

After eight years of the Liberal government, Canadians cannot afford another tax increase by the government. Will the Liberals listen to Canadians and cancel both of their failed carbon taxes before July 1?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, if the member opposite wants to talk about clean fuel regulations, let us do that. I thought the party opposite was really interested in technological solutions to climate change.

Let us talk about how clean fuel regulations help to drive clean technologies. That means better biofuels, developing through hydrogen, all of which support our economy of the future.

It is very important that we take this step. It is not just one thing in isolation. It is the fact that we have a clean fuel fund that helps to support people. We have an all-encompassing framework that covers all sectors of our economy so that we can plan for a strong economy in the future.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Nova Scotia forestry industry employs thousands. This is a traditional way of life and a major employer for rural communities. Atlantic Canadians have been affected by the carbon tax more than any other region in the country, and now the Liberals are implementing a second carbon tax.

Farmers and fishers are exempt from the carbon tax but not foresters, and they demand equal treatment. Atlantic Canadian premiers have spoken out against the 61¢-a-litre carbon tax.

Why is the Liberal government hell-bent on punishing Atlantic Canadians and the foresters with a \$33-billion industry?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly important that parties around the House actually have a plan to address climate change, but we must do so in a manner that is affordable.

The price on pollution is done in a manner where eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back than they actually pay. It is an effective manner for addressing climate change.

One of the political parties in the House, in the platform that it ran on in 2021, says, "We recognize that the most efficient way to reduce our emissions is to use pricing mechanisms." That was the Conservative Party of Canada.

● (1505)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the eight years this government has been in power, it has been touting that it is working to reduce greenhouse gases. Now, its solution is to introduce a second carbon tax. It is also saying that it will not affect Quebecers. That is not the truth.

This second Liberal carbon tax will cost Quebecers more than \$430. This government must stop taxing Canadians and take concrete action to achieve environmental results. Will the Prime Minister cancel this second carbon tax, which takes effect on July 1?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that when we took stock of our greenhouse gas emissions, we saw that they were starting to decrease, which means that the work we are doing is reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, if we want to talk about clean fuel, that is something that is going to help the economy as well, so we are doing two things at once. There are regulations, but there is also financial support for people who produce clean fuels. This is very important for our economy of the future.

* * *

[English]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last two years have put our transportation sector through a lot, from the COVID-19 pandemic to extreme weather to the Russian war on Ukraine.

As we head into another busy summer travel season, could the Minister of Transport provide us with an update on what our government is doing to support Canadians and build a strong federal transportation sector?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is correct. The aviation sector around the world has experienced significant disruptions over the last couple of years, and Canadian workers and travellers have felt it here at home.

We promised Canadians to take action on lessons learned. So far, we have strengthened passenger protection rights. We are working to modernize CATSA, and today I had the honour of tabling Bill C-52, which would enhance service standards for airports and airlines, and enhance transparency.

This is great news for Canadians. I look forward to working with my colleagues on advancing this important legislation.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

• (1510)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for eight years, the carbon tax has had an impact across the country, even in Quebec, despite what the minister and the Prime Minister are saying.

As if that were not enough, the government will be imposing a second carbon tax as of July 1. Quebec families will be paying an average of \$436 a year for this new measure they really do not need.

Since we know that families are already stretched to the limit and struggling to get by, will this Prime Minister show some common sense and cancel this new tax?

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, I am so disappointed when I hear my Conservative colleagues from Quebec still talking about cancelling the carbon tax or pollution pricing, as they say. If there is one thing Quebecers understand, especially those currently affected by the forest fires, it is the costs that climate change will generate across the province and the country. If there is one thing the Conservatives campaigned on in 2021, it is pollution pricing. So they are going back on their word as well.

On this side of the House, we are going to continue to fight climate change.

The Speaker: I would like to remind members that, when they read out a text, the light can vary depending on how they hold the document. This is just a little reminder to help them to read out their text.

The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these Liberals have had eight years of blaming everyone and everything for their failures, and they have failed yet again.

This time the Liberals have failed to release quotas for northern cod, east coast capelin, mackerel and southwestern Nova Scotia herring on time. Harvesters and processors cannot count on the fisheries minister to deliver the decisions that their livelihoods depend on.

Will the Liberal government stop failing the fishing industry and announce these quotas immediately?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my goal is to grow Canada's fish and seafood sector, and to do it in a sustainable way so it is there for the long term and for the next generations.

With respect to the stocks mentioned, decisions have not yet been made. When they are made, I will announce them for the member and for all the fish harvesters in eastern Canada.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the chair of the public safety committee.

Just before question period, members of the committee were informed that the meeting had been cancelled for this afternoon. We were told that all parties had consented to this. None of the opposition parties have consented to this. I can only think that the reason the meeting has been cancelled on such short notice is to protect the Minister of Public Safety from a Conservative motion calling on him to appear to answer questions about the Bernardo transfer.

Could the chair of the public safety committee tell the House why the Liberals are going this far to protect the Minister of Public Safety? Why did they cancel the meeting?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have seen—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

Can I have the person who is going to answer the question please stand up?

The hon. government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, what we have seen, unfortunately, over the last three weeks is a party that is bent on obstructing everything at every turn, whether it is members pretending to have technical problems they do not have, members raising phony points of order or members screaming and yelling when others are trying to talk and have the floor.

They know very well the decision in question was made independently by corrections, and what they are covering up is the ability of the House to do its work on behalf of Canadians. We will not be deterred. We will continue the business of this nation. We will adopt the legislation that is needed, and we will be there for Canadians.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a free and independent press is vital to our democracy. Last week, we learned that 1,300 families were affected by Bell's layoffs, while the online platforms and web giants benefit from access to the Canadian market, but have no responsibility towards our artists, creators and local Canadian media. That is another example of why we need Bill C-11 and Bill C-18 to make the web giants pay their fair share to our local media.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell the House how our government made a commitment to defend our democracy?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle for her question and her absolutely great work.

Bill C-18 is crucial to save our newsrooms and make web giants pay their fair share. However, at every step of the process, Conservative politicians have filibustered to block passage of Bill C-11 and Bill C-18, because they would rather defend web giants than defend Canadians, jobs and our freedom of the press.

On this side of the House, we will continue to stand up for our democracy. We did it in the past, we are doing it today, and we will continue to do it.

* * *

[English]

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, rising food prices are putting pressure on families. Edmonton's Food Bank has had to cut the amount of food in its hampers by 25% to meet demand, and 40,000 Albertan kids who get lunch at school will go without once the school rises for the summer. Grocery CEOs are making millions in surplus profits, and the government is doing nothing to help Canadians. While the Prime Minister and the leader of the official opposition have private chefs and fridges full of food, Canadian children are going hungry.

When will the Prime Minister finally start tackling corporate greed and implement a windfall tax?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that food insecurity has been on the rise, and we continue to make investments to support those facing hardships. We have made significant investments for Canadian families through targeted social programs and income supplements such as the CCB so families do not need to make difficult choices when it comes to food and other essential needs.

We have made funding available to food banks and charities, and we will continue to trust the work against food insecurity, including delivering on our national school food policy program. The Prime Minister highlighted this priority in his mandate letters to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. We will continue to work for Canadians.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other day I got an email from the owner of Grizzly Jim's General Store in Topley, B.C. Like hundreds of thousands of other small business owners across this country, he accessed the Canada Emergency Business Account to keep his doors open during some of the most difficult times this country has seen. Revenues have still not fully recovered, and now small businesses are facing the added pressures of inflation and a tight labour market.

There is a simple way the minister could help businesses such as Grizzly Jim's, and that is to extend the repayment period for the CEBA business loans by an additional year. Will the minister do this?

● (1515)

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his advocacy, and thank all members for their advocacy in the House for small businesses across the country.

It was really heartening to see that almost a million small businesses got through the pandemic with the CEBA loan. We have, of course, been in touch with many of the businesses, some of which we know are still having a tough time throughout this period. I want to thank the Canadian small businesses for their resiliency, and we will continue to keep working on this very issue.

The Speaker: The opposition whip is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I have received a notice that the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security has unilaterally cancelled the committee's meeting this afternoon. The committee was scheduled to meet to begin a clause-by-clause study of Bill C-20, government legislation regarding a complaints process for the RCMP and the CBSA.

Conservatives have given notice of a motion to call the Minister of Public Safety to appear on the Bernardo transfer travesty. I call on all party whips to manage the resources of the House in a way that reflects the priorities of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona is rising on a point of order.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

The Speaker: It being 3:20 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage of Bill C-42.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

● (1545)

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

(Division No. 391)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	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	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Martel
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
O'Toole	Patzner
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Poilievre	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am just rising to express concern about an issue coming out of question period. Not for the first time at committee, a chair has been asked a question in question period, and the government House leader has either answered himself or has been allowed to pick who asks.

In this case, where committee chairs are asked a question, I think it is very important that either a committee chair or a committee vice-chair, when they show up, is allowed to be able to answer that question as a matter of priority. I think this is important to protect the independence of the committee. It should not be the government who chooses who answers on behalf of a committee that is properly independent from the government.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I was just going to add this: Although I would agree with the member that there are certain circumstances in which a chair would be asked a question, the content of the question is what is key here. It has to be about the schedule or the agenda of the committee. One cannot just ask about any issue they want.

I would encourage you to consider—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: If I could have your attention, please. I have just consulted with the Table, and the rules are that if the chair of the committee stands, then that person gets to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: One second. Let me apologize in earnest, please.

I want to say that two people were up, and I recognized the House leader. Unfortunately, according to the rules, I should have recognized the chair of the committee. I apologize, and we will know for next time.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner is rising on a point of order.

● (1520)

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out two things. First, I would ask for unanimous consent for the chair of the public safety committee to actually answer the question that was posed to him.

Second, I would also ask for unanimous consent to present the notice of meeting that was published by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, speaking to the seven to nine witnesses whom we had scheduled for this afternoon at the meeting.

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

An hon. member: Nay.

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Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams

Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Lotis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Rayes
Rodriguez
Romanado
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sousa
St-Onge
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Thériault
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Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Schieffe
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bérubé
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Chabot
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fergus
Fisher
Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Lapointe

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Casey
Chagger
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Coteau
Damoff
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Larouche

PAIRED

Members

Champagne
Hoback
Garon
Joly — 4

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 lost.

• (1550)

[*English*]

Hon. Dan Vandal (for the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: 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]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (1600)

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

(Division No. 392)

YEAS

Members

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

Government Orders

Speaker's Ruling

Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Sousa	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
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NAYS

Members

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PAIRED

Members

Champagne Garon
Hoback Joly— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**ROYAL ASSENT***[English]***The Speaker:** I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

June 19, 2023

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 19th day of June, 2023, at 11:47 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Christine MacIntyre
Deputy Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill S-246, An Act respecting Lebanese Heritage Month; Bill C-41, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts; Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts; and Bill C-45, An Act to amend the First Nations Fiscal Management

Act, to make consequential amendments to other Acts, and to make a clarification relating to another Act

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1605)

*[English]***PRIVILEGE**

ALLEGED BREACH OF MEMBER'S RIGHT TO INFORMATION—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised on June 15, by the member for Calgary Nose Hill regarding the government's answer to written Question No. 974.

In raising the question of privilege, the member for Calgary Nose Hill argued that the government had deliberately provided an incomplete answer to her written Question No. 974. The member stated that she had received, through an access to information request, a copy of emails showing that public servants had prepared the answer while limiting it to generalities and openly stating among themselves that the answer did not need to address every aspect of the question. She further noted that the public servants had analyzed the risks of a potential Speaker's ruling in determining what kind of response to provide. According to the member, this situation amounts to a breach of her rights and privileges to obtain complete information from the government.

The members for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, Lakeland, and Saskatoon West also rose to echo the member's statement, while noting that their own written questions had met the same fate.

[Translation]

In response, the deputy government whip pointed out that the member had obtained an answer within the prescribed time frame. She said that the decision of February 2, 2023, showed that the Chair cannot review the content of answers to written questions. She added that Question No. 974 asked for secret information and that, on that basis, the government was within its rights to provide a response that appeared incomplete. In her view, the matter does not constitute a prima facie question of privilege.

[English]

As for the member for Calgary Nose Hill, she acknowledged that the Chair had issued a ruling on the same written question on February 2, 2023. However, in her view, the new information obtained through her access to information request justified further action by the Chair. I agree with the hon. member on this point.

[Translation]

On September 27, 2016, my predecessor rightly remarked, on page 5176 of the Debates:

Access to information, accurate information, is one of the cornerstones of our parliamentary system. Members must be able to rely on it at all times. The integrity of many of our procedures, especially those relating to written questions, rests on the rightful expectation that ministers and the public servants who support them understand the value and utility of providing, not simply technically accurate, but also complete and transparent, answers in the written responses that they provide to members of the House.

[*English*]

Ministers and their officials are expected to provide members with the most accurate answers possible to written questions, regardless of their name, reputation or political affiliation. Written questions and the responses to them are essential parts of the process of accountability. Consequently, they are central to our parliamentary system.

[*Translation*]

However, in seeking a decision on this matter, the member for Calgary Nose Hill asked the Chair to rule not on the quality of the answer but on departments' internal processes for preparing responses to written questions.

On April 3, 2014, one of my predecessors ruled that this was beyond the powers of the Chair. Allow me to quote from page 4208 of the Debates:

Regardless of whether the department's internal processes on written questions have changed or not, it remains beyond the role of the Chair to undertake an investigation into any such matter or to render any judgment on it.

• (1610)

[*English*]

The Chair's powers therefore seem to be limited. In the case before us, I must conclude that there is no *prima facie* question of privilege.

However, the Chair would like to note that it finds the remarks of public servants reported by the member very troubling. I am especially troubled by the comments from the public servants to the effect that the Chair could not intervene in case of a point of order and that this could justify an incomplete response.

[*Translation*]

It is true that, based on many precedents, the Chair does not judge the quality of responses, and the reasons for that fact are understandable. However, my predecessors and I have repeatedly emphasized the importance of providing members with the information they need to do their work properly.

[*English*]

There may be legitimate reasons not to provide certain information in answers to written questions. In the present case, the government invoked the confidentiality of international relations and trade negotiations. Still, the Chair has noticed that members are questioning more and more the quality of answers to their questions.

There was a time when members complained about how long it took to receive a response, which led to the requirement of answers being provided within 45 days and the referral of late answers to committee. The time may have come for the House to consider how it wishes to deal with the issue of incomplete answers.

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In the meantime, the Chair encourages ministers to find the right words to inspire their officials to invest their time and energy in preparing high-quality responses rather than looking for reasons to avoid answering written questions.

I thank the members for their attention.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On a point of clarification, based on your ruling on this matter, would it be fair to characterize Kyle Harrietha's prediction in the ATIP that your ruling would “tut tut” the matter as correct?

The Speaker: I would love to answer that, but Speaker's Rulings are not subject to debate. I am going to enforce that rule.

* * *

ONLINE NEWS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, and of the amendment.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Provencher.

As always, I recognize what a privilege it is to stand in the House of Commons and represent my community of Peterborough—Kawartha.

Today, we are debating Bill C-18 amendments that have been brought back from the Senate. It is known as the online news act. In a nutshell, this bill proposes to make big tech like Google and Facebook or Meta, as it is now known, pay when they share links from smaller independent legacy media. This bill is deeply flawed and, quite frankly, it is an absolute disaster.

I grew up just outside Peterborough, Ontario in a town called Douro. We had about three channels. As the youngest child, it was my job to be the human remote control. It was also my job to turn the dial for the aerial outside to make sure it was just right. Everyone at home who was a child of the eighties knows what I speak of. My favourite shows were the CHEX news, The Raccoons and The Beachcombers.

When I was nine we moved to the township of Otonabee and we got a satellite dish. It was a huge deal. If someone pressed a button, the giant satellite dish out in the yard moved with a remote control with hundreds of channels.

As technology has rapidly progressed, the customer has definitely taken more of a driver role. The customer says what they want, when they want and how they want it.

Government Orders

There are so many more options and it has increased competition, which has made it harder and harder to capture the attention of the customer. Local news will always be relevant. Local news will always be a priority because we need to know what is happening in our community. We want to know.

The landscape of how we consume media has drastically changed but our need to stay connected and informed has not. I worked at a local television station for 14 years and then I went on to start my own business in social media. I know the value of local media.

I also know the competition has dramatically impacted our legacy media and not necessarily in a positive way. I worked for CHEX television at that time and we always dreamed of having a satellite truck so that we could go live. Imagine doing live hits. We were a small-town news media but with a big following because people wanted to stay connected. Then along came this little guy and we could go live with our phones like that.

Bill C-18 is not going to help legacy media. It is going to hurt them. Bill C-18 is a subsidy program. It is not a support program and it will never work. It also opens a dangerous door for censorship and control. It is a terrible idea hidden behind a classic Liberal narrative of "We will protect you and we know what is best for you."

This morning I spoke with Jeff Dueck, who is the sales manager from My Broadcasting Corporation in Peterborough, Ontario. He has major concerns with this bill. He shared many of his concerns with me, but the one that struck me the most is when he told me that they do not want subsidies but they want an equal playing field.

Subsidies are the polar opposite to sustainability and they are a classic Liberal tactic. They create chaos and then offer a sliver of help and long-term dependence, rather than freedom and autonomy. Canadians have caught on and the trust is gone. Jeff went on to say this:

The inability of our Government and the CRTC to listen to us and modernize outdated policies is slowly killing our industry, and in doing so, putting Canadians at risk of losing access to valuable sources for local news and information from trusted media outlets. When major players make major changes, it affects us all and stigmatizes us as a "passe" business model amongst the businesses that we count on for advertising revenues - but that's still far from the reality.

If people take anything from this, please listen to what I am about to say. The harsh reality of this bill is that despite its intention, it is actually going to do the exact opposite.

● (1615)

If I were at Google or Facebook and the government told Google or Facebook it had to pay to share the links of small legacy media, what motivation would I have to share it? I would have none, zip. I would not share it. That is what is going to happen. This methodology is literally the stick instead of the carrot.

The truth is that one of the very best ways to get news to more people is to have a bigger platform to share it. That is the exact thing one would want. Once a bigger platform shares one's content, they are then able to tap into a whole new audience. Once they have that audience they have the opportunity to promote their subscrip-

tion or merchandise. It is literally the best way to grow their business and brand online.

Bill C-18 will destroy legacy media: it will no longer be seen because it will no longer be shared.

Andrew Coyne, a columnist at The Globe and Mail, said it well when he said:

The premise, that the problems of the newspaper industry can be traced to search and social-media platforms like Google or Facebook "stealing" their content, is utterly false. The platforms don't take our content. They link to it: a headline, sometimes a short snippet of text, nothing more. When users click on the links, they are taken to our sites, where they read our content. Much of the traffic on our sites, in fact, comes from social-media links, which is why we go to such lengths to encourage readers to post them - indeed, we post such links ourselves, hundreds of times a day.

Has anyone even begun to ask how in the world this would work administratively? Who, and how are the links going to be tracked? Who is billing? Is it the legacy media's job to be their own watchdog and submit a claim? I am not sure who has worked in a newsroom in this room, but I can tell you, nobody has time for that. We do not need another government-run program with more bureaucracy to create more backlogs.

This whole idea is bonkers. It is a distraction from the out-of-date and archaic mandates by the CRTC. The real problem here is there are a bunch of platforms that can play what they want. They have no rules and no restrictions. Then there are legacy media that are bound by the archaic shackles of the CRTC.

How about we let radio stations play the music they want? That would be a great start. Of course they will continue to promote our talented and diverse Canadian artists. How about we trust them to listen to the customer instead of holding them hostage?

Bill C-18 is a terrible bill. It will be the death of our legacy media. If members in this House want to support our journalists and artists then they need to vote this down. Seriously, if members do not believe me, they should pick up the phone and listen to the people on the front lines. They know this is a disaster.

Jen Gerson is the co-founder of The Line, an independent journalist. She was a witness at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in September 2022. She said that this bill:

...is predicated on a lie. The bill adopts a very ancient complaint of newspaper publishers that aggregation-based news websites and social media networks are unduly profiting by "publishing" our content. However, we know this isn't true. In fact, the value proposition runs in exactly the opposite direction. We publishers are the ones who benefit when a user posts a link to our content on Facebook, Twitter and the like. This free distribution drives traffic to our websites, which we can then try to monetize through subscriptions and advertising.

Legacy media does not need Liberal interference and control. They need the government to get out of the way, stop regulating how they do their jobs and let them do what they do best, which is to create content Canadians want to consume. If Canadians cannot see the content, what is the point in creating it? Let us make sure that legacy media's hard work pays off. Let us vote down Bill C-18.

• (1620)

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to answer the member opposite by saying that yes, I have worked in newsrooms. For more than 20 years I worked in newsrooms.

I also sit on the heritage committee. I know that this legislation is possible because it is already working in a similar form in Australia, supporting small local news outlets in Australia.

Bill C-18 creates a framework so that news organizations have the power to negotiate with big tech. There is no money coming from government. There is no money going to government. In what world could one call that a subsidy?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her journalism career. I know she has had a good one. I know she has worked in a newsroom and knows how hectic it is.

Knowing what she does know, and back to my point of the administrative end of things, how in the world is that going to be done? Who is going to pay for it? Who is going to track it? Who is going to negotiate it? Who is going to cover the costs? Why in the world would someone not want their media shared on a bigger platform? It makes no sense.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, with whom I am fortunate to serve on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. We have some great discussions there.

I too have worked in a newsroom and studied journalism. I am speaking on behalf of local media in my region, which want us to pass Bill C-18 because they want the web giants to pay their share. Whether it is La Voix de l'Est, the radio station M105, La Pens e de Bagot, Le Journal de Chambly, Granby Express or Le Val-Ouest, these local media, which contribute to the local economy and are part of our cultural community, are calling for it to pass.

I am not hearing from anyone at those media outlets about the administrative problems that my colleague just mentioned. All they want is for Bill C-18 to pass. They need it. They are asking for it.

• (1625)

[English]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. She is wonderful to work with on the status of women committee. On the surface, if we just read the Coles Notes version, we would say we need help because they are drowning. The competitive market is destroying them. That is the reality. They have shackles on them.

This bill is not going to do what they think it is going to do. It is going to last maybe five years. It is going to put a bandaid on a bul-

let wound. Media needs access and the freedom to create content and to be innovative. This bill, as much as it sounds honourable, will not. We have quote after quote saying that.

Professor Dwayne Winseck of Carleton University said:

The media's money troubles are long-standing and this latest proposal is a bandaid on a bullet wound.... I just think the whole thing is a real dog's breakfast.... This bill is being saddled with expectations and being sold as a rescue package — that, I think, [is] really disingenuous.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned that, in her view, the government should not interfere with this free market that rules our media world, yet the message I am hearing from community media, like the local newspaper in my community, is that it wants this. It is struggling in the face of these big tech giants that are not going to tell the local stories in Smithers, Burns Lake, Fraser Lake and Prince Rupert. They are just not going to do that. Community media wants to find a viable way to ensure it has the business case to deliver those stories to the people who need to hear them. People came to me, met with me and said they want precisely what is delivered by this bill.

What would my colleague say to them if they came to her with that message?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. On the surface, I would sit down with them and tell them to read the bill. It is not going to give them what they think it will. They need help. Every small media company is literally drowning. If the government walks in and says it will give them money, they will say yes because they do not know how else they are going to keep their head afloat otherwise. The reality is they have to get innovative.

I am going to tell a quick story. I worked in a newsroom and we launched a live talk show. I went to the news director at the time and said we needed to ensure we were cutting these stories for the Internet, so we were putting them into two-minute-and-30-second pieces to post online. The boss looked at me and said, "Michelle, we are in the business of TV, not the Internet. We are not doing that." That is the limitation that boss had. He has been fired and he did not make it. They have to be innovative, but they have to be given the environment to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORDER AND DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to intervene on the point of order that was raised by the whip of the official opposition just prior to question period.

Points of Order

It is regarding the entirely appropriate decision that was made by the Speaker at the time, the Assistant Deputy Speaker, the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, who has been a stellar Speaker in the chair, always maintaining, on behalf of all of us, order and respect for this institution. It is so important. It was clear to me that the official opposition whip was not present in the House and had no idea what went on.

I want to cite a number of references to Bosc and Gagnon, and then I want to clearly lay out the facts because I hope you and the Speaker will rule in a forthright way. It is very important that the decision be upheld. It was the appropriate decision.

[*Translation*]

Madam Speaker, as you well know, Bosc and Gagnon give the Chair the authority to preserve order and decorum: “As the arbiter of House proceedings, the Speaker’s duty is to preserve order and decorum in the House and to decide any matters of procedure that may arise. This duty”—

• (1630)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member, as the hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, the member has been a member for a long time, and he knows better than to identify whether a member was or was not in the House. He indicated previously that the whip of the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is correct. We should not make mention of presences or absences in the House.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby can continue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I was saying that it was obvious to me that she had not observed what had happened. I stand by my position on that. That was obvious from her presentation. I was not in the House when the opposition whip made her presentation, but I carefully read what she said in her speech, and it was obvious to me that she was not here to observe.

Having said that, I will continue.

In essence, the Chair has the duty to exercise his or her powers in order to maintain respect for Parliament: “This duty carries with it...authority extending to...the behaviour and attire of Members, the conduct of proceedings, the rules of debate and disruptions on the floor of the Chamber and in its galleries”. I will come back to that later.

As we know, “Once the Speaker has ruled, the matter is no longer open to debate or discussion”. Furthermore, all of these “ways in which the Speaker may act to ensure that order and decorum are preserved” are given to the Chair by us, the members of the Parliament of Canada.

Bosc and Gagnon say:

The rules governing the conduct of debate empower the Speaker to call a Member to order if the Member persists in repeating an argument already made in the

course of debate, or in addressing a subject which is not relevant to the question before the House. The Speaker may intervene directly to address an individual Member or the House in general, or the Speaker may respond to a point of order raised by another Member. The Speaker can call to order any Member whose conduct is disruptive to the order of the House.

I will come back to this later, because it was definitely the case here.

If the Speaker has found it necessary to intervene in order to call a Member to order, he or she may then choose to recognize another Member, thus declining to give the floor back to the offending Member. On occasion, a Member who is called to order by the Speaker may not immediately comply with the Speaker’s instructions;—

That is what happened in this case. Bosc and Gagnon go on to say:

—in such a case, the Speaker has given the Member time to reflect on his or her position, declining in the meantime to “see” the Member should the latter rise to be recognized. A warning at the time the Member is called to order that the Chair may elect to do this has sometimes been sufficient to secure compliance.

It is therefore very clear, when we look at the procedural bible of Bosc and Gagnon, that all these powers to preserve order in the House do indeed fall to the Chair. That is the case in the ruling that was made this morning by the chair occupant, the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

I will give three examples, and then I will get back to the facts of what happened. Since I was in the House, I saw first-hand what happened.

Here is the first example. First, in 1987, Speaker Fraser would not recognize Jim Fulton, the member for Skeena and a member of our caucus, for more than three weeks because he refused to withdraw his remarks. The member was only able to be recognized after agreeing to apologize.

Here is the second example. On November 27, 2002, Speaker Milliken ruled on unparliamentary language used by Jim Pankiw, the then member for Saskatoon—Humboldt. The Speaker asked the member to apologize, which was not done. The member was not recognized for the day and offered a full apology the next day, which closed the matter.

I am also aware of another case, which involved an NDP member from Dartmouth. That member was not recognized for a few weeks because she had introduced someone who was in the gallery. As we know, we are not supposed to do that. It took a few weeks. In this case as well, the hon. member apologized and things went back to normal.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Clearly what happened with the member of Parliament for Lethbridge was a complete refusal to heed what were clear directives, politely but firmly given, from the Chair. Looking at the blues from this morning, we can see that the Assistant Deputy Speaker repeatedly asked the member for Lethbridge to stop screaming and heckling in the House. This was done not one time, not two times and not three times, but four times. Each time the Assistant Deputy Speaker issued, very clearly, a warning that, if the member for Lethbridge continued to heckle, yell in the House and disrupt the proceedings, the member would not be recognized.

As we can see from all the precedents and the clear directions from Bosc and Gagnon, that is an authority that we give to you, Madam Speaker, and to all of our terrific Speakers in the House of Commons, to maintain order and decorum. The member for Lethbridge violated that decorum repeatedly. She refused to heed very clear, politely but firmly worded warnings from the Chair, and the consequence is a consequence that has transpired in the past in the House. It is completely valid, within the rules of order and appropriate.

I will say one final thing on this. I know the Assistant Deputy Speaker and the great work she does in the House of Commons. I also commend the work of our whip, the member for North Island—Powell River. If a member from the NDP had done what the member for Lethbridge did today, that member would have been called to order by our whip because our whip would not encourage this type of behaviour in the House of Commons. Therefore, I call upon the official opposition whip to take her responsibility seriously and call on the member for Lethbridge to apologize in the House for her behaviour, which was inappropriate and over the top, and for refusing to heed the repeated warnings of the Assistant Deputy Speaker, who was acting entirely appropriately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member's points will be taken into consideration.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, on that same point of order, I do really appreciate the work the Speakers do in the chair. I know they are doing a fantastic job.

However, one of the greatest challenges we are seeing is that we need to ensure that this treatment goes from one party to the next and it is equal. We have had four of our own members sanctioned, while we have watched members across the aisle give the finger and say some very derogatory things. Therefore, when we are talking about this, we want to see equal treatment for all parties.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is duly noted.

* * *

ONLINE NEWS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion respecting Senate amendments to Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, and of the amendment.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity again to address Bill C-18 in the House.

I am pleased that the Senate has exercised its judgment as the place of sober second thought and sent this legislation back to the House for further work.

Right off the top, I will say that there are three areas where all members of the House are in agreement. First, we all agree that there should be some mechanism whereby tech giants are taxed, and that we do so in a way that does not negatively affect Canadian consumers. Second, we all agree that there must be some mechanism in place to deal with online misinformation and disinforma-

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tion. At every one of our offices, we deal with this issue on a daily basis. Third, we all agree that we must create a framework to regulate AI or artificial intelligence.

We agree on these three principles. The issue, as is usually the case in the House, is how we go about doing that.

How do we make tech giants pay their fair share? How do we regulate information online and, perhaps more pertinent to our conversation today, particularly in light of the events of the past three years, who determines what is misinformation? How do we differentiate between fact and opinion?

In our postmodern world, or what some have called a post-truth world or a world where truth has become a relative or entirely subjective concept, how do we, as governments and media, differentiate and adjudicate between truly evidence-based information versus that which is driven by ideology and political expediency? Finally, how do we even begin to deal with the challenges posed by artificial intelligence?

In the Bible, we have the story of Adam and Eve eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We have the story of the Tower of Babel, where people believed that by building a tower to heaven, by storming God's dominion, they could themselves become God. We have heard the story of Pandora's box, or jar if we want to be exact, and the story of Prometheus stealing fire from the gods.

Almost every ancient civilization has some story of humanity receiving or taking knowledge from the gods, knowledge they were not ready for, that they were ill-equipped to handle and that ultimately leads to chaos.

With the advent of the technological revolution and, in particular, artificial intelligence, humanity has come full circle to a truly frightening reality. It is good that we are beginning to address these important issues. It is good that we are at least largely agreed on what those issues are.

Unfortunately, as is always the case with the government, the flaw is in the details. There is a reason that the Senate sent this back. It could have chosen to just approve it. It sent it back and that is because this legislation, like its sister legislation Bill C-11, is deeply flawed.

Conservatives maintain that the government has misled Canadians about what the true objectives of Bill C-11 are. In short, it gives the government the ability to control what people see and post online. That is why Conservatives have committed to repealing it. I suspect that we will do likewise after Bill C-18 has been passed, and we are sitting on the other side of the House.

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Like Bill C-11, at first look, the legislation looks fine and prudent, but then one starts to dig a little deeper. The flaw is in the details. One of those first pesky details is the issue of accountability. The government says that tech giants need to be more transparent and accountable to Canadians, which is the pot speaking to the kettle.

I agree. I am pretty sure my colleagues agree with this statement. Tech giants, like all multinational, plutocratic entities, do need to be held accountable. If they wish to operate within the jurisdiction of a country, those individual nation states must find a way to temper the unprecedented power, influence and wealth these entities have amassed.

When it comes to transparency and accountability, the government has very limited credibility. How the government can have the audacity to tell anyone they need to be more accountable and transparent shows its utter lack of self-awareness and the level of narcissism we are dealing with here because there has never been a government that has been so secretive. This government has so actively shunned accountability.

When, in the long line of scandals and failures of the Prime Minister and his ministers, has even one of them ever taken responsibility? I think the record clearly shows that the answer to that question is never. I could stand here and, one by one, list the scandals and failures of this government, but we would be here all night, and I know we have other work to get done here.

• (1640)

There is always an excuse, always someone else to blame. The government never takes responsibility. No minister has ever been held accountable. Actually, that is not quite true. We may remember that the Prime Minister did fire a minister. What did she do? Did she fail to execute the basic functions of government? Did she create chaos in her department? Did she misappropriate funds? Did she lie about a matter of national security? No, she did not. Her crime was that she tried to hold the Prime Minister accountable. She was the first indigenous woman to be minister of justice and attorney general, and the Prime Minister fired her because she refused to be party to his misdeeds or to capitulate to his unlawful demands.

When it comes to accountability, the Liberals have no credibility. Therefore, how can Canadians trust the Liberal government to enforce the very thing that the government itself refuses to do? That same statement from the heritage minister's office states, "Canadians need to have access to quality, fact-based news at the local and national levels, and that's why we introduced the Online News Act." I agree with that sentiment. The problem is that it is really difficult to take the government at its word when it has spent the past seven and a half years subsidizing media outlets that are friendly to it, intentionally parrot government talking points as "facts" and brand everything else as "misinformation".

The Liberals gave legacy Liberal media \$650 million and continue to fund the CBC to the tune of \$1.24 billion per year. Why do they need to do this? First, it is to buy positive coverage, and they have gotten excellent bang for their buck. There is always a cost-benefit analysis, and the benefit seems to have been worth the cost of taxpayers' dollars. Second, they have done so because those

friendly outlets are dying. They are trying to prop up a dying industry.

With the exception of a brief renaissance during COVID, when flush with Liberal government dollars, the media spouted government talking points and spread fear and division among Canadians. They have ceased to be relevant. We can bemoan that fact all we want, but I would ask, as I believe my colleagues have adequately done, what members' primary source for their news and entertainment is? Chances are that it is something online. I think this is really at the heart of the issue. I would pose this question to the government: What is a better indicator of what people actually believe, what they say or what they do? I would argue that it is what they do.

In the same way as the government's track record, its behaviour has shown that it does not really believe in accountability. It also does not care about what the media prints or posts as long as it is favourable to the government. However, Canadian consumers have also spoken by their behaviour. If we were to ask a group of Canadians to define "Canadian content", it would be difficult to get consensus. The platforms that Canadians subscribe to, the shows they watch and the content they consume would probably not be considered Canadian content by all Canadians.

Maybe listening to Canadians rather than dictating to them what the government wants them to see as Canadian content would poise the government to better serve Canadians. If we were to ask a group of Canadians how important Canadian content in media is, I suspect about half would say it is important. If we were to ask that same group how much Canadian content they actually consume, what platforms they subscribe to and what shows they watch, the answer would most likely be pretty different.

Perhaps, for once, rather than dictating to Canadians, the government that supposedly represents their interests ought to take the novel approach of listening to them. While it is listening, it should ask them what they think about the carbon tax, the cost of living, this so-called green and woke agenda, their media priorities and whether they feel safe on the streets. This is Conservatism 101. The market is the best indicator of what Canadian people want, because it is driven by Canadian people. Rather than accept this reality, the government that thinks it knows better than Canadians how to spend their money, consistently pushes back against the market to achieve its own ideological purposes.

At the end of the day, the market determines the viability of a product, including media, so we need to address these issues. Conservatives agree with that, but the weaknesses of this legislation are secondary to the sad reality that the government lacks credibility. It is a serial offender, guilty of doing the very things it claims this legislation would address.

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• (1645)

Only a new, Conservative government would be able to address these important issues, and we will address them head-on—

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

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find myself standing on my feet in the House quite often, reciting the Conservative Party platform, which I never in my wildest dreams thought I would be doing. However, I will read to that member what he ran on in 2021.

He was knocking on doors, and this is what he was selling to people: “Canada’s Conservatives will: Introduce a digital media royalty framework to ensure that Canadian media outlets are fairly compensated for the sharing of their content by platforms like Google and Facebook.” I am literally reading their party platform. This is what they ran on, and that is exactly what this bill is about.

I understand that Conservatives are abandoning their platform en masse, because they have already done the same thing on pricing pollution. Would the member like to inform the House of any other Conservative platforms that they are so rigidly against, but that they ran on under two years ago.

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, every time the member for Kingston and the Islands stands up after one of my speeches, I am just looking forward to the question. I know it is going to be a lob, so I am teeing this one up.

Conservatives absolutely believe that tech giants need to pay their fair share. What we do not believe is that governments should be picking winners and losers. In this legislation, 75% of the winners will be made up of these three companies: the CBC, Rogers and Bell. That is not fair.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my Conservative friends are very good at criticizing, but they offer very little by way of solutions to real problems. For all the years that we have been talking about fighting climate change, we have constantly criticized the government, and rightly so, because the Liberals are absolutely useless at fighting climate change. However, the Conservatives do not offer any meaningful solutions to real problems.

The revenue sharing in Bill C-18 is a real problem. In my riding, there is a weekly newspaper that had 10 journalists five years ago. Now there are only two left. How can they cover all the events? There are six federal ridings and there is simply no way they can cover all the regional news, which is extremely important.

What solutions does my colleague have to offer for this problem that is real and widespread across Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, the member for the Bloc raises a very important issue. I think of the small periodicals in my riding. I think of the Southeast Journal, The Clipper, the Niverville Citizen and even The Carillon. These are not the media outlets that are going to benefit from this piece of legislation. The member asks, rightly, what our solutions are. We are going to come up with solutions, and we are going to announce them in our platform in the next general election. Canadians are going to be incredibly impressed, and we are going to implement those solutions as soon as we get elected.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, as much as I am tempted to ask my hon. colleague what those solutions are now, and I am sure Canadians probably want to know what they are now, I digress, because I am not quite certain. As the member is reluctant to give them today, I hope he may provide them to everyone here in writing.

I want to make a quick differentiation about something that, for a long time, New Democrats have called for; this is the difference between the needs and the wants of Canadians. The member speaks directly to the market. As a matter of fact, we need to ensure that a market is well-balanced to ensure that the things Canadians actually need to obtain to live, such as food, water, homes and, in this case, good information, are actually available to them.

The member did not speak directly to the concern that I think is important in this legislation, which is why I think we can probably agree that there needs to be a process ensuring that our small businesses, particularly news outlets in small rural communities, can actually get the information they are working for produced on to the websites people are seeing the news on. This is important for small communities, because people are doing the work. They are doing the journalism in their communities to talk about the good work happening, whether it is in Edson, Drayton Valley or Fishing Lake, so that when people go to the news, they can actually have access to it. Right now, these companies are saying that they will not, and they are benefiting to the tune of nearly \$10 billion.

Could the member speak to how important it is to balance those two?

Mr. Ted Falk: Madam Speaker, that question requires a comprehensive answer, but I will try to make it brief.

The member raises a good point. How will these smaller platforms benefit from this legislation? It is going to be difficult, because embedded in this legislation is that the negotiations between these big tech giants and news media outlets are going to be done in secret. Therefore, the question remains of whether these small news generators in smaller communities will be able to afford to have the information they are producing clicked on or listed on the big media platforms. I think that the cost to these small media outlets is the big question this piece of legislation does not address.

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[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nunavut, Indigenous Affairs; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Hamilton Mountain.

I go back to the question that I asked the member for Provencher a few moments ago. He answered it by saying that I like to set up lobs for him to hit out of the park. The only problem is that he inadvertently did that to me as well, in his response. That is because the next part of the Conservative platform, immediately after the part that I read, says, “It will: Adopt a made in Canada approach that incorporates the best practices of jurisdictions like Australia and France.”

What the Conservatives ran on is quite literally what we have before us now, with the exception of the fact that the legislation that we have here is even more transparent. I am finding it more and more difficult every time I come here. I was saying earlier that I never imagined I would be reading the Conservative platform into the record in the House of Commons so much, but here I am. Conservatives ran on this. They even referenced the best practices of Australia and France. They literally ran on what we have before us now. It is just like pricing pollution. The Conservatives ran on pricing pollution. This all happened under two years ago.

Now Conservatives come into the House and are so incredibly opposed to these ideas. With absolutely no shame, they are just completely brushing them aside as though they never had any interest in them whatsoever. Meanwhile, 338 Conservative candidates literally went knocking on doors in the last federal election, trying to sell Canadians on voting for them, because of what they were promising to bring in. Pricing pollution was one promise, and this exact legislation on digital advertising and the revenues that are associated with it was another.

I am at a loss that the Conservatives can do this with a straight face, as well as that they can come in here and can speak so adamantly against these concepts that they would have, presumably, been debating in their ridings under two years ago. They would have been sitting there with other candidates, pushing for these ideas and policies. Now they are just totally tossing them aside as though there is no way that they could have ever conceived of supporting them.

I will tell the House why I think this legislation is so important, as well as why it is so important to give the resources and tools to media outlets that are seeing their work exploited by these big tech firms. We all scroll on Facebook or Instagram or wherever it might be and come across stories. We are choosing that to be the location that we go to get the information.

I got a real kick out of it when I heard the member for Peterborough—Kawartha say earlier that people want to get on the biggest platforms, and that is where they want to share their information. It reminds me of people who say to artists, “Would you like to come and hang a painting here for exposure?” Exposure is not what artists really want; no, they want to be paid for the work that they do.

The member for Peterborough—Kawartha used the exact same logic by saying that people want the exposure from Facebook and Instagram. In her view, of course they want to put their stuff there, because that is how they are going to get exposed. These outlets do not need exposure as much as they need supports to survive and to continue. That seems to be completely lost on Conservatives.

I want to use an example of how misinformation happens, why we need press out there with the resources and tools to properly investigate and why this is so important. We do not have to go any further back than yesterday.

Yesterday, there was a big, false, misinformation-based story about the Prime Minister being investigated by the RCMP. We had one question in question period about it yesterday, but not a single one today. That is because even Conservatives have come to the conclusion that they probably could not exploit that one as much as they would like.

• (1655)

I will tell members what happened yesterday. An organization called Democracy Watch, which I do not know much about, had finally received a response to a freedom of information request. It interpreted, intentionally or not, information in that freedom of information report to mean that the Prime Minister was being investigated by the RCMP, so at 8:19 a.m., Democracy Watch tweeted out that the Prime Minister is being investigated. That was retweeted by Andrew Coyne of The Globe and Mail at 9:22 a.m.

The member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, my neighbour, then posted something at 10:52 a.m. in which he said, “Breaking: [the Prime Minister] and his former senior officials are facing an RCMP investigation, four years after the Prime Minister was found guilty of breaking ethics laws”, and it goes on and on, and then he adds another tweet.

I will note that the member has not, since this all happened, retracted this, apologized for it or suggested that he got the information wrong.

However, I do not want to skip too far ahead, because after he did that, the National Post tweeted it out at 12:55 p.m. Then, of course, it was tweeted by the Conservatives' favourite media outlet, Rebel News, which was really late to the game, because it did not tweet it until 1:29 p.m.

This is how misinformation gets spread like wildfire in today's day and age. It is all because this one organization misinterpreted the information in a response it received after it had requested information from the RCMP. Then, because we have organizations that could actually do the follow-up and look into the issues, we were able to determine that what had been claimed was categorically false. It was fake news. Rightly or wrongly, this one organization called Democracy Watch set off a series of events that spread like wildfire.

I am sure the Conservatives fundraised on that. There was a solid five and a half hours between the first tweet and when the National Post finally issued its correction. I am sure the Conservatives did not miss an opportunity to put some links in there to their website for donations. However, the point is that we need legislation like this because we need to have those independent agencies that are able to fact-check, look into issues and properly research information.

The Kingston Whig Standard, one of the first newspapers in our country, has literally been around for centuries, but it does not have the reporting capabilities that it did at one time. So much in The Kingston Whig Standard is just information that is being recirculated by its parent company, with very little local coverage. At least in the Kingston area, we can depend on other news agencies, such as the Kingstonist, for example, which has taken on a new format and actually goes out and researches and digs into these issues and does not just spread these pieces that it happens to see somebody else tweet out.

If our objective at the end of the day is just to receive information that has been tweeted out in 140 characters or less, then I think we are pretty much going to be in a very difficult situation when we are relying on that information to actually tell us the truth. I think that is what this comes down to.

I know that my time is limited and I am looking forward to sharing it with the member for Hamilton Mountain, so I will conclude by saying that this is important legislation and that it is something we can all adopt. It is certainly something that the Conservatives ran on in 2021. This bill is very important for us, and I think this entire House should adopt it.

• (1700)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague across the way went on ad nauseam about this disinformation or misinformation that he is alleging on SNC-Lavalin. I would like to have him appreciate that an ATIP was put in and that the response to it came a month ago. The RCMP actually responded to the ATIP and said the following: "A review of the records revealed that this matter is currently under investigation." This is on the request for the SNC-Lavalin scandal. In fact, the vast majority of the documents for that request were withheld on the basis of an ongoing investigation and the potential for legal proceedings.

A month later, the story came out, and then it took eight or 10 hours before the RCMP responded that it did not happen. I guess it took that long for the government handlers to say, "Hold on a second. There is nothing to see here." To blame the media for a response from the RCMP that said directly that yes, on May 25 of

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this year there was an investigation going on is again misinformation spread by this member.

• (1705)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have that ATIP right here. I did research this before making that speech and I think it is very convenient that the member read out one sentence of the entire document.

What is specifically in here is reference to a whole host of grievances that have been put into the ATIP. To extract that one sentence to mean the Prime Minister is being investigated for a particular incident is an exaggeration. I know that the Conservatives know this too, because they did not once bring it up in question period today. If the Conservatives thought there was a scandal to be had, can anyone imagine them just sitting on their hands over there and pretending it does not exist? Why will the member not bring it up in question period?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate everyone's questions. Earlier, I was in the lobby with a colleague. We were talking about how the process required to come up with a law that makes sense and that meets the requests of all regional media is long, cumbersome and sometimes tedious.

I would like to point out something important. When the flooding in Baie-Saint-Paul happened, residents got information from community radio stations and community television stations. They got updates in the local newspaper, Le Charlevoisien.

At the moment, the staff at these media outlets are struggling. They are always on tenterhooks, wondering whether they will close their doors or be able to stay afloat. That is what Bill C-18 is for. It provides a foundation. After that, the government will have to collaborate with us to consider the possibility of a new fund, because all these small media outlets have been in financial peril for too long. There will have to be a fund.

I would like to know if my colleague is open to a fund for media outlets that are at risk—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member brings up a really good point about having a separate fund specifically for small and medium-sized outlets. I would love to have a discussion about it, but I will reflect on the first few comments she made about talking in the lobby with a colleague about how badly this bill needs to get through. Let us remind ourselves that there is only one political party in this House that is opposing this bill, and it also happens to be a political party that put it in its platform less than two years ago.

The Conservative Party of Canada is holding up this legislation right now for no reason other than it just happens—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I need to give another colleague the chance to ask a question.

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The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has the floor.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about the importance of this bill, but here is the thing: 450 news outlets in Canada have closed since 2008 and at least one-third of Canadian journalism jobs have disappeared. The Liberal government took power in 2015. Can the member explain why his government dragged its feet and took seven years to fix this problem?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is why this legislation is before the House. It is here specifically for the purpose of trying to give those resources to those news organizations. In my speech, I spent five minutes describing a set of conditions yesterday that led to a wild spread of misinformation. We need this legislation to help combat that kind of stuff.

Ms. Lisa Hefpner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to rise today to speak to Bill C-18, the online news act. As members have heard, I am a former broadcast and newspaper journalist, and I am also currently a member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Therefore, this bill really is important to me. I am very proud of the work that we did as a committee and that we are one step closer to this legislation's actually passing now that we have received amendments from the Senate.

I am so grateful for the work of the Senate, and I would like to thank the senators for their thorough debate and their thoughtful consideration of the legislation. I would also like to thank my colleagues on the heritage committee for working collaboratively across party lines and listening compassionately to all the groups and individuals who came to committee to tell us just how important Bill C-18 would be for them.

Before I get into the substance of the Senate amendments, I would like to explain why this bill is so crucial for small local Canadian news outlets. These outlets at one time told the stories in and about every little corner of our country, but they have been shuttering, one after the other, and the trend is accelerating. I witnessed it first-hand in my more than 20 years as a journalist, surviving mass layoff after mass layoff and watching talented and bright colleagues have to go off and find their next dream job.

Just last week, Bell Media laid off some 1,300 employees from its broadcast division on Parliament Hill. We lost journalists like Joyce Napier and Glen McGregor. These journalists are institutions within this institution. Their deep knowledge, gained from years of experience, and the context they bring to their reporting has been lost. It is a loss to us who work in this place and it is a loss to our constituents who are trying to understand federal politics.

It is not just in Parliament buildings in federal and provincial capitals where journalists have become scarce. It is our city halls, our courtrooms, our legions, our school boards and our local sporting events. We used to have reporters in all those places, listening to people, sharing stories and giving us a real sense of community. They are mostly not there anymore.

As we have heard already today, since 2008, more than 500 Canadian news outlets have closed in 335 communities across Canada. Three hundred and fifty-nine of these are community newspapers. Sixty-three closed since the start of the pandemic.

Since 2010, the number of jobs in the newspaper industry saw a 45% decrease. Thousands of journalism jobs have been lost permanently from all the mediums. This means that many communities do not have local news to rely on. They are left unaware when they could have helped someone in need. They are left in danger when there is an impending natural disaster. They have no way to know how their city, or province or country is performing, whether there is corruption or a policy that causes harm to vulnerable people.

News producers told us at committee that news had never been profitable, that it was expensive, that it was hard work. It takes a person at least a full day, sitting through meetings, coming up with an angle, conducting interviews and writing a story for print or broadcast, just for one piece of content. However, news is so valuable that it was always worth the trouble. Companies would advertise. There were classified ads or obituaries. News producers could survive. Now all those sources of revenue are gone.

Eighty per cent of all advertising revenue goes to Google and Facebook, two companies. They do not employ journalists or ask reporters to gather news, but the content produced by reporters is still important to these online giants. These are the stories people share on Facebook. This is the data scraped from the Internet, when artificial intelligence is being developed. The news content creators are dwindling, but the content itself is going further than it ever has before. What happens when we do not have any more reporters to share our stories? Democracy dies in darkness, as I am sure members are aware.

In order to secure a future for local news, we must ask Facebook and Google to pay their share, to contribute to Canadian journalism. We must ensure that we continue to have journalists and that they are paid fairly for their long, uncomfortable, highly scrutinized and yet sorely needed work. That is why we need to pass Bill C-18. This bill would require the tech giants to fairly compensate publishers for the content distributed on their platforms.

My riding of Hamilton Mountain is particularly well served by local news outlets. There are radio stations, magazines, local web-based reporters, The Hamilton Spectator, Hamilton Mountain newspapers and CHCH TV, with hard-working reporters, editors, photographers and a myriad of other people with the skills required to make it all work, ensuring that the people of Hamilton know when there is something they need to know.

Government Orders

• (1710)

Bill C-18 would help smaller outlets. They can work together to negotiate collectively with big tech giants. Bill C-18 would require these tech giants to broker deals with smaller outlets. If a fair deal cannot be reached, the negotiations would move to final-offer arbitration.

We need to acknowledge and mitigate the threat that tech giants pose to our local news outlets based on the balance of power they hold. We need to empower and strengthen our local news teams. Most news organizations in Canada, which produce journalism as already defined under the Income Tax Act, will be eligible for the online news act, whether they are big or small, local or national.

This is bigger than just Canada. We are following in the footsteps of other countries, such as Australia and France. The online news act is based on the Australian model, where digital platforms that have a bargaining imbalance with news media are required to make fair commercial deals. As we saw in Australia, collective bargaining was essential for ensuring that small publishers got good deals. That is why this legislation does the same. Other countries are watching what we in Canada do in order to follow in our footsteps, because they also see the dire need to protect their journalism.

Regrettably, there has been a campaign of misinformation surrounding this bill. Tech giants have tried to convince small news outlets that Bill C-18 will hurt them. The opposite is true. This bill is good for local news. News producers maintain their freedom of expression and their editorial and financial independence. Bill C-18 is about supporting fact-based local Canadian journalism in a fair digital marketplace.

To hear tech giants and opposition members spread misinformation about this bill really gets to me. It is appalling. I have heard this called a “link tax”. There is nothing in Bill C-18 that makes platforms pay per click. There is no tax. The government is not collecting any money. Now more than ever, as we face rampant disinformation and lost trust in our institutions, we need quality, fact-based, objective news reporting at local, national and international levels.

The intimidation tactics that we have seen from tech giants are quite troubling. From February 9 until March 16 of this year, Google ran tests that dangerously blocked and censored news from more than a million Canadians. When Google ran similar tests in Australia, it blocked access to other institutions too, like a hospital and a shelter for women escaping violence. Instead of directing people to those sources, Google directed its algorithm to promote sources of questionable quality, sources known for conspiracy theories, for example.

When Google uses tactics like blocking Canadians' access to news and information, it fails to be a reliable service for consumers. By running tests that block access to news, Google is hurting Canadians and damaging Canadian democracy. Rather than being good corporate citizens and working with legislators, tech giants have been trying to strong-arm and intimidate us. There is derision in lieu of thoughtful, meaningful engagement with the parliamentary process.

Our government supports journalism, full stop. We have the local journalism initiative, the Canada periodical fund, the journalism tax credit and the digital news subscription tax credit. With Bill C-18, we are taking another step to encourage, support and stand up for our local news outlets.

A free and independent press is absolutely essential to Canadian democracy. I am proud of the work I did for more than 20 years as a journalist. To come full circle, I am equally proud of the work we have done as a committee and as a government on this piece of legislation.

Let me just talk briefly about the Senate amendments to this bill. I am encouraged that we agree with the majority of amendments made by the Senate. Out of the 12 it suggested, we accepted 10. It is very reassuring.

The government respectfully disagrees with amendments four and five. These changes would undermine the objectives of the bill, which focus on encouraging fair deals. The amendments would narrow the scope of the bargaining process between platforms and news outlets. We cannot add an amendment that would limit the ability of news publishers to negotiate fair compensation with large tech giants. A main component of this bill is a fair and independent framework for Canadian publishers and journalists to bargain with tech giants. Amendment five would improperly benefit the platform at the expense of the publisher.

• (1715)

Once again, I thank my colleagues at the Canadian heritage committee and thank the Senate for its thoughtful deliberations.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite, who sits on the Canadian heritage committee with me.

She alluded in her speech to the fact that Facebook and Google will block Canadians from being able to share news links. We know that originally in Australia, the same thing was tried, but Australia granted them an exemption and worked with Facebook and Google to make sure citizens were not going to be blocked. Why did the government not do the same?

• (1720)

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Madam Speaker, this government really believes in supporting journalists and sticking up for them in the face of intimidation tactics by tech giants.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I believe that my colleague and I agree that we absolutely must protect our local media outlets. There is currently a crisis. People are losing their jobs, and we must stand up for them.

Bill C-18 is a good step, but unfortunately it will not fix everything in this time of crisis. That is why the Bloc Québécois, and especially my colleague, the member for Drummond, is working very hard to ensure that a special fund for local media is created.

Recently, media outlets in our ridings contacted us again about this matter. I am thinking of the Voix de l'Est, Granby Express, Journal de Chambly, Val-Ouest and M105. They are closely following the debates on Bill C-18 and want an additional fund to give them a boost. All these media outlets need an extra boost.

I would like to know if my colleague's government is prepared to go that far, on top of passing Bill C-18.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Madam Speaker, I completely agree that journalists and small media outlets need support. At the same time, Bill C-18 gives them the autonomy to negotiate directly with major tech companies. Some do not want money from the government.

We must continue to talk about all the ways in which we can support journalists, but I believe that Bill C-18 is a good start.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I will ask the member a question that she did not really talk about and that not enough members talked about regarding Bill C-18. What I like about this bill is that the support provisions will provide for indigenous production. I wonder if she could help describe why Bill C-18 would be important for indigenous news outlets.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question. I did meet with stakeholders who were indigenous journalists. They told us about how important it was for them to tell their stories in their own way from their own voice and to not have a definition of journalism imposed upon them that would not feel natural for their lifestyle. We incorporated their suggestions into our legislation. I thank them again for their input, because it led to very valuable amendments to this legislation.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, constituents from the riding of Waterloo appreciate their media sources. While they do continue to support traditional sources, we are going more and more online.

I would like to hear from the member what it is about this legislation and these amendments that is essential for Canadians to know. There is a lot of misinformation and disinformation out there. What is the importance of this legislation, and what is it that constituents from the riding of Waterloo and Canadians need to know about the importance of advancing this legislation and seeing it passed?

Ms. Lisa Hepfner: Madam Speaker, I agree that Canadians take their news in all forms. Like many people, I enjoy reading lots of news from online journalism sources.

What people need to know is that the government is not getting involved in censoring the Internet. There is nothing like that at all.

All this legislation does is allow news organizations in Canada to have a business negotiation process with tech giants for an exchange of goods where they both benefit.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in this House and address not only my constituents in Calgary Midnapore but also Canadians. The matter at hand today is Bill C-18, which seems to go hand in hand with Bill C-11, the unfortunate legislation we saw this House pass that attempts to silence Canadians.

Before I get to my speech, I want to take a moment to recognize the member for Lethbridge, who, as the Conservative shadow minister for heritage, has done an incredible job of standing up not only for content creators and all Canadians, but especially for those who want their voices heard, whom the government, hand in hand with its government partner the NDP, is not allowing to be heard. Let us hear it for them being the opposition someday soon. It will happen when the member for Carleton becomes prime minister.

Today we are discussing Bill C-18. I am not as familiar with this bill as the member for Lethbridge, who, again, has done such a fantastic job of championing our opposition to this bill and to Bill C-11, but after my review of the bill and the information I have seen online, which I do not believe is misinformation, I have some significant concerns. It seems that the government's reasoning for this bill is in alignment with a lot of its other legislation. I am going to go over some troubling points that I see and then conclude with how I feel this points in the same negative direction that we see the government often take.

Apparently, according to this bill, the government would be able to determine who eligible news businesses are. That is very unfortunate, because if anyone has something to say, then that is news, that is their news and that is their voice. It really should not fall to the government to determine who eligible news businesses are. The government would also mandate payments for links, so in addition to controlling who is saying what and what they are saying, it is controlling the money of who is saying what and what is being said.

Also, the CRTC would be judging the agreements. The CRTC has been given incredible oversight, and I would almost say overreach, with Bill C-11, and this is continuing with Bill C-18. I have seen several articles that indicate Bill C-18 risks creating no independence within the press. That is also very concerning.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**PREVENTION OF GOVERNMENT-IMPOSED
VACCINATION MANDATES ACT**

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC) moved that Bill C-278, An Act to prevent the imposition by the federal government of vaccination mandates for employment and travel, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in the House of Commons and represent the people of Niagara West. I appreciate their support for the past 19 years, and I want to make sure they know I never take it for granted. They sent me here to be their voice in Parliament, to speak to issues important to them and our beautiful riding of Niagara West.

I proudly rise to introduce a private member's bill that is important not only to my constituents but also to over six million Canadians. The bill reads:

This enactment amends the Financial Administration Act to provide that the Treasury Board may not require as a condition of employment in the federal public administration that a person receive a vaccine against COVID-19. It also amends the Canada Labour Code to provide that regulations may not be made that require, as a term or condition of employment in or in connection with the operation of a federal work, undertaking or business, that a person receive a vaccine against COVID-19.

In addition, the enactment amends the Aeronautics Act, the Railway Safety Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 to provide that no regulation, order or other instrument made under any of those Acts to prevent the introduction or spread of COVID-19 may prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting a person from boarding an aircraft, a train or a vessel solely on the ground that they have not received a vaccine against that disease.

The title of the bill is “an act to prevent the imposition by the federal government of vaccination mandates for employment and travel”, or simply, the “prevention of government-imposed vaccination mandates act.” As I said earlier, this bill is incredibly important to my constituents and more than six million Canadians across the country, more than actually voted for the Liberal government in 2021. This bill is about freedom. It is about reining in the ballooning and intrusive government that got used to interfering in Canadians' lives with extreme outreach. The bill was initially introduced by our Conservative leader, the member for Carleton, and because there was quite a bit of overlap between his bill and my previous bill, we agreed I would go forward with his. I am grateful that his views are aligned with mine on this issue of freedom. After all, freedom is at the core of our Conservative way of thinking and is essential to governing and to government.

This bill, if passed, would prohibit the federal government from discriminating against federal public servants, federally regulated workers and federally regulated travel based on health status. Specifically, it would prohibit the federal government from mandating COVID vaccines for employment and travel.

What all of these concerns I have just listed point to is a theme with the Liberals: They want to control everything. That is exactly what they do. They absolutely want to control everything. Whenever there is something they do not agree with, they label it as misinformation. This is what they do, and Bill C-18 is just another example of the government's attempt to control Canadians.

However, members should not just take my word for it. Michael Geist noted, “The Globe and Mail's Phillip Crowley warned against the intrusion of the CRTC into the news business, calling it a “threat to the independence of media”, something I just mentioned. Virtually everyone admitted—

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have a point of order by the hon. Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Hon. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I would ask for unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move that, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(2), the House approve the reappointment of Heather P. Lank as Parliamentary Librarian for a term of 16 months.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. minister's moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: What?

Mr. Greg McLean: Grow up.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Grow up?

Mr. Greg McLean: You heard me. Jackass.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Calgary Centre is rising to apologize, I hope.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I am rising to apologize. My apologies to the member across the way.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, all parties have been consulted, and if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House, the motion that, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(2), the House approve the reappointment of Heather P. Lank as Parliamentary Librarian for a term of 16 months be deemed moved, the question be deemed put, and a recorded division be deemed demanded and deferred to the expiry of the time provided for Private Members' Business today.

• (1730)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Private Members' Business

For far too many Canadians, the last three years has been among the most difficult times in their lives. During the pandemic, many Canadians made the personal choice of remaining unvaccinated, specifically and only with respect to COVID. Their personal choice about their health put them in opposition to the views of the Prime Minister. As a consequence of this, they suffered deeply. They were shut out of their churches, banned from travelling, banned from seeing their loved ones and fired from their jobs. Some Canadians were stripped of their employment insurance benefits.

I know that, to many, this seems like it was long ago, so let me refresh people's memories of these egregious government actions. It was May 2021. While the country was going through the COVID pandemic, the Prime Minister said in an interview, "We are not a country that makes vaccinations mandatory." The Prime Minister clearly stated that he did not support vaccine mandates in May 2021. That all changed after he saw the political opportunity and after he saw the polls. He saw an opportunity to win a majority government by wedging voters on their personal health choices. He saw that he might gain votes if he divided Canadians and pitted them against each other. He did this by putting in place mandates that restricted the freedoms of Canadians. When Canadians disagreed with the Prime Minister's policy, he appeared on television, calling them misogynists and racists. He also said that they held unacceptable views.

Next, the Liberals introduced the country's first mandates, a divisive, vindictive, stigmatizing and cruel measure. In an instant, millions of Canadians were, because of their personal medical choices, put on unpaid leave and banned from taking federal transportation. This was in addition to being ostracized by friends and strangers alike, sometimes even by their family, as a consequence of the Prime Minister's divisive rhetoric.

Let us just say it how it is. The government saw this as an opportunity for political gain and took it. Even when the world began to open up, the government kept these measures in place, continuing to restrict the personal freedoms of millions of Canadians. Soon after mandates were introduced, an election was called. The Prime Minister ran a campaign largely advocating the violation of some of the most fundamental civil liberties that Canadians have.

• (1735)

Not long after, mandates were extended to members of the Canadian Armed Forces. CAF members who chose to remain unvaccinated were rendered unsuitable for further service and were booted out. This decision caused turmoil among senior CAF members who questioned the legality of this. In a decision of May 30, 2023, the Military Grievances External Review Committee found that this vaccine mandate had breached the charter rights of military personnel. I am sure that, in the coming months, we will see more of this decision when it condemns the government's divisive and unscientific vaccine mandate. The Liberal government looked soldiers in the eye and said they were unsuitable because of their personal health choices. It almost sounds like a dystopian movie plot where the Liberals play the villains, punishing citizens who speak out of line or think for themselves. Quite frankly, that is a movie I would not want to see become a reality, but, unfortunately, in many ways it has become so.

This was just another display of the Prime Minister's wanting more control over Canadians. Big government overreach divided Canadians, turning neighbours and families against one another. To the Liberals, it is always about winning; it is not about Canadians, and certainly not about compassion in difficult times. For those who made different personal medical choices, the government made them outcasts in their communities, firing them from jobs, banning them from travelling and ostracizing them from their friends. Canadians should have the freedom to make personal health decisions for themselves, without social and economic threats from the government. They have the freedom to do so, a freedom that should never, ever be cast aside again. However, if one did not agree with what the Prime Minister decreed was right, one was punished. The scale of this was unprecedented in Canadian history.

Millions of Canadians voiced their worries and concerns, including hundreds to my office. They emailed, called and wrote to me and many of the MPs here in the chamber. One of the stories I listened to was from a young man named Daniel. Daniel chose to remain unvaccinated because of his own personal fears of a fairly new vaccine, especially since he had had a bad reaction to one before. Because of his personal health decision, he was scoffed at and treated differently. He watched in horror as different levels of government treated Canadians who were unvaccinated like they were some sort of criminals, all because of the example of, and the pressure to fall in line exerted by, the Prime Minister and his Liberal government. Unscientific mandates kept Daniel from seeing his friends, his family and especially his grandparents. He could not go watch a hockey game with his grandfather or go to a restaurant to celebrate his sister's birthday. Most of all, he could not see his grandmother while she sat alone in a nursing home, unable to spend the holidays with the family. Daniel spoke up and sent me a letter because he was inspired by what our current leader and many other caucus members had said. He says that he will be forever thankful that, on this side of the House, we speak up for what we truly believe in.

What happened to Daniel was not a one-time thing. I personally know of a friend incredibly close to me who also suffered. As a father, he watched as his child was banned from playing basketball, a sport they both love. His son was told he was not accepted; this was not as a player on the court, but as a person, all because of one personal choice. Outside of sports, his son was kept from playing with his friends and was even denied entry to stores, where he was forced to wait outside in -40° weather.

Private Members' Business

These Canadians were not hateful. They were not conspiracy theorists or science deniers, like the Liberals were so disgustingly saying at the time. These are labels, might I add, that some Liberals still repeat. These were good folks who just wanted to live their lives without government forcefully telling them what to do. All they asked was to be left alone, and because of that simple request, they experienced hardship like they never had before, hardship that was facilitated by legislation, and rhetoric sparked by the Liberal government.

The Liberals took not just the jobs of these Canadians; they also took their livelihoods and their reputations. One can see this with the government's invoking the Emergencies Act, where Liberals accused protesters of being arsonists and thieves. In reality, Ottawa Police Service had unequivocally said there was no connection between the fires and protesters. Despite this, the Minister of Public Safety, the leader of the NDP and Liberal members like the member for Pickering—Uxbridge shamefully used these false stories to justify their use of the Emergencies Act.

This misinformation and disinformation were peddled not just by government officials. The media, mostly the CBC, which is a good pal of the Liberals, tried to claim that Canadian-led fundraisers supporting the protests were being funded by foreign agents in Russia and the U.S. Later, they had to walk back those remarks because the overwhelming majority of donations, close to 90%, came from Canadians who were upset about how their fellow Canadians were being treated. The legacy media, the Liberals and the NDP did not care about the facts. All they relied on was unconfirmed online chatter. They were desperate to cling to something.

• (1740)

In August 2021, the front page of the *Toronto Star* had a now infamous opinion piece quoting the line, “I have no empathy left for the willfully unvaccinated. Let them die.” This was one of the lowest points in our country, to see something like that happen to folks, some of whom live in my riding. In January 2022, a Quebec judge ruled that a father could not see his son after the father made a post on social media that was critical of vaccine mandates. The judge labelled him a conspiracy theorist who was too dangerous to see his own son. There is even more.

Not even students were safe from being targeted. Across Canada, universities and colleges banned students from going to classes or participating in campus events. Students' chances of graduation and access to quality education were put in jeopardy because of these mandates.

Canadians were being singled out for their personal medical choices and punished because of the hateful rhetoric of the Liberal government. While protesters were outside protesting for their freedoms in the freezing cold of Ottawa, the Liberals sat in their cushy warm offices, freezing Canadians' bank accounts. The Liberals kept them from buying food, paying rent and paying for utility bills and other essentials. They wanted to paint the protesters as evil, so they falsely told Canadians the protesters were ransacking offices, another complete fabrication to justify their complete and total overreach.

While the Liberals covered their ears and called people names, I was listening to people. I knew that compassion, understanding and

empathy were the way out of this Liberal-created crisis. I listened to the stories of Canadians in my communities and across the country. These stories also inspired members of the Prime Minister's own Liberal Party to speak up.

In February 2022, the member for Louis-Hébert said he was uncomfortable with how his government was handling the pandemic. He pointed out how the government had changed and taken a more stigmatizing and divisive approach to its pandemic policy. He reminded the Prime Minister to not demonize people who just disagreed with his policies. The member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin also agreed, saying that there were more in the Liberal caucus who felt the same way.

With all of this, the Liberals set an egregious example to the provinces and municipalities. Premiers and municipal politicians across the country felt forced to get in line and follow Ottawa's lead. If they did not, the legacy media, so closely aligned with the Liberals on almost everything, would have made them pay a heavy political price. Clearly this was about control.

Thankfully, members of our Conservative Party stood up and spoke their minds, including our leader. He stood up for the freedom of personal choice. We want Canada to be the freest country on earth. We must ensure that Canadians will never lose their medical freedom. I will never let people forget how the Liberal government trampled on the rights of Canadians for three long years, how the Prime Minister treated them during that time or how he froze Canadians' bank accounts, got them fired, stripped them of unemployment insurance benefits and banned them from travelling.

The Liberals did all these things to achieve one goal: political success. The Liberals capitalized on fear and made their opponents their scapegoats. These millions of Canadians deserve a voice, and they deserve accountability from the government. Only Conservatives will give these Canadians a voice and stop excessive government overreach so that they can take back control of their lives. Only the Conservatives will bring home freedom.

The COVID-19 policies put in place by the Liberal government were simply too much. It was not right. We all know that, or at least I hope we do.

Private Members' Business

We cannot go back to firing people for a personal medical choice, something so intimate to Canadians. What Canadians choose for their health is their freedom and theirs only. We cannot go back to stripping people of their employment insurance benefits because of a personal medical choice. We cannot go back to prohibiting people from travelling or working because they made a decision for themselves. It was cruel. There was no compassion for our fellow Canadians who may have thought a bit differently than the government. It violated the rights of Canadians for way too long and without any scientific basis.

I hope all members in the House will show compassion, empathy and understanding by supporting this bill and making sure that our fellow Canadians are never treated with such disdain by their government ever again.

● (1745)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I note that the member brought forward a petition to this House on March 2, 2022, and what makes it interesting is that the individual who initiated the petition is from Vancouver, so not even within the same province as the member. What is most interesting about the petition that he brought forward is that it calls upon the Government of Canada to suspend the use of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women, children, youth and adults of child-bearing age. That is a petition he presented for Canadians, and it was a petition initiated outside his riding.

I am curious if this bill goes far enough for him, or if he would like to see the COVID-19 vaccines banned for pregnant women, children, youth and adults of child-bearing age.

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, this bill is about choice. That is all we have said. It is about the ability to choose for one's self whether they would like to do that and to not exclude people because of that choice. Whoever wants to take it, that is up to them. The point is that they will not be excluded from society, which the Liberal government did for three years, and that is completely unacceptable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, this bill is a bit of a nightmare. We had pretty much forgotten all about the pandemic for a year, and all of a sudden, this afternoon, just before the summer break, we are being forced to re-visit the pandemic and the restrictions.

I wonder whether my colleague would not agree with me. Instead of proposing a vaccination ban, why not introduce a bill that would require the government to properly fund the health care system so that, if we ever end up in another nightmare, if we ever have to live through another pandemic, we can tackle the real issues that we faced during the pandemic, namely the underfunding of the health care system?

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, this bill is merely about choice. All things need to continue.

We realize that health care is still underfunded. We need to do more in that respect. This is about allowing people to make their

own medical decisions. This is about people not being excluded from travelling. This is about people not being excluded from going to school. This is about people not being excluded from going to work. It is absolutely ridiculous.

A bunch of people paid into EI and were not even allowed to use it over a medical decision. That is completely heartless on behalf of the government.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, it was a very poignant speech made by the member. I heard several things.

I think it is important for Canadians to note something: Many of the restrictions in place during the pandemic were provincial regulations. Whether they were Conservative or New Democratic governments, they often instituted those uniformly, particularly in my province of Alberta. The former member of this chamber Jason Kenney instituted many of those mandates.

I think the member is conflating public health measures and the measures taken federally. It is important to note that governments, at one point in this country, were unified on ensuring that Canadians' lives were saved. World War I and World War II veterans were saved because of vaccinations. Today, we have the convoy party talking about how inappropriate vaccinations are.

How many lives have to be lost before he takes deadly pandemics seriously?

● (1750)

Mr. Dean Allison: Madam Speaker, this bill is about freedom. It is someone having a choice to take the vaccine or not, and not be excluded from going to their job. The government was heartless to say that someone cannot go to work and collect a paycheque.

On the issue of the provinces, whether it was done federally or provincially, it was still wrong. A lot of pressure was exerted by the federal government pressuring the provincial governments to do that.

This bill is about federal workers and about national travel. We have shortages in hospitals while people are still not allowed to go back to work. When we have a health care crisis, that is absolutely ridiculous.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I certainly hope that nobody will need to go to the Library of Parliament anytime soon to look up any information on vaccines because we do not have a librarian as a result of the petty politics being played in the House.

Typically, we will just approve the librarian through a UC motion. We did it in 2018 for this particular librarian, but the Conservatives are not even willing to let us appoint a librarian. How much more political can they get on an issue than to refuse to appoint a librarian?

Moments ago, the member for Calgary Centre called me a “jack dot, dot, dot”, and members can fill in the blanks, as a result of questioning why the Conservatives would not approve a librarian, but here we are. I hope we do not have to go to the library to get any information on vaccines any time soon, because we do not have a librarian.

In any event, I am talking about Bill C-278, which has come forward, presented by the member for Niagara West moments ago. We are having second reading on this. I am particularly concerned. I do not think it should go without saying that I will not be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have a point of order from the hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, I would ask the member for Kingston and the Islands to clarify what he just said. He tried to accuse the Conservatives of blocking the vote. He is incorrect. I would ask—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is weighing in on debate and not a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am happy to do it anyway.

In 2018, we appointed our current librarian. I would bet that the member does not even know the librarian's name. I would bet that just about everybody in this room probably does not know the librarian's name. We just attempted to extend that appointment for 16 months through a UC motion, like we did in 2018, but the Conservatives are insisting on having a vote from the House. That is what just happened.

The member for Calgary Centre called me a—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have another point of order from the member for Calgary Signal Hill.

Mr. Ron Liepert: Madam Speaker, just for clarification, the librarian's name is Heather Lank.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I want to remind members that they might want to look up what a point of order would entail before they rise on a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the best part about that, and what the public could not see, is that while I was giving that answer, another member went behind the curtain to meet him. He got the name, and then he jumped up to say that, so the member did not know the name. In any event, it is irrelevant.

Let us talk about the bill. I do not think it should surprise anybody that the government will be opposed to this bill. This is not a bill that respects the will of Canadians. I do not think it would accomplish what the member is seeking to do.

The member for Niagara West mentioned a couple of times about charter rights and EI. I would remind the member that this has been challenged in some courts, including the EI scenario specifically, all of which have been struck down by the courts. Therefore, when we talk about the court involvement in the House, perhaps it is wise to indicate the outcomes of those courts, which were not in favour of what this member would probably like to have seen.

Private Members' Business

I will reflect on the fact that this bill would specifically also amend other acts in addition to the first part about ensuring public sector employees could not be required to be vaccinated in certain settings. The bill states that it would amend other acts:

to provide that no regulation, order or other instrument made under any of those Acts to prevent the introduction or spread of COVID-19 may prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting a person from boarding an aircraft, a train or a vessel solely on the ground that they have not received a vaccine against that disease.

These were some of the most influential policies the government created and they led to our success, relatively speaking against other countries, when it came to dealing with the COVID-19. It was the Conservatives who were calling for certain measures in the beginning of the pandemic, who now seem to be confused by the fact that these actually worked. Restricting people's ability to move on trains or airplanes helped to prevent the spread of the virus.

Members should not take my word for it. Why do we not listen to a former Conservative prime minister? I am reading from an article, which states that just days ago, Brian Mulroney “praised the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, its [dealings with] NAFTA and its ongoing support for Ukraine in its war with Russia.” This is what former Conservative prime minister Mulroney said: “I have learned over the years that history is unconcerned with the trivia and the trash of rumours and gossip floating around Parliament Hill. History is only concerned with the big ticket items that have shaped the future of Canada”.

The article continues: “He said [that the current Prime Minister] and the premiers 'conducted themselves as well as anybody else in the world' in dealing with COVID, something Mulroney called 'the greatest challenge that any prime minister has dealt with in Canada in 156 years.’”

That is former prime minister Brian Mulroney praising the work that this government did in dealing with the pandemic. This is a former Conservative prime minister, a Progressive Conservative prime minister, I might add. I am not sure where we are today. The Conservatives keep moving further and further to the right. This piece of legislation that has been introduced today is just another example of that.

However, at the end of the day, we did what was needed to be done. We see that through the fatality rate in Canada. Not one death should be considered acceptable, but when compared to our counterparts throughout the world, we did an incredible job of dealing with this pandemic. That is something that has been reverberated not only in the House of Commons by Liberals here, but also by a former Conservative prime minister just days ago.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I usually say that it is a pleasure to rise and comment on a bill, but this time I am not sure it is a pleasure.

Private Members' Business

The bill seeks to amend the Financial Administration Act so that the Treasury Board can no longer impose mandatory vaccination. The bill also seeks to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Aeronautics Act, the Railway Safety Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001. According to the bill, all those laws should provide that mandatory vaccination is a thing of the past and can never again be required for COVID-19. I feel there is something missing in this bill. In the health bill, we could also prescribe a disinfectant to make sure that we do not get any germs, as Trump did in his public statements when COVID-19 first hit and we were waiting for a vaccine. That element is missing from the bill and we could move an amendment to that effect.

This bill is just one more attempt to politicize vaccination. The hon. member for Niagara West was behind Bill C-285, which was similar to this one. It is easy to descend into demagoguery. At the time, the hon. member compared the vaccine mandate for federal public servants to something that the totalitarian regimes of China and North Korea would do. I can say right away that the Bloc Québécois will be voting against the bill and that it refuses to play into the hands of conspiracy theorists.

I say this with all due respect, because everyone is entitled to their opinion. The hon. member's past positions on vaccines and the kinds of petitions that he has sponsored, however, make it difficult to see what he is trying to do with this bill as anything other than yet another attempt to discredit vaccines. I only have 10 minutes to speak, but if I had more time, I could go back in history and talk about the times when there were no vaccines. I could talk about infant mortality, the Spanish flu and the First World War. We have seen how much of a difference vaccination has made.

The sole purpose of this bill concerns an issue that should be off-limits to partisan games. COVID-19 has been a tragedy, not a conspiracy. The seven waves of COVID-19 took the lives of nearly 18,000 people in Quebec, more than 50,000 people in Canada and 6.5 million people worldwide.

The Conservatives, however, have no sympathy for the victims, for the health care workers or for our young people and all the sacrifices they made to protect our seniors. Their sympathy is for pandemic deniers. The Conservatives decided to turn their backs on it all and vote against the principle of Bill S-209, which called for March 11 to be designated as COVID-19 pandemic observance day. Shame on them. Pandemic denialism may be part of their DNA, along with denying climate change and insisting that it is not real. Both these realities, however, are having profoundly negative societal effects in terms of health and poverty. I think these issues deserve more attention, not a sideshow.

The Conservatives not only do not want to recognize this tragedy, but they are now proposing to deny the vaccination that allowed us to save many lives and get through the pandemic. I am not absolving the Liberals, who were not entirely innocent throughout this pandemic. They also used vaccination for partisan purposes.

Let us not forget that in 2021, they called an election for no reason in the middle of the pandemic, when health measures were in force. The Liberals hammered home their message on mandatory vaccination for partisan purposes. It was a game against the Con-

servatives to go after a segment of the electorate. It was no more edifying than that.

● (1800)

That is a dangerous game, because it just diminishes a debate that should be based on knowledge and evidence, not partisan interests.

As we know, the government often improvised or delayed taking action when managing the crisis. Take, for example, border controls and the delays in procuring equipment and vaccines. We understand that it was a crisis situation and that sometimes urgent action needs to be taken. However, in the end, some major setbacks fortunately forced us to rely on getting people vaccinated very quickly. It was almost unprecedented how it was possible to create a vaccine that then helped us to significantly stabilize the situation.

France, Germany, the United States, England, the list of countries that adopted a vaccine passport for transportation is very long. We have to remember the situation we were in. Hospitals around the world were overburdened. We saw the images, not just in Canada, but in Europe. So many people died that people did not even know where to put the bodies. That was a tragedy. Vaccination finally enabled us to see a little light at the end of the tunnel. I think that goes to show that research and development and science help us move forward when we are confronted not with a minor cough but a global pandemic.

To deny that by banning vaccine mandates in labour laws and in transportation, and to say that if someone has COVID-19, it is open season and they can show up without being vaccinated and completely ignore a vaccine mandate, that is like giving up the tools we have to protect ourselves in a public health situation.

Making vaccine mandates permanent would have been going too far, much like saying that Parliament should be hybrid permanently is going too far. That is too much. We have to be able to consider the context. The Bloc Québécois has never been in favour of making vaccination mandatory, because that would be impossible. Mandatory vaccination is not possible, unless you round people up and force them to get the shot before they can leave. That would be impossible. There were, however, constraints placed on those who did not want to be vaccinated, and those constraints were warranted.

What is regrettable about the Liberals' partisanship at the time when it was made mandatory is that it did not take into account a position-by-position analysis. Were there any positions where this was not an issue? Were there any other work positions? This is true for both federal employees and those in federally regulated businesses.

Labour relations analysts and advisers were very serious in saying that employers should assess the situations in which the work was carried out by staff. That was not done either. It was done indiscriminately.

Private Members' Business

Some unions decided to go to court on behalf of their members. There was not much in the way of case law, but case law did support demanding this as a condition of employment, given the specific context we were in. With this bill, the Conservative Party wants to say that they are against this, that it does not make sense and that it should be eliminated from all our laws.

Our labour and transportation laws already do not require vaccination. Our laws say nothing about this. They will certainly not be amended to explicitly say that, in the future, there will never again be an obligation to be vaccinated.

• (1805)

Just think of the H1N1 flu epidemic. It was a serious flu. People were asked to be vaccinated if they wanted to travel. I had to travel, so I got vaccinated. That is life, when there are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. member, but her time is up. I even gave her a little more time.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, before I move into the bill, I want to acknowledge the sacrifices that every Canadian has made over the past three years.

The high school graduates of this month are the first cohort to have spent all of their high school years under COVID. I think about all the rites of passage that were missed and compromised in an effort to keep people alive and well during COVID-19, such as missed weddings, celebrations of life, graduations, births, birthdays, all of it. I think about Canadians across this country who fought for the last three years to keep their families healthy and safe. I think about the unpaid caregivers who gave up their work and sidetracked their careers to support the needs of their families and friends. Of course, I think of the frontline workers and paid care workers, like nurses and long-term care workers, who took on all of the institutional care when families and volunteers were shut out. I acknowledge their heroic work and that they are experiencing high levels of burnout and moral stress. This needs to change. These workers deserve better working conditions and respect.

This pandemic has also disproportionately affected women and immigrant women, who are the backbone of the care economy. Their employment and educational opportunities have been sidelined as they stepped up to take on more paid and unpaid work.

Women have also experienced an increase in gender-based violence throughout the pandemic.

Women have shouldered a significant burden in the health and social care sectors, accounting for 70% of the workforce dedicated to combatting COVID-19 globally. These brave women have faced heightened risks of infection, while grappling with the challenges of maintaining their own health and safety.

By considering the broader societal impact, we recognize the importance of prioritizing the health and well-being of all individuals irrespective of gender. That reality is protected in our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Unfortunately, last week we saw a bill brought to this House by the Conservatives to create a double standard when it comes to who should have health freedoms. The Conservative Party wants to uphold what its members would call health-related freedoms in Canada, but at the same time oppose reproductive health freedoms for women and diverse genders.

The bill we are talking about today, Bill C-278, claims to protect the health rights of those who choose not to vaccinate, yet the double standard shows that the Conservative Party has a biased view of who should have access to health care and who should not. This bill emerged from the Conservative leadership race, initially introduced by the member for Carleton, who has been a vocal opponent of the COVID-19 vaccine requirements, labelling them as a means to exert control over individuals' lives.

In addition, the member for Niagara West, who brought this bill forward, actively supported the 2022 convoy occupation in Ottawa, and aligns himself with an ideology of medical freedoms while actively opposing reproductive rights. Although I will not speculate here on the motivations of the sponsor of this bill, I will note that decisions regarding vaccination policies should be based on evidence and the advice of experts rather than driven by political considerations.

The New Democrats firmly support an approach that balances the rights of individuals who have chosen not to be vaccinated with the collective rights to health and safety. We must ensure that public health decisions and laws are grounded in scientific research and data rather than being influenced by political rhetoric or ideology.

Coming back to the bill, this proposed legislation has faced criticism in the community. It has been called out because it solely targets COVID-19 related vaccine requirements. The potential ramifications of this legislation have not been duly investigated, and at a time when health organizations and experts have already called for an end to the vaccination exemption, this bill is not aligned with reality. However, the Conservatives have no concern for reality, but prefer to work to advance their partisan agenda.

Let us look at what they are proposing. They are proposing to amend the Financial Administration Act, the Aeronautics Act, the Railway Safety Act and the Canada Shipping Act without due diligence. It has taken over a year to get the Canada disability benefit through this House and here are the Conservatives proposing to change a number of acts. It is just not bound in reality.

Private Members' Business

• (1810)

These wide-ranging changes do not help workers or the economy, so let us get back to reality. Current and past Liberal and Conservative governments were not prepared for a pandemic. Our health care systems were underfunded. There was a shortage of Canadian-made vaccines and PPE, as previous governments sold off our manufacturing capability. Long-term care workers, nurses and workers across the nation were exploited and continue to be exploited. They were taken for granted for decades. They deserve better.

The New Democrats support these workers and all workers that make society function. Workers deserve to be supported, and we must ensure that they are protected with laws that matter to them and funding they need to support all Canadians, pandemic or not. They deserve no less, and the NDP will fight to correct these long-standing deficits.

Just yesterday, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby tabled a bill, Bill C-345, to protect firefighters, paramedics and other responders. The member for Vancouver East continues to fight tirelessly for immigrant workers to get the immigrant status that they deserve. It is our collective responsibility in society to protect workers as they protect us.

The current nursing and health care shortage has certainly proved that there is a lot of work to do to improve working conditions. The Liberals need to take seriously the work of solving the health care crisis, including nursing shortages, and to take immediate action to work with provinces to fix critical needs, including by investing in housing that workers need. The Prime Minister must not continue to let down nurses, care workers and all workers.

The Liberal government has a responsibility to be part of the solution and to act on other gaps, such as protecting Canadian manufacturing of vaccines and PPE and investing in research and development in every corner of this country. The Liberals and the Conservatives need to do more to support workers and communities, put people ahead of corporate profits and spend less time on ideological partisanship.

I close by reminding the government that Canadian health systems are on the verge of collapse. Frontline workers have been heroic, yet this heroism has resulted in burnout, fatigue and early retirements. As we work through this reality, more federal investments are needed in health care and community. There needs to be respect for women in the care economy, because they have always been the true backbone.

• (1815)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to my colleague's private member's bill, Bill C-278, an act to prevent the imposition by the federal government of vaccination mandates for employment and travel.

This bill is an important chance to right some of the wrongs Canadians endured during the COVID-19 pandemic, including and especially the violations of their rights and freedoms.

Formally, the bill amends the Financial Administration Act to provide that the Treasury Board may not require as a condition of employment in the federal public administration that a person receive a vaccine against COVID-19. It also amends the Canada Labour Code to provide that regulations may not be made that require, as a term or condition of employment in or in connection with the operation of a federal work, undertaking or business, that a person receive a vaccine against COVID-19.

The bill also amends the Aeronautics Act, the Railway Safety Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001, to provide that no regulation, order or other instrument made under any of those acts to prevent the introduction or spread of COVID-19 may prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting a person from boarding an aircraft, a train or a vessel solely on the ground that they have not received a vaccine against that disease.

This bill was initiated by our leader before it was taken up by my colleague, the hon. member for Niagara West.

The right to one's own medical choices is sacrosanct. The COVID-19 pandemic presented an unparalleled challenge to daily life for all Canadians across all areas of life and business. In its haste to ensure Canada was able to weather the pandemic as well as possible, the government of the day made some decisions that ultimately had serious negative effects on thousands of Canadians across the country.

The pandemic was undoubtedly a scary time for all, but instead of working with understanding and compassion, the Liberal government employed rhetoric that was cruel to its opponents. In particular, those who were hesitant to receive COVID-19 vaccines were made to be ridiculed and were discriminated against.

We now have the chance to take a sober second look at the outcome and aftermath of the pandemic. While it can be argued that the vaccines helped many, the way the government mandated their use in certain areas cannot be repeated. I am speaking about mandating vaccines as a requirement for employment and travel.

Particularly when it became clear that the vaccines were not a silver bullet and could not stop the spread of COVID-19 wholesale, the serious restrictions put on unvaccinated Canadians became unconscionable. In August 2021, the Liberal government mandated vaccination against COVID-19 for all federal public servants, employees in federally regulated transport industries and passengers on commercial air travel, interprovincial rail service and cruise ships. In all, more than 1.235 million employees were subjected to that mandate, more than 8% of the total number of workers in Canada. Those who could not or would not receive the vaccine and did not have an exemption were put on unpaid leave or fired.

Private Members' Business

Thousands of Canadians were denied their rights to freedom of mobility. The charter grants them the freedom to enter and leave Canada, but for a period of almost three years, six million unvaccinated Canadians were trapped in their own country.

Certainly at the beginning of the pandemic, in the first three weeks, nobody knew what this was, how serious it was or what we should do. After three years, it was clear that people who were fully vaccinated, such as I am, could get and transmit COVID the same as the unvaccinated. All the members of this House, many of whom had COVID during this time, were busy flying back and forth and taking trains in the country, but the unvaccinated were unable to go anywhere. That was discrimination.

Thousands of Canadians were unable to see loved ones across the border. It was a situation I became well acquainted with in my border riding office. Families were split apart. Parents were unable to share custody of young children. Loved ones were unable to say goodbye to dying older parents on the basis of mandates not based on science.

I have people in my riding who are married to people who live just across the border. They were prevented from being with their spouses for years. This is just unacceptable.

- (1820)

Worse still, some workers who lost their jobs were ineligible for employment insurance benefits as of October 2021. Employment and Social Development Canada issued a notice at the time to enforce vaccine mandates to help them fill out records of employment, documents that are necessary in applying for the benefits. According to The Canadian Press, "The department said if an employee doesn't report to work or is suspended or terminated for refusing to comply with a vaccine mandate, the employer should indicate that they quit, took a leave of absence or were dismissed potentially disqualifying them from EI." While indeed it is an employer's right to set the rules of conduct for their workplace, for the federal government to instruct the employer to deny employees Canadian government benefits they had paid into was wrong. How many Canadians suffered and how many families went without because of this direction?

The EI system is an insurance premium system. A person pays their premiums, qualifies with their hours and collects the benefit, yet at the same time that the government was handing out CERB cheques of \$2,000 a month, it was preventing people who were terminated for not being vaccinated from getting any money at all.

Furthermore, a year ago in June, the government refused to repay employees who lost their jobs due to the mandate the first time. Reporting in the National Post at the time states: "The ... government says it will not repay any salary to federal public servants who were suspended since October because of the COVID-19 vaccine mandate." This was at the time the mandate was being lifted. This was after months of calls for the government to reverse the mandates, not only from me and my colleagues but also from the major public service unions, including PSAC, PIPSC and CAPE. All had filed policy grievances against the employer's vaccine mandate for federal bureaucrats. At the same time, many other countries had released and stopped their mandates, following the advice of the World Health Organization after it said they were not effective. It took the

government much too long to reverse these policies after much harm had been done.

I must say that it was not just Conservatives who opposed these divisive policies that had been imposed by the Prime Minister and the government. A few Liberals even had the courage to call out the Prime Minister for his efforts to divide Canadians. The Liberal MP for Louis-Hébert said, "A decision was made to wedge, to divide, and to stigmatize," further saying, "I fear that this politicization of the pandemic risks undermining the public's trust in our public health institutions." Even the former Liberal finance minister admitted that the Prime Minister used vaccines as a political wedge, saying, "I didn't see that as something that was helpful."

Today, millions of Canadians remain unvaccinated against COVID-19. We cannot allow the freedom of millions of people to make their personal medical decisions to ever be compromised again. We cannot discriminate against millions of people for their personal medical choices. We cannot stand in this House and say we stand up for Canadians while leaving out a significant portion of the population.

it is clear that this extreme restriction of freedoms must never happen again. Hopefully we will never see the like of another COVID-19 pandemic, but there could be other similar threats out there, and we need to be prepared. It cannot be our main line of defence against a pandemic to arbitrarily limit the rights and freedoms of its citizens.

This bill, Bill C-278, will help to ensure that. We must not limit employment or travel on the basis of vaccination. We must not limit the operations of our House of Commons or our federal public service or our important industries on the basis of vaccination; it must be down to the individual's choice.

I will share one example of something that happened in my riding of Sarnia—Lambton.

At the beginning of the pandemic, nurses were heroes on the front line. They wore their personal protective equipment and there were no vaccines. Then, subsequently, when the vaccines came forward, there was a vaccine mandate put in place. Even though all the nurses were wearing the same protective equipment and there was no science or evidence that there was any transmission and the unvaccinated ones were being tested every day, which gave even more of a guarantee, the unvaccinated ones were all fired. Four weeks after all the unvaccinated nurses left the facility, there was an outbreak of COVID-19 among the COVID-vaccinated nurses. What was accomplished was misery in many people's lives and nothing positive whatsoever.

Government Orders

It is time to replace the fear sowed by the Liberals with a new hope. We must take these lessons learned and enshrine them into law. We can have a Canada where personal medical choice is protected, a Canada with productive and profitable trade and travel. We can bring it home to your home, my home, our home. Let us bring it home.

• (1825)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not really know what to think of the slogan from the members opposite, “My home, your home, bring it home”, or what they are really trying to get at. However, at the end of the day, it is definitely not about freedoms. They should look in the mirror and talk about women's rights and quite possibly apply that same principle of freedom.

I am thinking in terms of what we have witnessed over the last few years. I believe that Canadians from coast to coast to coast have come together and recognized that, as the world went into this pandemic, it was going to take a team approach. I want to acknowledge the sacrifices that were made by virtually everyone in dealing with the pandemic.

In listening to the comments from members opposite, we heard a lot about the sacrifices that were made, some very personal. They dealt with deaths, births and everything in between. I want to acknowledge that at the very beginning and commend the actions of Canadians as a whole.

My colleague made reference to Brian Mulroney, a former prime minister, and quoted what he had said. Before I expand on that, I want to make reference to the fact that, as a national government, right from the very beginning, we were clear that we would have the backs of Canadians—

An hon. member: What did John Manley say?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind members that there are no questions and comments during this part of the debate. I would ask them to hold on to their thoughts. If they wish to debate this, they may put their names up when I call for resuming debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what Canadians knew and understood was that, whether it was the Prime Minister, the cabinet, members of the Liberal caucus or others, we made it very clear that we would have the backs of Canadians going through this pandemic. We took a team Canada approach, as we worked with provinces, territories, indigenous leaders and many other stakeholders at a time when we needed the country to come together. Therefore, when former prime minister Brian Mulroney ultimately provided the compliment to the Prime Minister and the government, I think that same principle applied. As a government, we did a good job, but it was a collective good job. It was Ottawa working at its best with the different stakeholders, and we made a difference. Lives were saved as a direct result. A lot more time was saved with people not having to be in hospitals—

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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*]

ONLINE NEWS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, and of the amendment.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am returning after the hour of PMB. I would like to thank my colleague from Niagara West for presenting that piece of legislation to the House. I would also like to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

I left off saying that, for many reasons, I am very concerned about the direction of Bill C-18, for the reason that it would create risks to the independence of the press. My conclusion from all the items I listed prior to coming to that conclusion was a larger conclusion, which is that the government likes to control everything.

I gave some examples that were provided to me through different media sources, and I will continue some of those examples now. This is very interesting commentary that Canadians have left on the Substack of Michael Geist, and these comments include the following: “I wonder if the Liberals view C18 as a win-win situation. If Google and Facebook pay then the media will be more likely to support the Liberals in the next election.”

We have seen this happen before, of course, where the Liberals pay the media and then it feels compelled to report positively on the government of the day. In fact, we just heard the deputy House leader make reference to an article. We know, not off the top, if this journalist would have been subject to this type of situation, whereby they felt compelled to print something positive about the government of the day.

Another comment reads:

The potential consequences of this bill are deeply concerning. Even its supporters acknowledge the serious flaws that could lead to significant losses for Canadian media, including lost links and deals. The fact that the government is willing to silence criticism from local media organizations raises alarm bells about the lack of accountability and transparency surrounding this legislation.

This is similar to what we saw with Bill C-11. The comment goes on:

If passed as it stands, it could result in reduced access to news for Canadians and diminished revenues for Canadian news organizations. It is crucial that we address these issues and strive for a balanced solution that supports the sustainability of Canadian media while preserving the public's right to information.

Government Orders

Another comment off the Substack of Michael Geist, who has been a strong commentator on the negative aspects of Bill C-18, is from a Canadian named Brian, who writes:

Haha. The driving of the final nail into the Canadian news media coffin has begun. Once the referrals to news sites from social media and web searches stops, so will the traffic to those sites stop and so will the advertising revenue they enjoy from that traffic. The last revenue stream for those news organizations will dry up faster than a puddle of water in the Sahara desert.

Michael Geist himself makes a comment, which is really damning, on the government cutting off debate, which is nothing new for us. Unfortunately, we have experienced time allocation several times in the House. He says, “The government cut off debate at second reading, actively excluded dozens of potential witnesses”; this is pretty par for the course as well. It “expanded the bill to hundreds of broadcasters that may not even produce news,” which is interesting considering that they accuse us over here of providing misinformation. It “denigrated online news services as ‘not real news’, and shrugged off violations of international copyright law.” This is a larger problem altogether.

In fact, I believe it was the member for Hamilton Mountain who said the quiet part out loud in committee by claiming that online news outlets were not news. That is news to me. After apologizing, she never spoke up again at committee, but she chose not to maintain her silence in the House today.

• (1835)

DB writes, “After Bill C11 and C18 why should anyone trust this government? It's clear they value the interests of media organizations over the interests of Canadians.” That is my point, as I go to close here. The Liberal government wants to control everything. It wants to control our democratic systems, as we have seen with its hesitancy to do anything about the situation regarding foreign interference and call a public inquiry. It wants to control the cycle of our economy, keeping Canadians in poverty with higher taxation but giving back tiny bits. It wants to control our day care systems, in terms of providing no solutions for different types of families and taking away work from female entrepreneurs.

The good news is, in the member for Carleton, we will have a prime minister that will allow for freedom, and we will see all these things go the way of the dodo bird.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have an unbelievable fact. Here is what the Conservative Party said:

Canada's Conservatives will:

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

They even make reference to Australia and France. This is what the legislation is doing. I heard the critic say, “Do not answer it.” I hope she does answer.

At the end of the day, how does the member justify going to her constituents, campaigning on doing what Bill C-18 is doing and, then, voting against it? It sounds as though the member is either being intimidated by giant tech or just selling out with the rest of her party.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, it is pretty rich for this individual to talk about intimidation when it was his leader, in fact, who intimidated such women as Jane Philpott, Jody Wilson-Raybould and Celina Caesar-Chavannes.

Unlike the media after this has passed, I speak freely, and I will continue to do so.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, for the past few years, Google and Facebook alone have been gobbling up 80% of the advertising revenue in Canada that used to go to small regional weeklies, small community radio stations like the ones in my riding, and small community television stations, which I have in my riding as well. That money is no longer going to the regions, small weeklies or small news producers, it is going to large international billionaire conglomerates.

I really cannot understand how the Conservatives can rise in the House today and defend these billionaires, who are going to continue to make billions if we do not legislate to stop them. We have to work for our journalists, our weeklies, the people in our regions who produce news for local residents. I really cannot understand how the Conservatives can stand up and do this.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Mr. Speaker, what I find really interesting is that Facebook has said it will no longer share news on its platform once Bill C-18 passes. That means that news and local media will no longer have a voice. That includes Quebec media.

I think that it is very important for my colleague to consider the impact of Bill C-18. The fact that Facebook will no longer share local news will have an impact on Quebec.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that the majority of the Conservatives' Bill C-18 amendments side with web giants to give them loopholes and stronger negotiating powers, instead of supporting Canada's news media. That is not a surprise, because we know the Conservatives are all about big business, big media and the ultrawealthy.

Would the member explain why your party consistently neglects to protect small—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Leah Gazan: Point of order, Madam Speaker—

• (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have already called out the member once today. I do not think she wants me to call her out again about the heckling.

I want to remind the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre that she should address all questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the member.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I think Canadians expect more from us than to act like goons in the House of Commons.

Would the member explain why her party consistently neglects to protect small start-up independent online publishers and news media outlets in Canada?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I am certain the member for Winnipeg Centre was not referring to my colleagues as goons. I am sure she has more respect for her fellow members in the House than that.

The member and her party are the ones in the coalition with the government of big business, the government that gave money to Loblaws, for example. I think that before she accuses the official opposition of such acts, she should really take a look at who she is in bed with first.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-18 tonight.

The question I have for Canadians watching this evening is this: Does the Prime Minister want to control what they see and hear about him on the Internet? My colleagues have already mentioned what the Prime Minister has done, with previous examples. Jody Wilson-Raybould is a classic example of trying to control people in this House. He has also overlooked foreign interference to win elections, frozen the bank accounts of protesters and established mandates. There are countless other things showing that the Prime Minister's ultimate goal is control. He is not quite comfortable unless he has full control.

The predecessor to Bill C-18 is Bill C-11, the way I see it. Legislatively, the Prime Minister has already implemented a censorship bill. It has been called that by many people, including the Conservatives, and he rammed it through the House. I became very familiar with the previous iterations of this bill, Bill C-10 and Bill C-11, and he has now censored by law, through the CRTC, user-generated content. He wants to control it. He might not like the video that I post on YouTube. Freedom of speech still reigns in this country for now, but the Prime Minister may say he does not really like what the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies is saying, so off he goes and he can no longer be on YouTube or social media.

We already see that the Prime Minister is gaining control by censoring Canadians, but let us look at what Bill C-18 would do, not in an opposite way but in another corner of what censorship does. This is by influencing what big media have on their newscasts.

The question is on censorship and what the Prime Minister considers he is doing in a positive way to influence media in his favour. This is the way I phrase it: Who does not get the money and who gets the money? This is from an article entitled “Sue Gardner: Bill C-18 is Bad for Journalism and Bad for Canada”. On who does not get the money, she says, “This process will benefit big legacy media companies at the expense of startups and indie publishers.” She goes on to say, “Meanwhile, many small and indie publishers are actually excluded from C-18; the bill excludes operations that employ fewer than two journalists, and excludes those ‘primarily fo-

cused on a particular topic’ in favour of those that make general interest news.”

That is a question we have to ask when talking about control. Small publishers are much harder to control, and big media is a lot easier to control. Just give them millions and billions of dollars and away we go.

Let us talk about who is getting the money. The same article says:

If news organizations became dependent on money from the platforms to sustain their operations, as they surely would with the passage of Bill C-18, this dependence would create an incentive for them to pull their punches in how they covered the platforms.

That is an example where media might say it does not want to go after someone because, after all, they are writing the cheques.

What is even more concerning, based on what I have alluded to regarding the control of big tech, is the control of government. This is from the same article:

For journalism to be trusted, it needs to be—and perceived to be—independent from government, and willing and able to be critical of government.... Bill C-18 deepens government involvement in the industry. This creates an incentive for the industry to be soft on the government, and it will further reduce trust in journalism.

That is not from me; that is from this writer. They continue: “And anything that reduces trust in journalism is dangerous—especially right now.”

I started by talking about who gets the money. Let us look at what the money looks like.

I have an article by Samantha Edwards entitled “What to know about Bill C-18, the proposed law that could affect Canadian news publishers”. It states:

A report from the PBO said of the around \$329-million the bill would generate for news outlets, around \$247-million would go to broadcasters such as the CBC, Bell, Shaw and Rogers.... “The fact that three-quarters of the money will be going to broadcasters, some of which are the richest companies in Canada, plus the public broadcasters which are heavily subsidized already, undermines the government’s whole premise of the bill”....

What is the temptation? I have already talked about it. The temptation, of course, is about somebody writing cheques for millions and billions of dollars: Is the media going to be as truthful to the public as it should be when reporting about them? What is its first goal? Is it to provide news and truthfulness to Canadians? Right now, the government is saying that if the media wants a big cheque, they have to say this or that. We know the Prime Minister is already about control and wants to control what people say about him. Will he use this as a heavy stick? I believe he will.

Government Orders

We have already talked about the control that Bill C-11 gave to the CRTC. The CRTC is influenced by the Prime Minister and cabinet. It says it clearly right in the bill. I have an article from the Macdonald-Laurier Institute entitled “Extortion, Dependency and Media Welfare—The Liberals’ Bill C-18”. About halfway through, it states, “Those in favour have no qualms about creating a news media industry permanently dependent upon the good graces of the two most imposing powers in the lives of citizens these days: Big Tech and Big Government.” As a former chair of the access to information, privacy and ethics committee, I saw how powerful big tech was and is, and the government working together with these guys is a really scary thing for those who care about freedom in the country. I will go on: “All involved will huff and puff self-servingly, while the [Prime Minister’s] government happily renders media companies ever-more dependent on federal funding.”

● (1845)

It is not me saying this but articles that are concerned about the very same measures that this controlling Prime Minister, who has already implemented a censorship bill, is now trying to use to covet those two big entities so as to have the narrative go his way.

One interesting bit of testimony I saw when I was doing some research, because I knew I would be speaking to this, was from Liberal Senator Paula Simons in her speech from the Senate debate. Here is a clearly Liberal senator, a former media person, who is very concerned about what this bill brings if passed. I will read a couple of her quotes.

“More than that, I’m asking if it’s wise. How independent can the Canadian news media be if they are so deeply beholden to the goodwill and future economic success of two foreign corporations?” She is referring to big tech in this instance.

She goes on to quote Mr. Greenspon, from 2021, at a Senate committee: “...inviting the platforms to negotiate deals with individual publishers can badly distort the information marketplace. People have expressed concerns for decades that advertisers influence news agendas.” This is exactly what I have been saying. This is a person who has been in the industry her whole life. He went on: “They have massive public policy agendas of their own, including tax policy, regulatory oversight, data, et cetera.... You are here to strengthen the independent press, not to create new dependencies.”

Here is another quote from the senator: “And are we comfortable giving unprecedented new regulatory powers to the CRTC to intervene in the business of print journalism and to require mandatory media codes of ethics, given the free press has never before been subject in any way to the authority of the CRTC?”

I will finish with this. Who controls the CRTC? We already heard that it is cabinet and the Prime Minister. Members heard my question, the question that I started with: Does the Prime Minister want to control what we see and hear about him on the Internet? Absolutely, yes.

● (1850)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, talk about being paranoid.

It is interesting. The member talked about Bill C-11 and how the government wants to censor everything. He then went on to Bill C-18 and said we are going pay off the media so that the media will give us nothing but positive stories. The real manoeuvre, no doubt, is the fact that we were able to fool the Bloc, the NDP and the Greens into supporting the Liberals in bringing all of this together to pass this kind of legislation so that the Prime Minister of Canada would be almighty and powerful. That is the type of tinfoil hat talk that I think we are seeing across the way.

Does the hon. member really believe what he is talking about? Is this the type of thing he is promoting through his social media?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, what the member just asked me would be funny if it were not so scary.

This is from a Liberal senator appointed by the Prime Minister: “And are we comfortable giving unprecedented new regulatory powers to the CRTC to intervene in the business of print journalism and to require mandatory media codes of ethics, given the free press has never before been subject in any way to the authority of the CRTC?” That is from a Liberal senator.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am rather shocked by my colleague’s comments. I do not know what his point is.

My colleague is currently questioning freedom of the press and freedom of expression. There is nothing about that in Bill C-18. That does not make sense.

Since he likes quotes, I will share one with him. Annick Charette, president of the biggest union of French-language news media employees, said that negotiating on unequal terms or without any obligation to achieve results rarely yields positive outcomes. She believes that Ottawa has the best possible legislative tools.

What does my colleague think about that?

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Bloc, but normally its members are more opposed to the Prime Minister. Apparently they want to carry his water tonight for him.

I have quoted many media individuals. I have eight quotes, with even more in the documents, that note exactly the concern that I have been bringing forward. It is a concern about government overreach and control regarding what is seen and heard on the Internet.

The member can say that he trusts the Prime Minister. It is interesting that the Bloc would trust the Prime Minister. I did not think its members did, but it sure sounds like he does tonight.

Government Orders

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I look on social media. I just heard the term “tin-foil hats”. That is certainly a growing theme in the House of Commons these days. Facts seem to be a thing of the past. As a long-time academic, I cherish facts.

Getting back to the debate, the Conservatives brought forward amendments that attempted to block the CBC from accessing compensation from web giants that profit from sharing CBC content. There is that kind of attack on the media. Certainly the Conservatives have a leader who constantly attacks freedom of the press. Actually, he refuses to respond to questions from the press.

I wonder if the member can explain how the Conservatives' position can possibly be fair to the CBC. I know they pick and choose whom they talk to. They do not really seem to appreciate freedom of the press. However, do they not understand that the CBC also provides important news information to Canadians?

• (1855)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Speaker, it is an interesting thing again. The Bloc tonight and the NDP, again, are supporting the Prime Minister. All I have said tonight is about holding the Prime Minister to account and limiting what he has for power. He is seeking more power and not less. He not only wants to be able to censor online content, but everybody who has actually read Bill C-11 will see that user-generated content would now be censorable by the CRTC, the cabinet and the Prime Minister. I guess I am just a bit surprised that the NDP, once again, instead of caring about democracy and free speech in this country, supports a corrupt Prime Minister.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Thornhill.

I would like to start by giving a big shout-out and thanks to my colleague, the member for Lethbridge, for all of her exceptionally hard work in stopping this dumpster fire from happening, but here we are tonight.

I think it is really important for people to understand why we are here and what is happening, so I want to break down how what we are dealing with tonight would sacrifice Canadians' freedom of speech, destroy Canada's capacity for investigative journalism and divide our country into more extreme views. I will explain what has happened, who is winning and who is losing because of this mess, and debunk the information that the Liberals and their coalition partners in the NDP are using to cover up the impact that the bill would have on Canadian culture and the economy.

What would the bill do? It would create a link tax. It would make digital companies like Facebook, otherwise known as Meta, and Google, with the possibility of TikTok and Twitter following, according to officials, pay a tax to media companies when they post links to the story they create on their sites. The legacy, old media companies want this link tax, because their share prices are dropping, as they did not figure out how to create enough monetizable product to replace print advertising, so they need other, easier sources of income to provide returns to their shareholders and bonuses to their CEOs.

A simpler way of understanding this for someone who is watching is to try to remember the last time they bought a physical newspaper. It was probably quite a while ago. Companies that relied on someone reading the ads in those physical papers did not figure out how to make money when people stopped buying them, so now they want the government to step in with this link tax. To them, this makes sense. They hope that the link tax will be a cheap way for them to replace the revenue they lost from print advertising. However, that assumption is very wrong, and we have proof. This is where things start to affect Canadians in a very negative way.

When confronted with this link tax, Facebook and Google simply said, “Well, if you are going to make us pay this tax, we are just not going to post the links.” This kind of makes sense, because there is nothing that is actually forcing these companies to post the links, and they have more to gain from a business perspective than to lose if they do not follow through.

The administrative cost to these companies of setting up systems to monitor and pay this tax would be very high, while the revenue that news links, particularly Canadian news links, make up is a very small percentage of their overall traffic. Second, Facebook and Google, in posting media links, actually give free advertising to media companies, in that they expose their content to Facebook and Google's massive user base. I will bet that the last time members read a Toronto Star article, they clipped through it on a platform like Facebook, Google or Twitter, and that is free advertising for the Toronto Star.

In testimony, Facebook estimates that it provides about \$230 million in free advertising to Canadian media companies and does not get a lot by way of revenue in return. Facebook has said that if the government passes the bill, it is just not going to post the links to these articles, and it has already started banning links to Canadian news sites for that very reason. The government wants Canadians to believe that these companies are the bad guys because of this, but it is this piece of legislation, which the government is insisting on ramming through, that would create big problems for everyone.

Here are a few of them. This would create problems for print media companies, like the ones that are asking for this link tax, because if they lose all the clicks that they would receive from their content being posted on Facebook and Google, they are going to lose a lot of revenue from people looking at digital advertising embedded therein. It also means that fewer people will find their way to their sites and take out paid subscriptions, which means less profits for their shareholders and bonuses for their CEOs. It also means that they are going to fire more journalists. This is why I think traditional media companies were playing chicken through the Liberals with Facebook and Google, thinking that they were just not going to ban the news, which they are clearly going to do.

Government Orders

The second big impact that Facebook, Google and potentially other platforms banning Canadian news links would have is that Canadians would have less access to the news, and some Canadians who post digital content but do not want to be part of this link tax scheme will have their voices silenced as Facebook and Google stop posting their content too.

• (1900)

Small independent firms, like The Line, Canadaland and Western Standard, have all said they do not want any part of this because they have adapted and built their business model around today's reality. They feel that when their links are pulled, their ability to reach Canadians will definitely be impacted, and they are probably not wrong. The fact that the government has not addressed this and has not allowed them to opt out raises a lot of very suspicious questions.

This link tax means that ethnically, regionally and gender-diverse viewpoints that may not have been platformed in the past by mainstream media outlets like the Toronto Star, new voices that have successfully started their own subscriber-based platforms, could be put out of business because of the Liberal-NDP link tax. That means that the same colonial voices in downtown Toronto that have always controlled the news in Canada will still control the news: that is, if their shareholders do not figure out that Facebook and Google are not going to play ball first. This means that the young indigenous woman who wants to start a Substack-based media outlet in her home might never get off the ground.

All this bill does is favour the profits of a few lazy corporate executives whose most creative business growth strategy has been to keep convincing their Liberal buddies to bail them out without any thought for what this means for the rest of the country. That is why we are standing against this bill.

It is going to cost taxpayers a lot. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, is supposed to administer this new link tax. How many more expensive bureaucrats are taxpayers going to have to pay for to administer a program that is going to censor diverse voices and line the pockets of a few corporate executives as they pull the parachute on their flaming wrecks of outdated companies? Could that money not have been better spent somewhere else?

When the Liberal and NDP coalition partners say that this is going to support more local media, that is flatly wrong. It is going to kill regional start-up media in their infancy by preventing their content from being exposed to countless people whom Facebook and Google will simply ban. They are serious about this.

The Liberal-NDP news-banning censorship link tax is not going to hire more journalism, as the Liberals claim. Any money that does come in is going straight to wealthy CEO bonuses and shareholder profit. If this bill was going to result in more journalists being hired, we would see more being hired. Instead, we had the CEO of Bell Media blame the cutting of countless newsrooms and radio stations last week, including the termination of some of Canada's most senior journalists, like Joyce Napier and Glen McGregor, on the instability caused by this bill. We saw the closure of college-level journalism courses for the same reason.

The bill is also going to create more silos, because it is going to force people into tiny silos of content as these other platforms shut down because of these link bans, so it is actually causing more divisiveness in our country.

The Liberals also say that Australia did this. It did not. What happened was that Australia changed its legislation to allow deals to be made outside of the content of this legislation, which is what Facebook did, yet the Liberals are still careening down this path, with the NDP in tow, with all of these negative consequences on display for everyone to see.

What the government should be doing instead is working to create a stable way to support actual investigative journalists, like Bob Fife, "Fife the knife", the knife that cuts both ways, to be hired. Instead, we are seeing these people being fired. I think that is actually what the government wants from this, less scrutiny.

The government should be allowing people to opt out of this bill. If a journalistic outlet says that it does not want to be part of the ban, the government should allow that, but it is not. It has not amended the bill. It should be telling journalism students and journalists to get a good understanding of how AI is going to change their jobs, how to build a subscription platform and how to get good at research, writing, and video and audio content, because that is what journalism is going to look like. It is going to be so much harder while people are learning those new skills for them to get started as journalists, given how this bill is going to fundamentally transform Canadian journalism for the worse. The proof is already there. It is already happening.

Canadians need to know that the government is ramming this through. We are doing everything we can to stop it, but it is going to go through. The only way to change that is for them to subscribe to content from news articles they trust so it gets right into their inbox and goes around the ban, to punish the Liberals and the NDP for the censorship and for destroying democracy and diversity in journalism through this bill.

• (1905)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide what the Conservative Party meant in the last election when it had incorporated into its platform that a Conservative government would "Introduce a digital media royalty framework to ensure that Canadian media outlets are fairly compensated for the sharing of their content by platforms like Google and Facebook."

What did the Conservative Party mean when it made that statement?

Government Orders

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I can tell members what we did not mean. We did not mean this flaming dumpster fire wreck of a bill that the government is ramming through, in spite of hundreds of people and millions of Canadians saying they do not want it.

I offered solutions the government could have taken that Facebook, Google and other media companies already put on the table, such as creating funds that would go directly to investigative journalism instead of going to the rich corporate executives and shareholders of a few dying media companies.

If the Liberals want ideas for it, we are happy to provide them, but we will be doing that on that side of the House when our party is government.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqittiji*, I am going to ask a similar question to what I have asked since the debate started some time ago. It is on the fact that there have not been enough discussions about the positive impacts this bill could have for indigenous producers or the supports it would give indigenous producers.

I wonder if the member agrees that this bill is important, so that indigenous journalists can get the support they need to make sure they are part of providing online news to Canadians with an indigenous perspective.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, for us to actually address reconciliation, there needs to be more indigenous voices and indigenous reporting. This bill would do the opposite.

I think about a young indigenous woman who wants to start as a journalist to tell her story and the story of her people, and this bill would prevent her voice from being shared on some of the platforms we need to share on today, such as Facebook and Google. That is why I implore that member, who I know cares about this issue, to go to her House leader and her caucus to say they cannot support this and that this would empower colonial voices in downtown Toronto, who have controlled the media and what Canadians have heard for too long. It is going to line their pockets and the pockets of their shareholders as diverse voices suffer, and that is why it has to stop.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, maybe the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, the member for Lethbridge has been getting up to ask questions, but the Speaker is censoring her due to a faulty ruling, so I urge the Speaker to change her ruling and let the people of Lethbridge have a voice in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. member that a decision has been rendered. If he wishes to challenge the Chair, I think he knows what the rules are around that.

• (1910)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I had posed a fairly precise question to the member opposite, and I think the Conservative Party does owe an explanation to Canadians. They campaigned on and promised to bring forward legislation of this nature that would do what this legislation would do. Even in their platform,

they make reference to Australia's and France's legislations, which this legislation is modelled after. There is no cop-out or an excuse.

Why did the Conservative Party backflip and flip-flop on this issue? They promised Canadians they would support it.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, this is exactly the type of misinformation the Liberals want their controlled media sources to spread to Canadians. The reality is that, when he raises that issue of Australia, Australia amended its legislation so that Facebook and Google could work with journalists to create deals to support journalism in ways that go directly to journalism, outside of the legislative framework, understanding that they cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach. The Canadian government has been ramming through this bill without amendments, and I have to ask why. I think it is because its members want their colonial downtown voices of Toronto to keep controlling the media and keep shutting out voices.

The parliamentary secretary is a member from western Canada. Do members know that there are no members from western Canada in the Parliamentary press gallery? There might be one, but I think it is zero, and we have to change that, so we should be looking at ways that other witnesses suggested. Certainly that is what the Conservative Party would be suggesting to support journalism instead of lining the pockets of wealthy corporate executives and their shareholders, who are hoping Canadian tax dollars will squeeze out the last vestiges of their dying business models, which we have no responsibility to pick up.

We need to be supporting young diverse voices as they enter the career of journalism in a way that is accountable to Canadians' free-speech rights.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would also like to give a shout-out to my colleague from Lethbridge for fighting the heavy hand of big, bossy government, which has struck again with this bill. It has almost become a cliché, and its latest offender is this bill, Bill C-18. It is sad to see the Liberal response to an important and relevant modern issue concerning the place where bureaucracies, news providers and digital technology intercept.

We are here to debate a bill that would fix one problem, instead of the one that actually needs it. It proposes solutions that would not work, and is backed by a minister who has yet to accomplish an actual win during his tenure. In other words, it is business as usual from this minister and the government. The incompetence is often confused with malice, and I can assure members that it can be both. On the surface, Bill C-18 seems like a pretty innocent bill. The gist is that small independent news providers should have a chance to compete with the big fish and earn their fair share of revenue in a free market. That is fair enough as a concept, but when we dig deeper, we find that this piece of legislation is deeply flawed, and it would not accomplish the stated goal.

Government Orders

Over the past eight years, we have witnessed an unprecedented erosion of freedoms under the Liberal government, particularly with Bill C-11, the censorship bill, as just one example. It was among the worst bills ever brought to the House, with an alarming opposition from industry, experts, creators and even their own friends, not just once, but twice, thanks to the member of Parliament for Lethbridge, who is not allowed to speak.

During those same eight years, we have also seen an alarming growth in the size and the power of the federal government here in Ottawa, with new abilities to regulate, to give and take away, to pick winners and losers, and to define right and wrong. A government that is big enough to do anything or to be anything is the same government that is big enough to take anything or everything away.

The overbearing approach, whetted with incompetence, adds icing to the cake of this Liberal failure. Because there are no longer proper safeguards in the new powers that the government has given itself, there is no justification on any of the decisions. Some of the most senior ministers do not read emails. Others are not briefed, and some simply are place holders in organizations where it seems like nobody is in charge.

There is no accountability, and Bill C-18 is the epitome of this. It is big government, limited freedom and crippling incompetence all combined into one bill. The political calculation here was that the Liberals might be able to force Google or Facebook to pay for links and to pay their fair share, saying at times that upward of 30% of the costs for every news outlet would be covered by these two companies. However, when we dig into the bill, we see the opposite is true because the publishers post links themselves to increase traffic and get more revenue. We heard that, over and over, at committee. It never made much sense to begin with, but when we found out from Facebook that news is only 3% of its overall feeds, it now makes even less sense.

Beyond the minister's initial miscalculation, he has no answer as to how he would deal with Canadians overall getting less news as a result of this bill, unless, of course, he is going to stop all of the government advertising or, even more ludicrous, the Liberals are going to stop Liberal Party advertising, let us say, during a campaign. Of course, the minister is not going to do that. Even if he were threatening to do that, it is a completely empty threat. It is more empty rhetoric and bluster that Canadians would end up paying for.

Let us go piece by piece and break it down. My first point is big government. Here in Bill C-18, the CRTC would be back on centre stage, much like it is with the censorship bill. Bill C-18 would give this unelected, unaccountable body of bureaucrats sweeping new powers. It would be responsible for ensuring that big social media companies, such as Facebook and Google, reach licensing agreements with various new outlets and, if an agreement cannot be reached, it would have the power to step in to appoint a mediator, and then an arbitrator, to do the job, giving the government the power to pick the winners and losers, in a free market.

Who would benefit from these deals? It would not be the small and local independent organizations that actually need our help. Rather, it would be large, established groups that can afford the

high-priced lawyers and can curry favour with the CRTC and, by extension, the government.

● (1915)

In fact, many outlets, such as The Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail, Le Devoir and more, have already reached deals. These big media groups might have the ability to negotiate with Facebook or even the federal government. Small mom-and-pop shops find themselves in a very different position. We have had confirmation of that already.

Lobbying records show that there was one meeting about Bill C-18 every four days over the span of eight months. We have had confirmation from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, too. He said that 75% of the money in this bill would go to CBC, Rogers and Bell, leaving only 25% for everybody else, precisely the opposite of the result one would want.

My second point is on limited freedom and forcing companies to pay for news access by mandating agreements in the free market. There would be less news, choice and independence. We have already seen the effects of that. Facebook recently shut down news-hosting services for some Canadians as a result of this legislation. That is a preview of what is to come. It is the most obvious thing that was going to happen.

If Google were to decide to do the same, it would again hurt the small independent producers. Large outlets, such as CBC, CTV or the Toronto Star, would not be affected. One can hardly say the same about the thousands of other independent broadcasters in Canada. The heritage minister can say this is not the intention, but the outcomes remain the same.

That brings me to my third point, which is incompetence. I will be frank. Only in this government could a heritage minister do no consultation, ignore opposing voices on not one but two laws, and fail so spectacularly without consequences. His record leaves much to be desired for anyone who looks critically at the issues and wants to do anything to solve them, whether in the House, in committee or in the Senate.

In front of committee, only a few weeks ago, the heritage minister could not answer basic questions about the legislation. From that bewildering appearance, we gather that he seems to believe the Internet is the problem. That is why he wants to regulate it with Bill C-11 and tax it with Bill C-18. He does not realize that the great equalizer, the Internet, is the place where all voices are heard, where people big and small can spread their ideas. It is the very outcome he wants to achieve.

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The bill threatens that. Beyond the minister's crusade, this bill is extremely vague and unclear. It removes the certainties and the safeguards that anyone looking to Canada relies on. The minister likes to claim that he is working for the little guy, that he will not let Canadians get bullied by media giants. Again, that is exactly the opposite of what is happening. He is not working for the little guy. He is working in no way to rectify an issue. He is working to make the government, the CRTC, big media groups even more powerful and less accountable.

One cannot possibly be for big government, higher taxes, bigger bureaucracy, and for the little guy. One cannot have it both ways.

If the bill truly helps independent media, then why on earth would organizations keep speaking against their own interests? We have heard this debate all day long. They would not.

Here is what they do say. Phillip Crawley of *The Globe and Mail* called Bill C-18 a “threat to the independence of media”. Canada-land's Jesse Brown, no friend of the Conservatives, underlined the risks Bill C-18 poses to Canadians' trust in news providers. Witnesses at a recent Senate committee admitted that this bill would devastate the Internet traffic that media groups rely on.

Canada's Conservatives believe the Canadian news media should be fairly compensated for the use of their content by platforms such as Google and Facebook. The Liberals' approach to this issue through Bill C-18 is absolutely devastating. Not only will it not work, but it also creates a problem we did not have before.

Conservatives have listened to feedback. We tried to implement amendments to level the playing field at the CRTC, ensure journalistic independence and target aid to the smallest, most deserving broadcasters, the person starting their Substack out of their own home. At every step of the way, we were voted down.

This bill should be called the “no online news act” instead of the online news act. That is what it will do in practice. I will proudly vote against this bill. I will vote on the side of the independent media, which will be killed at the expense of a government again protecting its friends in legacy media.

● (1920)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is disappointing to hear the deputy leader of the Conservative Party taking this position and leading the fight against Bill C-18. Whether it is Bill C-18 or Bill C-11, a great deal of consultations have taken place. One sees that New Democrats, a member of the Bloc, a member of the Green Party, obviously the Liberals and even the former Conservatives, when the Conservative Party was under different leadership fewer than two years ago, supported the legislation.

What has changed, outside of the leadership of the Conservative Party? Why is the Conservative Party moving so far to the right? I would suggest it is going even further right than the Reform Party.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, when one lives in an echo chamber of legacy media, one starts to believe one's own nonsense, and this is what we are seeing now.

Why on earth would Conservatives support a solution that only gives 25% to small and independent journalists, the thing we wanted to solve with this bill? Why on earth would we support something akin to Australia that is not like Australia? The member opposite brought this up, but the substantive provisions of the Australian code have never been applied.

This bill is not what was in the platform, so he can stop misinforming the House and get back into his echo chamber, where he is happier.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I believe I heard the hon. member suggest there were not any amendments to the bill. Quite accurately, there were around 96, one which happened to be Conservative. The majority of the Conservative amendments on Bill C-18 seemed to side with the big web giants, actually taking talking points from Google and Facebook to give them the loopholes and stronger negotiating powers instead of supporting Canada's news media. Would the member explain why their party consistently—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is some heckling going on, and I ask members not to heckle while the hon. member is asking the question. I am sure the hon. member who is going to answer wants to hear the whole question.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre has the floor.

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, would the hon. member like to explain why their party consistently neglects to protect small start-up, independent online publishers and news media outlets in Canada?

● (1925)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, the amendments from the Conservatives were voted down. In fact, the amendment he is talking about to support small and independent media he could have voted for, but instead he decided to support the government and vote against that. Imagine getting 25% on a test; one would fail. That is the kind of legislation we are seeing. We are not going to support something because we agree fundamentally in principle with it. We want to see good legislation, and that is exactly what we have done at every stage of this bill, and it was voted down by the cover-up censorship coalition of the NDP and the Liberals.

Hon. Rob Moore: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Points of Order

We are studying Bill C-18, and it speaks about freedom, censorship and power imbalance. I notice the member for Lethbridge and the fantastic shadow minister for Canadian Heritage has been getting up to ask questions over and over, and ironically, the Speaker is censoring her on a very important debate that she has much to contribute to. I urge the Speaker to reconsider her ruling and stop censoring the member immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member knows full well I am not censoring the member and that there was a ruling. I am sure the member does not believe, when there is a ruling from the Speaker and the Speaker has asked several times for a member to stop heckling and the member does not cease to heckle, that we should be accepting this. There was a ruling made earlier today that the member would not be recognized for one day and the ruling stands.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, a brief question, please.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am much in sympathy with what I have heard from the Conservatives around Bill C-18 to the extent of whether it will solve the problem. I am not hearing us identify the problem of social media outlets like Google and Facebook and the others having eviscerated the news media in this country, not necessarily by putting their content up without paying for it but by actually getting rid of the business model our newspapers used to rely on, like classified ads. The newspapers used to be able to rely on a source of income that is no longer there because foreign enterprises not paying taxes in this country have created a different marketplace that provides access to Kijiji and so on. I wonder if the hon. member has any comments on whether we could replace the word “platforms” with the word “publishers” and solve this problem.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I am not sure that simple change would change the crux of the bill, because I think the bill fails spectacularly to do what the Liberals intend to do. I would be happy to speak with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, the leader of the Green Party, about how to move forward. I think she is on to something in that the business model has changed. What we have to do is provide certainty for an industry going forward, particularly when it comes to small and independent journalism, which is something this Liberal government has entirely missed the mark on and is pretending that it is solved.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On a point of order, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORDER AND DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was trying to get your attention earlier to speak on the point of order that was raised earlier. I just want to support that the member for Lethbridge was repeatedly told to stop heckling by the Speaker.

Consistently, the Conservatives have failed to respect the Chair and to respect the rules in this place, which are supposed to govern us all. On the idea that it is unfair in some way, Madam Speaker,

you gave many opportunities for that member to be recognized or to withdraw what she was doing and she failed to do so. The fact that the Conservatives continue to challenge the Chair in an indirect way I find is entirely disrespectful. The chief opposition whip had an opportunity to address this. All parties had a chance to address this.

The decision is with the Speaker currently. I suggest that the Conservatives respect this chamber, that they respect you, Madam Chair, and that they stop these games.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the hon. member's information.

As I said, the ruling that was made earlier today stands. I know that there are others who have spoken on the ruling and that the Speaker himself will come back to the Chair with a decision at some point in time.

The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets on the same point of order.

• (1930)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I would point out that in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, it says that “The Speaker usually turns a blind eye to the many incidental interruptions, such as applause, shouts of approval or disapproval, or heckling that sometimes punctuates speeches”.

I would encourage all members to refer to the guide on procedures for the House of Commons before they get up and make comments about whether or not heckling is allowed.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I think that now it is becoming a point of debate. However, I do want to remind members that, unless they are being recognized, they should not be speaking out of turn. I would ask the hon. member for Lethbridge that she not participate at this point.

I appreciate the additional information that the hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets has provided. However, there is a difference between heckling a little bit and heckling constantly, especially after being asked on several occasions to stop heckling and after being told what repercussions would come forward if the heckling did not stop. That is it for this year. Hopefully, members will not continue to challenge the Chair on this.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has a point of order.

* * *

PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIAN

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I believe you have received the appropriate advance notice, and if you seek it I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1(2), the House approve the reappointment of Heather P. Lank as Parliamentary Librarian, for a term of sixteen months.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have received notice from all recognized parties that they are in agreement with this request.

[*Translation*]

All those opposed to the hon. parliamentary secretary moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

[*English*]

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

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

ONLINE NEWS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion respecting Senate amendments to Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, and of the amendment.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

The NDP-Liberal coalition has been as sly as a fox and as slippery as an eel with this piece of legislation known as Bill C-18, the online news act. This is yet another Liberal attempt to control the online content available to the people of Canada. The government will pick winners and losers among our various media outlets with this faulty legislation if it passes.

When this bill was before our House of Commons' standing committee in December, the government cut off hearing from witnesses who wished to voice their concerns about the fairness for media outlets. These witnesses and media stakeholders who wanted to put forward their concerns were simply shut down. After hastily being pushed through the standing committee, Bill C-18 came back to this place, where the censoring Liberals called time allocation after just three hours and 20 minutes of debate. What utter disregard for the many journalists and media outlets whose livelihoods will be weighed in the balance should this law pass.

The NDPs who supported the Liberals, when their blushing brides wanted to rob witnesses of the opportunity to testify at committee, backed them again by shutting debate down and rushing to get this bill passed here and sent off to the Senate. This is what we have seen time and time again with these partners in crime when it comes to legislation that supports their socialist agenda.

Legacy socialist legislation, like Bill C-11, Bill C-21 or Bill C-35, routinely gets pushed through this House with no regard for the views of stakeholders, ordinary Canadians and the opposition party.

What is wrong with Bill C-18, one might ask? Why are we using our resources to oppose this legislation? How is it bad for the Canadian public? How is it bad for small and local and ethnic media? How is it bad for journalists who want to maintain their independence?

I will tell us a little bit about that.

While this bill was in our House standing committee, the Liberals' court jester, the Minister of Heritage, deceived the committee with fake stats. He claimed that news outlets are destined for extinction. He cited a study that showed that 400 news outlets had closed since 2008. The conniving part of this testimony was that he left out a very important piece, also outlined in that same report, which was that hundreds of new outlets had opened during that exact same period, yet the jester claims that this bill is about supporting local media and building a fair news ecosystem. Nothing can be further from the truth.

This bill will favour darlings of the costly coalition like the CBC. The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that more than 75% of the money generated by this bill will go to large corporations like Bell, Rogers and the CBC, leaving less than 25% for newspapers. Very little of that will be left over for local and ethnic media after big newspaper businesses take the lion's share of that 25%.

According to the PBO, the Liberal claim that this bill will help sustain local newspapers and ethnic media is completely false.

That is why Conservatives tried to fix this grave injustice at committee but the NDP-Liberal coalition, and the Bloc, voted against the amendment.

Conservative senators tried to amend this bill to stop state-backed broadcasters like the CBC from competing with private broadcasters and publications for this limited money when they already receive secure funding from taxpayers' dollars.

● (1935)

According to the PBO, this bill would generate \$320 million, and of that amount, \$240 million would go to the big broadcasters: CBC, Bell and Rogers. They would be entitled to more resources than they can possibly use, to help them increase their market share, while smaller outlets like the Toronto Star could disappear, heaven forbid.

Bill C-18 is another greasy attempt at online censorship. It walks hand in hand with Bill C-11. The other place sent this bill back to this place with amendments made by its independent senators, while amendments proposed by Conservative senators have been completely disregarded. Witnesses at the Senate committee painted a grim picture for most journalism in Canada, but that testimony was disrespected and trashed, along with the amendments that arose from it. The Liberal government is determined to control what we see online. According to witnesses from The Globe and Mail, News Media Canada, La Presse, Le Devoir, CANADALAND, The Line, and Village Media, this bill would create enormous risk for the independence of the press, for the bottom line of news outlets and for the future of digital media across this country.

*Government Orders***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

The government has disguised its eagerness to control what news can be shared online with its appearance to want to straighten out big tech, like Facebook and Google, and to protect small media. Does that sound familiar? The same Minister of Canadian Heritage used these exact same tactics with Bill C-11 by touting his protection of Canadian content; however, at the same time, he cut small media's global revenue streams.

The government is enlisting the help of the CRTC to determine what is news and what is not. When something is created to share information about something new, otherwise known as “news”, it would be up to the CRTC whether it can be seen online in this country. Who asked for this bill? Legacy media asked for this bill, and the Liberal government has responded. The bunch on that side of the House will make sure that their story, their narrative, their agenda and their propaganda get out, and that opposing viewpoints are silenced. That is what this is all about. The government will use this legislation to choose winners and losers in the information world, and if it does not match its socialist agenda, news will not see the light of day. Good journalists and independent news media risk falling by the wayside if this legislation receives royal assent.

Conservatives will fight censorship and stand up for freedom of the press, which is now much broader than what it once encompassed. This is a new world, and a new approach is required to fight censorship. Censorship can be easily enacted in the online world without anyone ever suspecting it. On this side of the House, we stand for freedom and for protecting the public from legislation which would restrict the news content they would see. This bill to protect legacy broadcasters would drastically impact what news Canadians can see online, and Conservatives will not go on the record as supporting it. Censorship is censorship, however one slices it, and I will not vote for a bill that supports it in any way.

To conclude my remarks, my thoughts are with my colleague from Lethbridge, who, in my opinion and in the opinion of many of my colleagues, has been censored. She has been treated unfairly. It rushed to my mind as I was speaking so much about censorship. Hopefully, my colleague will receive justice.

● (1940)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was interesting to listen to my hon. colleague's concerns and comments.

First, I want to address the issue of the Senate, a place I have amazing respect for, regardless of who appointed the senators. I think everything they put forward is treated with respect and consideration. We like to think they have an extra sense of maturity, and I think we should not be disrespectful in our comments, because we certainly, on this side of the House, are very respectful of any amendments that the Senate puts forward.

Second, I look at my colleague's grey hairs, of which we all have a few. I am trying to figure out whether he has children or grandchildren. I have considerable concerns about what is going on in the media when it comes to what our children are exposed to. I would think the hon. member has an equal number of concerns around some of the things we see on some of these sites.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House that the opposition day designated for Thursday, June 22, has been undesignated, and redesignated for Wednesday, June 21.

* * *

● (1945)

ONLINE NEWS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, and of the amendment.

Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, I do not know how to respond to my hon. colleague's making comments about my hair. Maybe I should have it dyed blond; I do not know.

In terms of respect and heading to the Senate, my hon. colleague talked about maturity. I think she might be approaching that stage in life where she has her eye on the other place. We would not want the news media to put a tilted slant on her heading over there some day. If the supreme leader stays in place long enough, he has some positions to fill.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member. I enjoy my time sitting on the fisheries committee with him. Although we disagree on almost everything, we do have many good conversations, so that is good.

First, I want to quickly express my concerns about a continuation of misinformation happening; the Speaker ruled, yet we hear the member continuing to heckle in here and other members saying that it was censorship. It is completely absurd.

The other thing is that I do not understand the attention being paid to CBC, which is the only independent broadcaster in Canada. It is not the only one, but it is the only one that does not have corporations at the forefront of its work. My question to the member is does he agree—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Madam Speaker, is it appropriate that we have a member in the House currently heckling me, who has been asked to not heckle? She is in the corner right now, heckling, despite a Speaker's having ruled that she should not be heckling in the House.

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Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my fellow fishery committee member's question. She talked about CBC and its independence, or whatever. Her taste in food is much better than her taste in media, because she just told me about how much she liked fried bologna and beans. Her taste in food is a lot better than her taste in media, and I think she should make that a part of her daily routine.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I know this might more properly be a continuation of a point of order, but in response—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member. There is a great deal of noise and I cannot hear the hon. member.

Is the hon. member rising on a point of order or on a question? It is a question.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I wanted to point out to my friend from Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame that there are many things in the Standing Orders that are actually known as rules; they are not guidelines.

In the old days, Speakers who found somebody heckling, or violating the Standing Orders in other ways, would throw them out of the chamber for six months or more. This is not censorship; this is called decorum, and it is easy to follow the rules. One of them that I think the hon. member might want to take a look at is Standing Order 10, which says that, when the Speaker has stated a ruling, “No debate shall be permitted on any such decision, and no such decision shall be subject to an appeal to the House.” We should cease discussing something that happened earlier in the day.

To the member's points on Bill C-18, I do not see how it would be censorship. I may think it is flawed policy, but I do not see any censorship there, and perhaps he could explain where he sees censorship as opposed to an effort to, as the member said, support legacy media.

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I think there is a travesty in this place, and we have a shadow minister who is shepherding this censorship bill and is being censored—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): This has been dealt with by other chair occupants. The Speaker will return to the House with a decision on the point of order raised by the member for South Surrey—White Rock.

The hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame.

• (1950)

Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, when a piece of legislation would support certain media giants that are affiliated with and support the narrative the Liberal government is putting forward, and would throw other smaller media to the curb, that would be a form of censorship. That is with respect to one part of the member's question.

As to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this place to speak to Bill C-18, An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada, which has been returned to the House by the Senate with amendments.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to point out once again the hypocrisy of the Liberals, who imposed time allocation on this bill for a second time earlier today. If that was not egregious enough, yesterday a member of the government interrupted a member of an opposition party in the middle of their speech to give notice that it would be moving a time allocation motion on Bill C-18 today. The government then switched debate to Bill C-42, forcing that opposition member to finish their speech this afternoon. Perhaps it is understandable that the government is in such disarray as it stumbles from scandal to scandal, mismanaging its agenda in the House so poorly that it must now rely on these heavy-handed measures at the end of this session, although it can always count on the blind support of its NDP backbench to bail it out.

Moving on to the bill, this bill will require digital platforms such as Google and Facebook to pay Canadian media outlets for sharing their news content. Digital giants will have six months to negotiate private deals to compensate Canadian media outlets before being required to enter into arbitration. The proposed legislation will also create a framework for the arbitration process.

This is yet another ill-conceived bill from the NDP-Liberal government. Subject matter experts have raised numerous questions and concerns about it, including the impact it will have on news media, the Internet in Canada and the benefit or lack thereof to Canadian media.

Some questions remain unanswered: Why was the CRTC selected to be the regulator? Does the CRTC have the knowledge and expertise capacity to do the job properly? Does the CRTC have the capacity to enforce the regulations once they are created? The answers to these questions and others are impossible to know, because they will stem from the regulations that will follow if this bill is passed into law.

Essentially, what the government is asking of us is to grant them these new powers and just trust that it will be fair in its application. It is a ridiculous thing to ask for. The government has been chronically plagued with introducing deeply flawed and deliberately vague legislation, leaving the details to be fleshed out by the bureaucrats through regulation, which does not get the kind of public scrutiny that bills do through a debate in this place.

It is not only that: The government has also been chronically plagued with scandals and cover-ups. How can it be trusted to do the right thing when it has shown time and time again that it is prepared to abuse its position of power to help out its friends?

The fact that the CRTC, which is a government entity, will decide which news outlets qualify under this legislation is effectively a form of indirect funding. This bill allows the CRTC to pick winners and losers by determining which news businesses are included and will get to bargain for compensation and which news outlets will be left in the cold. Conservatives proposed amendments to level the playing field but were voted down by the other parties. While the government may suggest that the CRTC is independent, I am not reassured. The WE Charity scandal came out of a supposedly independent process. The SNC-Lavalin scandal came out of that same supposedly independent process. For the Liberal government, an independent process is independent in name only.

Another flaw in the conception of this bill is the idea that hyperlinks possess monetary value. While 99.9% of Canadians may not be aware of it, a case decided by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2011 dealt with this very issue. In the case of *Crookes v. Newton*, the Supreme Court stated clearly in their decision that hyperlinks are akin to footnotes. Since footnotes do not carry a monetary value when used in publications, why should hyperlinks? Although access to the information behind the link is much faster than having to look up the reference in a footnote, the two are considered to operate in the same way.

● (1955)

The Supreme Court was quite clear in their findings on this case. Experts are asking why the government is ignoring the Supreme Court in this matter and whether it is planning on challenging this decision from over a decade ago. How does it reconcile what is in this bill with the Supreme Court's ruling in 2011?

Another flaw in thinking that links have monetary value is that often publishers and sellers are paying to feature their links at the top of search engines or to boost their outreach on Facebook. It is interesting that when organizations are paying to feature their links on these sites more prominently, the government now turns around and says that it is the one that should be getting paid.

Initiating this "link tax", as it has been called, can open the door to other issues, such as the ability of larger organizations to take less money per link than smaller organizations, making the larger organizations a more attractive partner for big corporations. That raises the question of how smaller websites will be able to compete.

The reality of media marketing is that organizations pay money to push links to their sites on platforms like Google and Facebook all the time. They spend quite a bit of money to do this. This boosting of their links is essentially an advertisement for their respective websites. Does providing access to these sites not boost user engagement with their articles? If Google or Facebook were taking the articles of Canadian news outlets and republishing them as their own, then we would have a real issue, but it is an issue that can already be addressed through existing laws and legislation. However, that is not the issue at hand. Anyone who has used Google would know that search engines do not republish articles in this way. If I were to search for an article, I would need to click through to the article in order to access the content behind it.

Another deep concern with this legislation is that the CBC would be the largest beneficiary of the provisions in this bill. The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that the majority of the money—

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three-quarters of it, to be exact—would go to the CBC, Rogers and Bell, with less than a quarter left for newspapers. After the larger newspaper businesses take their share, very little, if any, would be left for local and ethnic media.

Canadians already give over \$1 billion to the CBC each year. If the purpose of this bill, as the government purports, is to support smaller domestic media sources, why include the CBC? Again, Conservatives proposed an amendment to exclude the CBC so that more money would go to local and independent news sources, but it was voted down by the NDP-Liberal coalition and the Bloc.

In conclusion, I am very concerned that rather than helping Canadian news outlets, this bill would harm them by restricting their reach, as I have mentioned. Independent media are foundational to Canadian democracy. Experts in the field have raised the concern that this legislation would negatively impact this principle in Canada. When the government creates criteria for access to funds, even media organizations may self-censor to ensure they qualify. This could lead to Canadians having less information, fewer options and an unbalanced media field.

Once again, I am unable to vote for this bill in its current form.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is somewhat disappointing and disheartening when we see the type of support that is out there for this legislation.

I will use something that was brought up earlier as an example. We can look at the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association, the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association or the media outlets, or we can look at the amount of concern that Canadians have with regard to media and the important role that the media play in some of the foundations of our democracy, and then we can look at what is happening inside the House.

We have the NDP recognizing that the bill is good. We have the Bloc recognizing that the bill is good. We have members of the Green Party recognizing that the bill is good. Obviously the Liberals recognize that the bill is good. We used to have the Conservative Party, under a different leader in the last election, saying that the bill, in essence, was good. In fact, it was in the Conservative election platform.

Could the member explain to Canadians why, under this current right-wing leadership of the party today, the Conservatives cannot support good legislation that is modelled after Australia's and France's, something they incorporated into their own election platform?

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• (2000)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, in my speech I outlined a number of concerns that we have with this bill. I hope that the hon. member was listening to it.

Conservatives are not saying that addressing the issue that the bill is trying to address is completely without merit, but rather that this legislation is not the right solution for the problem. Once again, it is deeply flawed.

The NDP-Liberal coalition is not really looking for fair solutions. It is only seeking more centralized power and bureaucracy in Ottawa through this piece of legislation.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, in 2020, \$9.7 billion of online advertising revenue was generated. Out of that \$9.7 billion, Google and Facebook benefited, receiving 80% of this revenue.

I would like to ask the hon. member if she could explain why her party consistently neglects to protect small start-up independent online publishers and news media outlets in Canada over online giants like Google and Facebook.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, the answer is quite simple: This bill will not do that. Although there are a few small publications that will benefit from Bill C-18, the vast majority of local and ethnic media will not.

During the study of this bill at committee, Steve Nixon, the executive director of the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association, made this point. He said that only four out of the 56 publications will benefit from this legislation.

The PBO has stated, as I mentioned in my speech, that 75% of the money will go to the CBC, Rogers and Bell. This government does not want to help small publications, and neither does that member's party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, if I understand my colleague correctly, the Conservatives are against the idea of CBC/Radio-Canada and other public media outlets benefiting from this because they are publicly funded businesses. They also said that smaller media outlets would not benefit.

The legislation could be amended to provide more support to smaller media outlets. Would my colleague agree that multinationals like Google, Meta and others need to be regulated and that, otherwise, they will stifle smaller media outlets and traditional media?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's observations about the CBC and small media outlets, as well as about Google and Facebook.

The bottom line here is that the CBC does not need any additional support from Canadians, contrary to what some members might believe. It already receives over \$1 billion a year from taxpayers. I, for one, question if Canadians are getting value for those tax dollars that are being spent.

If the purpose is to support smaller domestic media outlets, this bill will not do that, and we do not need to give more money to the CBC.

• (2005)

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my riding there are 13 weekly newspapers. The NDP voted against a number of them receiving it because one person is the proprietor, owner and reporter. The NDP voted against our amendment to support small local media in my riding.

I think the MP from Saskatchewan would probably respond, as it is similar in her riding, but the NDP voted against that.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I think this is obviously a result of the partnership between the NDP and the Liberals. The NDP seeks to support the Liberals in whatever the government presents. It is actually almost comical that the NDP is trying to make it harder for working Canadians to access government hand-outs.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Censoring the good people of Lethbridge during a censorship bill is the height of hypocrisy—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): This has been addressed numerous times today. The Speaker will return to the House with a ruling.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

I rise today to speak about my concerns related to Bill C-18. This bill should be strongly opposed. We Conservatives believe that Canadian news media deserves to be fairly compensated, while the Liberals continue to fail to create effective legislation to support Canadians.

First and foremost, the Liberals claim that Bill C-18 would help smaller newspapers and media outlets. However, they fail to mention the fact that, according to the government's Parliamentary Budget Officer, more than 75% of the funding would go to large media outlets, such as the CBC. Less than 25% would be left for small media companies. The Liberal government claims to support small businesses, yet it continues to funnel tax dollars to its friends at media companies. Small news outlets' main competition is from corporations, such as the CBC.

We Conservatives proposed amendments that would level the playing field and support local and ethnic media. These amendments were rejected. The Liberals want to pick and choose their friends instead. Is \$1.2 billion to the CBC not enough?

In the Senate, Senator Carignan tried to bring forth a motion to fix this. It was rejected.

According to former CRTC commissioner Peter Menzies, “Bill C-18 will only perpetuate a market already distorted by subsidy and it will punish independence.” He said, “If Parliament values a free press, it will not approve Bill C-18.” Do the Liberals admit that they do not like a free press? The Liberal government continues to help its elitist friends in high places and big corporations, while it forgets about the local and ethnic media outlets.

Dwayne Winseck, a professor at the School of Journalism and Communication and director of the Global Media and Internet Concentration Project for Carleton University said, “Canada's largest media conglomerates—some with revenue multiple times higher than what Google and Facebook earn in Canada—will likely be the biggest beneficiaries of the bill”.

In December, the government cut off hearing from witnesses at committee, silencing experts from dozens of independent and digital news outlets who wished to speak. Rather than focusing on Canadian experts, the government relied mainly on non-Canadian critics of the digital platforms Google and Meta to tout Liberal talking points.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage deceptively stated that 400 news outlets had closed since 2008. However, he failed to mention that the same study he was referencing showed that hundreds of new news outlets had opened during the same time period.

After criticizing digital platforms for not disclosing the details of existing agreements with news outlets, the Liberal and NDP MPs on the committee rejected a proposal brought forward by Conservatives to require greater transparency. Now they have brought on time allocation to silence Canadians' concerns. The Liberal-NDP government has no interest in listening to these concerns. It wants to silence anyone with opposing views.

Furthermore, Bill C-18 poses a grave threat to privacy rights. The bill includes provisions that would expand the government's surveillance capabilities, allowing it to collect and analyze vast amounts of personal data without sufficient oversight. This erosion of privacy is deeply troubling. We should have the right to live our lives free from unwarranted surveillance and invasion of our private affairs.

By giving authorities unchecked powers to collect and analyze our personal data, this bill would put our privacy at risk and set a dangerous precedent for government intrusion into our lives. Just like Bill C-11, Bill C-18 would infringe on the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

Conservatives believe in the importance of a free and independent press. This bill would have significant implications for journalistic independence. Bill C-18 would empower the CRTC to obtain any information it considers necessary, including confidential information from news organizations. Conservative MPs brought forward amendments to guarantee the freedom of the press, but they were voted down by the NDP-Liberal coalition and the Bloc Québécois.

- (2010)

Another concern is that Bill C-18 would impact small businesses and start-ups. The bill would introduce stringent regulations and

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compliance requirements that would disproportionately burden smaller online platforms. This would create a significant barrier to entry for entrepreneurs, stifling innovation and competition. We must foster an environment that nurtures small businesses and start-ups, as they are often the driving force behind economic growth and job creation.

By favouring large corporations, the bill threatens to consolidate power in the hands of a few, reducing consumer choice and limiting opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. The bill would enable the CRTC to pick winners and losers among media; to no one's surprise, the Liberals' friends are going to be picked as winners. Conservatives brought forward motions to fix this. They were rejected.

Many experts feel that the bill is on a path to destroying Canadian media. They agree that the bill has deep flaws, which would lead to millions of dollars in lost revenue. This would set back media by years, and the projected losses that would be incurred because of Bill C-18 are greater than the funding and the tax credits.

The Liberals have extended the eligibility to foreign news outlets, and they have the audacity to claim that this will help Canadians. Broadcasters who are licensed by the CRTC but do not produce news are eligible.

From the Office of the United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Katherine Tai has warned that Bill C-18 would have serious trade implications for Canada. In a recent press release, a spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy stated the following: “We have...concerns it could impact digital streaming services and discriminate against U.S. businesses”. The U.S. has warned of trade retaliation, which would likely be equivalent to whatever the U.S. believed U.S.-based digital news intermediaries had lost as a result of Bill C-18. According to the PBO, this would be \$300 million-plus. The Liberals have found a way to give Canadian taxpayer dollars to American companies, while at the same time, making trade relations with the United States worse.

Any government intervention into the free press must be carefully considered, as there is a potential to warp outcomes, stifle innovation, determine winners and losers, and compromise journalistic independence. In its current form, Bill C-18, the online news act, fails this test, according to the independent online news publishers of Canada.

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Furthermore, the vague and ambiguous language used in Bill C-18 raises concerns about potential abuse of power. The broad definitions and discretionary powers granted to government agencies leave room for arbitrary decision-making and selective enforcement. This undermines principles of fairness and due process, which are crucial to the functioning of a just society. We must demand legislation that is clear and specific, while respecting the rights of individuals and the rule of law. The Liberals intentionally used vague language to deceive Canadians so that they can interpret the wording in a way that will allow them to give more and more help and funding to their friends.

The legislation before us fails to address the needs of Canadian media outlets. Conservatives have brought forward amendments to fix these issues, but the Liberal-NDP coalition, along with the Bloc, voted them down.

Conservatives will continue to stand up for Canadians, stand up for small businesses and push back against the Liberal government giving money to its friends. Canada needs more common-sense legislation without ambiguous words. We need legislation that uses strong wording that can be easily interpreted.

In conclusion, Bill C-18 represents a disregard for small businesses, as well as the principles of fairness and due process. The bill would help neither those struggling to survive nor those trying to enter the marketplace. We oppose the bill and demand a more balanced and thoughtful approach that respects our fundamental rights and effectively addresses—

● (2015)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, since 2008, we have witnessed over 450 media outlets of all different forms virtually disappear. We recognize these media outlets as having value; they are important to society, to our communities and to democracy. We have legislation before us that has support virtually across the board, from local communities and larger communities to political entities, including all of those inside this House, with the exception of the Conservatives. The Conservatives refuse to recognize the value of the legislation, which is modelled after what we have seen in Australia and France.

My question for the member is this: Why does he believe everyone else is thinking it would be healthy for our communities to preserve these systems into the future? Why does it have to be the Conservatives who are right, when it appears they are dead wrong on voting against this bill?

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Madam Speaker, I have to admit that the Liberals paint a pretty picture, and I believe that is what is happening here. The Liberals have come out and said not to worry, that they are from the government, that they are here to help and that it is going to be good. The more they keep spouting this off, the more I worry that they are actually doing exactly what we are saying the bill would do. It would not help any of our small local media producers, which they promise it would do. Once again, the Liberals are helping out their best friends in big corporations, such as the

CBC, and they are the ones who are going to get the most money. Our small conglomerates that the member says were going broke in the last few years would continue to go broke through the legislation.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has raised some points here, yet he has not really answered the concerns of people in his constituency. When he talks about small independent media, he has not once referenced the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association, which worked with the NDP to get the amendments passed that would allow for small organizations to get funding. What does the hon. member have to say to the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association, which is in support of this legislation and worked with the committee in the process as a stakeholder? Now, it hears this member from Alberta shutting the association out and suggesting that somehow that it is not a legitimate stakeholder in this discussion.

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Madam Speaker, once again, they are spouting off about how great this legislation is. That is funny. I am actually talking to my news reporters and the owners of these small papers within my riding. They are telling me that this is not going to help them one bit. We have tried to put an amendment in at committee to make sure that they could be represented, but the member voted it down. Therefore, those members are the ones who are not helping small businesses and media in our communities.

Mr. Matthew Green: Madam Speaker, I love the opportunity to reply.

It is strange to me. The member talked about speaking to the owners or managers of local businesses; we would assume that they have more than one employee. What is at stake here? What he has created is this red herring and false straw man argument. The misinformation the Conservatives have been spouting all night is that these small organizations would not get help. These organizations are precisely those the legislation is supposed to help. However, when he talks about big corporations, he does not have the courage to take on Google and Facebook, which are profiting from the work of his local community without paying for it.

This is a basic question of pay equity for workers, creators and local news agencies, so I will ask him this again: Did he consult with the Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association, and if so, how can he reconcile the difference he has today in this debate?

● (2020)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Madam Speaker, the member spouts off a very good argument on his behalf, yet he is one of the people sitting here saying that this legislation is going to help everyone, that it is going to be great and that we should not worry about it. He asks why we are so concerned about this. He is the one who has to go and say that it is going to help all these people who are creators, from one person who owns a paper to potentially someone who has one or two part-time employees. These are small media sources. They do not have the revenue coming in that they need to survive, and the legislation would do absolutely nothing for them.

Therefore, the legislation is not something I can support now or in the future, unless it gets changed substantially.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the well-informed constituents of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and speak to the Liberals' online news censorship act.

Every single day, thousands of Canadians have their online identity stolen. Every single day, a woman has her privacy and dignity stolen by revenge porn. Every single day, the mental health crisis grows in scale, driven by social media use among teens. Online crimes run rampant. Do these Liberals care? No, they do not. Instead, their priority is propping up dying broadcasters and failing legacy media corporations.

They have already passed their online streaming censorship act. We are already beginning to see the consequences of that first stifling bill. Smaller foreign streamers are telling the CRTC they'll leave the Canadian market. These Liberals were warned this would happen. I personally warned the member for Winnipeg North what would happen if foreign-language streamers such as a Filipino streaming service blocked people living in Canada from watching their content.

Now, here we are again. Every independent voice is telling these Liberals that their plan is terrible. Their scheme to force two foreign companies to subsidize the entire Canadian media industry is obviously ridiculous. Even the legacy media have finally admitted they make millions of dollars from Google and Facebook. The legacy media even buy ads on Facebook and yet their lobbyists continue to lie, and claim that these two tech companies are profiting from their content. We know this is a lie. Facebook and Google do not profit off the dying legacy media. These companies profit off our privacy. These companies strip-mine our data and sell it to the highest bidder. News links generate very little profitable data. Google does not even run ads on most news searches. That is why these companies have been clear: If they are forced to choose between negotiating unlimited payments for links and blocking news links, they will choose to block news links.

Now the Minister of Canadian Heritage huffs and puffs out his chest. That it is just a bluff. Hearing the minister speak like that, I can understand why some of his critics think that he is incompetent. In fact, the government knows exactly what it is doing. It is called the Liberal coin flip. If it is heads, the Liberals win; if it is tails, Canadians lose. If Google and Facebook win, it is tails and Canadians lose. If Google and Facebook comply with the extortion, the legacy media become beholden to the Liberals' continuing in power. If Google and Facebook reject the extortion and block links, fewer Canadians will learn the truth about the government's corruption and incompetence. Heads they win; tails we lose.

However, it does not have to be this way. There is a third option. Facebook and Google could respect our democracy by seeking a solution in the courts. The legislation would require negotiation on a commercial basis. The news media representatives have now admitted they receive significant commercial benefit from links shared by Google and Facebook. Google and Facebook provide these commercial benefits to the news media industry free of charge.

It is clear from the Liberals' desperate talking points that this bill has no relationship with reality. It is based on the big lie first

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pushed by Rupert Murdoch's Australian media companies. This bill would never withstand judicial scrutiny. Facebook and Google have a choice: They can block news links and make Canadian democracy worse off or they can use their considerable resources to fight this law in court. Facebook and Google must keep the news links working, refuse to pay the blackmail and demonstrate they care more about the fundamental principles that the Internet was built on, which is the free flow of information.

If Google and Facebook refuse to fight this and they just give up on Canadians and proceed with blocking news, then the Prime Minister wins and Canadians lose.

● (2025)

How many Canadians learned about blackface from a Facebook post? How many Canadians have googled the words “Communist interference” and “Liberal Party” in order to keep up with the latest news leaks?

The government would be all too happy to see fewer news stories online. Failing that, it would settle for bringing the legacy media under the control of government. This bill would give the CRTC the power to demand any information from news media. At the recent convention, Liberal Party members cheerfully passed a policy to force news media to disclose their sources. Who is going to risk blowing the whistle on the government if the CRTC can demand any news media outlet reveal their identity?

The government claims it needs to force Google and Facebook to subsidize the entire Canadian media industry in order to save Canadians from the scourge of misinformation. Meanwhile, the minister of public endangerment is a one-man misinformation band. He claimed that police asked for the Emergencies Act. He claimed he was not banning hunting rifles while seeking to ban thousands of them. He claimed the secret Communist police stations had been shut down. The current government is the greatest source of misinformation in our society today. Now the Liberals want to bring news media under their control.

At its core, the government is confused. It has confused the fundamental right of a free press with the corporate interests of a news media industry. The survival of any one particular newspaper or broadcaster is of no importance to our democracy. What is important is the freedom for any Canadian to publish. Bill C-18 threatens that freedom. If Google and Facebook give in to the extortion, then the larger established legacy media will be given an unfair competitive advantage over any media not willing to get into bed with the CRTC and—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 8:29 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 the consideration of the Senate amendments to Bill C-18 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.

• (2030)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 21, after the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[Translation]

CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill C-42 at third reading stage.

[English]

Hon. Dan Vandal (for the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry) moved that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what a pleasure it is to rise and speak to important legislation that we are hoping to pass. The good news about this legislation is that it does not matter which political party in the House members are in, because I understand there is a very good chance this legislation will pass unanimously. I am not too sure about the Green Party. I am assuming it will support the bill. It may be iffy, but we will have to wait and see.

The good news is that at least the Conservatives are onside, along with the New Democrats, the Bloc and obviously the governing party. I see that as a positive thing. At the end of the day, we are sending a very strong message that I like to think the federal government is taking strong leadership on.

When we think of the Canada Business Corporations Act and the impact it can have in building confidence, both in our economy and in the public on the whole issue of trust in corporations, I see it as a win-win for everyone. There are very serious issues that we need to face in government, but it is not just the national government. That is why I emphasize that the federal government is talking about the Canada Business Corporations Act. As members of the House will know, it is not just the federal government that is responsible for all corporations and businesses in Canada. From a numbers perspective, the provinces and territories have more corporations and busi-

nesses that, hopefully, at some point in the future, will also fall under—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

POINTS OF ORDER

ORDER AND DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was in the middle of my speech and just learned the reason I was summarily cut off, censored, from speaking to the online censorship bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member was not censored. The time was limited on debate, and that was it. That was the end of debate on Bill C-18. That was it. There is no point of order.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, my point of order is that they added all the times that the opposition coalition members were granted points of order to count against my time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows full well that this was the time allocated for the debate on Bill C-18, and that was the end of it.

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

• (2035)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, on the point of order that has been raised, we have seen this time and time again. It seems like the Conservative Party does not want to go by the Standing Orders and the rules of this House. I am beginning to take these points of orders as being a direct attack on the Speaker and the Speaker's ability to rule over this House.

In these last remaining hours, I would ask that we please continue, knowing that no party in this House is above the Standing Orders of this House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I take the hon. member's comments, which will certainly be taken under consideration in the ruling that the Speaker will return to the House with.

CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was on a roll until I was interrupted. I was actually saying some positive things about the Conservative Party.

At the end of the day, it is good, healthy legislation. One of the things to recognize is that Ottawa plays a leadership role on the issue of money laundering that is taking place in Canada and on the other types of illegal financial transactions that we see.

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We are not the only level of government that has to play this role. We have to recognize that there are provincial and territorial governments that have responsibility for corporations and small businesses in their jurisdictions. We have seen that some provinces have been more proactive in terms of trying to deal with issues such as money laundering, the funding of terrorism and tax avoidance. They have actually already started the process.

It is not like it is an issue that has been overwhelmed by governments around the world. More and more, we are getting attention paid to this particular issue. One would expect that a government, in recognizing it, would want to bring forward legislation, as this government has. It has done a very thorough job in the development of the legislation, and presented it to the House. I suspect that is one of the reasons we are getting the support that we are from all parties inside the House.

There is a scale within the legislation that would enable Ottawa to incorporate the provincial and territorial participation. I believe we have a couple of provinces in Canada, Quebec and possibly British Columbia, but do not quote me on that, that have actually already come forward with legislation. That legislation would complement the federal registry that we are attempting to put in place through the framework that is being established with Bill C-42.

It is a commitment that we made to Canadians quite a while ago. In fact, it was in budget 2022 that we talked about establishing the framework, or, should I say, establishing the bill. We did not know the number then, but it is Bill C-42. It is a commitment that is being fulfilled by the Prime Minister and the government to support the building of confidence in corporations.

I look at the bigger picture. We often hear how important small businesses are, and the biggest corporations often start as small businesses. In the last year, I have been to a number of announcements of small businesses, and even medium-sized businesses, opening up in Winnipeg North. They have contributed to the overall success of our economy over the years. We can talk about small businesses being the backbone of the Canadian economy, creating the hundreds of thousands of middle-class jobs that are so very important.

Many of those small businesses are going to be the medium-sized and larger businesses of the future. They are the businesses that ultimately believe in the importance of issues such as trade and international trade. At the end of the day, as I indicated in previous speeches, trade is very important to Canada.

As a country that is so dependent on trade, it is important that we send a message around the world that we take money laundering seriously. We take the issue of funds that could indirectly or even directly go to terrorist organizations seriously.

By doing that, I would argue we are demonstrating leadership not only from within our national boundaries, but even beyond them. It is not an easy task. As I say, at the end of the day, within this legislation, we provide enough scale to allow for provincial jurisdictions. Those numbers are actually even larger, in terms of the number of corporations and businesses, than what we would have in Ottawa. I suspect, if we were to canvass these jurisdictions, we would find that all of us benefit if we can pool the resources and get

everyone onside in the form of a larger national registry, and that is what this legislation is doing.

Corporations do a lot of amazing things. There is no doubt about that in the business community, but there is a percentage of those companies that do a great disservice. Those are the ones that continue to seek out ways, directly or indirectly, to launder money or to cause issues related to real estate, such as speculation of property, tax avoidance or even tax evasion. There is a difference.

• (2040)

We also see the issue of terrorism being financed, all through illegal money. Members should be aware that money laundering takes many different forms. I know British Columbia is a good example of it in terms of the casinos. Illegal money comes in, gets washed and then somehow exits as clean, filtered or cleansed money. That has cost millions of dollars.

We can talk about cryptocurrency. A number of months ago, there was an article in the Winnipeg Free Press on the police department cautioning people about fraud taking place with cryptocurrency. These are the types of things we need to be aware of. That is why we need to be careful.

I know we often mock the leader of the Conservative Party because of his attitudes toward endorsing cryptocurrency. He talks about it being a good way to fight inflation. At the end of the day, we have to be very careful. It is one of those possible tools that can, in fact, be used for unethical financial exchanges.

We are very dependent on our financial institutions and the protections that we put into place to track money that is flowing into Canada, and even money that is not flowing into Canada but has been acquired in an illegal fashion. We need to be cognizant of that fact. That is why, if someone goes into a bank and makes a deposit of more than \$10,000, there is an obligation to report it.

There are many outstanding Canadians who work at our financial institutions who are very aware of the types of things to watch out for. We need to watch out for certain behaviours that take place. They also play a critical role in terms of protecting the integrity of our system.

From my perspective, and I would ultimately argue in the best interests of Canadians as a whole, the government takes actions where it can, like it is doing regarding Bill C-42, with the idea of establishing additional confidence in the public regarding corporations.

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• (2045)

There is something that I should make a quick reference to, as I felt quite good about it a couple of budgets back. The federal government found that we had a lot of people outside of Canada investing in real estate who were driving the costs up. In particular, cities like Vancouver and Toronto were being subjected to all forms of speculative investments. There were also issues surrounding money-laundering allegations and so forth in real estate, in particular in condo developments. I heard about some of the empty units. Imagine building a unit that is worth \$2 million-plus and no one is living in it. After I talked to some people, I found out that a huge percentage of the overall new condos being developed in communities like Toronto and Vancouver were empty. They were sitting empty. One of the measures the government put in place to try to deal with that issue was a special tax for non-residents.

Like many others, I think housing should be all about homes for people. However, they are becoming more of an investment, and a lot of the investments are driving up costs, especially with some of the vacancy rates across the country. It could be that or just a mindset that is often referenced about corporations in general: Corporations are greedy, and there is a lot of corruption, laundering and tax evasion or avoidance. A lack of trust is often found among the public in regard to corporations.

That is why when looking at the very heart of Bill C-42, what we are really talking about is corporate accountability and public trust in our corporate institutions. We see this because of the requirement to have a public, searchable ownership registry. That is at the core of the Canada Business Corporations Act and the amendment the government is proposing today. One could ultimately argue that the industry itself has been saying it wants to see this legislation.

The other day when I was speaking to this legislation, it was interesting. I was one of the individuals expecting to see the legislation ultimately pass unanimously or very close to unanimously. That will depend on what the leader of the Green Party and its other members do. That is the type of support potential it has.

I often suggest that members see the legislation for what it is worth and listen to the comments being made at the committee stage. If members really want to help restore confidence in our corporations, one of the best things they can do is get this legislation passed so we can make a very strong statement. That statement deals with the beneficial ownership that individuals have in corporations, which would have to be part of a registry. Individuals could then find out about ownership when someone has a major portion of that ownership. I know that some want to see a lower percentage and that others might want to see a higher percentage. However, at the end of the day, what we are seeing, which I think is 25%, is an acceptable percentage for now.

• (2050)

At least let us get the legislation through. By doing that, we are establishing the framework. I would then hope to see more discussions taking place at the different provincial legislatures in support of it.

I talked about smaller businesses in our communities and the impact they have. I do not want to in any way try to imply that corpo-

rations as a whole need the legislation as much as it is important that the legislation is there to support corporations. We will find that law-abiding corporations and businesses are actually very supportive of the legislation. They understand the need for it. It is the idea that we have a registry that would enable consequential penalties. I would like to cite one in particular. By passing this law, to use a very specific example, corporations that fail to provide their beneficial ownership information to Corporations Canada may be prevented from obtaining a certificate of compliance.

Keep in mind that if they cannot get that certificate of compliance, that has an impact on their ability to borrow funds. If a corporation wants to expand and go to a bank, they will need that certificate, in good part because without that certificate, chances are they will not be able to get financing. This is not to mention exports. Many corporations today are dependent on exports. To get those exports and have the market, these certificates are absolutely critical.

If I look at it from that perspective, I think of my own community of Manitoba and some of the corporations that have done exceptionally well. The other day I talked about Hylife. Hylife is a company located in Neepawa, Manitoba, that creates hundreds of direct jobs, not to mention hundreds of indirect jobs. We can find out who those beneficial owners are, which is really important. It is the same thing with New Flyer Industries. These are in provincial jurisdiction, but some are in federal jurisdiction.

We are talking about millions of dollars in transactions. If we look at New Flyer Industries, a huge corporation—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): My apologies. We have come to the end of the hon. member's time for his speech.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask a question of the member for Winnipeg North.

He mentioned money laundering and the real estate market. We know, as reports are telling us, that the main factor causing disaster in the real estate market and inflation in the real estate market, besides government policies, is money laundering. There is a blind spot that launderers and criminals have found to break through the real estate market and make it unaffordable for the average Canadian to buy.

I believe it is too late now. Although this bill is a step in the right direction, it is too late to really solve such a fundamental problem in that area. Can the hon. member tell us where the government has failed? The government did fail, we have to admit, in protecting the real estate market from launderers.

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• (2055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do not think it is fair, whether it is the Conservatives in Ontario or the NDP in British Columbia, to point a finger at them and say they have failed, or at Ottawa and say it has failed, because I think all three governments have brought forward different initiatives to try to prevent real estate speculation and keep pricing more affordable for Canadians.

At the end of the day, we have a national government that is prepared to invest in housing. Has there been laundering in real estate? Of course we believe there has been. However, we are working with provincial jurisdictions and financial and real estate associations to try to minimize it, because by doing that, we will in fact make homes more affordable.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, 450 news outlets in Canada have closed since 2008. At least one-third of Canadian journalism jobs have disappeared. I am wondering what the member can share with us this evening about why it took so long to start the work on implementing this important move in the right direction.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I do not usually do this, but we are talking about Bill C-42 right now and not Bill C-18.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do not mind commenting on Bill C-18.

Bill C-18 is wonderful legislation, and I am very glad the member and the NDP are supporting it. It is unfortunate that the Conservative Party is like a fish out of water and flip-flopped once again—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are not being relevant to the bill being discussed right now.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am going to put the hon. parliamentary secretary out of any sense of suspense over how I will vote on this bill. I will probably vote for it.

The reason I waffled was that I was so impressed the other day by the speech from the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, who took us through, as a collective, what it was like to be in committee and to have the evidence from Transparency International put forward minutes before clause-by-clause amendments. Those improvements could have been made.

Transparency International is the gold standard, and Canada has been falling behind. Obviously we need the beneficial registry. We need this legislation, and we should have had it years ago. However, it is not great to be famous, as a country, for being a great place for money laundering, and we could have done better. I just wanted to explain that to the parliamentary secretary.

I do not know how the member for Kitchener Centre will vote. We do not whip votes here. We find it liberating for people to represent their constituents. In any case, I will be voting for it, but with some considerable regret that the bill was pushed through without entering good amendments based on witness testimony.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would not underestimate the member's influence over her colleague, her seatmate, and I highly recommend that she recommend to him that he join her in supporting this legislation, because it is good legislation.

One thing that I hope I have emphasized at great length is recognizing that Ottawa plays a strong national leadership role. I would like to emphasize and re-emphasize how important it is that Ottawa continue to work with provincial jurisdictions, in particular, to ensure that we can expand the registry so that all Canadians will be that much more emboldened to feel we have public confidence and trust in corporations. The bill would ultimately add more value to our economy, because even corporations want to see this type of legislation.

• (2100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, according to Transparency International, between \$43 billion and \$113 billion a year is laundered or is lost to tax evasion.

Obviously the Bloc Québécois is in favour of Bill C-42, which calls for more transparency from businesses in order to determine who exactly is hiding behind these businesses.

My question for my colleague is on the need for co-operation between the federal government and the Government of Quebec. In fact, Quebec has already brought in measures to improve transparency and to prevent tax evasion. How does my colleague see this co-operation?

Business ownership and business ownership law are areas of provincial jurisdiction, not federal jurisdiction. How does my colleague think the federal government will be able to bring this bill into force while securing real co-operation and getting the necessary information, which belongs to and is the responsibility of the provinces, including Quebec?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is important we recognize that the legislation establishes a searchable public ownership registry of a scale that the provinces that want to be able to participate in it can participate. I do not know all of the nuances. I know Quebec has been very progressive in advancing some legislation already. I would like to think that all provinces and municipalities would. In fact, members of this House can talk to their provincial counterparts and recommend that. After all, we all benefit if there is one registry that enables us to tap into it. When I say all, I am talking about the communities that we represent and corporations in general.

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Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, we had two committee meetings on this bill at the industry committee, one with officials and the minister and the other with a couple of witnesses, including the RCMP and Transparency International. As the leader of the Green Party said, Transparency International proposed a number of important changes. I put forward those amendments and the government voted against every one of them.

It is interesting that the parliamentary secretary mentioned real estate and provincial co-operation. I put forward amendments proposing that residential or real estate assets be included and the Liberal Party voted against them.

I put forward an amendment where, if a provincial government has a provincial beneficial registry, the federal government would enter into an agreement so they could share the data back and forth and the Liberals voted against it.

Therefore, I hear the words, but I do not see the votes, and I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could explain that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what the member does not necessarily indicate is that this a minority situation, so if he was losing votes at committee, that means it was not just the Liberal Party but the majority of the committee membership did not support the Conservative amendments, so it is not fair for him to say that it is the Liberal Party.

What I have witnessed is that this government has no objection to adding strength to legislation if a bill or amendment can add true value to it. It is up to the critics of the parties to work within the committee to maybe do a bit of lobbying with the minister, which never hurts, and if there are things we can do to make the legislation more sound and better in a timely fashion we are always open to those ideas. Keep in mind that one always needs a majority, even at committee, in order to pass an amendment. We do not have a majority, but maybe we will after the next election.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Madam Speaker, Facebook's decision to block Canadian news targets major media outlets—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are not here to debate Bill C-18; we are here to debate Bill C-42. The member was asking about Facebook.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are debating Bill C-42.

[*English*]

I thank the hon. member.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to go back to one par-

ticular issue that has to do with the significant interest clause, which the member discussed during his speech. He said that it was okay for now, which leads me to think he might think it should be lower. The fact of the matter is it should be lower and is a major hindrance to making this legislation as effective as it could be. I wonder why the committee did not support that.

Your argument earlier made no sense at all. If the Liberals had voted for it, it would have passed with the Conservative votes.

• (2105)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I want to remind the hon. member that it is not my argument.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what I was attempting to say is this. There were some who would have liked to have seen it lower and some who may have wanted to see it higher. I believe 25% is what they agreed to and that is what was passed at committee.

As I indicated to the previous—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry, but we have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am going to be speaking on Bill C-42, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

Before I begin, I seek unanimous consent from the House to split my time with the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have heard from all recognized parties that they are in agreement with this request.

[*Translation*]

Does the hon. member have the consent of the House to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, Conservatives are proposing that we amend the motion before the House today, the motion that Bill C-42 be read for a third time, in order to send Bill C-42 back to committee for some important additions, with number one being thresholds.

During our study at INDU, the RCMP officials were clear that reducing the threshold for significant control would strengthen the registry and law enforcement agencies' ability to utilize it in the fight against money laundering. Let me quote Denis Beaudoin, director of financial crime at the RCMP. He stated:

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The RCMP standpoint is that the more names and more information, the better. As we're trying to make links in a criminal investigation, it certainly can help.

This was in respect to thresholds.

The End Snow-Washing campaign also pushed for a 10% threshold, though the officials have since suggested it could be done at a later date through the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act review, which takes place every five years.

During testimony, the representative from Transparency International, which is tied to the End Snow-Washing campaign, stated:

I don't think, for one, lowering the threshold from 25% to 10% and a risk-based approach are mutually exclusive. I think they actually go hand in hand. I would note that the 25% isn't so much a standard as it was an initial global recommendation that everyone just kind of grabbed on to.

This quote contradicts the point that we have seen raised repeatedly by Liberal members that 25% is an international standard. They argue that moving the threshold away from the standard would hurt interoperability, but I have doubts. Does the government really believe that provinces would not follow suit and align with a new federal threshold? Twenty-five per cent remains far too open to abuse. The lower we bring the threshold, the less opportunity there would be for criminals to circumvent it. As I understand this bill, a sole owner of a small business worth \$100,000 in gross profit on an annual basis would be subject to reporting requirements and included in this registry. Meanwhile, a person with a 20% stake in a \$100-million corporation would not.

As has been mentioned during debate so far, currently the Ontario Securities Commission requires that any shareholder with a 10% share or more has to be reported. Private corporations should be held to the same standard of transparency and accountability. Frankly, I do not understand or trust public servants who say they are going to follow through on this. I predict that we will be back in this House in less than 10 years, wondering why the threshold was not adjusted to a lower rate in this bill to account for the serious problem of money laundering that we have.

Conservatives are therefore proposing that we send Bill C-42 back to the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology with the aim of reducing the threshold for significant control from 25% to 10%.

The second point I would like to raise tonight relates to interoperability. We are also calling on the industry committee to adopt additional amendments in relation to the interoperability of the registry with provincial and territorial registries.

As of now, penalties for violating requirements in respect to reporting information would only apply to federally registered corporations, which represent less than 15% of private corporations in Canada. As we heard at committee, there is as much as \$113 billion being laundered in Canada annually. We must ensure that this registry can reduce that figure as much as possible and end Canada's reputation as a haven for dirty money. To that end, by changing some of the clauses through the Criminal Code, we could achieve a higher standard of interoperability by making sure that provinces that opt in to a federal registry would impose the same penalties as a federally registered corporation.

Other areas for improvement of Bill C-42 were also raised through numerous amendments to strengthen the registry.

- (2110)

With my time here today I will talk about law enforcement. Conservatives also moved an amendment to ensure law enforcement would have back-end access to the registry without having to go directly to corporations. Department staff at committee assured members that there is already a provision for this in place. However, to my understanding this is not the case, based on the bill itself, and what we needed through more committee testimony was clarity through the officials on how that would actually be done.

The Budget Implementation Act, 2022, No. 1, did include an amendment to the CBCA to give law enforcement this access. However, it has never been brought into force.

We moved further amendments at INDU in relation to interoperability as well. The first would have added the jurisdiction of residents and the name of the corporation to the registry, ensuring it could have been searched by these fields. The second would have added specific language to require the registry to be made public in a searchable format.

I will quote Sasha Caldera from Publish What You Pay, which is associated with Transparency International. He said:

Searching by the name of the corporation is a function that the U.K. registry has, and it allows for reverse searching. If you don't know the name of the beneficial owner, you can look up the name of the corporation, for instance. That would be incredibly helpful. In some of our other recommendations, we just want to ensure that all publicly accessible data is searchable.

We wanted to achieve the same objective.

Another amendment we moved was raised by the End Snow-Washing campaign of Transparency International. One of them would have added "mechanisms to prevent beneficial owners from knowingly abusing the PO box system". Officials outlined at the clause-by-clause debate that this is a regulation that already applies to federally registered corporations.

However, what was not made clear is whether that same regulatory standard would apply to provincially regulated corporations. As a result, we left the amendment stage of the bill not knowing whether P.O. box numbers where provincially registered corporations are held would be subject to the same standard as federally registered corporations if any set agreement was made between the federal, provincial or territorial government in their respective jurisdictions. What I am getting at here is that we just needed a bit more time.

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I will quickly touch upon identity verification, another area we wanted to spend a bit more time on. An amendment we were unable to get to the floor in time from the Transparency International campaign related to identity verification. It requested language to require corporations to verify the identity of individuals with significant control. Indeed, there already is a precedent for this in Canada. B.C.'s Business Corporations Amendment Act, 2023, included the following language, which the organization included for reference in its submission to committee the hour before clause-by-clause:

Verification of identity of significant individual

(1) On the request of the registrar, a significant individual, or a person in a prescribed class of persons who can verify the identity of the individual, must provide to the registrar

(a) any prescribed records, or

(b) information or proof the registrar considers necessary

to verify the identity of the individual.

(2) The records, information or proof must be provided under subsection (1) in the prescribed form and manner.

We needed to do so much more for the bill, but I have just been informed by leadership that we will be removing our amendments to the bill, unfortunately, because it looks like we are going to recess for the summer this month. We will not be able to sit this summer and go through this important work.

That said, I still very strongly believe that, when we look at the proceeds of crime and money laundering act, we should revisit the CBCA to ensure we do the utmost to protect Canadians from money laundering. We have so much more work to do on this, and I am sad the Liberals tried to push this through right to the very end. If we just had a few more meetings, the bill could have been so much better.

● (2115)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do want to acknowledge the efforts of the standing committees and those who have ultimately had direct input to bring the legislation to the state it is at today, and I think working with provinces, as I indicated in my speech earlier, is so critically important. By building upon the momentum we are adding great value to this evening by the passage of this bill, I think we would be doing a good thing for all Canadians. I just wanted to get the member's thoughts in regard to the provincial participation in or buy-in to the program.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, the only assurances committee members have received regarding provincial participation relate to a letter the minister sent. What is problematic for me, as an opposition MP, and I am learning this the more time I spend going through amendments and clause-by-clause, is that the word of a minister is not enough. I need to see concrete action.

The minister did not provide the letter, and he did not provide any indication that any provincial register has so far indicated they are going to participate. That is the reason I spoke to the need to include provincial members in the legislation as a starting point, through amendments to the Criminal Code, as it relates to the penalties in this legislation to ensure provincial participation. My

province wants it and so do many others, but we need to see more concrete and transparent action from the government on that front.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I take it my hon. colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is persuaded there is enough good in this bill in having a beneficial ownership registry that he will be voting for it. I ask him to comment on how he sees the use of this reducing money laundering, which has been a scandal, particularly in our home province.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in the debate yesterday, perfection cannot be the enemy of the good. The Conservative Party will be supporting this bill reluctantly, but my cry tonight, my plea with the government, is to never again during this parliamentary session try to have witnesses the hour before clause-by-clause.

In British Columbia, we had the Cullen commission and the Peter German report. We have had so many people negatively impacted by money laundering. On the impact it has had and the deaths related to opioids, all of that money and those deaths are related to money laundering. We have not done enough in the House to address it. Lives are being lost in B.C. because of money laundering, and we could have done more.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I had the honour to serve with the member on the committee that briefly looked at this bill.

One of the most important proposed amendments the government rejected was one that would have taken the level of reporting of who owns what percentage of shares down from 25%, meaning anyone who has 25% or more has to be recorded, down to 10%, and 10% of course is what is used for making public disclosure by the Ontario Securities Commission. When one acquires shares in a company, they have to publicly disclose if they have 10% or more. I would like the member to comment on what value that would have brought and how disappointing it was for us that the government did not consider it.

● (2120)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from Nova Scotia is a true historian and parliamentarian in the very best sense of the word. Changing the threshold from 25% to 10% would have done what the RCMP said, in the testimony I shared today from that one hour from witnesses, which is that it would have given law enforcement organizations such as FINTRAC, and the RCMP and its money laundering unit more tools to combat the up to \$113 billion that is laundered in Canada every year.

We are so far behind other developed economies when it comes to money laundering. This is one tiny step in the right direction. All we were trying to do is get tough on those individuals who are costing lives because of money laundering, and we wanted to strengthen this bill and follow the spirit of what the government put forward in the first place to make it better. Unfortunately, it did not agree with us and sided with the Bloc Québécois when the NDP and the Conservatives brought forward reasonable amendments.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, just to be clear, I am not speaking about Bill C-18, nor am I speaking about any purported amendments to Bill C-42. Rather, I am speaking about Bill C-42, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act.

The bill does a number of things. Its stated goal is protecting Canadians against money laundering and terrorist financing, deterring tax evasion and tax avoidance, and making sure that Canada is an attractive place to do business. Those are all laudable goals.

We know that money laundering in Canada is a serious issue. It is so serious that we have earned our own nickname as the land of snow washing. That is not a badge of honour. In 2022, the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre reported \$530 million in victim losses, a 40% increase over 2021.

These are vulnerable Canadians being preyed upon by fraudsters, who are destroying lives. It is important that, as parliamentarians, we come together to deal with these problems and do our best to protect Canadians and their retirement savings.

In 2016, the Financial Action Task Force said that Canada was completely deficient in many areas. One of its main criticisms, in fact, was our lack of a beneficial ownership registry. That was seven years ago, and we are only getting to it today. Establishing such a registry would be a major step forward, and Conservatives certainly support that. The problem, as always, is that the devil is in the details.

In committee, Conservatives tried to strengthen the bill in a number of ways. One glaring problem with the bill is that the corporate and personal fines for failure to provide required information were too low under the CBSA. The fine was only \$5,000 for corporations and only \$200,000 plus six months' imprisonment for individuals. I was happy to see the INDU committee increase personal fines for individuals to \$1 million plus five years' imprisonment, as well as fines for corporations to \$200,000. Of course, Conservatives supported those amendments, as did Liberals on the committee. We can see that when Conservatives and Liberals vote together, amendments actually pass at committee.

There were, however, a number of other Conservative amendments related to thresholds, real estate, interoperability, law enforcement, access, searchability and the use of post office boxes, of all things, which would have made the bill more effective. They were all voted down by Liberal committee members.

I want to touch on a few of them now. Currently, under the CBSA, the threshold for what is called a "significant interest" is 25%. This means that corporations only have to disclose those shareholders who have at least a 25% interest in the outstanding shares of a corporation. This poses a problem, because if we really want to

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crack down on money launderers and terrorist financiers, the threshold should be lower. For instance, the Ontario Securities Commission threshold is 10%.

At committee, Conservatives proposed this amendment. However, it was rejected, even though the RCMP felt it was necessary. It was rejected by Liberal members of the committee, who purport to want this legislation to be effective. It is hard to understand why they would not want to lower the threshold. James Cohen, executive director of Transparency International Canada, said that it should go down as well.

Conservatives proposed another amendment that would have brought real estate holdings into the registry. In 2018, money laundering funded \$5.3 billion in British Columbia real estate purchases alone, further driving up the cost of homes in that province. The amendment said, "The corporation shall prepare and maintain...a register of individuals with control over the corporation and its real property"; it was a very important amendment that would have gone a long way in helping to control money laundering in Canada through real estate acquisitions. This amendment would have expanded the scope of the registry to make it similar to British Columbia's land ownership transparency register.

Another amendment called for interoperability with provincial registries. The fact of the matter is that most corporations in Canada are provincial. As this bill only governs federally incorporated companies, it misses out on bringing in the provinces, which would make it far more effective.

● (2125)

Another amendment that was defeated had to do with law enforcement access. This amendment would have added specific language to the bill to ensure that law enforcement and organizations like FINTRAC could access information from the director rather than having to go to the corporations directly. It would also have removed reference to prescribed circumstances, ensuring that only minors would be automatically exempted.

Another amendment defeated by Liberal members had to do with using post office boxes, of all things. It would have barred individuals from using post office boxes as their address in the registry. This was a specific request of the End Snow-Washing campaign.

On a cautionary note, it is always important to give consideration to stakeholders and their concerns. Small business is the backbone of this country's economy. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business raised a number of concerns, and I want to talk about some of them here.

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It raised the issue of privacy and personal security. It said many small business owners are concerned about having their information available to the general public, such as name, place of residence, date of birth, citizenship, telephone number, etc. In fact, individuals in small towns may not want neighbours or acquaintances to know they have a controlling interest in a company. The CFIB talked about fraud and crime risks and how making beneficial ownership registries public could make it easier for criminals to target wealthy individuals or SMEs. Small business owners are often the targets of fraud and could be even more vulnerable than consumers, as they do not have consumer protection acts to help them manage those who want to take advantage of them.

It talked about competitive disadvantage and that requiring SMEs to disclose detailed ownership information publicly might give their competitors a strategic advantage. Rival businesses could gain insight into their ownership structure, investments and so forth. It talked about inaccurate or outdated information and how public registries may not always provide accurate or up-to-date information due to delays in reporting areas or deliberate misrepresentations. It talked about how requiring small businesses to disclose their beneficial ownership information publicly could impose an additional administrative burden and compliance costs, and that this burden might disproportionately affect smaller companies with limited resources.

Also, I want to touch on the Canadian Bar Association, which raised concerns about the risk of identity theft from the registry, potentially undermining its anti-fraud rationale.

I raise these concerns not to say that we should not make this legislation effective but to say that as parliamentarians, it is incumbent on us to listen to the stakeholders and their concerns as we try to craft and fashion legislation that addresses those concerns but still accomplishes the ultimate goal of the legislation.

The reality is that money laundering is a very serious problem. We know from our friend Bill Browder that Canada has been fertile ground for Russian oligarchs to clean their ill-gotten cash.

I mentioned earlier how money laundering has driven up the cost of housing. This is at a time in this country, after eight years of this Prime Minister, that the dream of home ownership is in critical condition. The average mortgage payment has doubled. The average family now needs to spend 62% of its monthly income to own the average home.

The cause is clear: Inflation fuelled by wasteful government spending has fuelled the inflationary fire. Just today, the International Money Fund cautioned that Canada needs to bring back a debt anchor and keep fiscal policy tight. Money laundering makes things even worse.

Finally, I must reiterate how important it is to bring provinces on board. It is a matter of basic federalism. The government will need information-sharing agreements with the provinces if this registry is going to work. It will only be as strong as the provinces willing to co-operate with it, and that means all the provinces, because if one jurisdiction is left out, it will become a hotbed for money laundering.

I will wrap up by saying that although Bill C-42 is far from a perfect bill and has key shortcomings, including leaving in place a high threshold for significant control, failing to bring into force a clause allowing law enforcement back-end access to the registry and failing to ensure interoperability with the provinces, it is clear that it is a step in the right direction, and Conservatives will support it on third reading.

• (2130)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member opposite. Again, I would reinforce the fact that having this searchable data bank is going to be beneficial. We recognize that.

We also recognize that it is important to reach out to other jurisdictions. This is all about restoring the confidence of the public and business, as it is healthier for the economy to do so.

We appreciate the support the Conservative Party is giving the legislation. I guess this is more of a comment than it is a question.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, the member's comment leaves me wondering why the specific amendments that he just spoke of were defeated by the Liberal members at committee when they were proposed. Amendments around searchability and interoperability were defeated. They had their chance at committee to strengthen the bill and yet they chose not to.

One is just left to wonder why. Why leave Canadians so vulnerable to predators who can commit fraud upon them and money launderers who can jack up the costs of their homes, when they had the chance to stop them?

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a lawyer, my colleague will have seen when there is a hole in the registration process. Let us say that three provinces have a beneficial registry or even eight have a beneficial registry, the federal government has one and two have none. What happens? Can he explain to this House what happens and where corporations go?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, I think that is pretty straightforward. Every province, every jurisdiction has to be on board with this idea. If one province does not have a registry and does not follow these rules, it will become a haven for the oligarchs, for the money launderers, for the fraudsters, to come and do their dirty work and defraud Canadians in that jurisdiction.

There is a whole-of-government approach that is required. It is a matter of federalism that needs to be determined.

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Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Speaker, I too rise this evening to speak on Bill C-42, an act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act.

The bill was tabled about two and half months ago and would create what is known colloquially as beneficial corporate ownership registry. The purpose of that is to make transparent the true and beneficial owners of every federally registered company. A legal owner of a company holds the legal title to that company while the beneficial owner holds certain benefits and rights to company assets, even though the beneficial owner's name may not appear in the legal title.

Corporations in Canada need only register information such as names of directors. They do not have to register who their shareholders are. The current law only requires that lawyers maintain a registry of beneficial owners, so there is no government registry. The lawyers and the companies have to maintain their own sort of self-regulated registry. It is not transparent, it is not visible and it is not even visible to governments unless asked. When police need to find out who the beneficial owner of a company is, they have to contact that company's lawyers, say they are calling from the RCMP and would like to know who the beneficial owner of the company is. The lawyer may say he will get back to the officer and then call the client to say the RCMP is doing an investigation into it.

These are the things that exist now and why we need beneficial ownership registries on who the individuals are, not the corporations, who actually benefit from the ownership of corporations, whether they are federally or provincially incorporated. A beneficiary is the individual or entity, as I said, that will benefit from the transactions or the profits of the remittances of the activities of that corporation.

This bill is a good start, finally, after years and years of discussing it. I think there was a joint press release with the provinces almost six years ago that said we should maybe think about doing this. It has taken the government quite a bit of time to get to this important issue.

The government sets that any individual who owns 25% or more of the shares of a federally incorporated company must provide the information to the registry. What does this mean? There are 4.3 million incorporated companies in Canada and only about 10% of them are incorporated federally. Most corporations are incorporated provincially. Therefore, this bill would have no direct impact on 90% of companies.

With regard to the question earlier from the leader of the Green Party, when 90% of the companies in this country are not included or not brought under the umbrella of a national beneficial ownership registry, it is pretty clear that we are going to still have a significant money-laundering problem.

That is the primary reason, as the minister claimed, the government claims and most interest groups have claimed, we need to have this registry: to deal with money laundering. Other members have mentioned, and I will too, that Canada does not have a very nice nickname around money laundering that has been coined and used internationally to describe Canada, and that is snow washing.

We are the place where money goes to get laundered and cleaned up from illegal activities. It describes the flow of dirty money entering Canada.

The registration system for Canada at both the federal and provincial levels is totally shrouded in secrecy, which means that the real owner of a company or a trust can hire a person as a stand-in or substitute to conduct all financial filings and submissions for that company. The practice effectively makes Canada a tax haven, along with countries such as the British Virgin Islands, Panama and the Bahamas. The process has been made even easier since the Canadian government signed tax treaties with 115 countries.

• (2135)

With a form of business organization called a Canadian limited partnership, the only persons who have to declare themselves to authorities are the partners, and if they do not live in Canada, they are exempt from filing taxes in Canada. If stocks of a firm are not traded publicly, the rules require that only the directors of such companies be identified, and these directors are not required to reveal whether they are acting on behalf of someone else or whether they actually own any shares in the company.

How bad is it? Recent estimates have put money laundering in Canada at \$133 billion a year. Now, that is a big number. It is 5% of our GDP. It is a huge amount of money from illegal gains that is being cleared through our system in Canada.

Money laundering has its origin in crimes that destroy communities, such as drug trafficking, human trafficking and fraud. These crimes victimize the most vulnerable members of society. Money laundering is also an affront to law-abiding citizens who earn their money honestly and pay their fair share of the cost of living in the communities where they choose to live.

There can be few things more destructive to a community's sense of well-being than a governing regime that fails to resist those whose opportunities were unfairly gained at the expense of others. If one jurisdiction, such as Ottawa, or even Ottawa and a few of the provinces, as I mentioned earlier, create a corporate beneficial registry that is publicly available but others do not, then money launderers will gravitate towards those jurisdictions within Canada in order to hide their ownership and enable their money laundering.

We have talked a lot in this debate in the few moments that we have had about the issue of money laundering, and I will give another example of a problem that is caused by not having a beneficial corporate registry.

Government Orders

All politics are local. I have 7,000 commercial fishermen in my riding. There are 16,243 fishing licences in Atlantic Canada and in the gulf region of Quebec. There are 5,727 fishing licences in British Columbia. That is a total of about 22,000 commercial fishing licences that have been issued by DFO in Canada. However, do members know that DFO does not know who owns them? DFO does not know who owns them because there is no beneficial corporate registry.

In fact, 17 months ago, DFO went out for the first time to do a survey of the licence holders. They are not necessarily the licence owners, because in British Columbia, the licences can be leased out to someone, who would then be called the licence holder. Do members know what the result is? The result is that DFO now has to hire a forensic auditor to come in and try to figure out what happened with the information they got.

After more than 150 years of the Government of Canada handing out fishing licences, DFO still does not know who owns them, and that is a problem. It is a problem because DFO has policies around who can control a particular fish species or an area of fishing, and we cannot have an uncompetitive situation. We have had evidence in our study in the House of Commons fisheries committee on corporate concentration and foreign ownership in the fishery that there is one particular company that may own up to 50% of all commercial licences in British Columbia. This is way above what the Competition Bureau says is an acceptable concentration for any business, which is about 30% maximum in any industry. One company in B.C. may own half the licences, but we do not know because we do not have an ongoing federal or provincial beneficial registry that can provide that transparency.

It should not be up to a government department to do a survey once every 150 years in hopes of trying to figure this out. This should be something we could search regularly.

This is an issue in industries like the lobster industry. In southwest Nova Scotia, in my riding and in the riding of the member for West Nova, we all know that there was a lot of organized crime and cash. Whenever there is cash flowing and there are untraceable products like seafood, there is the opportunity for money laundering. This is a huge issue in Canada, and even those numbers are probably not included in the \$133 billion I talked about earlier.

The bill is a good first step, but it really just plays at the edges when so many corporations provincially are not included in it.

● (2140)

We mentioned earlier that we tried to make a few improvements with the help of the government on this, in a genuine effort, as we are very collegial in the industry committee, to try to get things done. However, we only had two meetings, one hour of outside witnesses, officials for the other one, and then straight into clause-by-clause.

I will give a couple of outlines. In that time, we tried to bring that threshold from 25% down to 10%. That is not uncommon. The government said that this is some sort of international standard. In other areas, the government likes to be the leader around the world, in saying that it is leading everybody on trying to have more NPAs than anybody else in the world, that it is trying to push the envelope.

On this one, it would not push the envelope. Moreover, it is not really pushing the envelope, because the Ontario Securities Commission requires that when someone buys 10% or more of a publicly traded company, they have to put out a news release and tell the market that they are doing that.

When they want to go below 10%, once they own those shares, the Ontario Securities Commission actually requires them to put out a news release before they sell the shares. They must actually notify the markets that they are going to sell their shares to below 10%. However, apparently, when it comes to money laundering, 10% is too aggressive for the government. It wanted to keep it at 25%.

When it comes to owners getting influence in a widely held company, if someone holds 20% of the shares of that company and the rest of the shares are widely held, then they are essentially the one that is controlling what happens in that company. The inability of the government to see that was greatly disappointing.

We want, as we have said, to expand it to real property, which is not that difficult. It is just connecting in the registries for property registration. We know that, in Vancouver and Toronto in particular, huge amounts of money laundering have happened around the purchase of residential properties. However, that has been rejected by the Liberals.

Finally, let us say that we have the provinces that, all on their own, go on and do provincial registries. Would that not be great? We put in an amendment saying that if there is a provincial registry, the federal government should go and get an agreement with the province to share the data back and forth, so that they are both searchable on all the data. It should not do it on its own, but it should do it under a federal-provincial agreement with the province. Again, the Liberals, and, I might say in answer to the parliamentary secretary's question, the Bloc Québécois voted against those amendments. The NDP supported them.

I think it is too bad that we have had so little debate, just five hours in the House, and six outside witnesses. This is such an important bill, but it has been rushed through; so much more could have been done for this. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, after the next election, with a change in government, there will be an opportunity to improve this bill much more than the Liberals are willing to do at this location.

● (2145)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is important to recognize that we have had a couple of Conservative speakers who have indicated, with a pretty heavy stick, I would suggest, that one gets provinces to come on-side, possibly by bringing in some sort of amendment.

Government Orders

I was not at the committee stage. I do not know if they were proposing an amendment that would legislate provinces to get on board. I think the government's approach, whether it is the municipalities or provinces in other areas, has been to lead, more so, with a carrot, as opposed to trying to legislate. I think we have been able to deliver.

One only needs to take a look at the health care, the child care and the CPP program, where the federal government has worked very clearly with provincial jurisdictions and territorial jurisdictions to bring results. I would think we will see some results that will hopefully be satisfactory even for opposition members.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I will let the House judge, since the Liberals made the judgment in committee. We were proposing to amend clause 15 of Bill C-42 to say the following:

The Director may, with the approval of the Minister, enter into an agreement or arrangement with a provincial corporate registry or with a provincial government department or agency that is responsible for corporate law in the province for the purpose of facilitating timely access to beneficial ownership information that could relate to the commission or potential commission of wrongdoing as described in paragraph (3)(b) [of the bill].

It was not an amendment that was going into provincial jurisdiction. It was an amendment saying that with co-operation of the province, if it were willing to do it, we could share information. Apparently, sharing information and getting a more effective registry was not something that the government wanted to see in this bill.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets for highlighting so many aspects of this bill. It begs the question of how serious this government is about fighting money laundering in Canada and controlling this. It damages so much of the Canadian economy and lives of Canadians.

• (2150)

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I will start with the positive. The positive is that there is a bill that will establish a federally incorporated beneficial owner registry for the 10% of companies in Canada that are federally registered. That is a good thing.

How serious is the government? The press release to do this was issued in 2017, six years ago. That is even slow by Liberal standards to get such a simple bill through. It was rushed through in two and a half months after it made a commitment six years ago. If it were treating this seriously, it would have given us a little bit more time in committee and worked with us to improve the bill, as other parties tried to do.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been outlined in the debate thus far that some provinces are further ahead than others. We have learned that the Province of Quebec has moved forward and enacted a registry.

[*Translation*]

This measure will help fight money laundering, which is a good thing.

[*English*]

As well, British Columbia has moved forward with implementing a registry. I believe almost all provinces in Canada, save Alberta, have moved forward.

I wonder if the member from Nova Scotia could outline what the federal government can do more effectively to include provincial registries in an interoperable format to ensure that every Canadian can access a public registry to combat money laundering and find information about corporations.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I would say it is positive if any province is at the point where it has put in place a beneficial ownership registry. It was a commitment six years ago. Some of them already have them. They beat the federal government to it.

In spite of the fact that the government rejected the amendment to get an agreement, it can still get an agreement. There is nothing that prevents the federal government from doing what we were trying to compel in law to get that agreement. It would make sure we share both the federal information with the provincial registries and the provincial registries with the federal registry.

The benefit of a federal registry is that people do not have to look in 11 different locations. They could look in one.

When this bill passes through the House, it should be a priority of the government to start the process to get those agreements and get that information in place.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to come back to something quite shocking the hon. member told the House. I know it is true because it happens on the B.C. coast too. We have a fleet separation in B.C. that is more extreme than what happens in Nova Scotia. The people who are fishing do not own their own business. They are essentially employees in a vast machine. In British Columbia, billionaire Jimmy Pattison controls the entire herring stock.

I want the hon. member to perhaps reflect on what it means that DFO is giving fishing licences when it does not actually know who owns the businesses that are depleting our fish stocks. People, not necessarily foreign corporations, are completely unconnected from care and concern for the health of biodiversity.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, the leader of the Green Party is bang on. This is why a beneficial registry goes beyond just the money laundering issue. It could be of great benefit to other things.

I do not know how one would enforce, as DFO policy, that there cannot be a monopoly or monopolistic tendencies if one does not know which companies own the licences. One does not even know whether or not a particular company has a monopolistic tendency.

Adjournment Proceedings

There is owner-operator fleet separation on the east coast, which has helped. That is good policy. It was enshrined in law. There are still some issues in making sure those companies are what they say they are and who the beneficial owner is.

On the west coast, there is no ability to do that. A survey was done by DFO on the licence-holders. As the hon. member noted, most of those licences are actually leased out to employees. The person who is holding a licence does not actually own it. Licences are owned by large corporations.

In lots of instances, there are companies from foreign countries, not necessarily all of which are open and democratic, which have acquired control of some of those resources too. They are now acquiring the resources of the fisheries and corporations on the provincial side. It is provincial. They are trying to get a whole of supply chain control of particular fish species.

This is a major problem on both coasts, but particularly so in British Columbia. It does not have the benefit of owner-operator fleet separation. It is something fishing groups are asking for. I believe it should be implemented on the west coast as well.

• (2155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech. There are certainly things that we do not agree on, but I would like to focus on what we do agree on. Obviously, we both agree that there must be co-operation between the federal government and the provinces, especially Quebec.

As members are aware, business ownership laws fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. There are things that work well. Every province has its own securities commission. In Quebec, we have the Autorité des marchés financiers. I want to reiterate that it is important that the federal government fully co-operate with the Government of Quebec to share information and to establish a framework or registry that will enable us to fight money laundering. We do not want the government to barge in and make decisions unilaterally, without coordinating those efforts. If we do not centralize the data, our efforts will be counterproductive and we will be duplicating work rather than working effectively.

I would like my colleague to share his thoughts on that. What practical action can the federal government take to work with Quebec and the provinces?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Madam Speaker, I do not think anyone on any side of the House who has been looking at this bill wants it done in a forceful way, where the federal government is coming in to try to force a province to do that. It was not the purpose of our amendments.

I understand Quebec is more advanced perhaps than a number of the other provinces on this. The way to do that is through an inter-operability agreement between the federal government and provincial government about what they are both willing to share so our citizens can have access and information truly available and our police forces have an easily searchable database so they do not need

to go to lawyers and warn people when they are about to be investigated.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division or wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, the official opposition would like to request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 21, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. I believe you have received the proper advance notice and, if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at midnight.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have received notice from all recognized parties that they are in agreement with this request.

[*Translation*]

Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, homes in Nunavut are falling apart. Overcrowding is leading to a severe mental health crisis. Suicide completions in Nunavut are among the highest. The outbreaks of diseases like tuberculosis are continuing to rise. Recently, another community was announced as having another outbreak of tuberculosis cases.

Adjournment Proceedings

I have seen the terrible living conditions that many Nunavummit are forced to continue to endure. There are many homes with mould. The situation is so dire that many of our young people are leaving their families behind in order to escape. The housing crisis has existed for years in Nunavut. Nunavut will continue to need sustainable long-term investments if any improvements are to happen. The government continues to apply a double standard to indigenous peoples by chronically underfunding housing for them. We have known for years how extremely serious the situation is, yet budget 2022 allocated only \$60 million over two years to the Government of Nunavut. There was no commitment to funding for Nunavut in this year's budget.

Since the Prime Minister took office in 2015, just over \$2 billion has been invested into indigenous housing Canada-wide. The Assembly of First Nations estimates that what is needed to close the gap is about \$40 billion to \$60 billion, a gap that I would like to remind the government it committed to closing by 2030. The funding for the urban, rural and northern housing initiative is a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that Nunavut and the two other territories will get housing allocations under the initiative.

As public governments that serve both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, the northern territorial governments may have difficulty accessing funds under the for indigenous, by indigenous housing fund. The people in my riding cannot wait any longer. I was told by people in Talurjuaq, for example, that they have a resident who lives in a tent because there is no housing available. I was told that in Kugaaruk, a suicide was completed right after a woman was told she would not get a house that year. In Qikiqtarjuaq, there are five families living in one unit. The people in my riding cannot wait any longer.

My question for the government is simple: Knowing all of this, what is the plan to address the urgent unmet housing needs for Nunavut and the territories?

● (2200)

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge that I am speaking from the traditional territory of the Algonquin and Anishinabe peoples.

Safe and affordable housing provides the safety and security that families need to learn, live and play. Indigenous peoples are more likely to experience poor housing conditions and overcrowding than the general population. This is unacceptable.

Over the past year and a half, I have visited communities throughout the country, especially in the north and Nunavut, and met with families who are struggling to find decent and affordable housing, but there are success stories too in communities that are using new investments to build housing that matches the needs of their communities.

Our government has been hard at work to ensure that indigenous peoples have the same access to safe and secure housing as other Canadians. Since 2015, the government has committed more than \$7 billion in funding for first nations, Inuit and Métis housing. We have now built or renovated nine houses for every one house

built under the Stephen Harper Conservative government and we have fixed the gap left by the previous government by investing in off-reserve urban, rural and northern housing, which received zero funding from the Conservatives.

In budget 2023, we provided investments to improve housing for indigenous peoples living in urban, rural and northern areas. We are investing \$4 billion over seven years, starting in 2024-25, to implement a co-developed urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy.

In last year's budget, the government invested an additional \$4.3 billion to support housing in first nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities. The funding includes \$2.4 billion over five years to support first nations housing on reserve, \$565 million over five years to support housing in self-governing and modern treaty holder first nations communities, \$845 million over seven years to support housing in Inuit communities and \$190 million over seven years for housing in Métis communities. The 2022 budget also included \$300 million for urban, rural and northern housing.

Earlier this month, the member for Nunavut joined the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada and others to announce the transfer of \$287.1 million for an indigenous, by indigenous approach to fund housing projects in urban, rural and northern settings, a historic change driven by a commitment to self-determination. We are starting to see some results. Census 2021 data shows that, since 2016, the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous populations living in crowded housing declined by 1.7%.

As members can see, the government has been taking concrete action to work with partners and improve the housing situation for indigenous people across this great nation.

● (2205)

Ms. Lori Idlout: Uqaqtittiji, unfortunately, the member did not answer my question because I did ask about funding for territorial governments. As he said correctly, I was at the announcement for NICHU.

I will say this again. According to the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, more than 50% of Inuit live in housing that is overcrowded or needs repairs. This is just 8.3% for the rest of the population in Canada. This continues to be such an injustice. The government has invested \$1.3 billion since 2016, less than half of what would be required to meet their own housing objectives.

When will the government commit to providing direct, long-term and predictable funding for the territorial governments so that they can build the housing they deserve?

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, I think I did answer the question. I was very explicit about the numbers that we have invested over the past few years and will be investing in the upcoming years.

I do agree with the hon. member that for far too long indigenous peoples in Canada have suffered from inadequate housing. That is why, as I mentioned earlier, the government has been working with first nations, Inuit and Métis to come up with practical solutions to meet their needs. We have co-developed strategies as well as policies and we have worked together to implement them.

We are working with indigenous partners to understand what will work best for communities. We have not imposed a top-down, made-in-Ottawa solution to go with indigenous housing problems. It is the opposite, from the bottom up. We are seeing results. We are seeing improvements that are being made across the country.

We know there is much more work to do and that work is under way. Having safe housing is the foundation for everyone and we are committed to making this a reality for indigenous peoples across this country.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, we are here this evening to debate the immensely important matter of overt and subtle racism at IRCC offices abroad.

I asked the minister on June 9 to confirm or deny if Canada is running an apartheid-era, visa selection process in South Africa. Unfortunately, the government's response has left me with more questions than answers.

Canadians are rightfully proud of our contribution to helping to end apartheid. The fact that Canadian immigration officers could be perpetuating apartheid in our visa selection processes today is appalling.

It bears reiterating some key facts from my question, including how the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration tabled a report in May 2022 that noted overt and subtle racism at its offices abroad, especially at posts where visa decisions were delegated to locally engaged staff, such as in South Africa. It came to my attention that an unofficial filter system has been incorporated in that country, whereby white, local staff are overwhelmingly refusing visa applications from predominantly Black South Africans. This is shameful.

It has real impacts on real people. This evening, I want to read into the record stories that I have been given permission to share to put a face to the travesty of the government's failure to address this systemic racism.

These are stories that have been shared with me by regulated Canadian immigration consultants who have helped countless applicants navigate Canada's immigration system. For the purposes of protecting their clients, some of whom have had to reapply, as well as the consultants' own livelihoods, we have taken the cautionary step of anonymizing identities.

I want to tell members about Jane Smith, a Black South African mother who sought a visitor visa so that she could be by her daughter's side, who had fallen ill and was rushed to the emergency

room. During the most traumatic period in their family's life, no one at the local office seemed to care. Emails and phone calls were unanswered. A decision was only rendered four months later. It was much too late, but fortunately, Jane's daughter recovered.

The fact remains that a mother was prevented from being by her child's side. Perhaps, these human consequences do not matter as much. Instead, let us consider how the government's inaction to address racism is costing our country real dollars.

Jessica Smith and her family were planning on vacationing in the United States. She walked into the U.S. embassy in Johannesburg and received her visa in 48 hours, just two days. However, from us, for three months, she heard nothing back and ended up cancelling over a week's worth of flights, hotel bookings, and theatre and other activities, depriving our economy of thousands of tourism dollars.

In fact, one regulated Canadian immigration consultant told me about another family that initially planned on visiting both the U.S. and Canada, but they did not even bother with us. The situation is so bad that Canada has now developed a reputation where people do not even bother applying.

There are also direct consequences for Canadians, including talent and, in the example I will share, for our health care system, which continues to be under strain.

Dr. Joe Smith is a Black surgeon who received a job offer from a provincial regional health authority to join its operating team in an underserved area and relieve its long backlog.

Despite the extensive work and references from the Canadian provincial health authority, somehow his file was deemed incomplete, and they were not even afforded a chance to answer, which is something that is always afforded to white doctors. Why?

Can my colleague confirm or deny if Canada is running an apartheid-era, visa-selection process?

● (2210)

Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York for raising this important issue.

The IRCC takes the integrity of Canada's immigration system and the experiences of clients extremely seriously. Our government continues to work diligently on our anti-racism strategy as well as the action plan, both at home as well as abroad, and remains steadfast in its commitment to a fair and non-discriminatory application of immigration procedures.

Adjournment Proceedings

Since the hon. member referenced South Africa in his claim, I would like to point out that the IRCC investigated selection practices at its offices in Pretoria, South Africa. It was determined that filtering applications by race could not happen, given all the protocols that are currently in place.

To start with, IRCC does not collect information on the race of applicants. Next, South Africa's immigration caseload goes through the same global triage intake process as all of the caseloads from all of the countries in order to assess eligibility as well as risk. The department also shifted to electronic submissions during the pandemic, and as such, there are no active paper files within the IRCC offices abroad, other than a small number of applications pending from before the pandemic.

Finally, South Africa's caseload is reviewed by a team of locally engaged staff from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, who work on a rotation system. They are assigned different tasks and applications every week. The teams are also rotated every three months.

Decisions on applications are not made solely by locally engaged staff, but rather by a diverse team made up of local staff from all backgrounds, officials in Canada and temporary-duty decision-makers. Team members also rotate in and out on a system managed by a Canada-based official. These protocols are in place to ensure a work environment that promotes not only continuous learning and engagement but also maximum oversight and minimal risk of systemic discrimination.

IRCC offices abroad take anti-racism very seriously. The IRCC staff in Pretoria complete a training program on inclusion and diversity, with a specific focus on their clientele. It was completed in April of this year, and we are going to continue to do the same.

I want to assure Canadians that while we acknowledge the difficult reality that systemic racism exists around the world, IRCC has made every effort to confront and overcome it in its procedures and its staffing. IRCC has an obligation to clients, to employees and to everyone it serves globally to ensure that it is doing all it can to prevent discrimination and promote equity. As a government committed to combatting racism both at home and abroad, we will always look for opportunities to do more.

● (2215)

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. I always appreciate that he has always been professional

and respectful. Not everyone necessarily always is; sometimes people are a bit too partisan.

However, I will say that I find it troubling that data is not being collected, because one of the things on which the government has done a good job is its gender-based analysis training. The GBA+ provides a framework with which folks are able to ultimately understand and apply that equity lens throughout their analysis of policy and so on. I am going to encourage my colleague to bring it back to the government to actually collect data. If the government members looked at their data, they would have highlighted this issue much sooner and much more quickly.

I was intentionally not bringing up the Pretoria office. It speaks to the fact that this was a known issue that I did not even have to bring it up, but that my colleague did. I hope that if the officials actually collect data they will see—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, once again I want to thank the member for bringing up this issue. I respect his comments very much and I thank him for that.

The IRCC thoroughly investigated its South Africa office and determined that filtering applications by race could not happen, given the protocols, as I said earlier, that are in place. First, the IRCC does not collect information on the race of applicants. South Africa's caseload goes through our standard global intake process to assess eligibility and risk. We shifted to electronic submissions during the pandemic, so, as I said earlier, there are no new paper applications coming in and the offices have no means by which to filter out digital applications.

As in every other processing office abroad, South Africa's caseload is reviewed by local staff from different racial and ethnic backgrounds who work on a rotation system. Their decisions are made in tandem with Canada-based officials.

Finally, the work to ensure that processes are fair for all is something that we as a government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:17 p.m.)

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