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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 26, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE
STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Financialization of Housing”.

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

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, entitled “National Strategy for Veterans Employment”.

[*Translation*]

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

I would like to thank all the team members and staff who work to support the committee. I would especially like to congratulate the analyst because, in the course of this study, we received 36 witnesses, as well as briefs, and he did an outstanding job. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated staff in Canada's House of Commons.

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[*English*]

WASTED FOOD REDUCTION AND RECOVERY ACT

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-360, An Act to establish a national strategy to reduce the amount of wasted food in Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, the wasted food reduction and recovery act was inspired by Becky Greenlees, Nelson, the Tri City Moms Group and the Immigrant Link Centre Society, all of whom continue to rescue food and feed families in Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Food is wasted at alarming rates in Canada. Over 50 million tonnes of food is wasted every year. It does not have to be this way. Community groups like Second Harvest have the solutions, and the government needs to act.

As food prices continue to climb and more Canadians are facing food insecurity, we must reduce the amount of good, healthy food that is wasted. Over 500,000 children are relying on food banks every month, while landfills fill up with perfectly good food.

Wasted food is harmful to people and the environment. The government has allowed this problem to go unchecked and has allowed private companies to use marketing tactics, like arbitrary best before dates, to increase their profits while leaving Canadians hungry.

I ask the government to adopt this bill as its own and help stop wasted food.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, presented on Monday, May 2, be concurred in.

I will be sharing my time.

It is a pleasure for me to speak today to this important third report of the transport committee. It is a report with one recommendation: “That the Government of Canada abolish the Canada Infrastructure Bank.” I was quite pleased to see that this recommendation was endorsed by the majority of the committee. I hope, therefore, that as a result of today's debate, this report will be concurred in and we will have a decision by the House to call for the abolition of the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

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This underlines the reverse Midas touch the Prime Minister has. Everyone has heard of the Midas touch from the old myth where there was a king and everything he touched turned into gold. That would have been great for his national economy, although it might have led to inflation given the increase in the supply of gold. What we have with the Prime Minister, though, is a reverse Midas touch: Everything he touches turns into complete disaster.

It would be of mythical proportions if it were not demonstrable in the clear record of the government and the Prime Minister. After eight years, the Liberal-NDP government truly has the Midas touch, although I can guess, from the fact that the majority endorsed this report, that even the NDP may have agreed to this recommendation to abolish the Canada Infrastructure Bank. I say, "*et tu Brute*". It is a majority recommendation from the committee.

Let us talk about the record of the Infrastructure Bank, which the Liberals have been championing. It is projected to lose money every single year. It has not completed a single project, and according to Statistic Canada's definition of private sector investment, it has attracted no private sector investment. That is a pretty clear indictment of the immense failure we have seen at this so-called Infrastructure Bank, which has not completed any infrastructure projects.

Only the Prime Minister could lose money running a bank. It is a reverse Midas touch indeed. We could talk about ethics in government. We could talk about our economic situation. We could talk about our foreign policy reputation. We could talk about the situation of crime, drugs and disorder. It is clear that the Prime Minister has a whopping, massive record of failures and of not delivering on the things Canadians want.

This is why more and more Canadians are responding to the call for a common-sense plan. After eight years, people have had enough of the NDP-Liberal government's record of failures. They are looking for a common-sense Conservative alternative that would put the interests of Canadians first: their homes, their jobs, their paycheques and their well-being.

I want to address one specific aspect of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, and that is the close relationship between the government and McKinsey and how that relationship was part of the story of the creation of this so-called bank.

It has been clear from the beginning that the government has had a close and cozy relationship with the consulting company McKinsey. McKinsey has gotten over \$100 million in contracts from the government. While the public service has grown, there has been a significant expansion in outsourcing, and McKinsey has been a big part of that.

The government has a close relationship with McKinsey in spite of the role that McKinsey played in advising Purdue Pharma on how to fuel the opioid crisis and in spite of the fact that McKinsey advised the Saudi government, giving it information about dissidents, with that information leading to the subsequent targeting of these dissidents. We have spoken in the House before at great length about the, frankly, innumerable ethical and moral failures of McKinsey.

• (1010)

However, what happened in this context in particular? Dominic Barton, who is the former managing partner at McKinsey, was an adviser to the government and led something called the Prime Minister's growth council at the same time as McKinsey was pitching its products to the government. According to his testimony, he was not directly involved in the pitching process, but one of the people working within McKinsey was involved in supplying analysts for Canada's growth council at the same time as that person was involved in pitching to the government for Government of Canada contracts and business. They were quite successful in getting this business from the government. This was an instance of a cozy relationship between a consulting firm and the government and a situation in which that consulting firm was able to do a great deal of business.

Dominic Barton was subsequently made ambassador to China, and he was asked, by a member of the government at the previous meeting of the transport committee, this question: "As ambassador, did you misuse your position to lobby for business, somehow, for a company with which you were no longer associated and from which you didn't profit?" Dominic Barton replied, "There were extremely strict rules and protocols put in place. Basically, it was excommunicado. There were very strict processes and protocols followed. If anything ever came in, it went to the deputy head of mission or the deputy."

That was a very interesting claim, which was subsequently contradicted by emails that were made public that revealed something quite different. There were discussions. I am trying to find the emails in front of me, and I will get to them if members want specific citations during questions and comments. Subsequently, there was an email exchange, and we probed this issue at another meeting of the transport committee. The email exchange was specifically looking at the availability of Mr. Barton, while he was the ambassador to China, to participate in a call related to the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

It was evident from those emails that there were conversations about the Infrastructure Bank that, in fact, Dominic Barton was involved in. The Conservatives sought to hold Dominic Barton accountable for this at committee and asked how he was no longer with McKinsey, ostensibly, but had these close relationships with all these folks who work for McKinsey, how people who had worked for McKinsey ended up in influential roles within the Infrastructure Bank and how he, as ambassador to China working for the government, was still involved in these kinds of calls.

At one point it was referenced in one of those emails that this was a very sensitive matter, and it is no surprise that it was a sensitive matter. It was a very sensitive matter because people did not want it to come out that there was this very close relationship between the government and McKinsey. I believe the closeness of that relationship played a significant role in the creation of the Infrastructure Bank, which subsequently engaged many people who work or had previously worked for McKinsey. It was very beneficial for McKinsey.

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McKinsey did well out of this, but it was not beneficial for Canadians to have a so-called Infrastructure Bank that, in the end, is losing money every year, has not completed a single project and has attracted no private sector investment. The so-called Infrastructure Bank is delivering for Liberal insiders, like McKinsey, but it is not delivering for Canadians. We can talk about the many failures of the government to deliver results for Canadians, but I think what is underlining that failure to deliver results is that the Liberals are working hard to deliver for someone else. That is, they are working hard to deliver for well-connected insiders.

While I am on my feet, I should mention that today at the government operations committee we have hearings on another important ongoing Liberal scandal. This is the “ArriveSCAM” issue: \$54 million was spent on an app that was really glitchy and did not work properly, and well-connected middlemen who did no IT work were collecting a significant amount of money, over \$11 million, simply to receive and subcontract that work out. The Conservatives will be fighting to get to the bottom of what happened with “ArriveSCAM”. We also saw in the news today that there is new information: A \$9-million contract was given to GC Strategies. These well-connected Liberal insiders have been cashing in, it seems, on multiple contracts.

Again, the Liberals and the Liberal-NDP government in general are trying to assist well-connected insiders, but they are failing to deliver for Canadians. We need a new government, a common-sense alternative, that would stand up for the best interests of the Canadian people.

• (1015)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when it comes to dealing with public policy, the Conservatives have demonstrated one thing: They are a very high-risk party. If we want to talk about being reckless, all we need to do is take a look at their attitudes toward excellent programs.

The member is critical of the Canada Infrastructure Bank. What would the Conservative Party do? It would get rid of the infrastructure bank completely. Think of the billions of dollars—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, like a bunch of seals, they are all clapping as one, worshipping the fact that they want to get rid of the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Do they not realize what the Canada Infrastructure Bank has delivered for Canadians in terms of jobs thus far and billions of dollars in investment?

My question is: Can the member be very specific as to why the Conservative Party, in a reckless way, wants to get rid of the Canada Infrastructure Bank? Can he explain that?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are members who seem to want to answer the question being asked, but they are not the members who should be responding. I would remind members that they need to keep thoughts or ideas to themselves.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for a response.

• (1020)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think my dear colleagues were inspired by references to Midas; they wanted to bring the Greek chorus phenomenon into Parliament. I welcome the affirmative lyrical support.

The member across the way is trying to characterize our position on the infrastructure bank as if we just woke up this morning and decided to do it. We are proposing to concur in a committee report that was the result of extensive study and that came out with a majority recommendation for the abolition of the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

I can only conclude that, if it was a majority of the committee, even the Liberals' coalition partners in the NDP, after hearing the evidence, agreed with this: A bank that is losing money every year, has not completed a single project and has attracted no private sector investment sounds like an institution that is not working very well.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, when it comes to infrastructure, there is a major underlying issue in the Canadian federation that we do not talk about, and that is the fiscal imbalance. The federal government has a much greater capacity for financial action than the provinces do, and yet the vast majority of infrastructure is a provincial responsibility.

Perhaps my colleague can tell me what he thinks, because the Conservative Party has said on many occasions that it is in favour of greater autonomy for the provinces. I believe that the money allocated to the Canada Infrastructure Bank should be transferred directly to the provinces, who know their infrastructure needs since they are directly connected to the communities.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this. Does he agree that the funds going to the Canada Infrastructure Bank should instead go to the provinces as tax points?

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, our position is, of course, that we are calling for the abolition of the Canada Infrastructure Bank. We believe very much in the principle of subsidiarity, that the federal government should work collaboratively with provinces and local governments.

We have also taken the position that part of the constructive work needs to include setting goals for the development of, for instance, new housing. The approach we have taken on addressing infrastructure gaps in housing is to tie infrastructure funding, especially at the local level, to municipalities' ability to deliver on critical goals around the construction and availability of new housing. We also want to give the flexibility to local governments to figure out the best way to do that. We want to work with them to establish goals and achieve results and to tie those federal investments to the results. I think that our approach to this is collaborative and effective, and it recognizes the competency of different jurisdictions.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague likes to talk about McKinsey, but under the Conservative government, we saw PricewaterhouseCoopers go from \$9.8 million to \$45 million in terms of outsourcing.

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We had Michael Wernick testify at the government operations committee. He cited that there was a direct correlation between the gutting of the public service and, later, the cost of outsourcing. He also highlighted that the cuts, when it came to training and leadership, had a serious impact on why the government went to outsourcing. New Democrats do not want to see outsourcing. We want to see those jobs remain in the public service.

The member talked about Dominic Barton. Does he believe that Dominic Barton was a closer friend with the current Prime Minister or Prime Minister Harper? I think it was the latter.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I want to say something very directly to the NDP member. At the government operations committee, we have requested documents related to the government's relationship with McKinsey. We want to insist on having all those documents.

Now the NDP member wants to look at outsourcing to other companies. I think this is legitimate, but if we do not have the support of the NDP to demand the documents on McKinsey, then what is the point of going on to look at other things? We need to be able to access the documents. Let us have the support of the NDP and insist on getting all documents related to McKinsey, and if they are not provided, challenge the issue appropriately. Then we can go on to look at other issues.

What is the point in asking for more documents from other companies if we have already set the precedent that we are not actually going to insist that those documents be delivered?

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is nice to speak on behalf of the residents of Calgary Centre for the first time in this Parliament. I really appreciate the fact that we have a speech here today on the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

When I first ran in Calgary Centre in 2019, this was one of the key items on the agenda about one of the boondoggles that the government is actually foisting upon Canadians here. When I say boondoggle, I mean that literally: There are billions of dollars going into a slush fund that does not actually meet a requirement that was necessary in the Canadian economy at that point in time. I say that because I worked in the finance industry, and there were all kinds of infrastructure funds across Canada. The thing about those infrastructure funds is that they invest in actual projects that make sense to invest in. There is a return of capital.

The thing about infrastructure funds is that the return of capital associated with infrastructure is much lower than it is with any other investment. Most infrastructure is in long-lived assets. There is a lot of security involved with it, so it is not going away any time soon. It usually has a strong revenue profile associated with that infrastructure, whatever it is, whether it be new rail opportunities or new service opportunities that serve Canadians. Every one has to meet a mark, and that mark, of course, is mathematical. It is finance. Meeting a cost to capital that is very low is not hard to do. That is why so many infrastructure funds had funds available for investing in infrastructure in Canada. What we did not have available was boondoggle funds.

The government saw the opportunity to say we need some boondoggle funds in infrastructure in Canada. Every infrastructure fund

in Canada said, "No, we don't. We don't need any more infrastructure. We're having enough difficulty finding good investment opportunities in infrastructure in Canada that we don't need another five billion bucks competing with us that is going to be slipping money under the table, frankly, to people on projects that don't make economic sense." There are a lot of projects in Canada that make economic sense for these infrastructure funds.

Now, the issue about competition here is very prevalent. We need to realize that all these infrastructure funds had previously been set up because so many funds and so many investors in Canada recognized that Canada had fallen behind on its infrastructure investments and needed more infrastructure. They have been stalled under the government for one reason: The government is not understanding what actual projects need to get developed in Canada. It is a problem. The government's response to the economic malaise it has created in the economy is just to put extra billions of dollars into this instrument into the Canadian economy that does not have to meet the test of actual economic performance. It is a way around it. It is called "sustainable finance".

My colleagues here all know that I spent a number of years, a couple of decades, in the finance industry. These things are mathematical at the end of the day. I noticed my colleague for Kingston and the Islands is over there winking at me because he always talks about finance, and I get to instruct him a lot.

The other point here, of course, is that all these things make sense. At the end of the day, sustainable finance is a way of playing games around where the return actually comes. The return does not come with these funds. It is a transfer of wealth from all these funds, from Canadians, into the pockets of insiders.

I can actually quote how many of these insiders are being paid in this boondoggle the Liberals have created. They have got insiders here. Despite the fact that they have hardly invested any money from this Canada Infrastructure Bank, they have collected in the last couple of years, 2020-21, almost \$7 million in bonuses. Every employee of this boondoggle investment infrastructure bank actually gets bonuses, despite the fact that, at one point in time here, they had one investment. They had one investment with the provincial infrastructure system in Quebec; it was layered in structure behind the actual pension fund in Quebec. If colleagues want to talk about how that is performing for the Canadian people, I can go into that as well.

Then, in 2021-22, again, we see \$7.7 million in bonuses to these Liberal insiders that have been appointed over there, transferring money from Canadians to their friends. It is a boondoggle of the highest order, investing in economic opportunities that do not exist and are not there. These are actually just ways of the government trying to paper over the fact that it has ruined the economy, so it will get some money being invested here into a sector where it no longer makes economic sense.

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• (1025)

I spoke earlier about this whole concept of sustainable finance. There is no such thing. There is finance; it has always been sustainable. The whole thing about math is that the numbers have to go around at the end of the day. I see my colleague from Kingston and the Islands shrugging, as if to say, “Who cares if the numbers go around?” Well, they do have to go around. It matters a lot, because somebody is paying the price. In this case, the people paying the price are the taxpayers of Canada, and they are paying it to Liberal insiders.

I say congratulations to those who are on the inside of that and making a good living. Regular Canadians have seen what has happened to the economy as a result of the government's actions, which have ruined the economy. Investment has been leaving this country in the hundreds of billions of dollars over the last eight years, a significant egress of capital.

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board does not even invest in Canada. It invests in foreign entities because it does not see the opportunity to invest in Canada. The organization of exporting and developing countries does not see the opportunity in Canada. It has Canada as the lowest-ranked growth country, out of its 40 members, over the next few decades. We are not talking about the next year or two. For the foreseeable future, Canada is seen as practically uninvestable, because of the government's policies.

I know it is a laughing matter for my colleagues across the way. It is not a laughing matter. Our entire economy depends on this. Being \$1.3 trillion in debt, doubling the national debt, is not conducive to an economy that works. We have to get back to making that economy work.

What did the government do this year? It doubled down on the Canada Infrastructure Bank, but that is not working, so it put \$15 billion into a new one: the Canada growth fund. It did this without much of a mandate and without it being passed. The government just said there was more money for another slush fund, which it needed to invest in projects that make no economic sense but make political sense for shovelling the money out the door a little more, collecting some friends and putting some money in everybody's pockets. It is all a circular economy, as they say, and it is a sustainable finance model. I suggest that it is sustainable for those stuffing money in their jeans.

For the rest of Canadians, it is not sustainable at all. It is a boondoggle. It is a way to make the government's friends rich at the expense of taxpayers. At the end of the day, Conservatives are here for Canadians, who pay their taxes and expect government to operate efficiently and effectively. Nothing of that order is happening here right now.

The opaque nature of every one of these funds and the investments they make is just obscene. There is no way we can continue on this course, with billions of dollars going into projects that the Liberals favour and have no foreseeable outcome at the end of the day. It is really just a way of spinning out and making Canadians more and more poor.

I will now refer to the concurrence report, because according to Yves Giroux, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, “despite the CIB's

goal of leveraging private investment, projects to date have been exclusively funded by federal, provincial and municipal levels of government.” He is a man whom I greatly respect and have spent a lot of time discussing finance with. Therefore, there is no leveraging going on, as was the concept and the whole goal of this. That is because nobody believes this infrastructure bank is going to do anything good at the end of the day. It is just going to put money into the pockets of insiders. That is a shame, because there is so much more we could be doing with taxpayers' funds. We could be putting money into the needs of Canadians, but we are not doing that right now. We are running massive deficits, and this is part of that.

When people ask me back home what I would cut if I were in government, one of the first things I talk about is the Canada Infrastructure Bank, because it is a boondoggle. I would get rid of the boondoggles, first and foremost, before having to start making real cuts. The government will eventually have to make real cuts. Conservatives will be ahead of them. We will be cutting the boondoggles out and getting us back to balance in the Canadian economy.

• (1030)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I hear members opposite saying, “Oh, here we go.” That is because they realize some facts are about to be dropped on their imaginary next three hours.

The member opposite spoke about a boondoggle, yet the Conservative infrastructure plan consisted of fake lakes and fake photo ops. He referred to the Canada Infrastructure Bank as not getting anything done. I would like to ask him specifically about a project in his home province of Alberta, which is going to create 143,000 new irrigated acres—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Jonquière on a point of order.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, the interpreter is having difficulties. I do not know if people nearby are talking, but the interpreter is having difficulty translating what the member is saying.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): When members are having side conversations or trying to participate when it is not their turn, it creates problems for the interpreters' hearing what the recognized speaker is saying.

The hon. member can wrap it up.

Routine Proceedings

• (1035)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, there is a project in Alberta that will create over 143,000 new acres of irrigated infrastructure to reduce floods. Does the member opposite believe that residents and farmers in Alberta should have their fields flooded, that they do not deserve infrastructure because the Conservatives would prefer to cancel it?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, it is good to hear that my colleague actually does pay attention to some of the developments happening outside her home province, including in my province of Alberta.

Irrigation, which first came up in the 1930s, was a way to open up the dust bowl, Palliser's Triangle, to make sure we had some irrigable land. The water that flows through the Rocky Mountain systems and all the way down actually gets stored. It was an inventive way of storing some of that water at that point in time. There has always been the opportunity to make sure there is economic progress. It has been made more viable, and if it were totally viable there would be infrastructure funds competing for it. What makes it more viable is the fact that agriculture is worth more because the government has punished farmers to the level where prices for crops have gone up.

Take a look at how that has affected Canadians at the food store. Canadians are paying far more for food because of the government's policies. Of course, we are going to need more food. We are going to need more of everything going forward, and it is going to cost about 10% more per year thanks to the government's inflationary policies.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, the sewer system in the city of Longueuil, in my riding, needs to be replaced. This is a major undertaking. Longueuil alone is looking at a bill of \$600 million.

The city also has big plans to electrify its public transit fleet, its buses. It wants to move forward with its plans, but they will also cost millions and millions of dollars. Then, of course, there is the housing crisis. Plans are in the works to build housing. Like everywhere else, we need housing too.

The Canada Infrastructure Bank has an enormous amount of money. If it is abolished, does my colleague agree that the money should be transferred to Quebec City? Cities are the creatures of Quebec City and the provinces. Quebec and the cities are the ones that know what their municipalities and their people need.

Does my colleague agree that all the money should be transferred to Quebec?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I read the Bloc Québécois' supplementary opinion, which says that this was a boondoggle.

It is something the federal government uses to dole out money and push the files it prioritizes in the province of Quebec. It is true, it is an economic instrument for the federal government. It is not something that is useful for balancing Canada's economy.

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member, in his intervention today, spoke about the CPP. Polls show that Albertans are overwhelmingly opposed to the plan by Danielle Smith to introduce the APP, the Alberta pension plan. We know that the leader of the official opposition has said he does not support the Alberta pension plan.

Albertans deserve to know how their members of Parliament stand on this. I do not support the Alberta pension plan. Could the member tell us whether he supports or does not support the Alberta pension plan?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, let me say very clearly that what I support is an independent pension plan for all Canadians, not the one the NDP keeps bringing to the floor of the House of Commons. It wants to manipulate at the political level what those pension plans invest in, which, frankly, would harm all Canadians in their retirement years. That is what is going to destroy the pensionability of Canadians, as opposed to what Albertans decide by themselves in a referendum about where they want their pension funds managed.

• (1040)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a bit of an issue, in the sense that there is so much I would like to be able to comment on in a very limited amount of time. I want to pick up on two points, the most recent being the pension question that the member was asked.

It took a while. Unlike the Prime Minister, who came out very clearly in regard to the CPP and how important it is to Canada, the Conservatives, a national party looking at the benefits for all Canadians through the CPP, took a while to realize that. The leader of the Conservative Party just recently came out and said that they support it, that they are going to get behind it.

The member now stands up and puts a black cloud over that. I do not know where the member stands on the issue. This is an Alberta MP who just finished talking about how they do not want the Infrastructure Bank, yet my colleague just brought up an issue that shows there are jobs being created in an area of irrigation. There was a late-show debate just last night during which one of his colleagues from the Prairies was saying how important irrigation is. They are so reckless. If one wants to talk about taking a risk, look at the Conservative Party today. It is all over the place on major policy issues.

I used to have what I called the Homer Simpson award when I was in the Manitoba legislature, because one often hears about some pretty stupid things. I am kind of inclined to give that award to someone very special—

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

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, the Speaker issued guidelines in the House. We are not to use mock names or be insulting in any way to other members of the House. I hope you would remind the member opposite of that.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would just say that if it is causing disorder in the House, I would ask members to please be very careful with the language that they are using.

The hon. member was also talking in general, not specifically about an individual. I also want to say that one cannot say indirectly what one cannot say directly. Please be careful. We want to keep the debate going and to make sure it is respectful.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, we need to look at what the Conservative Party is saying about the Canada Infrastructure Bank. We have now had two of its members say they want to abolish it. They are making it clear and reinforcing that fact. They believe that the Canada Infrastructure Bank is a bad idea.

Members are saying, “Yes, it is.” That is what I mean about their being so reckless when it comes to what the interests of Canadians really are. Do Conservatives have any idea that we are talking about 46 projects all over Canada? The government has committed just under \$10 billion, and the Conservatives are going to throw it away. They say it is garbage and it is not necessary.

Do members know that the \$9.7 billion has now accessed an additional \$20 billion from the private sector? That is an incredible amount of money. The Conservatives say there are no projects, or they will qualify it and say there are no projects that have been completed. When we spend billions of dollars on projects, they do not necessarily happen overnight, but there are 46 projects well under way, including projects in the home provinces of the two people who rose to speak on the concurrence report. The projects are going to make a huge difference, but the Conservatives want to get rid of the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

This goes back to Stephen Harper, who never really believed in investing in Canada's infrastructure, nowhere near to the same degree the government has. From day one, the government has been focused on Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, and on supporting individuals in need. Part of recognizing how we are going to do that is by investing in our economy through the creation of jobs, through the development of trade agreements and through bringing forward a higher standard for infrastructure spending. No government in the history of Canada has spent more money on infrastructure, because we recognize that to have a strong Canada, we need to invest in infrastructure.

With the billions of dollars we spent and invested in infrastructure, we also had an add-on with the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which the Conservatives across the way like to mock. They now say they want to abolish it completely. Even in my home province of Manitoba, there are infrastructure dollars from the bank going toward the Internet to modernize and to make sure that rural Manitoba is connected. On the one hand, the Conservatives are critical, saying we are not doing enough on rural connectivity, even though we are doing more than Harper did. Then, when it comes time to invest in the infrastructure, they are saying they do not want that infrastructure and they are going to cancel the Infrastructure Bank.

The Conservatives have no idea what they are talking about. It is almost as if they walk into their back room, talk to their leader, who gets a bright idea, and then make the decision that common sense says infrastructure is bad. Why is it bad? They need to explain that to me. We invest and see \$27 billion going toward Canada's infrastructure on projects that will have a profoundly positive impact, yet common sense, according to the Conservative ideology, says it is bad. That is why I was talking about the Homer Simpson award. It is incredible. I do not understand it.

When I first found out we were going to be talking about another concurrence report, the first thing that came across my mind was not necessarily to talk about the subject matter; it was to talk about “Here we go again with the Conservative Party's trying to filibuster legislation.”

• (1045)

It is legislation that is so critically important, yet they always use concurrence motions to prevent legislative debate. Let me give members an example. The day before yesterday we were talking about trade agreements. There is a lot of infrastructure necessary in Ukraine. It is a very important deal. It is infrastructure that Canada has a great deal of experience with, and it is part of that trade agreement.

Let us talk about the two days of solid hours of debate that takes place, something we all support, although maybe not. I should not say that. Do members remember when the member for Cumberland—Colchester said that Canada is taking advantage of Ukraine at a time of war and asked why we even have this piece of legislation? He even described it as being “woke legislation”.

This was after the President of Ukraine came to Canada to sign an agreement, which has so much power with economic ties and messaging on the war, and a huge part of it is dealing with infrastructure. I do not know why, but Conservatives are once again trying to be mischievous. On the one hand they say they support Ukraine, and then they do something like this. I asked if we could pass it by Christmas, and they waffle. Now we are on another piece of legislation, and they are using that tactic again.

When I came here I was not expecting to talk about the Infrastructure Bank, although I have a lot more to say on it. Rather, I was expecting to speak to legislation dealing with the Investment Canada Act, Bill C-34, which is very important. When we think of infrastructure, we have to recognize that it is so badly needed in many of our communities. Having the Infrastructure Bank is, at least in good part, meeting many of those demands and getting things to market.

Routine Proceedings

We are supposed to be talking about foreign investment coming into Canada today, a modernization of the act from 2009, because a lot has changed since then. We are supposed to be talking about ensuring that the minister has a national security review of the transactions that are taking place. Today, AI is something that is very serious. When we take that into consideration with international investment, I always thought Conservatives would be concerned about that. However, once again today we see, through the moving of this concurrence motion, that they are saying no. They are not being sensitive to issues such as technological advancements, AI and the impact it is having on international investments into Canada. Canada welcomes international investment, but we have to make sure that we have things in place to modernize the act, whether it is in respect to the minister or other processes, to protect the technology and our industries. That is what we are supposed to be talking about today.

Instead, Conservatives have brought forward a motion on the Infrastructure Bank. Given their position on the Infrastructure Bank, I hope that either the Bloc or New Democrats will bring forward an opposition day motion to seek clarification. I would like to see the leader of the Conservative Party backtrack on the issue of the Canada Infrastructure Bank. If he really believes in building a stronger or healthier Canada, this reckless policy of getting rid of the Canada Infrastructure Bank is the wrong way to go.

• (1050)

The Leader of the Opposition needs to understand that investments in infrastructure matter. I could go through the 46 projects there, even though the Conservatives want to spread inaccurate information. We can read what they have said in their speeches, just in the introduction. They tried to give the false impression that the Canada Infrastructure Bank is doing nothing, that there are no jobs because none of the projects are actually completed.

What about the hundreds, potentially thousands, of jobs, both direct and indirect, that are already in place, with people working today, because there are 46 projects under way? Some will be completed sooner than others. Some will make a huge difference for the environment.

I am thinking about the community of Brampton. A number of months ago, when I was looking at the Canada Infrastructure Bank, there was talk of an investment to electrify the public transit buses. I do not know exactly where that is today, but I can assure the House that it is making progress. That is not the only public transit in Canada that has accessed the Canada Infrastructure Bank, and that is a good thing.

I understand some members in the Conservative Party do not necessarily care about the electrification of vehicles. I suspect that includes buses. Rather, they are trying to play up the myth that we are going to see cars blowing up or catching on fire because we have too many electric vehicles, and it is such a small percentage overall of the population. It is that whole tin hat syndrome, which they tend to have.

It is something—

• (1055)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would say that, according to the new rules, we are not supposed to be name-calling. On it referring to a specific individual, there were two members opposite who raised the specific issue of cars on fire, which was raised by me. I did correct the record that the transportation statistics say that 3.5% of those vehicles—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate.

I would like to remind members to please be careful with the wording they are using in the House. It is best to try to make sure that the debate is respectful.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, if you listen back, I do not believe the Liberal member referred to the member wearing a tin hat. He talked about how these were “tin hat” scenarios. If the member identified herself as wearing a tin hat, that is her issue. However, the member did not refer to her as wearing a tin hat—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All sides of the House use certain words to describe situations or to describe parties. I would like to remind members that we have to be very careful to not describe individuals.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, again, according to the new guidelines, the member for Timmins—James Bay cannot do indirectly what he cannot do directly. I think that is what he attempted to do.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): When I was making that comment, I was making it for everyone. I want to remind members to please be respectful with their comments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I was here when members opposite spoke, and a member from Calgary, in reference to the Canada Infrastructure Bank, used the word “boondoggle”, saying it is nothing more than that. He also used the words “slush fund”, and he amplified those words. The member was very clear in what he believes.

The reason I raise that is that I really do not believe that the Conservative caucus as a whole is aware of the many investments that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has made. What the Conservatives are aware of is the political spin that is coming from their leader's office and the back room. On the political spin, there are a couple of words that they have needed to use in this debate: the Canada Infrastructure Bank is a bad thing, the Conservative Party would get rid of it, and the Canada Infrastructure Bank has not completed anything. Therefore, we get Conservative members standing up and believing what they have been told. There is a problem with that.

Members do not have to believe me directly. They can do a simple Google search of the Canada Infrastructure Bank and they will get a very good sense of its valuable role. Anyone who is going to be following the debate today on a Canada Infrastructure Bank can make sure that they consider doing a bit of research on their own. They would find that the Conservative Party is completely and absolutely out of touch on this issue. It makes no sense whatsoever.

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One of my colleagues provided me a sheet here, just to give members a bit of a sense of what there is. There are actually 11 projects dealing with public transit today. I made reference to one of them being in Brampton, and it is a significant project.

There are eight projects dealing with clean power. Let us think about the Darlington small module reactor. Darlington is a wonderful community in the province of Ontario. The website states that, at a cost of \$970 million, “Once built, the [small modular reactor] will reduce carbon emissions by an average of 740 kilotonnes annually between 2029 and 2050...The 300-megawatt SMR will provide enough electricity to power 300,000 homes.” I do not know exactly how many homes Winnipeg has, but I would suggest that would be close to half. That would be 300,000 homes being powered, and the Conservative Party says that the Canada Infrastructure Bank is doing nothing. This is just one project in a community.

I look to my colleagues and even members of the New Democratic Party and the Bloc. Before they position themselves in any way that would show any sort of support to the Conservative Party on this issue, would they please look at the projects that are there? This is an environmentally sound project that would be to the benefit of 300,000 homes, and in the long term, these are the types of projects. I made reference to the buses in Brampton because I remember seeing the video on it, and I was really impressed.

The point is that it does not take very much to get a very good sense of exactly what the Canada Infrastructure Bank is investing in. The bottom line is that we are talking about close to \$27 billion, most of which is not the Government of Canada's money.

* * *

• (1100)

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before continuing with questions and comments, it is my duty to inform the House that for the purposes and under the provisions of section 50 of the Parliament Act, the following members have been appointed members of the Board of Internal Economy, namely: the Hon. Karina Gould, in place of the Hon. Mark Holland, member of the King's Privy Council; the Hon. Steven MacKinnon, in place of the Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, member of the King's Privy Council; Mr. Mark Gerretsen, in place of the Hon. Steven MacKinnon, representative of the Liberal caucus.

We will continue with questions and comments with the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad that speech is finally over. That particular member made reference to a Homer Simpson award. Homer Simpson would at least admit he has made a mistake by saying “D'oh!”

This particular Prime Minister and that member who supports him go rake-walking almost every day, whether it be on foreign policy or on the economy. They smack into a rake and instead of saying “D'oh!” and asking what they should be doing differently, they just continue on. The Infrastructure Bank was created in 2017. The Liberals got rid of a very useful P3 Crown corporation. That took \$35 billion away from municipalities.

Will the member finally admit that the only thing the Infrastructure Bank has given is bonuses to its executives consecutively? There has been zero transparency, and the transportation committee has said in the majority opinion that it should be abolished.

Will the member admit to having a “D'oh” moment and give himself a Homer Simpson award?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We are going back and forth, and I have had individuals come up to the chair as well, so I just want to ask if we can be respectful during the debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, did the member actually listen to anything I said in regard to what it is the Canada Infrastructure Bank has done?

I did make a mistake. I could have actually modernized my comments. I was saying there were 46 projects. I understand it is actually 48 projects. I said it was a total of \$27 billion. It is actually \$28 billion.

It is beyond me. I do not understand why members of the Conservative Party who have already spoken to this issue are being so reckless. It makes no sense at all. They can look for themselves on Google at what it is the Infrastructure Bank is reporting as projects that are well under way that are going to be completed. I do not understand why the Conservative Party is so against infrastructure investment. It makes no sense.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I love the member for Winnipeg North's sense of humour, and I enjoyed his presentation on the Homer Simpson Awards. I could name a clear winner of the Homer Simpson Award. I know the winner of all winners. In fact, I think the award should be shared.

We put \$30 billion into a pipeline infrastructure project. The member was telling us earlier that the Conservatives are irresponsible, that they are going to deprive us of \$10 billion in infrastructure investment. We have collectively invested \$30 billion in a pipeline. If that does not deserve a Homer Simpson award, what does?

I would like to amicably ask my colleague whether he agrees that Quebec would be better served if infrastructure funds were transferred directly to the provincial government so it could manage that money.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the biggest challenge I have with my friends in the Bloc is it does not necessarily matter what program is out there, they prefer to see the Canadian government as an ATM to hand over money to the provinces, and there is no sense of accountability. That is the kind of sense that I get. It does not matter. Even when we were talking about housing, it is, “Hand over the money.” When we talk about health care, it is, “Hand over the money.” When we talk about infrastructure now, it is, “Hand over the money.”

I believe that Ottawa does have a strong national leadership role to play on a wide spectrum of issues. That is the expectation Canadians have. I believe that as a government we are delivering on those expectations in the best way we can.

[Translation]

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must inform the hon. member for Jonquière that he had a chance to ask a question, so if he has more he wants to say, he will have to wait his turn.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, there are \$133 billion of investments that went into the United States last year from Biden's Inflation Reduction Act and commitment on the environment.

Our workers and our environment are getting a one-two punch. One is from the Liberals, who have made lots of promises on these investment tax credits. They promised them over a year ago. They are nowhere to be seen. Investment dollars are moving south.

The other punch is coming from Conservative ideology. Danielle Smith, who chased out \$33 billion in clean tech, turned Alberta into a clean-tech wasteland. We have the Conservatives blocking every effort to get the sustainable jobs legislation, and we have their MPs from the 401 corridor ridiculing the \$7-billion investment by Volkswagen and \$7 billion by Stellantis.

We need to send certainty to international markets that we are ready to be there and play a role, yet without the tax credits and without an environment to make it happen, that investment money is going elsewhere.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member raises a concern that a good number of members have. I can assure members, in terms of the Liberal caucus as whole, that we want to be able to ensure that we are getting those good-quality middle-class jobs in renewable energies.

There has been a very strong statement over the last number of months that Canada is prepared to lead the world when it comes to electric batteries. That is one of the reasons we saw the huge investments in regard to electric battery production. It is more than just at the Volkswagen facility. I believe that the footprint of that Volkswagen facility is going to be like 200 football fields. It will be the largest manufacturing plant, from what I understand, in the country.

We take it very seriously in terms of how it is we can capture those renewable jobs, those green jobs, well into the future. The United States is also aggressively looking for those jobs, so we have to be in a position to push hard.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I will start by saying that I agree with the member for Winnipeg North insofar as his comments with respect to needing to go faster and further on the climate crisis are concerned, and it is not just he and I. The UN Secretary-General said that our planet “is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible” and that the “global climate fight will be won or lost in this crucial decade on our watch.”

To the substance of the report, the member will note in the report that this is a \$35-billion Infrastructure Bank, and several witnesses called out their concerns with the lack of efficiency in getting funds out. I will cite Heather Whiteside, an associate professor from the University of Waterloo, who said, “CIB hasn't done much.” At the time, over half of the projects announced were in the MOU stage. Dylan Penner from the Council of Canadians told the committee that he was concerned with the CIB's delays as well with respect to action on the climate crisis.

What would the member for Winnipeg North have to say in response to the concerns of these non-partisan witnesses?

• (1110)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, again, I really encourage members to take a look at the types of programs that are there and the progress that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has actually made. For example, when it comes to green infrastructure, it has 17 projects that have been approved and are well under way in terms of development. When we talk about clean power, there are eight projects, and that is just through the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

There are numerous programs over and above what the government has initiated both through budgetary and legislative means to encourage the development of green industries, including the Atlantic accord and working with provinces to make a difference, which is something, again, that the Conservatives are wanting to filibuster, but that is neither here nor there right now.

At the end of the day, we continue to move forward both from a legislative point of view and with organizations that are arm's length, like the Canada Infrastructure Bank, in expectation that we are moving towards what we committed to, net zero.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North was basically talking about how nice the bureaucratic structure of the investment bank is. He gave us a bunch of poetry about how beautiful the bank is without giving any evidence on how productive the results of these investments are and how much Canada has benefited from the bank, which was supposed to deliver investments and results rather than be a structure that is really doing nothing.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the simplest way of putting it is to look at it from the point of view of the just under \$28 billion that is going to be going through the Canada Infrastructure Bank when we factor in both private and public dollars coming from Ottawa, which is almost two to one. We almost have one dollar coming from Ottawa versus two dollars coming from other sources. Those other sources would not be investing if they did not believe that the Canada Infrastructure Bank, and the 48 projects that are out there, were not worth their while investing in.

I think that speaks more than any member of the Conservative Party could in terms of their criticism.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, today we are debating the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities' report on the Canada Infrastructure Bank. I am actually surprised that we are debating this today, because the committee released its report on the Canada Infrastructure Bank in May 2022, and here it is, fall 2023. It was tabled quite a while ago, and we had the opportunity to debate it well before now.

That said, there may be one thing worth talking about, and that is the recommendation in the report. That may be one of the reasons the Conservatives wanted to have this debate. In many cases, committees produce reports, study issues and make a number of recommendations. In this case, the report on the Canada Infrastructure Bank contained a single recommendation.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that the Liberal member for Winnipeg North, who spoke before me and who speaks very regularly in the House, does not seem to have bothered to read the committee's report before giving his speech. He said that the Conservatives were against it, and he is right. However, he also said that the other parties should listen to him before taking a position. Perhaps he did not know that the other parties had already taken a position. If there was a committee report, it is because the parties took a position. If there were any recommendations from the committee, it is because the various parties took a position on this issue.

What I can say is that we produced a strong majority report and that the majority agreed on the only recommendation, which was to abolish the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Votes are secret; they are held in camera. How could we get a majority if the government disagreed? It is probably because all the other parties voted in favour of the recommendation. When the report was produced, everyone agreed that it was necessary to abolish the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

To gain a better understanding of what the Canada Infrastructure Bank is and of its *raison d'être* from the Quebec perspective, we looked at what cities, provinces and the federal government own, respectively, in terms of infrastructure in Canada. We wondered what role the federal government plays when it comes to infrastructure. In short, 98% of infrastructure does not belong to the federal government. Only 2% of infrastructure belongs to the federal level.

Why, then, is the federal government getting involved in matters of infrastructure? There is a fundamental problem here.

Some \$35 billion has been invested in the bank, but it is not up to the federal government to decide or to dictate to cities and provinces how they should manage their infrastructure, especially since it owns only 2% of infrastructure. It is our cities and our governments, including the Quebec government, that are in charge of infrastructure, so that is where the money should be going. Because of this basic principle, we thought it made no sense to support a federal infrastructure bank, which is ultimately a blatant intrusion in areas of jurisdiction that are not its own.

Nearly all of the witnesses were very critical of the infrastructure bank. The Liberal member who spoke earlier may not be aware of this, but I did not hear many witnesses praising the Canada Infrastructure Bank. In fact, I cannot name even one.

Perhaps the member knows this, because he has been in politics for several years now, but I want to mention that the Canada Infrastructure Bank was part of the Liberals' 2015 election platform. The Liberals could therefore say that they ran for election and put in place what was in their platform. I would like to take that one step further, however, and specify that the infrastructure bank that was put in place and the infrastructure bank that was in their election platform are a bit different.

On page 15 of the 2015 platform, it says that the Canada Infrastructure Bank would provide municipalities with lower interest rates on loans related to the construction of infrastructure and housing. That is interesting because we are talking about the housing crisis right now. However, we would be searching for a long time to find the word "housing" in the documents of today's infrastructure bank, because it is not there. As for the municipalities, the infrastructure bank also does not finance municipal projects at low rates. The Canada Infrastructure Bank's direction has changed over time.

• (1115)

After it took office, the Liberal government decided to set up the Advisory Council on Economic Growth to provide guidance on how to generate more economic growth in Canada. The advisory council was chaired by none other than Dominic Barton, who is known to be a close friend of the Prime Minister. We know that the Prime Minister likes to appoint friends to key posts, as we saw when he endorsed his buddies from WE Charity. I will come back to that later.

During his career, Mr. Barton has also held other positions. It is worth mentioning that he was head of McKinsey. It is also worth mentioning that the Advisory Council on Economic Growth looked into the idea of an infrastructure bank. In fact, that was one of its main recommendations in its first report.

Routine Proceedings

Let us talk a little more about how the advisory council saw the infrastructure bank. I mentioned that Mr. Barton was chair of the Advisory Council on Economic Growth and that he also headed up McKinsey. I should also note that Mr. Barton surrounded himself with several people, including Michael Sabia, who would later go on to play a role at the infrastructure bank.

A board needs a secretariat, people to do the real work, to take notes and keep things running. However, this particular secretariat was not made up of federal officials. It was McKinsey that provided the employees to work on the advisory council's files on a volunteer basis. It was the McKinsey employees who supplied the discussion papers, who took notes on the discussions and who kept the secretariat running.

In committee, Mr. Sabia told us this about the role of the secretariat led by the McKinsey employees:

[McKinsey] essentially act[s] as a secretariat, on a volunteer basis. The concepts and suggestions came from the board members. As you know, an advisory board needs a secretariat, and McKinsey played that role. So they have been very involved in our reports and our deliberations.

Let us not forget that the McKinsey people were working on a volunteer basis. When he came to testify in committee, I asked Mr. Barton whether these people were volunteering for the government or for McKinsey. I asked him whether these people were paid. He said that they were paid by McKinsey, not by the federal government. However, the report was for the federal government. At the end of the day, they were offering pro bono services while being funded by McKinsey.

Was that work truly pro bono? Could it really be argued that McKinsey had no interest in the matter? For example, did it not have an influence over the direction the government took in terms of future economic growth?

The advisory council was designed to advise the government on economic growth, and it was McKinsey's people who had an opportunity to exert their influence. That is my conclusion, because when looking at the now notorious first report advocating for a Canadian infrastructure development bank, it is clear that they are no longer advocating for the 2015 version of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, but rather an infrastructure bank that takes public money and uses it to benefit the private sector, large multinationals and investment funds. They want us to bring the infrastructure projects to them. They say they will finance them. Basically, they want these big funds to participate so their money is poured into our infrastructure.

Clearly this idea has evolved quite a bit from the original one. It is interesting to see this change of direction. Whether we like it or not, the McKinsey people sort of steered the advisory council in that direction. Could it be that the McKinsey employees knew people who got contracts or money as a result? Was it their area of expertise? I think a lot of people already know the answer to that question.

Practically the only difference I saw between the version promoted by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth and the Government of Canada's version was \$5 billion. The Advisory Council on Economic Growth recommended an infrastructure bank funded with \$40 billion, whereas the government created one funded with \$35 billion. Otherwise, they are almost identical.

Led by Mr. Barton, what the Advisory Council on Economic Growth proposed was quickly implemented. In fact, about a month after that was tabled, we were already reading federal government documents that referred to a future infrastructure bank created roughly in the image of the one proposed by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth. Global Affairs Canada specifically talked about it at the Long-Term Investment Summit.

• (1120)

Was this decision made in the best interest of the public? I do not know. What I do know is that the Canada Infrastructure Bank was a disaster. The Conservatives are talking about it today.

The CIB was founded in 2017 and, in 2020, there were virtually no projects in existence. It had no idea where it was headed. It had a hard time recruiting employees. The board of directors was a shambles. No one there spoke French. It was a madhouse. They did not know what to do with it. The CIB was given \$35 billion, but they had no direction.

In a panic, they called up Dominic Barton. As mentioned earlier, he had worked on the Advisory Council on Economic Growth with Michael Sabia. Mr. Sabia was then recruited to become chair of the CIB.

In committee, I asked Mr. Sabia how he was recruited, who recruited him, whether he sent in his CV, how this all came about. He told me that he received a phone call from Bill Morneau. I just about fell over. We are told that the CIB is not political, but it was the Minister of Finance who called him directly to tell him that he had a job for him and asked him if he would accept it. Worse yet, it was not even his department. The CIB is not the responsibility of the Department of Finance. It is the responsibility of the Department of Infrastructure.

The minister for another department was calling to tell him he had a job for him. What a wonderfully open, democratic, transparent and apolitical process this was, to be sure. I am being sarcastic, of course.

Mr. Sabia told us that when he became chair of the CIB in 2020, it was not going well, that he was there to put out fires and rescue the CIB.

However, one of his first decisions as chair of the CIB was to award a sole-source consulting contract to McKinsey. Everything is falling into place. Maybe McKinsey's volunteer work paid off in the end. It was a \$1.4-million contract. That is pretty good money. One point four million dollars is nothing to sneeze at.

He gave us an explanation as to why McKinsey was chosen. I am sorry, the document is in English.

Routine Proceedings

• (1125)

[English]

Mr. Sabia told us, “the decision taken at the time was to use some of the people from McKinsey who had been involved in the initial thinking around the Infrastructure Bank, to draw on their accumulated knowledge.”

[Translation]

In other words, given that McKinsey knew the CIB so well, it was awarded the contract so that things would go faster. Since McKinsey thought up the CIB, it obviously knew it very well. It had told the government what to do in the first place. McKinsey got the contract, but this time, instead of telling the government what to do for free, it was charging big money. It is as if McKinsey got a second chance to tell the government the same thing, because the CIB did not really exist yet and had not quite taken form—it was spinning its wheels.

It is fascinating to observe that the kind of volunteer work we are talking about is not always completely altruistic. It can sometimes serve private interests. The government does not seem to mind.

I asked Mr. Sabia more questions when he came to see us at committee. The CIB was clearly struggling, but before he became chair of the CIB, he worked at the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec and one of his projects was the REM. Well, the CIB just happened to invest in the REM. All this starts to get confusing because everything is all mixed together.

The CIB invested in the REM, but before the CIB was established, the federal government had had some money for the REM. The federal government had already invested in the project. It had received a federal grant of \$1.28 billion that had been announced by the current government.

That \$1.28-billion federal grant magically turned into a \$1.28-billion loan. There is a slight difference between a loan and a grant. It started out as a government grant. It became a loan from the CIB. Obviously, Quebec did not really come out a winner because it will pay interest on the loan rather than taking the money to the bank and using it for the project.

I asked Mr. Sabia how that decision was made and what the process had been from one to the other. He replied, “That was a decision made by the government and...the government informed us of that change.”

The government claims that the CIB is not political, and yet it directly informed the Caisse de dépôt of the change. Essentially, the CIB had so little in the way of a track record and so few projects that the government said that it was going to take a project that it was financing, stop financing it and give the money to the CIB so that the CIB could establish a track record. That is basically what happened.

That shows that the CIB is not really useful. It is not relevant. The government is taking projects that would have received funding anyway and funding them through different means, through the CIB. The CIB should have been generating billions of dollars, but instead it is generating \$1 for every \$8 or \$10. The government promised extraordinary numbers, a huge windfall, resulting from

private investments from all of these great private firms that are close to the government, but in the end, these much-talked-about investments never happened. Most of the projects that the CIB invests in are public projects, projects by our own governments and institutions, whether it be our municipalities, our cities, our provinces or the Quebec state that we hope to be one day, projects that they want and that are important to us. To find a way to make the CIB relevant, the government decided to send those projects to the CIB, but then it claims that the CIB is not political and that it is far removed from government. However, we all know that the CIB is very political. After serving as chair of the CIB from April 2020 to December 2020, Mr. Sabia magically became the deputy minister of finance from 2020 to 2023. Surely, he submitted his resumé as part of a long, open process. I am sure of it. At a certain point, it gets to be too much. No one believes it any more. That is what I wanted to demonstrate.

Unfortunately, the CIB is a hot potato that the Liberals are trying to justify. They claim it is useful and serves a purpose. However, what the cities told us when they appeared before the committee, and continue to tell us every time, is that they need money to build infrastructure for housing, water and all the municipalities' other needs. They do not need new federal programs that come with all kinds of criteria and standards that no one understands. They do not want to be forced to hire three or four people to analyze criteria every time a new program comes out or have staff work full-time to keep track of any new programs launched by the federal government and assess their compatibility with Quebec programs. At some point it never ends. Cities want to be given money directly and use it to build the infrastructure they need.

We already have a program that works. Give Quebec money so Quebec can invest in infrastructure. It would be so easy, and it works every time. There is another approach we can live with. The gas tax fund works very well. It is not perfect, and it could use some tweaking, but, generally speaking, it works very well. Cities would like to see more money there. Part of the gas tax revenue could be allocated to infrastructure projects. Cities build the infrastructure they need, not what the federal government decides they need. That is different, and it works well. Why not enhance programs like that one, which offer more leeway, through agreements with Quebec for things like the gas tax fund? No, instead the government creates programs by and for Ottawa so it can have the ribbon-cutting ceremonies that party insiders want. At the end of the day, those programs do not work. They are a dead end.

That is what I wanted to lament today. I hope the member opposite understands now why all parties except his voted against this bank.

Routine Proceedings

● (1130)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Bloc is voting against this for a totally different reason. It wants to break up Canada. It is a party that does not want the federal government playing a role more than just handing over money. That is the Bloc's position and that is why it is ultimately opposing it.

Needless to say, under the Canada Infrastructure Bank, there are a number of projects in the province of Quebec. One of the projects I like is the 4,000 zero-emissions school buses project. I suspect there is a very good chance that project, in good part, is made possible because of the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

All communities will directly or indirectly benefit by the investments of the Canada Infrastructure Bank. The Bloc does not like the Canada Infrastructure Bank because it goes against what it is as a political entity. Would the member not agree?

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question, because it gives me an opportunity to respond to an argument he made in his response to a question asked by my colleague after his speech. He said that the Bloc Québécois sees the federal government as an ATM and that we want it to hand over the money without any sense of accountability.

It is an interesting image. It is pretty cute. It is a nice metaphor, I will give him that. The question we have to ask, however, is who puts the money inside the ATM. Well, it is all of us, with our taxes, who fill up the federal ATM. It makes sense to want more control over the spending or our tax money instead of the federal government imposing its own priorities, which differ from ours.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it clear to me: The Canada Infrastructure Bank plays on Team Liberal. It gives money to Liberals. It invites Liberal friends to work at the bank. I do not think that this serves the interests of Canadians. Does the member agree?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, to answer my colleague's question, I would say that they are in real trouble at the bank. They are really in trouble. I think that they are in such bad shape that there is no way the Canada Infrastructure Bank is going to recover. What my colleague is describing is a bit like the image we have seen.

We see the Liberals giving contracts to Liberal insiders, and they are trying to create programs for Liberal insiders, as we saw with the WE Charity and the infamous McKinsey.

This does not inspire confidence in anyone. I think the best thing would be to start from scratch.

● (1135)

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I agree with him on many of those things. My background is in international development, and I will say that going to communities and going to provinces and telling them what

they need is not a good practice. Municipalities should have the ability to have more control over the infrastructure projects.

We also, as the NDP, brought forward a supplementary response to the committee report that we are debating today. One thing that was brought up was that one of our colleagues has brought forward Bill C-245, an act to amend Canada's Infrastructure Bank. It looks at fixing some problems the member talked about like prioritizing projects in indigenous and northern communities, altering the structure of the board of the bank and removing the privatization aspects.

Would he be supportive of that sort of legislation?

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, we understand that the NDP is always trying to find ways to save the government and give it a hand. They think the Liberals are so pitiful and should be kept in office, but the reality is that the Canada Infrastructure Bank is fundamentally flawed. I do not think patching it up is the best solution.

As we have shown, it is not up to the federal government to get involved in infrastructure. It owns only 2%. What the federal government needs to do is transfer the money to those who need it, and stop creating so many roadblocks. It needs to get out of the way as much it can.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to first commend my colleague for his excellent speech. I think he showed, with facts and evidence, that the Canada Infrastructure Bank is an organization that should not be. We know that there is political interference. The infrastructure bank favours friends of the government and the Liberal Party.

However, I would like my colleague to talk about another issue. The member for Winnipeg North mentioned that the federal government is an infrastructure expert. I want to give an example to show that the opposite is true. Ottawa and Quebec have been negotiating for 15 years to try to upgrade the bridge maintained by CN that was privatized in the 1990s. The federal government, the Liberal Party government, said in 2015 that this was a priority, a promise. Eight years later, this matter has still not been resolved.

Here is another example. In 2017, the same government tried to sell 25 ports in eastern Quebec for \$1. This government says that it is an infrastructure expert, but it is prepared to divest itself of these ports that it is supposed to be managing for \$1 because it is so incapable of running and maintaining them. It is incompetent in that regard.

I would like my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères to comment on that.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I really like the picture my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques painted of Ottawa's so-called experts who are struggling to manage their own assets. When we go out to Quebec's regions and see the wharves and airports, people everywhere tell us that the situation is outrageous, that the federal government has stopped investing and has turned its back on them.

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The Verchères wharf in my riding is a good example. It has been an eyesore in the middle of the village for 20 years. This wharf is over 300 years old. The reality is that the federal government is neglecting it. It is not taking care of the wharf, so it is falling apart.

It is hard to reach Fisheries and Oceans Canada on the phone. When we do manage to get through, we wonder whether there is anyone on the other end. They are the experts, and yet they are allowing their infrastructure to fall apart. People in our towns and villages are left wondering what this federal government is all about. That is both the question and the answer.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I cannot believe I am hearing my Liberal and Bloc colleagues in the House talking about a Government of Canada ATM.

The Government of Canada is not an ATM. It is not an ATM for infrastructure, or for any of its services. It is not a cash machine. We are talking about taxpayers' money.

The Liberal government has never been able to balance a single budget. Now it is trying to lecture us about the infrastructure bank, this great big apparatus that hands money over to Liberal friends. Worst of all, the Bloc Québécois supports it. The party said as much earlier: It supported it in committee and wonders why this is being reintroduced here.

The Bloc Québécois not only supports the Canada Infrastructure Bank, it supports carbon taxes, which mean Quebeckers will pay even more for their gas.

Why is the Bloc Québécois so supportive of the Liberal government?

• (1140)

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I do not know how to respond. I do not know where my colleague was during my speech.

When I talked about the ATM, I was referring to the metaphor that my colleague used. In no way did I claim that I agreed with that. In no way have we claimed to agree with the institution that is the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

My colleague may be making up a parallel reality, a parallel universe. If he truly listened to what is happening and what is being said, I think he would better understand why he is out in left field.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was listening very closely. There is a difference in opinion from the Conservatives, but they are united. There is a Conservative-Bloc coalition to get rid of the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

This is more of a comment, but I think it is a sad thing for all Canadians in all regions because the Canada Infrastructure Bank has many fine things it is doing. It is having a very positive impact in all regions of the country, and it is sad to see the coalition of the Bloc and the Conservatives to try to get rid of it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives and the Liberals need to talk to one another. The Conservatives are accusing us of supporting the Liberals and the Liberals are accusing us of supporting the Conservatives.

In the real world, the reality is that the Bloc Québécois supports Quebec. Perhaps that is what bothers them.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

More and more often, Canadians are experiencing the extreme and harmful effects of wildfires, droughts and floods due to climate change. This year was the longest and the worst wildfire and drought season on record claiming lives, causing loss of homes and crops, and challenging Canada's freshwater security.

It has never been more critical for Canada to proactively invest in climate-ready infrastructure to protect Canadians and to make communities more resilient, physically and socially. Our communities need to be connected and supported, and need to have the ability to support growing populations that could withstand climate change. Projects need to be completed, and the federal government needs to act with more urgency.

Members of the New Democratic Party understand the urgency and have been proposing changes to the Infrastructure Bank for many years so that it would actually work for Canadians. My colleague, the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, brought forward a private member's bill that spoke to the importance of this. It proposed public ownership of the CIB in the fight against climate change. Her bill spoke to the importance of a focus on rural and northern communities that are underfunded and left without critical infrastructure, basic infrastructure like water and roads. The Conservatives and the Liberals refused that common sense solution.

In the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, my colleague, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, also addressed the concerns of the CIB not efficiently delivering projects that would serve the public good. He spoke of the issues arising from private sector involvement in delivering public infrastructure, of the inadequate sensitivity to the needs of communities in funding decisions and of the issues with costs and transparency.

With an ample \$35 billion in federal government funding, the CIB should have, by now, been able to narrow Canada's infrastructure gap and to deliver projects that would have created jobs and supported communities for the long term. However, after years of the bank, the gap in the most basic of infrastructure needs, like water and housing, is growing. This is a failure.

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When the study was done, the PBO's analysis of the bank's project selection process showed that of the 420 project proposals received, there were only 13 publicly committed to. Alarmingly, it was found that the bank had rejected, or was no longer considering, 82% of the submitted projects. Most were screened out because, somehow, it was decided they were in the wrong sector or deemed not of sufficient size.

As the large number of proposals showed, communities clearly have infrastructure needs that require federal support. However, the bank's rigid fixation with massive projects and with private sector investment means it rejects most proposals. Communities that need the funding the most are being denied.

The results are that critical projects have not been completed and that Canadians are left without vital infrastructure to support their needs as the devastating impacts of extreme climate events increase. The costs associated with the climate crisis will continue to rise unless we take a different approach. I suggest the adage that an ounce of prevention equals a pound of cure. This should be a consideration in how projects are selected.

As a country, we need to be prepared for the next devastating flood, drought or wildfire. In B.C., the province I call home, the rivers and lakes are the cornerstone of the local economy, forests, fish, food crops, quality of life and cultural memories, yet watersheds in B.C. and across Canada face increasing pressures as extreme climate events threaten their stability. When a watershed is healthy and maintained, it can minimize climate change risk, support local wildlife populations, provide clean drinking water and increase disaster resiliency.

First nations, local governments and communities are working every day on the front line of the climate crisis with limited resources to keep watersheds healthy and secure. Indigenous and western science confirms that healthy watersheds protect against climate disasters like droughts, wildfires and floods, yet the CIB is not supporting them on this natural infrastructure. Healthy watersheds serve as natural defences against climate crisis. Wetlands act as natural sponges to purify water. Stream banks filter polluted runoff and provide shelter for salmon. Mature forests retain water and release it when needed most.

● (1145)

This is low-cost, climate-resilient, natural infrastructure that the government is ignoring. We need bold federal leadership and investment in natural infrastructure to address the climate crisis in B.C. and across Canada. The watershed sector in B.C. is a major employer and economic driver, generating over 47,000 indirect and direct jobs, and contributing \$5 billion to the GDP.

The recent investment of \$100 million by the B.C. NDP government in the co-developed B.C. watershed security fund with the First Nations Water Caucus is an important start, but the federal government needs to be at the table with a federal investment.

We are seeing the successes that can happen when governments properly invest in their communities. When projects are completed, funding is transparent and communities can plan for changes, addressing immediate needs for their communities to grow and flourish.

The NDP supports the findings and recommendations of the majority of this report concurred in today, which details in length the failure of the Canada Infrastructure Bank. As I have said, if the government stays on the same path and continues with this bank, it is time to change its mandate to make the CIB a public bank to serve the public good.

Right now, it could invest in the B.C. watershed security fund; give indigenous, provincial and municipal governments the resources they need for better planning and decision-making; and invest in natural infrastructure to fix the water and housing deficit in our country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that the federal government has all sorts of other infrastructure joint projects, both with provinces and municipalities. The Canada Infrastructure Bank is just another tool, a very important tool. B.C. also benefits from it. When I talked about Quebec, I referenced the electric buses project. The same thing is happening in B.C., where there is not one but maybe two approvals for more electric buses.

The NDP talks about the energy, a cleaner environment and so forth. Many of the infrastructure jobs being created are greener jobs and are leading to more environmentally sound projects. The Canada Infrastructure Bank has demonstrated very clearly that it can make a positive difference for Canada's environment.

Why does the NDP want to see it abolished? That is what the Conservatives are proposing, along with the support of the separatists.

● (1150)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, that just demonstrates how the Liberal government does not understand the urgency of the infrastructure deficit across the country, talking about one or two approvals. The programs the federal government is talking about are always oversubscribed. It is impossible for small, northern and rural communities to get the infrastructure they need in those lottery-based infrastructure programs.

I had meetings just this week with municipalities out of Saskatchewan and British Columbia that do not know if they are going to get projects funded. They have to wait years to get funding from the government.

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The NDP is talking about regular, steady investment in the infrastructure gap. There is no reason the Infrastructure Bank cannot do it, except for the fact the government does not want to spend one penny of its own money. It is open to giving a loan, but it will not invest one penny to get the infrastructure gap addressed.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague has spoken about the amount of money the government is spending with its cheque-book diplomacy, putting money in the pockets of their friends all the time, that far exceeds the amount the government has spent on programs for the NDP's confidence-and-supply agreement commitment to keep the government in power, like the dental plan. There is way more money going into this slush fund, and other slush funds, that the government has put together than in its supply agreement.

Would she consider withdrawing her support from her party's commitment to continue supporting the government because of the boondoggles she sees in this report?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, there is no bigger slush fund than what the oil and gas industry has taken from Canadians over the decades. I can talk specifically to Coquitlam, which hosted the Kinder Morgan pipeline since the 1950s. It was paying basically the most marginal amount of taxes to the City of Coquitlam. It did not invest in one hospital, school, community centre, road or bridge.

In the last eight years, since the Kinder Morgan sale and the expansion of the TMX, it started offering sponsorships around the city in relation to small businesses and business events. It is a joke. Billions of dollars worth of federal subsidies are going to oil and gas that could come to these infrastructure projects.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I agree with what my colleague just said. This country does indeed give the oil industry way too much money.

Earlier, my Liberal colleague said the Conservatives are completely out of touch when it comes to fighting climate change. That is absolutely true, but so are the Liberals. Last year, an International Monetary Fund study found that Canada directly or indirectly invested \$50 billion in the oil industry in 2022. That is not counting the Trans Mountain pipeline, which cost us \$33 billion.

Does my colleague not think that money would be better invested in things like fighting climate change and building housing? All kinds of electricity infrastructure could be built in cities in Quebec and elsewhere. Does she not think that money could be put to better use than it is now?

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. It is a disgrace that the Liberal government and the Conservative government before subsidized oil and gas. We lost lives this year in wildfires. Young people, under 20 years old, were lost fighting fires because of the burning of fossil fuels. It is time for change, and the Liberal government needs to get with the program and modernize its thinking.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to speak to an

important report put forward by the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities that takes on the Canada Infrastructure Bank, a Crown corporation that the Liberals have touted as a real model for years and unfortunately has very little to show for it.

I want to acknowledge the work of my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, as well as other MPs from other parties who have been very clear that the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which, over a year ago was sitting on \$25 billion, had very little to show for the work it was supposed to be doing.

I also want to share on the record, as colleagues of mine have said, that I am proud of the work we did to put forward a private member's bill, Bill C-245, that would transform the Canada Infrastructure Bank for the better for Canadians. In essence, our private member's bill, Bill C-245, aimed to make three major changes: first, to remove the private-for-profit model; second, to prioritize indigenous and northern communities that we know have the greatest infrastructure gap in the country, particularly around climate-related projects; and third, to shift the governance model, requiring indigenous representation on the governance board.

I am very disappointed that both the Liberal and Conservative MPs voted against my private member's bill. I want to acknowledge the support of northern MPs from the Liberal side, the MP for the Northwest Territories and the MP for Yukon, and others who abstained, recognizing the desperate need for infrastructure investments in northern indigenous communities facing the climate crisis.

For all the Liberals who voted against Bill C-245, it is not wrong to admit to their mistakes. This is the legacy of Bill Morneau, who is long gone from the House. The model of the Canada Infrastructure Bank as it exists right now is not making a difference for Canadians. It is not bettering the lives of Canadians across our country.

For the Conservatives, who we know, with great fury, opposed the Canada Infrastructure Bank, it was telling that they refused to support Bill C-245, which sought to transform—

• (1155)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): The hon. member, on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, there is a problem with the interpretation. We cannot hear the interpreter.

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[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): Order, please. I would ask the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski to say a few words. Hopefully, that will ameliorate the situation. If not, we may have to proceed to a different member.

The interpretation seems to be functioning now, so I would ask the member to restart where she left off.

The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed that Conservatives did not support my bill, Bill C-245, which sought to transform the Infrastructure Bank in such a way that it could make a difference in the lives of Canadians, when it comes to the major infrastructure needs in our communities.

It is not a bad thing to have a Crown corporation that is committed to building desperately needed infrastructure in our country, particularly as we face the climate crisis. We know that our infrastructure needs are significant on various fronts, but we also know that we are particularly deficient when it comes to climate-resilient infrastructure and ensuring our communities have the kind of infrastructure they need to face the climate crisis.

I want to acknowledge that the Bloc supported our bill at second reading, and I am thankful for that support, as well as that of the Green MPs.

The reality is that, in ditching Bill C-245, Canada missed an opportunity to transform a Crown corporation, an infrastructure bank, in such a way that it could meet the needs of our communities.

My bill was rooted in the experience of communities like the ones I represent, communities that are on the front lines of the climate crisis and are facing record wildfires and flooding. Communities such as the first nations on the east side of Lake Winnipeg do not have all-weather road access. They have to rely on ice roads for shorter periods of time to access medical services, shop more affordably and bring in the materials they need to build the homes they desperately require and other necessary infrastructure. I have heard time and again from first nations and northern leaders. As a northerner myself, it is clear to me that the infrastructure gap in regions like ours is only getting worse.

In talking about Bill C-245, I heard stories from first nations. One first nation was refused funding to upgrade a community home that was in desperate need of fixing because it could not show Canada's Infrastructure Bank how it was profitable. A northern community that was trying to switch from diesel fuel was told to apply for solar panel funding in the middle of winter. There are serious concerns from indigenous leaders that Indigenous Services Canada may help out once things are really and truly broken, but not a moment before.

Prior to Bill C-245 coming to the House at second reading, I acknowledged at the time that communities in my riding were facing immense challenges, as communities were becoming isolated with the melting of the ice roads. One of the projects we talked about needing investment was an all-weather road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, connecting a dozen first nations that right now are

becoming increasingly isolated as a result of the impacts of the climate crises.

We also talked about the transfer from diesel reliance to more sustainable forms of energy. Four of the communities I represent in the far north of northern Manitoba still depend on diesel fuel. We know that many communities in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories are in the same boat. This is unnecessary, given our ability to invest in sustainable energy. That requires government involvement, and the Canada Infrastructure Bank would be well placed to be involved in this kind of work.

As the climate crisis becomes more serious, it is clear that our infrastructure is not up to snuff. It is clear that our communities desperately need a partner in the federal government to invest in the infrastructure we need. Currently, we know that Indigenous Services Canada is not meeting the needs, by a longshot, of indigenous communities when it comes to infrastructure. The housing crisis in communities, for example, is acute. There is a need for critical infrastructure, whether it is health centres, or water and sewer, or roads in the communities or roads connecting communities that currently do not exist.

● (1200)

Indigenous Services Canada is not meeting the needs of indigenous communities. The Canada Infrastructure Bank could play that kind of role. It is not playing that role right now.

Since Bill C-245, we have noticed that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has paid greater attention to the needs of northern and even indigenous communities. I want to acknowledge the work being done on the airport here in Thompson and the Canada Infrastructure Bank's involvement there. I also want to acknowledge the work of the Keewatin Tribal Council in pushing the visionary Pusiko development and hope that the infrastructure bank will be a willing partner in terms of investing in this kind of legacy project.

However, I am deeply disappointed that we are still not seeing the kind of significant investment in northern and indigenous communities or communities across the country, underscoring the work of the transport committee. What is the point of an infrastructure bank that is not making a difference to communities? On that, I want to end by saying that many of us are in Parliament because we want to better the lives of our constituents, people across our country and people around the world.

To that end, I would like to finish my speech by stating clearly that Canada must call for a ceasefire now in Israel and Gaza. Canada must be a voice for peace and justice. As the representative of UNRWA said, "History will ask why the world did not have the courage to act decisively and stop this hell on Earth."

Routine Proceedings

• (1205)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, there are many different ways that government supports infrastructure. I have said before that, in the last 50-plus years, no government has invested more public dollars in infrastructure. That includes the Province of Manitoba, which has agreements with municipalities and provinces. With the new government now in the Province of Manitoba, I think there will be even greater opportunities.

The Canada Infrastructure Bank is a very important add-on to the building of Canada's infrastructure. Even Manitoba has benefited through the expansion of rural Internet services. Will the member not acknowledge that this is only one aspect of infrastructure? It needs the provinces and municipalities to also step up and say what their priorities are, and she might want to share that with some of her provincial colleagues, in particular. Could she provide her thoughts on that?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, current departmental programs, particularly under Indigenous Services Canada, are clearly inadequate when it comes to meeting the needs of indigenous communities on infrastructure. Time and time again, I have raised with Liberal counterparts the need to invest in the all-weather road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, and they have patently refused to do that.

The Liberals talk a good talk when it comes to reconciliation. Part of reconciliation is addressing the housing crisis and the infrastructure gap in indigenous communities. The gap is only growing. I certainly hope the Liberals do not think that what they are currently doing is sufficient, because it is not. We need to transform the infrastructure bank to make the difference that Canadians, indigenous and northern communities deserve. If that is not going to be the case, then we should get rid of it.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a lot of witnesses at committee had comments about the lack of transparency within the Canada Infrastructure Bank. People did not know where the money was going or how much each project was getting. It was very difficult to get that information.

Could the member comment on her experience when listening to the testimonies at committee?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the testimonies at committee were damning when it comes to the track record of the infrastructure bank. Again, the strongly worded recommendation to get rid of the bank is deeply rooted in that testimony.

What New Democrats have said is that we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Do we need a Crown corporation that has as a focus to partner with communities in building the infrastructure they require? Yes, we do. Do we need it the way it is right now, where it seeks to gain profit for private partners, where it is not transparent and where it is not committed to infrastructure that is resilient in the face of climate change? No, we do not.

Despite some of the cosmetic changes, there are still very serious concerns about the infrastructure bank's existence. As I said, New Democrats certainly put forward a transformative vision for the

bank. We hope that it could still be applied; if not, we should get rid of it.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague brought forward Bill C-245, and it was a way of fixing the infrastructure bank. What we have seen, time and time again, with the government is that it is very good at coming forward with these big projects, big words, big announcements and proposals, such as the red dress alert, announcements on housing and the core ombudsperson, which I know she knows quite a lot about. However, the action and follow-through are not actually there.

Does she believe that this infrastructure bank could be saved if the Liberal government actually stepped up and put some principles in place, principles that were in the legislation she wrote, to fix the infrastructure bank at this time?

• (1210)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I think we are all here because we hope that we can change things for the better. I hope that the Liberals will see there is a desperate need to transform the bank. They made some cosmetic changes in the recent budget, in terms of a focus on indigenous communities. It is nowhere near enough.

We know the climate crisis is only deepening. Our communities' needs for infrastructure and investment are only deepening. The time to transform the infrastructure bank is now.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on this topic. I have to wonder, however, if the Conservatives made a very critical error in their strategy. It is interesting to me that the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan actually used the issue of the Canada Infrastructure Bank to filibuster the legislation that was scheduled to be discussed today, which actually would allow and authorize the minister of industry, where he considers that investment could be injurious to national security, to review such things.

It is interesting that the Conservatives, who talk tough when it comes to national security, would have an opportunity to actually debate having legislation to keep Canadian national security interests at the forefront of what we do, which would modernize the legislation. What are the Conservatives doing instead? They are filibustering and blocking legislation. I think their strategy today is going to be very telling for Canadians: They do not actually care about national security interests in this country, because if they did—

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Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The new guidelines have been issued, and we are not allowed anymore to make comments that question the courage, honesty or commitment to the country of other members in the House. I think that was where the Liberal member went on that one, if you could correct her.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): I would just remind the House that we try to use our words in a judicious manner to try not to cause disorder.

I will give the floor back to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, it seems I have hit a very specific nerve with the Conservative Party. It seems I am alluding to exactly what they are afraid of, which is that they are not serious when it comes to matters of national security. They are reckless when it comes to producing meaningful legislation that would actually keep Canadians safe.

They have just allowed Canadians to see very clearly their lack of seriousness when it comes to matters of national security. What I find even more interesting is the fact that they have chosen this topic; I had been looking forward to the day when we could discuss our plan for infrastructure rather than the Conservatives' reckless history.

The Conservatives have chosen to abandon principles that would ensure our national security legislation continues to be modernized. However, the fact that they then chose the topic of infrastructure tells me that whoever was in charge of this scheme here today did not actually do their homework. They are about to be quite embarrassed for however long this debate continues.

Let us start talking about infrastructure and the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which is what the Conservatives felt was going to be a winning issue for them. Let us talk about Conservative math for a second.

The Conservatives have talked here today. I have listened to them refer to things such as slush funds. Meanwhile, the Conservative infrastructure plan previously included gazeboes, fake lakes and photo ops with fighter jets. Despite that, let us actually talk about the Conservative record on building infrastructure. The Conservatives had what they called P3 Canada, which was their infrastructure program. In 10 years, they had 25 projects which only totalled a \$1.3-billion investment.

Let us compare that—

• (1215)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We all want to make sure that the facts are presented in this House. The fund of which the member is speaking actually did 43,000 projects, and there was \$53 billion—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): That is debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, this is now the second time in which the point of order has been marginal, at the very best. I do not know if it is being intentionally done, with this particular

member. However, I believe that interference, when a member is speaking, is not appropriate. That is a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): I thank the hon. member. When there is a point of order, one does tend to listen to it. There should be a connection to the Standing Orders and to the precedence of this House.

I think we have dealt with the point of order at hand, so I give the floor back to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I will not be surprised that the Conservatives are going to try to interrupt my speech continually, because the facts matter and they do not want to be confused by them. They do not want Canadians to actually realize that their record on infrastructure is abysmal, so I am sure they are going to keep interrupting. That actually further proves my point that this strategic goal to block legislation dealing with national security is reckless.

They are reckless when it comes to national security, and then they choose a topic where their record is also reckless and abysmal. Of course they are going to keep interrupting, because their feelings are going to be hurt and they are probably embarrassed. They are probably going back to their House leader's team and asking why they did this today. They will ask why they chose this topic; it was so terrible, because the Liberal members were able to point out their record.

I am going to persist and continue to highlight to Canadians the recklessness of Conservative math.

Let us get back to that. The Conservatives had 10 years. How many projects did P3 Canada work on? It worked on 25 projects, with \$1.3 billion. Let us compare that to just under five years with the Canada Infrastructure Bank, with 48 projects.

By the way, let me go back to that \$1.3 billion that the Conservatives invested in 10 years. It was all taxpayer-funded money, all from Canadians. The Canada Infrastructure Bank, in under five years, had 48 projects and \$10 billion of investment from the government. Do we know what that turned into? It turned into a \$28-billion investment.

We heard at committee that investments such as this are transformational. In fact, I want to quote something we heard from a witness we had at committee. She spoke about this on her own podcast, called *The Raitt Stuff*, on "The Infrastructure Deficit - the role of the Canada Infrastructure Bank".

This was on January 30. Who said this? It was the Hon. Lisa Raitt, a former Conservative minister. She was talking about the Canada Infrastructure Bank, and she said:

...unfortunately, [the bank] has been the topic of a lot of political discussion in the past number of years. It was not supported by the Conservative Party at various times in the last Parliament and in this Parliament as well. However, you're doing a lot of work, you're getting projects done and you are, I think, filling a need that has been shown to be necessary in order to get projects going here in Canada. So tell me what is going on in 2023 for the Canada Infrastructure Bank and the projects that you're going to be looking at?

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Conservative former ministers do not even support the Conservative position on this. As most Canadians know, Conservative math just does not add up. They are reckless. They spent more taxpayer money to get fewer projects done in double the amount of time. That is Conservative math for us.

I am going to talk about some of these projects that I have heard members here today refer to as “slush funds”. I find that pretty interesting. They said that only Liberal insiders are getting rich from the Canada Infrastructure Bank.

I want to speak about a project in Alberta: the Arrow Technology Group, an \$8.1-million investment. This is building broadband in underserved communities, including 20 indigenous and four rural communities.

Are the Conservatives suggesting that these underserved indigenous communities are rich Liberal insiders benefiting from this bank, or is it that they just cannot wrap their heads around how to actually build infrastructure that matters? It matters for Canadians, indigenous communities and rural communities. It ensures that they are connected so that they have the ability to stay connected with loved ones and to create economic prosperity in these communities.

The fact that the Conservatives would insult indigenous and rural communities in Alberta by calling this, somehow, a slush fund is deplorable.

• (1220)

Let us also talk about Saskatoon and the \$27.3 million to the English River First Nation for waste water treatment. This will be the first indigenous-owned waste water treatment plant. Is that more Liberal insiders getting rich, or is it real investment for indigenous communities so they have economic development in their communities and can ensure clean water?

The development of waste water treatment plants allows for economic development and growth in Saskatoon. Are the Conservatives suggesting that the jobs created from this infrastructure investment should be lost and that those families should be sent pink slips because Conservatives want to cancel this project? There are shovels in the ground. There are jobs in communities happening right now. Conservatives would see those employees fired and those shovels put away. It is completely reckless to destroy local economies and prevent local families from being able to provide for themselves because of Conservative ideology. The Conservatives do not believe that they should help build up Canada; they only want to tear it down.

Let us talk about the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk has a point of order.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, we have already established that to impugn the character of colleagues is something that the new rules set out we should not be doing. I would request that the member withdraw her statement that Conservatives want to tear Canada down.

An hon. member: It is factual.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: It is not factual—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): Order. I would remind all members to be judicious in their use of language to avoid causing disorder in the House.

I will give the floor back to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, the fact that Conservatives want to fire people in these communities is tearing down communities, tearing them apart and not building up economies for indigenous populations and for rural Canada.

I also want to talk about the Tshuetin Railway project. This would be the first indigenous-owned railway in Canada. It is a “lifeline for northern communities”. This line will connect northeastern Quebec with western Labrador. This railway will deliver food, fuel, building supplies, vehicles and medication, and it is under construction. However, do members know what the Conservatives would do? They would rip that infrastructure out and cut off those communities. They would cut off the ability for food to be transported between northeastern Quebec and Labrador. They would limit communities' access to medication. Why would they do that? It is because they want to block national security legislation here today.

On the level of recklessness provided by the Conservatives on this topic, as I said, I am sure they will be sending messages to their House leader team asking, “Guys, why did we do this today? Why did we give the Liberals the opportunity to highlight just how little we want to invest in these communities that need it most? Why did we give them the opportunity to highlight our reckless record and to show we want to cancel projects delivering food and medication to communities?” I cannot believe that the Conservatives would open this door today to give us the opportunity to highlight to communities just how much they do not want to invest in communities and how they are willing to cut them off, even from things like food and medication. It is shocking to see this—

• (1225)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): On a point of order, the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I know that the parliamentary secretary is so full of criticism of us because she cannot point to any real results of her own government. However, I have not heard her even talk about what we are here to do, which is on the concurrence—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): I thank the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, but I think he is going into debate. There is broad latitude on relevance, and I will give the floor back to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

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Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I feel for you, but I can imagine right now that behind the scenes here, there are Conservative staffers texting and furiously saying, "Interrupt her speech, ruin those clips and do not let her keep going", even though that is precisely why the Conservatives do not even interrupt with actual procedural issues and instead it is just debate. I laugh, because it is laughable, at the fact that the Conservatives would actually block the ability for legislation that takes into account national security issues to be modernized and that the Conservatives would choose a topic on which their record is so terrible. Therefore, I feel sorry for the staffers on the Conservative side today, furiously typing, like in that cat GIF that says, "Please interrupt her." Canadians are going to be made aware of the Conservatives' terrible record on infrastructure.

I cannot help but take immense joy in being able to talk about this topic today, because we are able to talk about very real projects like the ones I have just mentioned. However, I am going to talk about another project that the Conservatives, if they had their way, would see cancelled. It is another Alberta project, one that was for a rail system to go from the Calgary airport to Banff National Park. What would this do? This would build enormous tourism opportunities for the community. How would Conservative members representing some of these ridings go to their communities and say that Conservatives would like to cancel the infrastructure that we are going to build that is going to help support tourism in their community, help create jobs and help create economic development in such a crucial area in their community? Who knows why? They do not really have a plan; it is just whatever reckless policies they come up with, and they do not think about the very real impacts.

I have also heard comments from members opposite saying there is no transparency and they do not know where the money is going for the Canada Infrastructure Bank. I have a quick tip: There is an entire website for the Canada Infrastructure Bank that details these projects. It even has photos, so if members opposite do not want to read the text, there are photos of the construction in progress and of the jobs being created, to show the very real impacts this program is having across the country.

In addition to this, there were numerous testimonies, including by a former Conservative member who is now the mayor of Brampton, Patrick Brown. He talks about the investments for buses in his community. In fact, it was a \$400-million investment for 450 zero-emission buses. The mayor of Brampton said that this would not be possible without the Canada Infrastructure Bank. This was a game-changer and is going to help the residents of Brampton and the city reach their 80% GHG emissions reduction goals by 2050, which I believe is their timeline.

I want to know why Conservatives do not support municipalities when they are trying to address the challenges of climate change, when they want to deliver for their communities on things like reliable clean transit, and when municipalities want to create clean air for their residents. Why do Conservatives oppose that?

I know I am running out of time, which will be a great relief for the Conservatives and their staffers who are frantically trying to find points of order so Canadians do not have to hear the facts about how reckless the Conservatives are, how unserious they are when it comes to national security and how their record on infras-

tructure is actually kind of embarrassing. Why would they choose this topic, given their history?

The last point I want to talk about is the overall policies around the Canada Infrastructure Bank and why it exists. These projects are some of the hardest ones to get shovels in the ground for. This is not to replace traditional infrastructure programming. There is a role for both.

• (1230)

These projects require enormous investment and sometimes expertise that smaller rural communities may not have access to. They might be some of the hardest to actually get off the ground, so there is a role for both, but if the Canada Infrastructure Bank were cancelled, like the Conservatives are suggesting, it would mean broadband being ripped out of the ground, jobs lost and individuals fired. The Conservatives laugh at the idea of people being fired, because of their ideology when it comes to infrastructure, and the ideology they have is that they think people who pay property taxes should pay for all this infrastructure. They think families in smaller communities should bear the cost of this major infrastructure that has benefits to all Canadians.

We think Canada has a role to play in transformational infrastructure, and we think building infrastructure across this country creates good-paying jobs, economic opportunities, indigenous-owned opportunities and an ability to invest in clean projects that are going to transform our GHG emission reduction targets. It is shameful and it is reckless, but it is no surprise, with how terrible their record is, that the Conservatives are completely out of touch when it comes to the needs of Canadians. Canadians who pay property tax do not think municipalities should have to bear the brunt of all of this infrastructure, because the Government of Canada, the private sector and others have a role to play in building infrastructure right across this country.

Conservatives do not really have the innovative thought process to move forward on projects that actually matter and to get difficult projects built, because all they care about is flashy slogans. I think that today, the Conservatives are going to be really rethinking some of their strategy and will be having to pivot, but I look forward to talking about our infrastructure record time and time again, because when we compare it to that of the reckless Conservatives, we win every single time.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro—Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in May 2022, the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities did a full and detailed examination of the Canada Infrastructure Bank. It came back with one single recommendation: to abolish the Canada Infrastructure Bank. That was the only recommendation that could be made from the committee's findings. As I glance through the committee's findings in that detailed report, there were many reasons it came to that conclusion. One that jumped out to me was that the annual office expenditures of \$42 million were for a staff of 74 people. Those are just astounding numbers. I would like to know from the member opposite whether she thinks \$42 million is a justifiable number for such a small staff.

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Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, once again, I actually feel bad for Conservatives today, because the report the member is referring to and the recommendations made by Conservatives actually came out before we did an additional study on the Canada Infrastructure Bank. The later study spoke about governance issues, changes that have been made and improvements on getting projects built. Therefore, if Conservatives are going to use lines that are sent to them, they might want to look at the updates in terms of what actually happened at committee, because we heard a lot about the governance changes. In fact, the Canada Infrastructure Bank admitted that it was slow to start, but now that it is going, it is roaring ahead, delivering real results for Canadian communities.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères raised an excellent point earlier. If we take all of Canada's infrastructure combined, we see that 98% of it belongs to the provinces, Quebec and the municipalities. A mere 2% of infrastructure belongs to the federal government.

I would like to ask my colleague whether she thinks it would be more logical to transfer money to the provinces so that they can manage infrastructure, considering that they own 98% of it. Would it not make more sense for the federal government to transfer funds to the provinces rather than manage these funds itself, while sometimes administratively greasing the palms of its friends at the Canada Infrastructure Bank?

[*English*]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, my answer to that is we can do both. Canada can be bold when it comes to addressing the infrastructure gaps in this country. We have committed, for example, to long-term, sustainable, permanent transit funding to do just what the member opposite has said: to ensure that provinces, territories and municipalities can do long-term planning. However, the role of the Canada Infrastructure Bank is to ensure that the most difficult projects get through the door and get shovels in the ground.

I take some exception to the member opposite suggesting that the Canada Infrastructure Bank is allowing Liberal friends to get rich. Would he say that the school buses for Quebec are somehow making people rich? Is it not enriching communities to ensure there are zero-emission buses? Quebec has been a leader when it comes to the clean economy. Why would it be opposed to allowing school buses to be green so kids have cleaner air in the province of Quebec?

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that it feels a little like the Liberals are saying they are good enough because they are not as bad as the Conservatives, which often seems to be the case in this place.

Unfortunately, during the study, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that there was a shortfall in spending. He even came back a second time and stated that we were \$19 million off the timeline the Liberals set. They set their own timeline, which they are not meeting.

I understand, as the parliamentary secretary says, that these are difficult projects to have in place. However, I was speaking to a constituent, Scott Parker, today, and he was telling me that he is tired of hearing about how it is difficult to get these projects happening. He wants to see real action, and this is the problem. It is too slow. It is too inefficient. It has been proven to not be working for indigenous and northern communities. Folks are tired of the empty promises from the Liberals.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has made it clear that we are not going to meet the targets. I do not understand how she can justify that.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, by no means am I suggesting that the Liberal infrastructure plan is only good because it is better than the Conservative's plan. I am suggesting that I cannot believe the Conservatives would block the ability to modernize legislation to deal with national security matters and have picked the topic of infrastructure, where their record is so abysmal.

I take the member opposite's comments to heart in the sense that hard projects are difficult to get through the door. That being said, there have been a number of governance changes at the Canada Infrastructure Bank and a number of improvements have been made, and some very real, tangible projects are happening. I mentioned the Alberta broadband project with the Arrow Technology Group. Twenty indigenous communities and four rural communities that are under-serviced in broadband will be connected.

There is always room to do more, but there are very real projects improving communities right across this country happening as we speak.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's impassioned speech.

We hear comments in this House daily about how the Canada Infrastructure Bank is doing nothing. I think my colleague and I, being from the Durham region, know quite well that we have had some major investments from the Canada Infrastructure Bank, such as repayable financing for Durham Region Transit. I wonder if she could speak to the major difference that this is making for the transit system in our region.

● (1240)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, I was a regional councillor under the Harper government, and one of the reasons I ran for federal office was the lack of investments in our communities and the lack of partnerships at the federal level to invest in our communities. If our communities are not able to produce economically, the country suffers.

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The federal government has a role in building out our communities in a sustainable way. What the Conservatives would like to do is just download these costs to property taxpayers. I saw it time and time again, and it is why I am so passionate about this subject. We all have a role to play in building up our communities.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Highway 97 between Peachland and Summerland has become four lanes, and the Hope-Princeton Highway has been widened. These investments were not made by a federal government for 30 years but were done by the Harper government. There were changes in the 2014 gas tax agreement that allowed gas taxes to be used for a whole range of things, and we saw advanced waste-water treatment all through the Okanagan.

This particular parliamentary secretary talks a big game, but when Mr. Harper had to do a stimulus, we built things. The current government builds up bureaucracy. Does the member not understand that the parliamentary committee, which includes NDP and Bloc members, agreed that the \$35 billion taken away from municipalities to build the Infrastructure Bank was not useful? The Liberals were warned this new concept would probably not work, and all we have seen so far is executives receiving big bonuses every year and very little transparency.

Will the member admit the bank is a failure? Her lack of addressing the issue in her speech and talking about other investments while pointing the finger to our side shows the lack of competence on theirs.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, once again, the member opposite was probably not listening to the countless examples of projects that the investments in the Infrastructure Bank are delivering on.

What we have heard time and time again from communities is that, yes, we need traditional infrastructure programs to deal with the needs communities are facing right now, but in addition to that, we need big, bold ideas, which is what the Canada Infrastructure Bank represents, to build projects that, frankly, sometimes municipalities and communities cannot do on their own.

As I said before, communities deserve to have the federal government involved in ensuring they are built up, that investments are made and that we are working to provide expertise to ensure that some of these more challenging projects get built. However, this is in addition to traditional infrastructure projects that municipalities continue to say they want and support.

Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

The Liberal government has created a series of complicated and inefficient infrastructure programs that have regularly failed to deliver results and get money out the door. The Canada Infrastructure Bank, the government's flagship policy, is no exception to this fact. It has been an immense failure.

The Infrastructure Bank has spent millions on overhead, high-priced consultants, CEO payouts, bonuses and corporate welfare while failing to get critical infrastructure built as part of its mandate. It is debatable whether the bank has built even one infrastructure project. In fact, last year, the bank spent twice as much money

on salaries and bonuses than it paid in infrastructure. It also spent almost \$1 million on consulting and legal fees for an electricity project that never got off the ground.

The mandate of the bank is essentially to attract private sector investment for low-cost loans and to reduce the risk in order to get infrastructure built. However, the government's bank has turned into a form of taxpayer-funded corporate welfare. The bank repeatedly puts taxpayers on the hook for millions of dollars by subsidizing multi-billion dollar corporations, handing them low-cost interest rate loans at a much lower rate than what Canadians can go to the bank and get for themselves.

It is frankly perverse that while Canadians are suffering with almost double-digit interest rates for their mortgages, while Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, while Canadians are rationing their children's baby formula and while Canadians are worried about whether they will be able to heat their homes and fill their gas tanks to go to work, we are being so careless with the taxpayer-funded loans that the bank gives out. While Canadians fear they will not be able to make their mortgage payments, and the average Canadian has these real fears, they are being asked simultaneously to subsidize billion-dollar companies to build projects that are not even successful, are often not needed and could be built better by the private sector.

The bank was given a budget of \$35 billion courtesy of taxpayers six years ago. The Liberals promised that taxpayers would see a return on investment of four times from private sector investors. They even anticipated that the investments from municipalities and provinces would yield an 11 times multiplier. However, that was six years ago and that has not happened. Private investment has not even been returned at a 1:1 ratio from the bank.

The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities determined that the Infrastructure Bank was not fixable. It needed to be abolished. The sole recommendation in its report was that the bank be abolished. The committee's recommendation was based on the testimony given by stakeholders involved in the infrastructure projects across this entire country. Witnesses highlighted that the bank was inefficient, lacked transparency and was unable to secure the private investments it promised it would secure.

We are at a time of 40-year high inflation, when Canadians are struggling with the cost of home heating, groceries, food and daily living expenses. They cannot even afford their mortgage payments anymore because of the government's hefty deficit spending, which has driven up interest rates.

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● (1245)

Canadians cannot afford to continue to subsidize the government's bad investment. Canadians can no longer afford to foot the bill for this bank that cannot even deliver one single infrastructure project to Canadians. Conservatives will create a winnable process that gets infrastructure built and develops communities without wasting taxpayer dollars.

The bank's executives each gave themselves bonuses last year, big bonuses, in fact. The Canada Infrastructure Bank paid \$7.7 million in bonuses to every single one of its executives for getting zero projects done. They got bonuses for not producing, million-dollar bonuses for not producing. Speaking of efficiency, that is some level of incompetence.

In fiscal year 2021-22, the bank also spent twice as much money on bonuses and salaries as it did on projects. This bank is here to finance executives and elites while Canadians are suffering. It makes no sense. At the same time, infrastructure project spending went down by more than half of the previous year and spending on salaries went up by 35%.

Speaking of interest rates, it is really ironic that it is because of the government's failed economic policies and irresponsible spending that the bank's projects have failed. An example of this is the Lake Erie connector project. The bank actually invested \$655 million in a \$1.7-billion project to build a water electricity cable that is now dead in the water due to financial volatility and inflation. That \$655 million was promised to a multi-billion dollar company, Fortis Inc., for an electricity project that ironically failed due to inflation. That inflation was caused by the Liberal government's overspending and reckless spending. A local press release at the time stated:

"ITC made the decision to suspend the project after determining there is not a viable path to achieve successful negotiations and other requirements within the required project schedule. External conditions – including rising inflation, interest rates, and fluctuations in the U.S.-to-Canadian foreign exchange rate – would prevent the company from coming to a customer agreement that would sufficiently capture both the benefits and the costs of the project," an ITC spokesperson said in a prepared media statement. "As a result, the company believes suspending the project is in the best interest of stakeholders."

The project failed due to interest rates.

One and a half years ago, the Liberals were gushing about their new partnership with Fortis, a private company that rakes in billions of dollars in revenue every year, promising tons of low-carbon energy, billions in GDP and hundreds of Canadian jobs. Where are those billions? Where are those projects? They never materialized.

Conservatives warned from the beginning that this was a risky and inappropriate use of taxpayer dollars, and we were ignored. We found out later that the bank wasted almost one million taxpayer dollars on consulting and legal fees for an electricity project that never got off the ground. The Lake Erie connector project demonstrates why this bank is an expensive failure. They are spending millions and they cannot get a single project built. At a time when Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, when almost two million Canadians every month are visiting a food bank, the government keeps wasting taxpayer dollars.

● (1250)

In closing, I just want to highlight that the Fortis project was not transparent. We also witnessed very recently the situation at the Fairmont where the bank was—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): Order. I do have to interrupt the hon. member as her time has expired.

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, really and truly, we just cannot make this stuff up. It is incredible. The member who just spoke referred to there being not even one project. If we want to talk about Conservative spin and misinformation, it blows my mind.

That particular member has a project in her own backyard, in her constituency. Has she ever heard of Oneida Energy Storage? There is \$170 million coming from the Canada Infrastructure Bank to complement a half-billion dollar project that is going to help her constituents. That is one of 48 projects, yet the Conservatives try to tell Canadians there are no projects. Are they serious? Talk about misinformation, and they want to get rid of the Canada Infrastructure Bank. It is an absolute shame. They are reckless, and they are risky. I would suggest they had better do their homework, because they are on a totally different planet.

● (1255)

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, that was quite the dramatic intervention.

The truth of the matter is that the Canada Infrastructure Bank does fund projects, but it does so in a reckless way so that the projects never get to completion. That is what we are talking about. The bank cannot complete a project.

It funded Fortis and then hid the fact that the project actually failed. That project was in my community. It would have affected my community of Haldimand—Norfolk where I reside, the community I represent, and the Liberals hid the fact that this project failed. They provided no updates on their website. They did not even answer to it until we raised a question in this House asking them for transparency. That is the only way we got an answer.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always odd to hear the Conservative Party express concern about people's cost of living and the federal government's failed infrastructure projects. However, there is one infrastructure project that the Conservative Party never talks about, even though it is one of the largest infrastructure projects in Canadian history. I am talking about the acquisition and expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline.

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The government acquired it in 2017 for \$4.5 billion. Initially, there was an expansion project estimated to cost \$7.4 billion in public funds. The cost then jumped to \$12.6 billion in 2020, later reaching \$21.4 billion. Now it is at \$30.9 billion. That is four times more expensive.

Is my colleague prepared to say that an infrastructure project that costs four times as much should be scrapped and that we should sell off its assets and stop investing immediately?

[English]

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, part of the reason we are seeing companies actually not wanting to invest in Canada is the unpredictability of our legislative and regulatory framework. When companies invest in this country and the rules are changed midstream, it breeds corporate insecurity. On the question my friend posed, the increases in the cost are due to the Liberal government's failed regulations, its failed intervention and its failed interactions with corporations that would have caused security in investment.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from Dream, another REIT that is using public financing through CMHC to build housing because it is cheaper. We now know from the Infrastructure Bank that private investors are looking at this financing because it is cheaper, and they would be making profits off of public money.

When we look to Toronto, for example, the mayor of Toronto is looking to build 60,000 units that would cost about \$13 billion in financing to ensure there is no homelessness.

Does my colleague not agree that if we are going to use public financing to do investments, it should be going to public housing to serve public interests?

Ms. Leslyn Lewis: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has a very good point. We recently found out that the Infrastructure Bank actually funded a \$46.5-billion loan to Fairmont hotels where the lowest-priced room is \$500 a night and goes up to \$1,400 a night. Most Canadians cannot afford to stay there for even one night. They claim the loan is for a retrofit project.

My colleague's question is very viable, because there are many Canadians who would like help with retrofitting their homes, and they cannot apply for low—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): We do have to move on.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak about the Canada Infrastructure Bank. At the outset, it is important to reflect upon how this bank got started and what promises were made when it was put together.

Thirty-five billion dollars that had been earmarked for infrastructure in municipalities was taken back by the federal government to create this bank. This is money that municipalities needed to build their roads and sewers and upgrade their bridges and everything else. The government took that money and put it in this Infrastructure Bank. The story at the time was that the government was going to attract private investors and was going to leverage taxpayer money probably 11 times.

Here we are now, seven years later. I am sure members thought I was going to say “after eight long years”, but from 2016 to 2023, it is seven years. No projects have been built, and there have been lots of comments about the projects that are on the way to being built. However, as an engineer who worked in building and construction, I would say that if I had been given \$35 billion seven years ago, I certainly would have built something by now, instead of just paying large salaries to executives, as we heard my colleague talk about.

In comparison, the Conservatives under Stephen Harper had multiple kinds of infrastructure funds. They spent \$53 billion and did 43,000 infrastructure projects in 10 years. Compare that to seven years and zero projects completed, or compare it to some of the other infrastructure projects taken over by the Liberal government.

The Liberals took a pipeline that Kinder Morgan was going to build for \$4.5 billion, paid \$7 billion for it, and now it has cost \$30 billion and it is not finished yet. That is the reason the committee members, when they talked about the Infrastructure Bank, listened to witnesses who were involved in it and invited the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and at the end of the day, the committee had one recommendation. That recommendation was to abolish the bank, because it clearly was not coming anywhere near achieving the goals.

With respect to the money leveraging that was supposed to happen, we can go to the government web page. The government started with \$35 billion and now we see that it is \$38 billion. The \$3 billion extra that came as this great leveraged money is really, over that period of time, a 1.7% increase. It would have been better to put the money in the bank and invest it. The government would have made more money that it has leveraged in this existing Infrastructure Bank.

If we listen to the people who are talking about the good things the Infrastructure Bank could do, it is not that Canada does not have a need for infrastructure. We do not build anything. Under the Liberal government, 18 LNG facilities were cancelled.

Let us talk about broadband. Broadband is something everyone needs. The government has been repeatedly called on to increase the amount of broadband, but again, zero projects have come out of this particular fund.

We need nuclear facilities. We know that to meet the existing electrical demands and to grow, we do not have enough electricity in the grid, and we do not have enough infrastructure in the grid. In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, we are having a number of new plants built, but we do not have enough electricity or infrastructure there. These are projects that Canada needs to build as a nation.

We hear demands from other places across the country where they need rail infrastructure, places that need airport infrastructure and of course there is the need for pipelines to get our products to one coast or the other.

I am not here to say that we do not need infrastructure. I am just saying the government does not seem to be able to build anything.

We have had much discussion in the House of Commons about the housing crisis in this country, that we have the most land but we have built the fewest houses. In fact, the Liberal government built the same number of houses that were built in 1972, this after recognizing that we are five and a half million spaces short. One would think that if they do not know what to do with the \$35 billion in the Infrastructure Bank and there is a huge housing crisis in the country, maybe that is a place to start to funnel that money to municipalities that have plans.

• (1300)

My riding of Sarnia—Lambton has a great plan. It has put \$38 million over 10 years into affordable housing and \$40 million into maintaining and upgrading existing housing. It also has five projects over five years that will create 2,000 spaces. We are trying to close an affordable housing gap of about 6,500.

Many municipalities have plans, and their plans are different. They could use this money back that is in the Infrastructure Bank, which is busy paying off bonuses to executives and not finishing projects. That is something that should be considered.

We also have a lot of infrastructure needs related to climate change. Shoreline erosion is the first one I would raise. In my riding, we need \$150 million to address the shoreline erosion. The member for Cumberland—Colchester was talking to me about the one way of transiting to access the land, which is being eroded, and it would cut off the Atlantic provinces if it were to collapse. It really needs work.

There are needs for infrastructure. We should not be giving all of our money away to build infrastructure in other places, such as to the Asian infrastructure bank, which the Liberals gave \$250 million to in order to build pipelines. They are building the pipelines they will not build here in other places.

I always try to bring some positive ideas when I speak in the House. One of the ideas the Liberals might want to try is something being done in my riding, where postwar houses were built structurally to take another level on top. Private mortgagors are giving mortgages to first-time homebuyers to redo the house with an apartment above and an apartment below. This would support the mortgage and triple the amount of housing. Something like that would be a great thing to do with the amount of money that was put in the Infrastructure Bank. Instead, it is a failed initiative.

The one recommendation from committee was to abolish the bank, and I support that.

• (1305)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would the member not at least acknowledge the fact that there are numerous projects in the works. One cannot have a multi-

Routine Proceedings

billion dollar investment and expect it to be done in six months. It takes time. There are 48 projects, so the Conservatives are being misleading when they try to give Canadians the impression that not one project has been done.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I did go on the government website to take a look at the projects that were listed there, and many of them are in the state of memorandum of understanding. That is a letter of intent. That is what that is. After seven years, one should have shovels in the ground and be near completion. I finished a billion-dollar project in three and a half years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[*Translation*]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, we would like a recorded vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until later this day, at the expiry of time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

PETITIONS

OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to, a little later than I had anticipated, present a petition on behalf of nearly a thousand residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands who are very concerned for the fate of the endangered little bird, the marbled murrelet, which is protected under the international Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds.

The Government of Canada is ignoring its obligations to protect this endangered species. I have had the great pleasure of getting to visit and watch the marbled murrelet up close and in person in the old-growth forests of Haida Gwaii. This little bird is a sea bird, but it nests in the roots of old-growth trees. That is the only place it nests.

As the little bird emerges, and it is a little fluffball with very comical feet, it tears off to the shore and follows the unique call of its mother. It dives into the ocean waters and stays there, but—

• (1310)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I very much appreciate this, but I believe that during petitions we are supposed to stick to the petition so that we do not end up with overly political speeches. If we set a precedent, then other people will abuse it.

Routine Proceedings

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): I thank the hon. member.

I would encourage the member to briefly respond, and then we will carry on.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the substance of this petition is the dependence of the marbled murrelet on the specific and unique nesting in the old-growth forest. I am sorry for adding a personal anecdote of having seen this in person. I do not think it was overly political, but I take the hon. member's point.

As a succinct petition, the petitioners require that the government pay attention to its obligations, which are international, due to the Migratory Birds Convention Act, and domestic, due to the Species at Risk Act. They also require that the government take immediate steps to halt the logging of old-growth forests, particularly in British Columbia and highlight the specific areas of tree farm licences where the old-growth forest uniquely sustains the existence of the marbled murrelet.

I will close there, and I thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for giving me a chance to complete that thought.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): I would remind hon. members to try to be brief in their comments so that we can get in as many petitions in as possible.

The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise again to present a petition on behalf of my constituents.

I rise for the 19th time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The people of Swan River are fed up with this NDP-Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies, which put violent repeat offenders on the streets instead of behind bars. Small rural communities do not have the resources to deal with the out-of-control crime caused by the out-of-touch Liberal government.

The petitioners are calling for action with jail, not bail, for violent repeat offenders. The people of Swan River demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, which directly threaten their livelihoods and their communities. I support the good people of Swan River.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from Canadians from across the country, including many of my own constituents, who are concerned about the consent and age verification of those depicted in pornographic material.

The petitioners call on the government to follow recommendation 2 of the 2021 Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics report on MindGeek, which would require that all content-hosting platforms in Canada verify age and consent prior to uploading content.

Bill C-270, the stopping Internet sexual exploitation act, would add two offences to the Criminal Code. The first would require age

verification and consent prior to distribution, and the second would require the removal of material if consent is withdrawn. As such, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to pass Bill C-270 quickly to stop Internet sexual exploitation.

TAXATION

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I have to present is from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about the tax regime that favours selling a small business or farm to a family member over a stranger. They are concerned that family ownership and long-term business stability is weakened by the current tax rules. The folks who have signed this petition note that small businesses are the backbone of our economy and communities.

The average age of the Canadian farmer in 2016 was 55 years old, and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture estimates that \$500 billion in farm assets are set to change hands in the next 10 years. Therefore, the folks who have signed this petition call on the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to support and quickly pass Bill C-208, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, transfer of small business or family farm or fishing corporation, which would ensure that farms and businesses can be transferred to the next generation without having to worry about unfair tax treatment, and to ensure that family-owned small businesses and farms are encouraged, supported and that the red tape would be eliminated.

COVID-19 MANDATES

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am presenting today comes from Canadians from across the country who want an end to all COVID mandates and the ArriveCAN app. Currently, the government has only suspended some of these mandates, but the petitioners would rather they be eliminated entirely and that the ArriveCAN app be entirely dissolved.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to finally and permanently end all federally regulated COVID mandates and restrictions.

● (1315)

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I present today comes from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about how easy it is for young people to access sexually explicit material online, including violent and degrading material. They comment that this access is an important health and public safety concern.

The petitioners note that a significant portion of commercially accessible sexually explicit material has no age verification software, which could ascertain the age of the user without a breach of their privacy rights. The petitioners also note the many serious harms associated with this kind of material, including the development of addiction, along with the development of attitudes favourable to sexual violence and the harassment of women.

As such, the folks who have signed this petition are calling on the House of Commons to pass Bill S-210, the protecting young persons from exposure to pornography act.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I present comes from Canadians from across the country who have noted that there is an increased risk of violence against women who are pregnant. Currently, the injury or death of a preborn child is not considered an aggravating circumstance for sentencing in the Criminal Code of Canada.

There is no legal protection for the preborn in Canada. This legal void is extreme, as we do not even recognize them as victims of crime. Justice requires that attackers who abuse pregnant women and their preborn children be sentenced accordingly and that the sentence match the crime.

The folks who have signed this petition call on the House of Commons to legislate the abuse of pregnant women and/or the infliction of harm on the preborn child as an aggravating circumstance for sentencing in the Criminal Code.

FIREARMS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition I present this afternoon is from folks from across the country who are concerned about the health and safety of firearms owners. The petitioners recognize the importance of owning firearms and that it is part of our Canadian heritage. They are concerned about the impacts of hearing loss caused by the noise level of firearms and the need for noise reduction.

The petitioners also note that sound moderators are the only universally accepted health and safety device that is criminally prohibited in Canada. Moreover, the majority of G7 countries, and most European countries, have recognized the health and safety benefits of sound moderators and, in fact, mandate them for many hunting and sport shooting events to reduce noise pollution.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to allow legal firearm owners to purchase and use sound moderators for all legal hunting and sport shooting activities.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I present today comes from Canadians from across the country who are concerned about the human rights situation in Turkey, Pakistan and Bahrain.

The petitioners note that Turkish, Pakistani and Bahraini officials are committing gross human rights violations against thousands of Turks, including eight Turkish Canadians. They note that Turkish officials have killed hundreds, including Gokhan Acikkollu. The petitioners state that Turkish officials have wrongfully detained

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over 300,000 people without reason and that multiple international human rights groups have confirmed this gross human rights violation in Turkey.

The petitioners ask the Government of Canada to closely monitor the human rights situation in Turkey, sanction the Turkish officials who have committed gross crimes against eight Canadians and killed one Canadian, and call on the Turkish, Pakistani and Bahraini governments to end all human rights violations in their respective countries.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS MODERNIZATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): I wish to inform the House that, due to an administrative error, there is a portion of text missing in the printed version of the Notice Paper for report stage of Motion No. 1 in relation to Bill C-34, an act to amend the Investment Canada Act.

[Translation]

The missing text should appear at the beginning of part (b) of the motion. The text appears correctly in the electronic version, which is published on our website. A corrected printed version of the Order Paper and Notice Paper is available at the table.

[English]

I regret any inconvenience this may have caused hon. members.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Nater): There are three motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for report stage of Bill C-34. Motions Nos. 1 to 3 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

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• (1320)

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 3 to the House.

[*English*]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (for the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-34, in Clause 4, be amended

(a) by replacing lines 2 and 3 on page 3 with the following:

“notice for review under section 15 within 45 days after the certified date referred to in paragraph (a) or within the prescribed period,”

(b) by adding after line 16 on page 3 the following:

“(4) Paragraph 13(3)(b) of the Act is replaced by the following:

(b) in a case where the receipt contains the advice referred to in subparagraph (1) (b)(ii), no notice for review is sent to the non-Canadian pursuant to section 15 within 45 days after the certified date referred to in paragraph (1)(a) or within the prescribed period.”

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-34, in Clause 8, be amended

(a) by replacing line 11 on page 5 with the following:

“8 Paragraphs 17(2)(b) and (c) of the Act are replaced by the”

(b) by adding after line 17 on page 5 the following:

“(c) in the case of an investment reviewable pursuant to section 15, forthwith on receipt of a notice for review referred to in subparagraph 15(1)(b)(ii) or paragraph 15(2)(d).”

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

That Bill C-34 be amended by deleting Clause 15.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are debating Bill C-34. We were supposed to be debating it a few hours ago, but instead the Conservatives, in their reckless wisdom, thought it would be better to amplify their party's position on the Canada infrastructure bank, which, as I pointed out in my debate, is totally and absolutely bizarre.

Before I go on to the actual debate on the amendments, I have an observation and a plea for my Conservative friends.

Canadians were disappointed when the Conservatives flip-flopped on the price on pollution, a fairly significant flip-flop. I would encourage them to do another flip-flop on the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Canadians would benefit immensely if they were to do that, so I highly recommend that.

I am glad that we are finally on this debate. It is important to recognize that the last time the Investment Canada was amended was maybe 12 or 14 years ago, I believe. A great deal has taken place since then.

We can talk about things such as foreign interference. Foreign interference takes place in many different ways. One of those ways is through investments, significant investments.

When we think of investments, we have to think of it in two ways. There are those who will invest in Canada to get a rate of return. They are not necessarily a majority; they are not taking ownership, if I can put it that way.

Then there are investments in which ownership has taken over. I think most Canadians, including myself, have a great deal of concern when that takes place. Whether we are debating the amendments or the legislation itself, we have to be very careful to recognize that we are debating ways in which we can modernize the Investment Canada Act.

I want to focus on technological changes, such as the development of AI and the impact that this has on society.

We have incredible companies throughout the country. We have endless minerals and potential for development and extraction. Many minerals that are in exceptionally high demand can be found in Canada. We have companies that are leading the world in certain sectors, such as anything related to companies that are technologically advanced, AI being one of those.

As a government, we have been putting a great deal of focus on green jobs, recognizing the not millions, not even billions but close to a trillion dollars of investment around the world. We have to be very much aware of that. We have to realize that Canada has a role to play. We need to be in a position to protect our industries, the AI and the technological advancements that are taking place today. That is why we have things such as copyrights and patents.

We do not want a company from abroad coming into Canada, buying something and then taking it out of Canada. Canada loses out because of that leading technology that was part of a company.

• (1325)

This is why it is important we see this legislation pass. It would modernize the Investment Canada Act.

Let us think of this with respect to national security reviews, how we look at certain aspects of industries, anything from military weapons development to Internet or artificial intelligence being developed in Canada, to see if it is in Canada's best interest. It is not in Canada's best interest to accept all international investments coming into our country.

At times, as a government, we want to be in a position to put in some constraints, take specific actions that will protect Canadian industries and Canadians as a whole. It also ensures the type of growth we want to promote and encourage in certain sectors. In fact, we often provide incentives for those industries.

Canada, through the many trade agreements we have signed off on in the last number of years, has created opportunities, not only for investment outside of Canada but also for investment to come into the country. Canada, as a result of our many trade agreements and our reputation around the world, is a great place to invest.

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Billions of dollars every year enter our country for a multitude of reasons. Let there be no doubt that a lot of it is because of Canada's reputation in the world as being a safe place to invest. At the end of the day, it's those and other investments that we have to be aware of with respect to how they impact Canadian jobs, not only for today, those good, hard-working middle class-type jobs, to ensure we protect them well into the future.

This legislation would empower the minister and different areas of the department to do just that. It would provide a higher sense of security and ensure that the best interests of Canadians are better served. That is what I like about the legislation, and it is very timely. As we continue to grow in commerce throughout the world, we have to ensure we have the regulations and laws in place to protect the population from a wide spectrum of things that could come about.

I look to my colleagues across. Instead of filibustering the legislation by doing what they did earlier, we could have been debating this. I could have been giving this speech over three hours ago. It would have been nice to have seen this legislation possibly pass before question period, as we are at report stage; it still has to go through third reading. We know that is not going to happen now because they were successful with their three-hour filibuster. However, they were the ones who made with that decision.

I hope members across the way will see the value of the legislation for what it is. It is about ensuring that Canada is well positioned, from a worldwide perspective, on investments, so we are able to better create and promote industries in Canada, thereby keeping the jobs we have and growing our economy well into the future by providing well-quality jobs for our middle class.

• (1330)

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the parliamentary secretary's remarks on the Investment Canada Act changes, and I would like to ask a question. What we are debating here today is the report stage and some amendments. Conservatives have put forward a particular amendment that would restore cabinet decision-making in reviewing foreign investment. This bill would actually take that out of section 15.

I wonder whether the parliamentary secretary thinks that cabinet decision-making is of value, or whether we should just have a lot of little independent ministers who could run the roost over making individual decisions on whether an investment is good for Canada or not, without the input of their colleagues, including their colleagues from Quebec or other parts of the country?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I was not on the committee, and I suspect the member was on the committee. I understand there were a number of amendments being proposed. One of them required unanimous consent, which it did not get. That is encouraging, and hopefully we will see some amendments.

I do not know offhand whether the member is going to get the opportunity to explain his perspective on his amendment. I am not going to predetermine what the position of the government would be on it, but I can assure the member that, as a government, we are very much concerned about making sure we get this right.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see you in the chair.

The Investment Canada Act was in need of a review, especially when one thinks of businesses in the context of COVID-19, like our aerospace businesses. There is an issue. Are we protecting them enough? I do not think we talked enough about thresholds at committee. The government did not exactly show it was open to reviewing these thresholds.

At what point do we start an inquiry? I would like to hear what my colleague has to say. Should we have dug deeper into this to make sure we could protect our SMEs, which are the backbone of the Quebec and Canadian economy?

• (1335)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, like the province of Quebec, the province of Manitoba has a very healthy aerospace industry. The technology is absolutely incredible. When we start to take a look at things such as computer components and the whole area of AI, I suspect there are companies outside Canada that would dearly love to be able to get their hands on some of this information, and they may not necessarily want to keep those good-quality jobs in communities. That is one of the reasons it was important we bring forward legislation of this nature. Again, I am a bit reluctant to provide comment on the real details of it. If the member has some very specific questions, he might be best advised to check with the minister in question.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see you in the chair.

I have a specific question for the parliamentary secretary. The former minister of industry, who was a Liberal, allowed the takeover of Zellers by the American conglomerate Target. Subsequently, we saw the loss of all the Zellers stores across Canada, which included union jobs and benefits, and they actually had a small profit. Target then closed all shops in Canada. Does he regret the minister's decision at that time to allow the takeover to take place?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the minister does have an obligation to review things.

I think back to 10 years ago, and things do change. We could ask how many dollar stores, such as Dollar Tree, were around at the turn of the century and where they are today. Even stores like Giant Tiger have popped up in more communities. I would suggest there are probably more of them than there were Zellers stores.

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There is a wide spectrum of things that have to be taken into account that the government is ultimately responsible for. The biggest concern I had was when Loblaws assumed Shoppers 10 years or so ago. That was something I do not know whether I would have approved of. With respect to the Target and Zellers stores, I just do not know enough about the details. All I do know is that there seems to be a lot of retail competition, especially if we factor in the advancement of the Internet.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, we are debating Bill 34, an act to amend the Investment Canada Act, at report stage. We are dealing with a new amendment to this bill from the Conservative side of the House, as well as some housekeeping amendments from the government side.

To make sure everybody watching understands what the Investment Canada Act is about, it deals with the acquisition of Canadian companies by foreign entities: companies and governments that come to Canada to try to acquire our businesses. There is a government process, through Investment Canada, that these entities need to go through with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and cabinet. Through the bill before us, cabinet would be removed from the process. I will speak to this in a moment.

Wayne Gretzky, whom I know everybody here admires, said, “You miss 100% of the shots you don't take”, and this bill fits that description. While it would make administrative amendments and speed up the process a little, it missed the opportunity to look at what is happening in the Canadian economy and deal with the increasing acquisitions of assets and businesses of various sizes, from small businesses worth a few million dollars up to minerals rights and large corporations, by states that are hostile to us. As has been said before, it has been 14 years since the act was amended. A lot has changed in the world, in particular around the way that state-owned enterprises have become extraterritorial in taking over companies around the world for their own economic interests. The Conservatives' challenge with the bill is that it thinks small. It did not use this opportunity to take a shot on net and score a goal by recognizing the change in the global economy and what is happening with the outright sales of Canadian businesses and assets to hostile states.

The minister is the minister of broken bills, which is why we are having to make more amendments to this one. On his other bill, Bill C-27, after a year and a half, he has had to make amendments. Perhaps if he had spent more time here in Canada understanding what was going on, he might have produced better legislation. The Liberals missed the chance to think big and understand what is going on in our economy. What is going on in our economy is what I call the Chinese government cold war. We are in a new cold war. It is not one of bombs and the military in that sense; it is the silent takeover of the economic assets of other countries. This is how China is gaining influence all around the world. We all know about the election interference issues, but those things are perhaps a little more obvious than this is to Canadians, this creeping strategic control by the Communist Party of China of Canada's assets and those of other countries. Other countries have put mechanisms in place within their investment acts to recognize this and prevent it. The bill, as it was introduced in the House and debated at second reading, did not contain any of that.

Small businesses in my riding, such as lobster buyers, are \$2-million businesses being bought for \$10 million by China. The Chinese government owns a number of lobster businesses in my riding. It is how it is getting control of our seafood assets behind the door. It is doing the same in agriculture. It is buying land and farms in western Canada and mineral rights in our land. It is buying more obvious things, which I will speak to. It is buying companies like the only producing lithium mine in Canada. Therefore, Bill 34 missed a lot and would just make small administrative changes.

The Communist Party of China cold war's being ignored in Canada might be out of incompetence, but it also could be the case, as we know, that the Prime Minister believes that China is his most admired country, so maybe it is more strategic. Let us take a look at the Liberal government's record on this issue.

● (1340)

In 2017, the Liberal government allowed a telecom company from B.C. called Norsat to be acquired by a company called Hytera, which is Chinese-based. Hytera does not make any money. Conservatives demanded, at the time, a full national security review. The Liberal minister of the day refused to do one and approved the acquisition. Lo and behold, in 2022, Hytera was charged with 21 counts of espionage in the United States and was banned from doing business there, but only eight months later, the RCMP in Canada, shockingly, bought telecommunications equipment from Hytera to put in its communications system. When I asked the RCMP, at the industry committee, because it was in all the newspapers, whether its members were aware that eight months before, Hytera had done this and been banned in the U.S., the RCMP, shockingly, said no.

I referred earlier to the Tanco mine, our only producing lithium mine, which was bought by the Sinomine Resource Group, a Chinese-owned mining company. Every ounce of that lithium in our critical minerals industry goes to China.

The record on this is very awkward for the government to hear, but it is a growing concern. It did not take those things into consideration in drafting the bill before us. As a responsible opposition to His Majesty, the Conservatives proposed a number of amendments in committee, and thanks to the support of the other two opposition parties amidst the objections of the Liberals, we made some significant amendments. Those amendments include that with any state-owned enterprise from a country that does not have a bilateral trade relationship with Canada, the threshold for review by the Government of Canada would now be zero dollars. Any transaction over zero dollars would be reviewed, compared to the threshold now, which is \$512 million. China is buying a lot of assets for under \$512 million, and the threshold would now be zero. The same would apply for a new concept we added, which is that all asset sales would need to be included in that test with a state-owned enterprise.

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Today, we are also taking this one step further by saying that the minister has made yet another error. That error was trying to consolidate all his power and ignore his cabinet colleagues. The bill would change the Investment Canada Act process that requires that at the beginning, when an acquisition is made, the minister take his recommendation on how far to go with a national security and net benefit review into a study. The bill before us says that he would not have to do that anymore and that he could decide on his own, that at the end of the process, whatever the results are, he would come back and say he will decide whether or not he goes to cabinet with the results.

Removing cabinet from the decision-making process would mean that we would not get the breadth of experience of people around the cabinet table and that we also would not get the breadth of experience from regional perspectives. For example, there have been companies bought in Quebec. If an industry minister is from Ontario and our public safety minister is from out west, they would make the decision on their own without any input from Quebec. I suspect that the Bloc Québécois would be opposed to that issue and would want to see Quebec representation in those decision-making processes, but the bill before us has the potential to eliminate that part of it.

We are proposing common sense Conservative amendments, as we did in committee. Thankfully we upped the ante of the bill and made it more than an administrative bill such that it would deal with the serious international challenges we had, through the four amendments that were accepted. By the way, there are two national tests in there. One is on national security and the other is on the net benefit to Canada. Conservatives in committee added a third: if a company has been convicted of bribery or corruption, the minister would now have to take that into consideration in deciding whether to approve the acquisition. It would add much benefit, but, for some reason, Liberals did not think it was worthy when they voted against it.

We believe that Conservatives have improved the bill dramatically. We are trying to improve it again in the spirit of good public policy for Canada and protecting our economy against hostile interests, which the Liberals seem not to care about. I urge the House, including all members from the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the government, to recognize that cabinet's decision-making process is essential to getting the full breadth of things, and I urge members to vote for our amendment.

● (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we recognize that foreign interference takes many different forms. One of them is through investments. I am glad that it appears, from what I can tell, the members of the Conservative Party are in fact supporting the principle of the legislation.

That being said, I anticipate that the Conservative Party would like to see this legislation pass through all readings before Christmas. Is that a fair assessment?

An hon. member: What year?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues, in response to that, asked, "What year?" That is funny.

Yes, absolutely, the principle of the bill originally was an improvement of the current Investment Canada Act. We have improved it dramatically over what the government presented, so obviously we will be voting for the amendments we made to improve the bill. We will have a robust debate at both report stage and third reading to give members a chance to speak about this important strategic issue for Canada.

I hope government members will support my amendment today to ensure that we return to cabinet decision-making processes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from South Shore—St. Margarets, who is my Standing Committee on Industry and Technology co-chair. I have to say that I am liking him more and more. We have been working together for a good year now, and I appreciate how thorough he is and how creative he can be. He stands up for small businesses, and he has a good understanding of Quebec's economy.

The member proposed an amendment. My immediate reaction is that I am in favour of the minister having enough time to really think things through if necessary. It is no good announcing public consequences before doing due diligence. I would like to give him a chance to go into more detail about his amendment. Maybe I will give him one last chance to convince me that, from a Quebec point of view, this amendment makes sense.

● (1350)

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue provides a lot of great input at the industry committee, and I appreciate that we have a lot of thoughtful discussions.

I agree that we should not create artificial time when we are dealing with very critical acquisitions. Whether it is a private sector company from around the world taking over Rona, for example, or a state-owned enterprise, the minister needs to not be restricted by arbitrary timelines so we can get the adequate national security net benefit and can analyze whether they have been convicted of corruption or bribery, thanks to the Conservatives, who put that in. Those are considerations the government should review in a thorough manner, not necessarily feeling that it has to rush things through.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague works really hard at committee and comes well prepared.

I understand the amendment the member is putting forth right now with regard to the consolidation of the minister's powers and not having secondary support from cabinet. Maybe the member wants to elaborate more on that. Is this because of the previous Conservative industry minister, Maxime Bernier? Is that what this amendment is about? Is it a Maxime Bernier amendment?

Government Orders

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, no, I named this the Navdeep Bains amendment, as he did not review anything that went before him, and particularly not large companies from China. He approved them all without national security briefs. Now we know why Navdeep Bains did that: It was so he could secure himself a big, fat job on Bay Street, first with CIBC and now with the most expensive telephone provider in the world, Rogers, where he sits atop the tower talking about the things he used to regulate and let through. It is shocking, really, that Liberals would sell themselves for a job.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, one of the acquisitions that I wish had been reviewed, which I do not think Bill C-34, even with amendments, would catch, was Paper Excellence buying up the pulp and paper mills of this country: all of Catalyst, all of Resolute and, in the member's home province, starting with Northern Pulp. It looks like it was all financed by the China Development Bank. What does the member think about that?

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, if an acquisition is financed or controlled by a Chinese entity, thanks to the Conservatives, there is now a change to the act that says anything over zero dollars is reviewable by Investment Canada.

I appreciate the hon. member for bringing that up. It gave me the opportunity to once again explain how important our amendment and improvement of the act are when looking out for those things.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by telling the interpreters that I will not try to fit my speech into the six minutes, although I think I could. The fact that I will not have to take questions immediately afterwards may save me from getting a question like the one my colleague from Windsor West asked. I will prepare accordingly.

I rise today to speak to Bill C-34, which has just passed an important milestone. I understand that my colleagues have identified other amendments at this stage, and I will inform the House of the Bloc Québécois's position in due course.

This bill represents the first substantial review of the Investment Canada Act since 2009, when the government introduced a mechanism for assessing the national security implications of foreign investments. Essentially, it aims to strengthen the government's powers to monitor foreign investments that could compromise Canada's national security.

Bill C-34 introduces seven major changes: a new requirement to provide notice of certain investments prior to their implementation in designated sectors; ministerial authorization to extend national security reviews of investments; harsher penalties for contraventions; ministerial authorization to impose conditions prior to the national security review period; ministerial authorization to allow undertakings that mitigate national security risks; improved information disclosure with international counterparts; and new rules to protect information in the course of judicial reviews.

These undeniably necessary changes reflect the logical evolution of an increasingly interconnected world. Foreign investment plays a vital role in economic development, not only in Canada, but also, and especially, in Quebec.

Over the past few months, the members of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology examined several important issues related to these foreign investments. We held no less than 12 meetings, during which we heard from nearly 20 witnesses. Their testimony informed our debates and contributed to our collective understanding. We heard valid concerns about the potential vulnerability of our businesses and our sovereignty to ill-intentioned foreign investments. This strengthened our conviction that Bill C-34 is an important first step.

When it came time to consider each member's amendments, we each addressed aspects that seemed important to us. I was particularly anxious to ensure that Quebec's economy would not be hurt. I thought about several situations where investments shaped Quebec. I wish the federal government had done some thinking as well, in response to the recommendations of the Bélanger-Campeau commission, and that it had opened up certain sections of the act to make amendments to better protect Quebec's leading companies.

The Conservatives tried to make changes that probably would have had disastrous consequences for Quebec's aerospace industry. They suggested drastically limiting the ability of foreign state-owned enterprises to invest in critical sectors and authorizing such operations only with the members of the anglophone Five Eyes, meaning the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

Let us look at the practical consequences of the Conservatives' proposal. Take, for example, the takeover of Bombardier's C Series by Airbus. That transaction, which was completed successfully, is critical to our aerospace cluster. Airbus is a company owned by the French and German governments, which are neither American nor anglophone. If amendments CPC-5 and CPC-6 had been in effect at the time, that transaction would have been prohibited, which would have had disastrous consequences for our aerospace sector. That is what the Conservatives' aerospace policies are like at times.

I appreciated the government's openness to considering clarifying that purchasing a company's assets is the same as purchasing the company itself, and so the transaction is subject to the act. This clarification was necessary, especially when it comes to intangible assets such as intellectual property patents, where there was a gap in the previous legislation. It is crucial that our laws protect the national interest, including intellectual property.

On some amendments, our position was more nuanced. I supported the idea of taking intellectual property into account during reviews of transactions, because it enhances our national security and protects our strategic assets.

However, we must keep in mind that Bill C-34 seeks mainly to align our security policies with those of the United States, an essential prerequisite for Canada to be included in the U.S. industrial modernization strategy, in particular the development of electrification.

• (1355)

The proof is that, immediately after Bill C-34 was introduced, the Americans lifted the most protectionist measures through the Inflation Reduction Act, which Joe Biden announced just before his visit to Ottawa.

Restrictions remain in future incentives for the purchase of electric vehicles, but these provisions will only come into effect later, when current investments have increased the supply of cars enough to meet demand. There is every indication that they will harmonize this with the industrial component.

As a result, Canada's agreements with the U.S. include specific provisions on personal information in the defence sector, allowing Canadian companies to bid on Pentagon contracts for the first time since 1956. Since these contracts give access to U.S. defence secrets, the U.S. government asks for information on our companies' personnel in order to conduct security checks. We have to be careful not to lose this privilege.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House that other ideas emerged during our work on the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology.

I will continue my speech after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October 24 was World Polio Day.

As a Rotarian and proud member of the Rotary Club of Orléans, I want to acknowledge the vital work Rotary clubs across Canada and internationally are doing to raise awareness of the importance of polio vaccination to protect every child from this devastating disease. It is a day to celebrate the many parents, professionals and volunteers whose contributions make polio eradication achievable.

Yesterday, I also had the privilege of welcoming on the Hill nine members of the Orléans Youth Council. Their passion and insights were truly inspiring, shaping engaging conversations that offered valuable perspectives. They shared with me their heartfelt preoccupation regarding the conflict in the Middle East. It surely reinforced my belief in the power of youth engagement and reaffirmed our dedication to empowering them as not only the leaders of tomorrow but the leaders of today.

Statements by Members

OPTIMIST CLUB OF CORNWALL

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride I rise today to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Optimist Club of Cornwall. Seventy-five years is not just a number. It is a testament to its longevity, hard work and dedication to our community.

I have had the pleasure to see it all first-hand, from Cornwall's Ribfest to the Canada Day breakfast, Youth Achievement Awards, toy drives and organizing various youth sport leagues. This is just a small example of the great work Optimists have been doing day in, day out.

Recently, when we were cutting the ribbon on the new playground equipment at Optimist Park, the members were already sharing with me the next two or three projects they wanted to get under way. That just shows the energy and the dedication the Optimists have maintained in Cornwall for 75 years and counting.

To the members, all the volunteers, families, supporters and donors, I thank them and hope that same energy is able to continue for the next 75 years. I congratulate them.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, across Canada, there are phenomenal organizations advocating for and supporting people with disabilities. A great example in the developmental sector is Christian Horizons. Since 1965, it has helped people with disabilities accomplish their goals. I became familiar with its work as Ontario's minister of community and social services and met its CEO, Janet Noel-Annable.

It recently changed its name to Karis Disability Services. This new name will help people know everyone belongs. Karis is one of many exceptional organizations in Canada's developmental sector making a difference in people's lives. For decades, the sector has been advocating for a disability benefit to provide people with disabilities with greater financial security.

Our government took action. In June, the Canada Disability Benefit Act received royal assent. We are working with the sector to co-design the benefit, and I am hopeful it will make an important difference in the communities these extraordinary organizations serve.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SUCCESS OF AN AGRI-FOOD COMPANY

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the agriculture and agri-food sector is a major economic driver in Canada, employing 2.3 million people. This growing sector alone represents 7% of our GDP. Aliments Ouimet-Cordon Bleu, a Montreal company known for its Clark and Paris Pâté brands, is a major player in this industry.

Statements by Members

This year, Cordon Bleu is celebrating its 90th anniversary, while also expanding into the U.S. market and seeing strong growth nationally. In addition to this success, Cordon Bleu is racking up numerous honours. In the spring, it won Quebec SME of the year at the Mercuriades gala of the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec.

I salute and congratulate the leaders of Cordon Bleu, who are here today, and I encourage all Canadians to keep supporting our dynamic agri-food businesses.

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[English]

FOOD BANKS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of failure, the Prime Minister must be really proud of himself. His NDP-Liberal government's food security policy, food banks, is working so well visits to food banks are up 32% from March 2022, a 78% increase for the same month in 2019, and winter is coming.

Canadians are bearing the brunt of years of his blowing the bank and fuelling inflation. How does this out-of-touch Prime Minister respond with the news that food bank usage is up? He blames everyone else.

It is not the fault of the farmers and grocers that carbon taxes drive up costs. It is not the fault of the truckers who deliver our food to the grocery stores. It is certainly not the fault of Canadians who find, after paying all the carbon taxes, there is nothing left to put food on the table.

In a country endowed with as many natural resources as Canada, it is a disgrace that the need for food banks is soaring. The Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

PATRO ROC-AMADOUR

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of Patro Roc-Amadour.

In Limoilou, the Patro is more than an institution. It is truly a pillar of our community. The Patro serves a wide range of needs through its recreation and sports programs, its community support service, its aquatics programs and its adaptive services. All of these services contribute to the Patro's mission, which is to serve users of every age. It is reassuring to know that Patro Roc-Amadour is there to meet the growing needs of our community. Last year alone, more than 450 caring volunteers gave the Patro over 35,000 hours of their time.

I congratulate the organization's tireless executive director, Clément Lemieux, for his outstanding work.

I congratulate the Patro on its 75 years of service, and we wish it another 75 at least.

[English]

CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you will recall in the last federal election Conservatives from coast to coast campaigned and said, "We support a price on pollution." Then came the shiny new leader of the Conservative Party and the big flip-flop occurred.

Fast-forward to today, and we hear the Conservatives doubling down. The Canada Infrastructure Bank, they say, is a bad idea. Talk about being reckless. Talk about taking a risk with Canadians.

There are over 46 projects today. We are talking about an investment of close to \$28 billion, and almost two-thirds of that is through private or non-Government of Canada funding. They are putting jobs at risk. They are putting good green jobs and the future of many of our municipalities at risk.

I have a question for the leader of the Conservative Party. Will he do the honourable thing and do another flip-flop and support the Canada Infrastructure Bank?

* * *

ABORTION ACCESS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October is Women's History Month.

I want to highlight the brave feminists who fought for abortion access in our country and the women who were forced to give their children up for adoption in postwar Canada.

Earlier this year, I read the book *Looking for Jane* by Heather Marshall. While the book is historical fiction, it includes real events like the Abortion Caravan that descended on Parliament Hill in the 1970s and laid the groundwork for the removal of abortion from the Criminal Code. The book also shares the heartbreaking stories of unmarried women who were housed in so-called maternity homes and were forced to put their children up for adoption, which was the subject of a Senate study entitled "The Shame is Ours".

We still have much to do in this country to ensure abortion is accessible to all who choose it, and that forced adoptions are recognized in Canada for the trauma they caused young mothers and their children.

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[Translation]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Liberal government's incompetent financial management, they are foisting two carbon taxes on us, backed by the Bloc Québécois, which wants to drastically increase the carbon tax.

Statements by Members

More and more Quebecers are struggling to make ends meet. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly. More and more Quebecers are forced to sleep in their cars. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly. More and more Quebecers are forced to turn to food banks. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly. More and more Quebecers are forced to make tough choices in order to pay the mortgage on their house. Voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly.

Inflation has hit Quebec the hardest over the last four months. The Bloc Québécois supports the Liberal government twice on the carbon tax. Let us not be lulled into complacency by the Bloc Québécois anymore, but let us worry about the Bloc Québécois, which is refusing to hear from the RCMP commissioner at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics by voting again with the Liberal-NDP government.

Quebeckers want a chance to choose a new prime minister, but the Bloc Québécois is holding up the return to common sense.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

OXI DAY

Ms. Emmanuela Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 28, Greeks from across Canada and around the world will be celebrating the famous Oxi Day.

Oxi is the Greek word for “no”. The Greek prime minister, Ioannis Metaxas, gave that as an answer to an ultimatum from Benito Mussolini on October 28, 1940, when he asked Greece to allow the Axis forces to enter and occupy certain strategic locations or to go to war. The rejection of this ultimatum led to the Axis forces descending on Greece, which they expected to fall quickly, but the Greek resistance pushed Italy back within a month and forced Hitler to change his plans, delaying his invasion of Russia by at least two months.

Franklin Roosevelt said that when the entire world lost all hope, the Greek people dared to question the invincibility of the Nazis, raising against it the proud spirit of freedom. Without Greece or the big three countries of the U.S., Great Britain and Russia, Hitler's powerful war machine probably would have won the war, and the world we know today would have been a very different place.

[Member spoke in Greek]

[English]

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CARBON TAX

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, carbon tax is causing the affordability issue in Yukon. First, the NDP-Liberal government wanted to triple the carbon tax. Then they said that it was not enough and brought in a second carbon tax. Both of these carbon taxes will increase 14¢ to 61¢ a litre, all supported by the Liberal MP for Yukon. Now his NDP-Liberal government will quadruple the carbon tax.

This is from Yukon Party leader Currie Dixon this week: “Yukoners continue to grapple with the rising cost of living in Yukon with often the highest rate of inflation in any jurisdiction in Canada.”

This year, the Liberals increased the carbon tax by 30%. This drives up the price of everything in Yukon, from construction to food and basic necessities. Yukoners cannot afford any more Liberal tax increases, and winter has arrived. After eight years, Yukon knows this Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has gotten so bad when this Prime Minister stands up in question period to answer a question, he does not know whether to answer the question or to say “not guilty”.

Just this week, the Prime Minister directed his Liberal MPs and his NDP lackeys to shut down the ethics committee right when the RCMP commissioner was set to testify on the SNC-Lavalin affair. After eight years, this NDP-Liberal government is now covering up their cover-ups to protect a prime minister who has been charged with ethics violations on five different occasions. He is just not worth the cost.

Canadians want common sense from their government, but all they are getting from the Liberals is concealment, mismanagement and non-accountability.

Canadians deserve the truth. Why did the Prime Minister order a shutdown of a parliamentary committee to cover up the potential criminality in the SNC-Lavalin affair?

* * *

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring attention to a cause close to my heart: the challenges faced by Canadians affected by Parkinson's disease.

A few weeks ago, we lost my Uncle Robert, my dad's brother, after a 20-year-long courageous battle with this awful disease. I saw first-hand the toll it took on both him and our family.

Canada has one of the highest rates of Parkinson's in the world. Every day, 30 more individuals receive the devastating diagnosis, and within a decade, that number is expected to become 50.

Statements by Members

Parkinson's is relentless, and with no known cure or disease-modifying therapies, proper support and services are critical. By ensuring that tax credits and benefits are available, by making Canada a leader in access to the best medicines and by ensuring that there are appropriate specialists to provide well-rounded Parkinson's-informed care, we can improve the lives of those who are impacted.

This is not just a matter of health care; it is a matter of compassion.

I thank all of those who continue to advocate for this important cause.

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CAREGIVERS

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, October 29 is the International Day of Care and Support.

The collective prejudice against care workers because of gender and race has resulted in a shared belief that care work is unskilled work and, therefore, does not deserve adequate compensation. This is wrong. The federal government must step up and end this discrimination. It is time for the government to improve the working conditions of nurses, child care workers, care aides, teachers' aides, teachers, long-term care workers and all care workers across this country.

The NDP calls on the government to create a robust, gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and age-sensitive care strategy for Canada.

International Day of Care and Support is a time to recognize a caregiver in our lives and the amazing work done by unions across the country who are fighting to protect the rights of care workers.

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● (1415)

[*Translation*]

LATIN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, *Octubre es el Mes de la Herencia Latinoamericana*. October is Latin American Heritage Month.

The month is already coming to a close and, as the first woman of Peruvian origin elected to the House of Commons, I would like to highlight the enormous contribution this community makes to Quebec society.

Latin Americans make up the second-largest ethnolinguistic group of immigrants. My mother, a proud Peruvian, is one of them.

I grew up with a mother who was a resilient, tenacious go-getter. I see those as qualities of this entire community, and they aptly illustrate its evolution and integration into Quebec society over the years. Latin Americans make an undeniable contribution to Quebec's social fabric and culture. That, along with the community's entrepreneurial spirit, enrich Quebec and contribute to its growth.

I am certainly proud to be both a Quebecker and a Peruvian member of Parliament, and I celebrate the important contribution this community makes to society.

Feliz Mes de la Herencia Latinoamericana.

* * *

[*English*]

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, The Canadian Press was forced to retract three erroneous statements. Surprise, surprise, it had to do with Conservatives, of course, who were wrongly attacked. It should also be noted that persistent legal action was required in order to finally get it to retract its misleading information.

In its notice of correction, which was released late at night when nobody was looking, it admitted this: It admitted that the Canadian Press falsely reported one thing but, in fact, an opposite thing was stated by the Leader of the Opposition. Then, it went on to say that, actually, it falsely reported a second thing but, in fact, the exact opposite was true. Then, it went on to admit that it actually falsely reported a third thing in the same story but, in fact, the exact opposite was true. These are three massive errors and not mini mistakes: This is absolute disregard for the truth.

The Canadian Press admitted this, but it was deliberate three times. Why did it take legal action to finally get it to correct the record?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. You made a point last week of giving us direction on how to conduct ourselves in this place. During the last S. O. 31, we had members, including the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, heckling.

If we are not supposed to speak up at all during question period, we certainly should not be speaking up when members are trying to make a statement.

The Speaker: I thank the member for raising this important issue. The member is an experienced member of the House. This issue normally would not be raised during S.O. 31s but would usually be raised at the end of question period.

It is really important for all members to allow each member who has the floor to make their statements uninterrupted. It is important for them to provide a message, sometimes to their constituency or sometimes to a national audience.

I ask for all members to please take this opportunity to listen to each other respectfully in the House during Statements by Members, as well as during the question period and, in fact, during all debates in the House.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

• (1420)

OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government tabled Bill C-49 to unlock massive green energy investments in places like my riding of Cape Breton—Canso. The private sector is positioned to invest \$1 trillion in offshore wind and green hydrogen and, yes, that is trillion with a “t”.

Our government believes that Atlantic Canadians deserve their fair share, so why are the Conservatives voting against the Atlantic accord amendments when \$1 trillion is on the line?

We should all be working together, working together here with industry leaders, with fishers and with indigenous communities like Membertou, to start our green energy future now.

Instead, the opposition is voting against a generation's worth of economic opportunities for Nova Scotia, all because a win for the Atlantic does not go well in their campaign strategy.

The Conservatives are trying to score a political hit but, with our future at stake, Canadians are the ones who are taking the punch.

This is another example of how they are risky and absolutely reckless.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the spending spree of taxpayers' money continues. Liberal insiders are getting rich quick while inflation and interest rates spiral out of control, housing prices double and more than two million Canadians are using food banks in a single month. We now know that the public safety minister's own department paid \$17 million last year to the same companies that did no actual work and made millions off the arrive scam app even after concerns of corruption were flagged.

I have a simple question for the minister. Why do shady, well-connected firms deserve \$17 million of taxpayers' money?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, misconduct of any kind in a procurement process is never acceptable. We are aware of the RCMP's ongoing investigation into those very serious allegations.

To protect the integrity of that investigation and the work the RCMP does, we will not be able to provide any further comment.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will answer the minister's question for him if he will not bother to do so.

Under no circumstances do these companies deserve any taxpayer money, let alone \$17 million. They are being investigated by the RCMP. They did no work for the government, and nobody seems to be able to explain how they got the contract. It is \$17 million for these guys but food banks for two million Canadians. That is what we get after eight years of these guys.

Oral Questions

How does anyone over there defend this scandal?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is being raised by the member opposite is being addressed by the RCMP. As I have said before in the House, we trust our law enforcement professionals to do their work and to do it independently. We will not be participating in, or commenting on, their investigation. We know that it has been referred to them. Our professionals in our law enforcement system will do the work necessary to come to a conclusion.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are certainly keeping law enforcement busy in this country. With \$17 million to insiders, Canadians are still going hungry. Almost two million people went to a food bank in a single month. That is the highest number ever recorded but, instead, Liberals are worried about helping their well-connected friends. They are not worth the cost, and they are certainly not worth the corruption.

When will the Liberals and their NDP enablers stop helping insiders get rich and start helping Canadians put food on their tables and keep roofs over their heads?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I am impressed that the Conservatives are finally talking about supporting some of Canada's most vulnerable, it is unfortunate that their record does not stand up to the scrutiny.

I was in Kelowna yesterday to announce \$31.5 million to build more homes in that community. The Conservatives plan to cut the fund that is actually putting that money into Kelowna.

During the pandemic, we continued to invest so that families could keep food on the table while their leader called them “big, fat government programs”. Canadians would be forgiven if they asked what the Conservatives are going to cut in order to achieve their goals. Is it going to be money for housing? Is it going to be money for low-income families?

We will make the investments necessary to support Canadians in need.

Oral Questions

● (1425)

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the media is reporting that one in 10 Quebecers are using food banks each month. That is more than 870,000 people. It is 2023. That is the situation after eight years of Liberal governance and inflationary spending. It is like the ArriveCAN app, which cost \$54 million and is currently under investigation by the RCMP.

Who is going to stand up for Quebecers who are struggling to put food on the table? It is certainly not the Bloc Québécois, which wants to drastically increase the tax on gas and groceries.

Will the Prime Minister give up his inflationary spending so that Quebecers can put food on the table?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. As I pointed out earlier this afternoon, such conduct is unacceptable in a procurement process.

We are well aware that the RCMP is currently investigating those allegations, and we will not comment any further to protect the integrity of the investigation.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is another major problem. According to a Nanos survey, 28% of mortgagees in Quebec will have to renew their contracts within a year and a half, and 79% say they are worried about their upcoming renewal. More than one-third of Quebecers cite rising interest rates as the main reason for their financial concerns. After eight years under this Prime Minister, Quebecers are worried about ending up on the street.

Will the Prime Minister finally stop wasting taxpayers' money and start curbing inflation and rising interest rates?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Quebecers are afraid of is Conservatives. Conservatives go to bed thinking about cuts and wake up thinking about austerity. What Quebecers are afraid of is cuts to housing, services for seniors, services for families and child care. There is nothing scarier than a Conservative government.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, CBC tells us that the federal government is considering the possibility of reviewing its immigration levels in 2026 because of the housing crisis. Finally, the Liberals have come to understand that there is a limit to welcoming families when they cannot be housed. The housing crisis is not in 2026, it is now. The Liberals are going to raise levels in 2024 and 2025.

Will the government actually be responsible and review its immigration levels as early as 2024?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is possible to welcome newcomers and build housing at the same time.

I have good news for my colleagues: We have reached an agreement with Quebec to build housing in Quebec.

[English]

It is essential that we continue to embrace newcomers, as they are key to our economic growth. They are key to our health care system. We can build homes for Canadians at the same time, and that is precisely what we will do. I hope my colleague will join me in this effort.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government must review its levels as early as 2024 and, above all, it must review them in co-operation with Quebec and the provinces. It is currently working behind closed doors. It is right to be concerned about housing capacity. However, when it comes to health care, education, francization and transportation infrastructure, that is the job of the provinces and Quebec.

Are we going to ask them what their capacity is and set the levels accordingly?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a Quebecer, I have my opinions on immigration. I am in favour of immigration. There will be plenty of time to talk about this on November 1. It is important for members to remember one thing: We need immigrants here in Canada. We need to build houses and we need 100,000 construction workers. They will not all necessarily come from here, so we need immigration.

If the Bloc Québécois is against immigration, then they should say so.

* * *

● (1430)

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people need affordable homes now.

Canadians are exhausted with Conservative and Liberal governments making big announcements while families cannot afford homes. Tens of thousands are on waiting lists. They are sleeping in their cars, in tents and in sleeping bags on the streets in Edmonton, and it is snowing and freezing today.

The Conservative plan is to help their rich developers, and the Liberals are missing in action. How many more years will Edmontonians have to wait to get homes they can afford?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her concern for some of Canada's most vulnerable.

I am happy to inform her that we have been working for a number of years to build more homes to support them. In fact, we have doubled funding to the Reaching Home program to support some of Canada's most vulnerable.

We recently removed the GST on new apartments. We have seen thousands of new homes come online as a result.

I was recently in western Canada to make an announcement to change the way cities are going to build homes. We are going to pull every lever at our disposal to build more homes faster for Canadians, including to provide supports to some of the country's most vulnerable people.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps talking about solutions that are not going to happen for this winter.

As my colleague from Edmonton said, people are already sleeping out on the streets. Students are sleeping in tents, couch surfing or living in overcrowded conditions because they cannot find affordable housing. It is beyond unacceptable. The lack of affordable rental options for students in B.C. is leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and homelessness today.

However, the Liberals and the Conservatives are too busy blaming each other and other levels of government instead of getting to work. When will the Liberal government invest in affordable and safe student housing for today?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with the hon. member that as a result of the measures we put in place directly to support some of Canada's most vulnerable, we have prevented more than 120,000 Canadians from becoming homeless, and we have found permanent housing for almost 70,000 more who were experiencing homelessness.

We know there is more to do. That is why we continue to make investments through the national housing strategy, which has now created or retrofitted half a million homes for Canadians. We will do everything we can to build more homes. I am glad the NDP is alongside us. I invite the Conservatives to get on board.

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FINANCE

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Governor of the Bank of Canada just slammed the incompetent Liberal-NDP government for failed economic policies. After eight years, even he knows the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. He said the government's deficits fuelled inflation. This caused 10 interest rate hikes in 19 months, the most rapid hikes in Canadian history. Mortgage costs have already doubled, and anyone renewing their mortgage now will see a minimum of double the interest rate. That is failure.

Will the Prime Minister rein in his spending and balance the budget so interest rates and inflation can come down and Canadians do not lose their homes?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is laser-focused on ensuring inflation can stabilize and that

interest rates can come down. We are doing it with a fiscally responsible plan, one that has seen inflation come down from its peak at 8.1% in June 2022. It is also a pillar that our AAA credit rating has been reaffirmed.

The Conservative leader's plan is to fire the Governor of the Bank of Canada and attack the independence of our institutions. How on earth is that going to impact and help Canadians?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if being responsible is adding more debt than every government before it combined, I would hate to see what the Prime Minister on a bender looks like.

Robert Asselin, former Liberal adviser to the Prime Minister, admitted today at the finance committee that the Liberal-NDP spending is working against the Bank of Canada. Even the Governor of the Bank of Canada said government spending is making his job harder and is not helpful. While the Prime Minister has a tiff with the bank governor, Canadians and their homes are caught in the crossfire. After eight years, he is not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister finally rein in the spending so interest rates and inflation can come down and Canadians do not have to lose their homes?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe in the independence of our institutions. The Bank of Canada pursues an independent monetary policy that is best suited to Canada's economic circumstances. Keeping these institutions free from political interference is not a matter of principle. It is a matter of protecting Canadians' livelihoods, their businesses and our economy.

Canada's AAA credit rating was reaffirmed last month, and Canada still has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. The Conservatives can keep fearmongering all they want. Canadians expect and deserve better.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1435)

The Speaker: I am sure we all want to hear the next question.

The hon. member for Calgary Heritage.

*Oral Questions***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years of the costly coalition's carbon tax and inflationary deficits, there is record food bank usage right across this country. In the past year, the Calgary Food Bank saw demand surge by 32%, its highest increase on record. Canadians go hungry, and the NDP-Liberals get rich.

When will the Prime Minister axe his failed carbon tax and admit he is not worth the cost?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canadian families are struggling to afford groceries, and we will continue to support families with programs such as the Canada child benefit. We have also made funding available to food banks and charities across this country, including through the \$400 million invested in the community services recovery program.

We will continue to address food insecurity across the country and support Canadians in their time of need.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, are the NDP-Liberals even hearing themselves? We had the arrive scam app, SNC-Lavalin and the WE Charity. They get rich by printing, spending and stealing our money. How do they do so? They quadruple the carbon tax, a tax on food, with two million Canadians using food banks.

Where do they think the food banks get the food from?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we value the role that farmers play in this country in providing food for our tables. However, if we want to talk about making sure that life is affordable for Albertans and Canadians for the long term, where are the 29 colleagues of that member of Parliament from the Conservative Party when it comes to protecting and preserving the Canada pension plan? I can say where they are: simply not on the job. Now, we have the Ontario finance minister concerned about this. We are going to have a special meeting over it. Albertans want to stay in the CPP. Where are the Conservative MPs? They are silent and absent on the job.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the costly coalition, we hear things such as this from the Vancouver food bank: “We see parents who are skipping meals so that their children can eat. We see people who haven’t eaten in days. We see seniors who haven’t had produce in months”.

In my hometown of Kamloops, 225 children per week are getting community food support three times a day. When will the NDP-Liberal government wake up and recognize that it is sending Canadians to the food bank in unprecedented numbers?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives have stood against helping our most vulnerable, we have fought time and time again for tangible measures that help Canadians, such as the CCB, the workers benefit, child care, dental care, the grocery rebate, the increased OAS, the GIS and quarterly carbon price rebates. We are proud to have lifted over 2.7 million

Canadians out of poverty. That is 2.7 million more Canadians who would be joining food bank lines if the Conservatives had their way.

* * *

● (1440)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is this not the member who told Canadians that carbon taxes would be painful? We have to remember that the Liberal-NDP government wants to quadruple the carbon tax, going from 14¢ to 61¢ a litre. The Liberals have had eight years to get it right, and they got it wrong.

I worry that, this Christmas, we will not be giving toys; people will be getting canned food. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Will the NDP-Liberal government end its costly inflation and carbon tax increases?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are wising up to the fact that the Conservatives would cut programs that our government has put in place for some of the most vulnerable Canadians in our communities. These have lifted almost half a million kids out of poverty and reduced child care fees by 50%, saving families hundreds of dollars per month, to name just two.

Canadians also know that the Conservatives will not step up to fight climate change and would reverse course, make pollution free again and drive up emissions with reckless abandon. Let me ask the Conservatives a question: When will these slash-and-burn Conservatives realize that their reckless behaviour puts the future of Canadian families and our planet at risk—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Terrebonne.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 250,000 businesses could go bankrupt as early as 2024 if the government does not take action. The premier of Quebec and all the provincial and territorial premiers issued a warning to that effect on Friday. They are all calling on the federal government to extend the CEBA loan repayment deadline by one year, without the loss of the subsidy portion of the loan.

They joined their voices with that of the Quebec National Assembly, which is also unanimous. All of the premiers are calling for this. All of the Quebec MNAs are calling for this. Will the government finally listen to them instead of forcing 250,000 businesses into bankruptcy?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Our government understands that small businesses are still trying to recover from the pandemic. That is why we recently announced a one-year extension of the repayment deadline, more refinancing flexibility and more time to access loan forgiveness.

We have also increased the Canada child benefit and implemented a \$10-a-day child care plan, which has enabled more women to enter the labour market.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is quite simply out of touch with the plight of entrepreneurs. It is probably because, no matter how much it talks to them, it does not listen to them.

It is dumping all the problems related to CEBA loans onto financial institutions. It is not looking at the files of SMEs on a case-by-case basis, as it does during tax season. It is not allowing any payment arrangements. It is not addressing the concerns of business owners.

If the government really wants to help them, the first step is dialogue. Will it open a direct line of communication with SMEs that want to talk about CEBA?

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to be there for small businesses. We gave small businesses an extension from last year to this year. Because they asked for more help, we are offering them more flexibility when it comes to refinancing, more time to qualify for loan forgiveness, and a one-year extension of the repayment deadline for their Canada emergency business account loan.

I thank my hon. Bloc Québécois colleagues who continue to share excellent comments and ideas to support small business.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the member is talking about is 18 days during the holidays, but 250,000 businesses are going to go bankrupt. The government is not only unwilling to let them defer payments, but it is also unwilling to speak to them directly.

That is not what being financially responsible looks like. That is not what being flexible looks like. That is not what it means to deliver for Quebecers. Our economy has the most SMEs. Our entrepreneurs are worried. Our people are the ones the Liberals are abandoning. No government in the world would let 250,000 businesses close without doing something.

When will the Liberals finally take action?

• (1445)

Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that there are several thousand businesses and SMEs in Quebec.

Oral Questions

We have been there for them. We are still there for them today and we will continue to be there for them tomorrow. The measures we have put in place are flexible, responsible measures that will help businesses pay back these loans.

We will continue to help Quebec businesses, as we do every day.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, life costs more. Stephanie, a single mother in Woodstock, worked a full-time job, but after paying her monthly bills, she was left with only \$9 for food. Both carbon taxes have added 14¢ on a litre, but now the government wants to quadruple the carbon tax, adding an additional 61¢ a litre.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister accept that, by adding a carbon tax, he is forcing Canadians to choose between heating and eating?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that the Conservatives are not strong with numbers, but let us put some facts on the table. When it comes to supporting Canadian families, the government has been there at every step along the way. Whether with the Canada child benefit, which puts thousands of dollars each year in the pockets of families such as the one he is talking about in Woodstock, or perhaps the 50% reduction in child care fees, which is going to ensure that this family saves thousands more dollars each year, we have been there for Canadians. We are there for them to make sure that not only do they have money in their pockets, but they can also fight climate change and protect their children through the future.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the NDP-Liberals wanted to triple the carbon tax; then they said that was not enough and added a second carbon tax. These two carbon taxes will increase from 14¢ to 61¢ per litre of fuel. The NDP-Liberal government is going to quadruple the carbon tax. However, it is basic math: If it costs more to grow food, it will cost more to buy food.

After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Will the NDP-Liberals accept that their carbon tax is causing Canadians to choose between heating and eating?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, setting aside for a second the lala land math that the Conservative Party is using on this issue, let us hear what the experts have to say about our plan to fight climate change.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development said, “Canada commits a historic investment in clean electricity and fresh water in Budget 2023.”

Oral Questions

The Insurance Bureau of Canada said, “Canada's National Adaptation Strategy is brave and ambitious. No other country has proposed such a comprehensive suite of adaptation targets.”

Environmental Defence Canada said, “New data released...by the Government...demonstrates that climate policy has delivered real greenhouse gas...emissions reductions, bringing Canada one step closer to” our—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this government, one in 10 Quebecers turns to food banks every month. Usage at a food bank in my riding, Moisson Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, is 58% higher than it was a year ago.

Our people can no longer feed themselves because of inflation and excessively high taxes, yet the Bloc Québécois is supporting the Liberals' carbon tax 2, which applies in Quebec. Voting for the Bloc is costly.

Will the Liberals and their Bloc buddies show some common sense and axe the carbon tax?

• (1450)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis was part of a provincial government that fought for carbon pricing. The member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier was also part of that government, as was the member for Mégantic—L'Érable. In addition, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, whom I deeply respect, has publicly advocated for carbon pricing.

Now that they have a leader who is ideologically opposed to fighting climate change and putting a price on carbon, they are turning their backs on their principles and reneging on the commitments they made. That is unacceptable and immoral.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' for-profit pet project, the Phoenix pay system, was supposed to save over \$80 million. Instead it has cost over \$2 billion and does not even work.

This has hurt workers like Tina in my riding, a dedicated public servant for 30 years, who has been missing pay for years. The Liberals are prioritizing going after the workers who were overpaid instead of the workers to whom they owe money.

When will the Liberal government start putting workers like Tina, who are owed what they have earned, first?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all public servants are entitled to their pay and benefits, and our government will always stand up for their rights to receive their benefits and pay.

We are working diligently on ensuring that the Phoenix pay system delivers for Canadians. That work is continuing and is in progress. Canadians can rest assured that our work will continue. Our government will always support public servants on this.

[Translation]

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people should be able to feed themselves and their children. That is a basic need. Right now, thousands of people are no longer able to do that.

Every month, 872,000 Quebecers access food banks. That is one in 10 people. The Minister of Industry's spineless approach is pathetic. Grovelling before grocery CEOs and begging them to stabilize prices is not going to work. That is why the NDP is bringing the CEOs of the big grocery chains back before MPs so we can keep them accountable.

Will the Liberals force grocery stores to act, or will they just keep sending up prayers?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government works every day on behalf of Canadians to solve the problems of affordability and high grocery prices.

We are monitoring the actions taken by big grocery chains, including their commitment to price matching, price freezes and discounts on staple foods.

We are also stepping up support for consumer organizations, to help them fight practices such as price cutting.

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Kings—Hants expect the government to walk a line between helping to support Canadians with important programming that matters to them but also being fiscally responsible.

The President of the Treasury Board announced that the government would be examining ways to reduce departmental spending without compromising important programs that matter for Canadians.

Could the minister provide an update to the House on Canada's fiscal position and the work that the government is doing to find efficiencies in delivering important programs to Canadians?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague represents the town in which I was born.

This week, I tabled the year's Public Accounts for the Government of Canada to help Canadians better understand how taxpayer dollars are spent. These documents show that we decreased the deficit by 33% when compared to the projection in budget 2022 and we did so without cutting supports for Canadians, like the opposition plans to do.

We have to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent effectively and prudently. Unlike the Conservatives, we will always fight for Canadians.

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ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the cost or the corruption. The RCMP criminal investigation into the Prime Minister's wrongdoing during the SNC-Lavalin scandal was thwarted after the Prime Minister hid behind cabinet confidence and refused to turn over documents.

On Monday, he doubled down on his cover-up, ordering NDP and Liberal MPs to block the commissioner of the RCMP from testifying about his obstruction.

I have a simple question. What does the Prime Minister have to hide?

● (1455)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that the Conservatives would actually use an issue that was settled years ago. I reconfirm that the RCMP commissioner stated he was “very comfortable” with the decision being made.

While speaking about committee, I find it ironic that the Conservatives are trying to use a closed case to block the investigation of five Conservative members on a lavish trip to London paid for by individuals who want to ensure that pollution is free again.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the Prime Minister, it is corruption and cover-up all the time. This is a Prime Minister who obstructed justice to protect SNC, who fired his attorney general after she spoke truth to power, who obstructed a criminal investigation into his potential criminal wrongdoing, and who has now silenced the RCMP commissioner from testifying at committee about his obstruction.

Again, if the Prime Minister has nothing to hide, then why will he not let the commissioner speak at committee and testify?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that Conservatives had 26 opportunities to bring in the RCMP and bring forward a motion.

What I find interesting is, why are the Conservatives hiding the investigation or the study that members would like to have in regard to their lavish travel to London paid by lobbyists who would like to make pollution free again? There was \$1,800 worth of champagne, at a Savoy restaurant, \$1,000 for a three-course lunch, and \$1,200 at an oyster bar. Perhaps the Conservatives should realize the hypocrisy in terms of their cover-up.

The Speaker: Colleagues, we can see how this works. When one side gets excited, the other side gets excited. We need to exercise a lot of self-restraint in listening to the question as well as the answer.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner of the RCMP appeared on Monday, at the request of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, prepared to testify about the RCMP's investigation into the SNC-Lavalin affair. The commissioner was muzzled. He did not get to say a single word. Why? Because the NDP-Liberal coalition and even the Bloc Québécois voted to adjourn the meeting before the testimony and questions could even begin. It is costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois, which is preventing us from getting to the bottom of another Liberal scandal.

After eight years, why is the Prime Minister still so afraid of the truth?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the champagne Conservatives should take a long, hard look in the mirror when they are using a situation that the Commissioner himself has said is closed. It is a way to obstruct committee from looking into the spending on a lavish trip for five Conservative members paid for by lobbyists who want to make pollution free again.

We want to look into the porterhouse steaks that were consumed, the chateaubriand, the Scottish smoked salmon and \$1,800 worth of champagne. The Conservatives have a lot to hide it seems.

* * *

● (1500)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government is involved in so many scandals that even the Prime Minister cannot keep them straight. Yesterday, in response to an important question about the SNC-Lavalin scandal, he gave an answer related to the \$54-million ArriveCAN scandal. That is how bad things have gotten after eight years of this Liberal government's scandals, ethical breaches and wedge politics.

Why should Canadians keep trusting a government that paid GC Strategies, a two-person firm, \$11 million to develop the ArriveCAN app when the company had no IT expertise? Will the Prime Minister admit that he is not worth the cost?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Conservatives are trying to pivot once again from the fact that those champagne Conservatives are trying to obstruct committee from looking into lobbyists paying for a lavish trip to London, England for five Conservative members, while they dined on a \$1,200 oyster bar and \$1,000 for a three-course lunch. The Conservatives seem to want to distract and hide from the scandals coming from their champagne taste.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when something is not broken, it is better to leave it alone. However, the federal government did the exact opposite by transferring public servants' insurance to Canada Life. It has been four months and people are not being reimbursed for their prescription drugs, their claims for covered care are being denied and they are being treated like numbers by customer service. The result is that the union is talking about people who have been hospitalized because they simply cannot afford to pay for their medications and treatment. It is another Phoenix-type fiasco.

What is the minister doing to force Canada Life to take action?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, all public servants, retirees and their dependants deserve proper support in accessing their benefits. There is no doubt about that. Wait times at the Canada Life call centre are unacceptable. I spoke with Canada Life executives, made them aware of our concerns, and told them again that this is unacceptable. We will continue to work to ensure that everyone can get their benefits.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister said a month ago already, as she is saying again today, that she had reached out to Canada Life several times to express her concerns. This goes well beyond mere concerns when a union is talking about public servants looking for a second job to pay for the care they need. The contract with Canada Life stipulates that the federal government will only begin monitoring service level performance in January 2024. There are people who cannot get the care they need and cannot wait until 2024. This needs to be fixed now.

What is the minister waiting for?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at present, more than 99% of members have already registered with Canada Life, which has escalation procedures in place for urgent situations. The public service health care plan is the largest health care plan in Canada, and we continue to work with Canada Life to ensure that everyone can receive their benefits.

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• (1505)

*[English]***HOUSING**

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Remembrance Day ceremony in Halifax has had to move out this year because a tent city has overtaken its usual grounds. After eight years of the Liberal government, things are so broken in Canada

that the housing crisis uprooting Canadians has now also uprooted at least one city's Remembrance Day ceremony from its own home.

People cannot afford homes, and now they cannot even properly honour our veterans. Will the Prime Minister finally admit that after eight years, he has no plan to fix what he has broken and that he is just not worth the cost?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons we are dealing with such extraordinary housing challenges, including those that are impacting the country's most vulnerable, is that successive governments for decades made no effort to invest in affordable housing. For the entire decade the hon. member's party was in power, it did nothing to build housing for low-income Canadians.

We have changed that over the last number of years specifically to address homelessness, which is a crisis for those experiencing it. We doubled support through the Reaching Home program. The member voted against it. I cannot accept criticisms from him when he does everything to get in the way of the supports that would help the very people that form the subject of his question.

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CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Fred, a senior, wrote to me and the minister, concerned about the cost of everyday items. The margarine he previously used cost him 88¢, and after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, it now costs \$4.49, an increase of over 400%. I cannot believe it is not butter.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Will he surprise all of us, show compassion, make life more affordable for seniors and axe the carbon tax?

Oral Questions

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things seniors rely upon is the CPP, and the Leader of the Opposition claimed yesterday that the Conservatives have always defended the CPP. However, he opposed our government's improvements to the CPP. He called the CPP an "increased burden of government". In fact, one of his very first speeches as an MP was an attack on the CPP. He said, "If I could invest the premiums I am forced to pay into CPP myself...I would [get] a much higher rate of return". That was in Bitcoin. No wonder it took him a month to answer Conservative attacks on the CPP.

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal government first tripled the carbon tax. Then it said that was not enough and brought in a second carbon tax. The effects of both taxes will increase the cost of gas another 61¢ per litre.

The NDP-Liberal government will quadruple the carbon tax. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

When will the costly coalition take real action and axe the carbon taxes so Canadians do not have to choose between heating and eating?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is flooding my inbox right now is anxiety among seniors and young people who are paying into the CPP. They express anxiety that that CPP will be there for them in their retirement. The member of Parliament and his 29 Conservative colleagues have a responsibility to respond to 94% of Albertans who want the Canada pension plan secured. Their reckless approach is simply not worth the risk.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has spent the past few years repairing the damage caused by the Conservative budget cuts to the Canadian Coast Guard, cuts that our coastal regions have not forgotten.

Can the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard update the House on our recent investments in this institution that continues to save lives along our coastal areas?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all remember the nine years of darkness of the Harper years, when the Conservatives closed the Coast Guard stations. It was unforgivable and irresponsible. Last Friday, I was in the Gaspé to announce the construction of the Coast Guard's very first hybrid ship. It is a great project that will stimulate the economy.

The choice cannot be clearer. Between a party that has budget cuts in its DNA and a party that invests in our regions, I know who I would trust to get me out of the water.

• (1510)

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Liberal-NDP government is going to quadruple the carbon tax. Higher fuel taxes cause higher food prices. As a result, there is a 70% increase in food bank usage since before the pandemic in Newfoundland and Labrador. A heart-breaking one-third are children. For folks back home, the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

Will the NDP-Liberal coalition accept that its carbon tax is making Canadians choose between food and heat?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the CPP. As a new MP, the Leader of the Opposition claimed he could get a much higher return than the CPP Investment Board. I invite him to drop off his resume at One Queen Street East in Toronto and pitch them his ideas on crypto.

I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition finally listened to Canadians on something that his Conservative colleagues attacked: the CPP.

On this side of the House, we have put more money into the pockets of seniors. We have returned the age of retirement to 65. We will always defend the CPP.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals may think they do that, but they voted 24 times to increase the price of everything on everyone.

The Liberal-NDP government's plan to triple the carbon taxes on Nova Scotians apparently is not hurting enough. After eight years, it now plans to quadruple carbon taxes on Nova Scotians. It is an NDP-Liberal quadruple whammy. The destruction of powerful paycheques and carbon taxes have destroyed the dreams of home ownership. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Will the Liberals admit that their carbon taxes are making Canadians choose between heating, eating and owning a home?

Oral Questions

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely clear that when it comes to supporting the people in our home province of Nova Scotia, the solutions lie on this side of the House. I remember attending a ceremony in the member's riding when we shared details of a \$300-million project that would be creating jobs at the Michelin plant in his riding.

From the time I arrived in the House, we have been advancing measures that are putting more money in the pockets of our constituents in Nova Scotia. We ended the practice of sending child care cheques to millionaires to put more money in the pockets of ordinary people. We continue to advance measures to protect seniors' pensions. Now we are putting measures on the table that are going to build more homes at prices ordinary people can afford. That member and his caucus colleagues vote against it every single time.

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the NDP-Liberal government wanted to triple the carbon tax. Then it said that was not enough and it brought in a second carbon tax that will add 61¢ per litre to gasoline back home. The NDP-Liberal government will quadruple the carbon tax. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Will the Liberals accept that their carbon tax is making Canadians choose between eating and heating?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think what Canadians want is to be part of a 21st-century planet that is livable for everyone and where people can have well-paying jobs.

It just so happens that the International Energy Agency published its latest report two days ago, which shows that global oil consumption will peak in 2025, that global emissions will peak this year and that investment in clean technologies has doubled in the last 10 years.

This is where the future lies. This is where we are working to bring Canada and Canadians. Unfortunately, the Conservatives are standing in the way.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farmers and ranchers in western Canada have been rocked by natural disasters over the past few years, and this year was no different. From floods and hail to drought and fires, western Canadian producers have faced a number of challenges this growing season and need support. These men and women grow and produce our food. They are the forward-thinking and innovative leaders in our communities.

While the Conservatives continue to deny and ignore the realities of climate change, can our minister please update this House on how the government is supporting western Canadian farmers and ranchers through these challenging times?

• (1515)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the last few years

have been tough on western Canadian farmers. I have been a farmer myself. I know bad years can have a negative effect on the bottom line and on one's mental health.

Last week, we announced \$219 million of federal funding to support our western Canadian farmers with costs related to drought conditions and wildfires. We have stood by and will continue to make sure we stand by our Canadian farmers and ranchers.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, a British member of Parliament who travelled to Canada was detained three times and interrogated by Air Canada personnel. He said he was told it was because his name was Mohammad. Sadly, this is reflective of the travel experiences of far too many racialized people.

Air Canada says that it followed every single protocol. Is this true? If not, what is the minister doing to ensure this never happens to anyone ever again?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second I was made aware, I contacted Air Canada. Air Canada has apologized. Apologizing was the right thing to do.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the horrific events in Israel and Gaza should not be used to support a particular cause. Innocent people have been killed. No one should use those deaths to justify more violence. Calling for a boycott of a Toronto business just because it is owned by a Jew is repulsive. Defacing offices of MPs or MPPs serves nothing. Hatred and intimidation do not advance the search for a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

Can the Minister of Public Safety ensure that Canada's hate laws are being upheld and that violent protests are not being permitted?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing in the wake of the violence in the Middle East manifesting in this country in terms of divisions, intolerance and active hatred is repulsive. It is, frankly, un-Canadian.

I agree completely with the member who just raised the question that these are things we must all stand against. Incidents of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and intolerance toward one another are not what we stand for as a people or as a Parliament. We have conviction now more than ever in our belief that combatting hatred is a task for all of us, one we must stand united on and must pursue with vigour.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:18 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Call in the members.

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 435*)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blaikie
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genius
Gill	Gladu
Goodridge	Gray

Hallan	Hoback
Hughes	Idlout
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lehoux	Lemire
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Lloyd
Lobb	MacGregor
Maguire	Majumdar
Martel	Masse
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McPherson	Melillo
Michaud	Moore
Morantz	Motz
Muys	Nater
Normandin	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Poilievre	Redekopp
Reid	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shipley	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudel	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zarrillo
Zimmer— 165	

Routine Proceedings

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blois	Boissonnault
Bradford	Brière
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Drouin	Dubourg

Business of the House

Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Gaheer	Gainey
Gerretsen	Gould
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Iacono	Ien
Jaczek	Jones
Jowhari	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Miller
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sorbara	Sousa
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zuberi— 150

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron	Fry
Joly	Liepert
McGuinty	Ng
Plamondon	Rempel Garner— 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

The member from Regina raised a very good point, and it has been made before by a colleague in the House. I thank the colleague for making this point. When it comes to votes, I ask that colleagues follow the instructions of their whips and their House leaders so that they either quickly move out of the House to conduct

their vote electronically or take their seats as the two main whips take their seats. This is so that it is very clear who is going to be participating in the vote in person.

There will be a time when the matter will be a matter of confidence, and it is important that the Table and the Chair are entirely convinced of the eligibility of members to vote. I ask members to please, when there is a deferred vote after question period, make themselves scarce and leave the room if they do not wish to participate in the vote in person.

I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 13 minutes.

One of my favourite times of the week is inviting the hon. House leader of the official opposition to ask the Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am hoping the government House leader can update the House as to the business of the House for the rest of this week and into next week, and if she can let the opposition know the degree of certainty for the calendar.

We have recently had a few changes after the Thursday statement, and we do have a constituency week coming up, along with some supply days that we are expecting. Therefore, I just want to know if the House leader can confirm that this is now set in stone for the next few weeks once she updates the House.

● (1535)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to commit to setting anything in stone, but I will commit to it being very likely that this will indeed be the calendar for next week.

This afternoon, we will continue report stage debate of Bill C-34 concerning the Canada Investment Act. Tomorrow, we will begin second reading of Bill C-52, the air transportation accountability act. On Monday and Wednesday, we will return to debate on Bill C-34.

Next Tuesday and Thursday shall be allotted days. I know that is what the member is particularly interested in. I am sure it is the best part of his week; I am not sure it is the best part of my week.

I would also like to inform the House that the Minister of Veterans Affairs will be delivering a ministerial statement on Thursday, November 2 to acknowledge the beginning of Veterans' Week.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to share with my colleagues some of the other ideas that emerged during the work of the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. One of the most important changes for which the Bloc Québécois vigorously advocated involves transparency provisions.

I know how important transparency is to you, Mr. Speaker. We could have included other provisions, but I sense that you are particularly attentive to transparency. It is an important concern that witnesses have mentioned, and it has been reflected in the technical documents that have been presented to us.

I stressed the need for greater transparency in the national security decision-making mechanisms. I went to the right school, some might say, and I think I have colleagues who have influenced me, in particular the member for Joliette, whom I would like to recognize.

This includes more information from agencies responsible for decisions related to national security. It is a legitimate request to want to understand how the decisions are made and what criteria are taken into account.

The minister's obligation to publicly present his or her decisions is significant progress in fostering public understanding. This will allow citizens, businesses and stakeholders to better understand the process and the motivations underlying national security decisions.

We remain firmly committed to acting in the best interest of the Quebec nation, ensuring that our national interests are preserved in harmony with our democratic values and our quest for an open and transparent governance.

We think it is a shame that the government restricted and limited the amendments to Bill C-34 to the single issue of national security related to foreign investments.

I think there was some consensus around the table with respect to the fact that the government missed an opportunity to review the thresholds for mergers and acquisitions, especially when it comes to guaranteeing that the foreign investments have a net benefit for Canada.

We therefore support this bill and will continue to demand loud and clear that the government introduce a new bill to also review the other sections of the Investment Canada Act.

That said, it was high time to address national security issues related to foreign investment.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member just now and before question pe-

Government Orders

riod, and my primary concern is dealing with foreign interference, which, as I said previously, takes many different forms. What we are debating today is from an investor's perspective, and that is the reason we need to modernize the act after 14 years, given AI and technology, to protect our industries here in Canada and to make sure that interests here are served, first and foremost.

I wonder whether the member could provide his thoughts with regard to the passage of the legislation. Would the Bloc like to see any other things in the bill apart from the amendments we are debating today?

● (1540)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the Bloc Québécois intends to vote in support of the bill. However, the main amendments that we wanted to include were not compatible with the bill. From the outset, when we were talking about modernizing the Investment Canada Act, the Liberals should have included this notion of revising thresholds.

Let us take COVID-19, for example, with our airlines. When the value of our airlines plummeted to the point where they finally fell below the mandatory review threshold, which was triggered, foreign companies—Chinese, American and others—were able to buy up flagships like Air Transat for a song.

The consequences would have been disastrous. What we need to do with the Investment Canada Act is to go deeper into the issue of thresholds. All the same, I am delighted that transparency has increased. Let us take the example of Lowe's, a classic in Quebec, with the sale of Rona. We never knew what the compromises were. Five years on, we realize that these compromises may not have been respected.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a good speech.

Before question period, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government said that Canada was a good place for investors.

However, investors keep leaving. There are a lot of rules, like those arising from the passage of Bill C-69, the carbon tax is too high, and we have measures that do not exist in other countries.

Why is there nothing in this bill to deal with that problem?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for speaking French and for the effort that she makes. I commend her for that.

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That is indeed a major problem. How can we bring in foreign capital to grow our economy? What was of particular interest to me in the context, and I had the support of my Conservative colleagues in that regard, was how to regulate critical and strategic minerals, particularly when it comes to the electrification of transport. How can we be sure to maintain ownership of our critical resources for the sake of national security? About 30 of them were targeted, including lithium.

Imagine if our companies had to depend on Chinese lithium. In theory, there have been acquisitions by Canadian companies, but they were overseas and bought back by the Chinese. We were told that that was of no value, so there was no need to conduct a review under the Investment Canada Act. Imagine that this happens and we do not take action. I think that we would want to protect our interests in such a situation.

When it comes to the electrification of transport in the new economy, we need ownership of our resources. If we want people to invest here, then we need to own our resources.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague brought up excellent points. I wonder what he thinks about the fact that, in natural resources, we have had Vale, Rio Tinto, Xstrata and United States Steel take over the Canadian companies Inco, Alcan, Falconbridge and Stelco. What happened? We gave up all of our natural resources to foreign companies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, one of the dangers is indeed investing heavily at the end of the supply chain.

We are happy to see companies like Stellantis and Northvolt investing here, but we are at the end of the supply chain. No one is investing at the beginning, in other words, close to our mining companies, so we can protect our resources. We need to unblock the entire supply chain to ensure that we put lithium from Abitibi—Témiscamingue or Quebec in our cars instead of Chinese lithium.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-34, as well as to the amendments being proposed today, amendments that are actually pretty important to consider. I will be considering them, as will the NDP.

The amendments pertain to the independence of the minister, in particular where the minister could have ultimate authority with less cabinet oversight. As industry critic for about 17 of my 21 years here, I can think of some deals that were not even looked at by certain ministers. I am not sure whether this would solve it, because I know they actually brought some of these things to the cabinet table in successive Conservative and Liberal governments and they were allowed to be taken over.

The reason I asked my previous question about natural resources, and I want to touch a little on that, is that the companies in the mining industry that are now owned by foreign conglomerates used to be Canadian champions. Now, the battery supply and different minerals necessary for electrification of vehicles in our corner of the world are very much affected by that. It is the same with the inde-

pendence. What is also important and has not been taken much into account by either of these two parties in the last number of years is the number of tax subsidies, reductions and investments that those companies have gotten from Liberals and Conservatives that let them actually go out the door.

I want to talk about a more recent case, and then I want to get to natural resources. The most recent one is Nemark in Windsor, which is the Mexican-based company that got a series of investments. It was bought out, previous to that. It got a series of subsidies from the federal and provincial governments of the day, a federal Liberal government and a provincial Conservative government. There were no conditions on the investment of those subsidies. They went towards a new transmission update, a new motor update and other types of innovation. They then took that and put it in Mexico, and closed the Windsor plant down. We had to fight to get the workers' wages back. Our bankruptcy and solvency laws are actually very much against workers right now. We lost this opportunity, but we funded the loss of our opportunity after we let the company be taken over.

The reason I talk a little about the auto sector is that we had to have some foresight. Successive Conservative and Liberal governments have never had that. Some Canadians might remember Inco, Alcan, Falconbridge and Stelco. They are all gone. All were Canadian giants in natural resources, and the industry is now owned by Vale, Rio Tinto, Xstrata, and U. S. Steel. Some have even changed since then. All were foreign interventions in the Canadian system of natural resources.

Who owns the natural resources? We do, as Canadians. It is a privilege to be able to mine those resources. We are the ones who actually have the asset. It is no different actually from the spectrum that we have for our telecommunications industry, where successive Conservative and Liberal governments have taken in \$21 billion from taxpayers and allowed companies like Shaw, Telus, Bell and others to charge some of the highest rates. From the year 2000 to this past year, we actually took in, under successive Conservative and Liberal government, \$21 billion in spectrum auction of the airwaves above us that Canadians own. Then we let them charge us some of the highest prices in the world, with some of the worst practices.

That is important, because natural resources are at a premium now, especially when we are looking at lithium ion and different types of minerals related to the new economy and the emerging auto industry in electrification. It actually goes further than that. There was a big loss with respect to getting the next chips and innovation related to the electronics industry. The shortages were high. The U.S. is spending billions of dollars in investment. In microchips, we were actually a leader at one time, in Mississauga. We let that be bought out, closed down and shipped over to Taiwan. All of it was approved under Liberal and Conservative governments in the past, after policies of reducing corporate taxes and giving subsidies with no conditions and terms. Companies were bought up, closed down and, with less competition, moved out of the country.

• (1545)

Finally, and I have raised this in the past, when China Minmetals was on the lookout to buy Canadian natural resources in the oil patch, what is interesting about that is at that time, back in, I think, 2004, there was no national security review screening, and that was okay, if members can believe it. Paul Martin was the finance minister at the time, and he later became Prime Minister. It was okay with the Conservatives and Liberals for China's national industries to own Canadian natural resources, but it was not okay for Canadians to own Petro-Canada, so we sold off our shares in Petro-Canada. We took a bath on it because six months later, the prices skyrocketed, at a time when it was okay for China to invest. All the records are here. All the documents are here. At the same time, we could not have a national champion like Petro-Canada, heaven forbid, but at the same time we brought in investments from China. Now the Liberals are talking about concerns and reservations, but we do not have those resources under control anymore.

We are looking at the same thing with competition right now. If we look at the frustrations in the grocery industry and all the different consumer industries, they are of concern. There is a pattern here. All these industries I have talked about had to be approved by the minister and cabinet, so I am empathetic to the Conservatives' amendment here for a cabinet review, but when we have a party that is destined ideologically to sell off Canada, it does not matter if it is one person or 12 in the room making the decision to sell off those jobs and those investments. That is the problem.

When we look at some of the most historic ones, such as Lowe's buying Rona, how well did that work out? Now it is going back to the Rona brand, because people trusted it because it was a Canadian company. What did we do? We allowed Lowe's and basically Home Depot to be the competitors, and we eliminated the Canadian competitor by allowing it to be bought up. What Rona got as a condition and term was a supposed corporate office, I cannot remember if it was going to be in Quebec City or Montreal, but in one of those two places. We know that was a facade.

At the same time, we saw it in the retail sector, which is just as important, with electronics. We used to have Future Shop. It is gone. Now we have Best Buy, and that is it. It only had a limited market to begin with, but on top of that, Best Buy said it would sell off the Canadian component as well so that it would have no competition. If we wonder why we have less competition, it is because ministers and multiple cabinets are ideologically driven, not from a business sense, by competition or all the other things that are im-

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portant to the consumer society. The United States has laws preventing that from happening. What we have are ideologically driven governments that want to sell off Canada and say it is okay because that is the way of doing business. However, it is not the way of doing business anywhere else but Canada. The United States has anti-competitive laws for those things that break up companies like Microsoft and others when they have gone too far. We do not have any of that stuff here.

There are so many cases it is unbelievable, but another one I want to note is Zellers and Target. It is one of the most eye-popping ones. During the retail market struggles when companies were losing money, Zellers was still making a profit, even with a union that provided benefits for its employees. What did we do? We opened the floodgates. We let Target come right in and take over Zellers and close some of them down. A few months after that, Target realized that maybe it was not so hot for the Canadian market, and after about a year it ended up closing those stores. The workers were gone. The pensions were gone. The benefits were gone. The stores were gone. Zellers is trying to make a return now, but what does it matter when we had a minister, cabinet ministers and parties in power who were ideologically driven to basically give Canada and the investments away?

It is not the same free market as in the United States. I live close to the U.S., and I know it has much stronger laws that protect consumers than in Canada. It is about time we got them here.

• (1550)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Windsor West has been a long-time member of the industry committee and has a good knowledge of the various industrial sectors.

I want to ask him about the impact of foreign ownership on certain segments of the industrial sector. For example, almost every company in the steel or aluminum industry is foreign-owned, and none of those steel and aluminum sector companies have had any capacity during the last 20 years. The stagnation we see with this foreign ownership does not impact the economic security of Canada, which can also be related, in one way or another, to the national security of Canada.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been on this committee and others as well. His question is a really good one, and I really appreciate it.

We can look at national security and a number of different things through the lens of Stelco in Hamilton, which was bought up by U.S. Steel. It actually moved some of the operations to Zug Island in Detroit, where its operations caused what was then called the Windsor hum, even though it came from Detroit. The operations there made vibrations and problems.

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I will conclude by saying it is a great example, because we gave up the capacity to grow and expand our steel and aluminum industry, and then the company pulled it out because they wanted less competition. The end result was that we had a painful exercise with workers who lost pensions, jobs and so forth.

That is why I appreciate this question, because it is about national security, and it is also about personal security for our workers who are actually in these sectors.

• (1555)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the clause-by-clause study at the industry committee, the government members voted against a Conservative amendment that would subject state-owned enterprises in countries like China to a mandatory national security review.

I would like to know what the member's thoughts are as to why the government would vote against such a common-sense amendment that would protect Canadian assets, especially in minerals and natural resources.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I was perplexed by that.

I want to thank the member, who actually came to the committee. The committee is known to try to work together to improve the bill.

There are several amendments in here, and I want to commend the member for working through a process where one of his amendments that was supposed to go through, was sabotaged.

People should know that the member brought forth a compromise, a specific related amendment that really should be in his name. I want to say publicly that I appreciated that approach.

I do not know why they would have these mandatory things not necessarily part of it right now, especially because there has been growing consensus.

I referenced China Minmetals in the past, but now we have come to a point where people understand that the national security clause is a paramount part of what we do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his impassioned speech.

I would like to know whether he would be open to creating another bill or at least finding some way to do more to protect our high-tech sectors as well as the head offices of our small businesses. What I would like to say to my colleague is that the Quebec economy in particular is made up largely of SMEs. The thresholds are not reviewed very often.

Does the member think it is important to try to protect our small businesses?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, this is an excellent question as well, and I will tell members why.

The small and medium-sized businesses that the member references often get out of the discussion points, but they are also some of the start-ups, the other ones we are trying to incentivize to get to

the next level, from small to medium to growing. Then what happens is they are gobbled up. I would be open to looking at that.

I think the member brings up an excellent point that gets really lost. We are spending a lot of time, money and energy in proponents to help venture capitalism and grow Canadian companies, companies in Quebec as well. The member brings up an excellent point. Sometimes we do those investments, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, and then they get gobbled up later and that is at a discount for those foreign nationals.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-34, an act to amend the Investment Canada Act.

Today the House of Commons will vote unanimously to support this bill's objectives. This bill was studied at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, and we encourage those members to send this bill to the Senate for its consideration.

Members all know very well this legislation plays an important role in our economy and that it helps in making Canada a destination of choice for foreign investments. This legislation will ensure there are favourable conditions for a trade based on a stable regime and clear regulation.

This legislation encourages economic growth and employment. The legislation allows for a government intervention only if an investment would harm Canada's national security. Bill C-34 allows the government to act rapidly if the circumstances require it, and this is exactly what we intend to do with these proposed amendments.

In fact, it is clear the time has come to modernize the ICA and ensure Canada is aligned with the rest of the world. Our industry remains one of the most dynamic in the world, but as members all know, Canada is facing unprecedented geostrategic challenges and national security issues.

Canada's foreign investment regime must adapt to the speed of innovation. In recent years, intangible assets in the knowledge economy, like intellectual property and data, have grown in importance in defining Canada's economic strength and at the same time pose new challenges in terms of how these are to be managed to ensure the benefits accrue to Canada and Canadians.

Our government recognizes the value of the intangible economy, its growth and the relevant opportunities for all Canadians. These new innovations are driving new ways of doing business and with huge opportunities for Canadians. Our government will support this growth as it helps drive Canada's economy and supports highly skilled, well-paying jobs.

To do so, tools such as the ICA must also be modernized to offer additional protections considering changing geopolitical and technological advancements, and to prevent hostile actors from exploiting Canada's expertise and capacity for innovation.

Geopolitical risks and instability are now fixtures in our operating environment. Hostile state and non-state actors pursue deliberate strategies to acquire goods, technologies and intellectual property. They do so in ways that are fundamentally incompatible with Canada's interests and principles. We also know that foreign investments can be used as a conduit for foreign influence activities that seek to weaken our norms and institutions. The nexus between technology and national security is clear and here to stay.

Rapid technological innovation has provided Canada with new opportunities for economic growth, but it has also given rise to new and difficult policy challenges. More and more, Canada is the target of hostile threats. This threatens both our national security and our prosperity simultaneously. That is why our government must adapt our tools to better defend ourselves against current and future threats.

All over the world, foreign investments have been the subject of many investigations, with a specific focus on national security. These investigations focused on several angles, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the security implications of climate change, disruptions to global supply chains and shifting geopolitical considerations. Hence, by amending this legislation to stop the threats of tomorrow, Canada will remain a destination of choice for foreign investments.

The time is right to pursue modernization of the Investment Canada Act. Now more than ever, we need to make sure we are doing everything we can to foster an innovative, healthy and growing economy. The guidance and decisions issued over the past several years make clear that some transactions, particularly those by state-owned or state-influenced investors, may be motivated by non-commercial imperatives that could harm Canada's national security.

Allow me to repeat that these types of investments in sectors deemed sensitive currently face enhanced scrutiny under the ICA. Our government believes an effective review regime must be robust, transparent and flexible to adapt to a changing world and that it is now time to make these changes. That is why we stand today in favour of this bill, which represents the most significant update to the Investment Canada Act since 2009.

• (1600)

We are making important moves now to review and modernize key aspects of the act, while ensuring that the overarching framework to support needed foreign investment to grow our economy remains strong and open. Our record as a government makes it abundantly clear that, where national security is concerned, we will not shy away from decisive action and that our assessment of risk keeps pace with evolving economic and geopolitical considerations.

The ICA already gives us much of the authority we need to intercede and address national security risk that can arise from foreign investment. These amendments build on the solid foundation and will improve the mechanics around the national security review of investments.

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Now is the time to act decisively so we can make sure that Canada will continue to gain the economic benefits of investments while strengthening our ability to address threats to our country and ensure its future prosperity. It is clear to everyone that the proposed amendments in Bill C-34 would ensure an important equilibrium. They would protect Canadians and Canadian enterprises while making sure that investors will continue to view Canada as their first destination of choice.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing that is happening in Canada is that hundreds of millions of dollars of investment are leaving the country because we do not have a competitive landscape here. We have higher taxes, carbon tax 1.0 and 2.0, long approval processes in our regulatory process and uncertainty. We see that we would have to give away \$31 billion to incite people to come to Canada and open up a business. Why was none of that put into the bill?

• (1605)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, the amendments to the act are really designed to ensure national security and that Canadian interests are reflected in the act. When foreign investment is coming into the country, it would be subject to a national security review. We have actually seen quite a significant amount of that coming into Canada in recent years. I think giving the minister the powers and authority to be able to react and trigger those reviews are extremely important to protecting our national interests.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague is very simple. We sat on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs together for several months, and in light of everything we learned about ineffective measures for countering foreign interference, when we talk about industrial looting in this case, we want to ensure the viability of our industry.

Based on the conclusions we have drawn in recent months, can my colleague confirm that this amendment and this bill are valid?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, the amendments that are being proposed by this side of the House are designed to ensure that the bill is consistent. They are amendments that were actually sub-amendments in our committee put forth by the Conservative Party and the NDP. In essence, the amendments we are making are to ensure that the bill is consistent. I agree with the hon. member that, for our work on the procedure and House affairs committee on tackling foreign interference in Canada, this bill is certainly a step in the right direction. It would essentially subject a lot of the foreign investment in Canada to a national security review, which we can all agree is a positive step in the right direction.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify two specific amendments that were actually rejected by the government. Regarding subsection 15(a) of the act, we wanted to list specific sectors necessary to preserve Canada's national security rather than the systematic approach that was recommended by the public servants. We wanted to do that specifically in relation to the testimony given by the member for Whitby. We need to be very careful in light of the strategic and geopolitical issues we are facing. The second amendment relates to section 25.4 of the act, and that would have allowed the Government of Canada to maintain ownership of intangible assets that have been developed in whole or in part by taxpayer-funded research.

Why did the government vote against those two common-sense amendments?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, I am not really sure what the member is referring to, because the amendments that we have put forward and we are debating are ones that make the bill consistent. There were subamendments put before the committee that were from the Conservative Party and NDP.

I do not know what the member is bringing forward, but my understanding is that the additional amendment that the Conservatives brought forward is designed to gut this bill and take away the minister's power and discretion in order to trigger a national security review. That would greatly reduce the speed at which that can happen, which I think is contrary to the whole intent of this particular piece of legislation.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): We have time for a short 15-second question.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you picked the wrong member for a short 15-second question. You know me. The time is already almost up.

We welcome the progress and the improvements that the bill makes to the current act, but why are the rules still so slack, and why is there so little scrutiny?

[English]

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, you will not be surprised, that, unfortunately, I disagree with the hon. member that this is slack. I

do not think that is the case. This is a very strong piece of legislation that was agreed to by committee members.

• (1610)

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-34, otherwise known as the national security review of investments modernization act, seeks to update and strengthen the Investment Canada Act with the aim of protecting Canada's national security when it comes to foreign investments in our country.

As tensions rise around the world, Canadians, our businesses, our intellectual property, our private data and our natural resources must be protected from bad actors who seek to undermine our sovereignty and exert influence on our institutions and way of life in Canada. For eight years, the NDP-Liberal government has not taken sensitive transactions seriously and has failed to conduct full reviews of transactions involving Chinese state-owned enterprises, which has seriously jeopardized the security of Canadians and our government.

According to Statistics Canada, China's share of Canadian assets under foreign control doubled from 1.9% to 3.8% between 2015 and 2019. Large shares of key industries are also under foreign control, including 40% of all assets in Canada's oil and gas industry, 48% of wholesale trade, 44% of manufacturing, 30% of mining and quarrying and 25% of professional, scientific and technical services. With so much of Canada's economy controlled by foreign companies and governments, it is crucial that we ensure foreign investments do not pose a threat to our national security and prevent bad actors from weaponizing Canada's economy and our own resources against us.

Let us take a look at some recent examples of investments the government missed.

One example is the Neo Lithium Corp. and Zijin Mining. In March 2021, the minister of industry updated and enhanced guidelines for transactions involving critical minerals and state-owned enterprises. Just 10 months later, the minister ignored those new guidelines, allowing a Canadian mining company, Neo Lithium Corp., to be acquired by Zijin Mining, a Chinese state-owned enterprise, without a security review.

Another example is Sinclair Technologies and Hytera Communications. In December 2022, the RCMP awarded a contract to supply sensitive hardware for its communications systems to Sinclair Technologies, which is directly linked to Hytera Communications, a company partially owned by the Chinese government and a major supplier of China's public security ministry. It was revealed in December 2022 that the CBSA used Hytera's technology and communications equipment in 2017. Hytera has been charged with 21 counts of espionage in the U.S. and banned from doing business in that country. In 2017, when Hytera acquired B.C.-based telecommunications company Norsat International, the parent company of Sinclair Technologies, the minister of industry failed to request a full national security review.

Conservatives have long called on the current government to take swift action to ensure that, any time a foreign state-owned enterprise seeks to invest in a Canadian corporation or asset, the government conducts a thorough review. At second reading of this bill, Conservatives voted to advance the proposed legislation to the industry committee, upon which I sit, with the clear expectation that significant amendments would be made. At industry committee, Conservatives tabled a number of amendments to ensure these reviews would take place and to strengthen this legislation as a whole.

Some of the amendments tabled by my colleagues and me at industry were adopted. However, many more were voted down by the government.

We wanted to modify the definition of “state-owned enterprises” to include any company or entity headquartered in an authoritarian state. We wanted to list specific sectors necessary to preserve Canada’s national security rather than the systematic approach applied or recommended by public servants. We wanted to exempt non-Canadian Five Eyes intelligence state-owned enterprises from the national security review process, to prevent an overly broad review process for an ally such as the United States or Australia. We wanted to allow the Government of Canada to maintain ownership of intangible assets that have been developed, in whole or in part, by taxpayer-funded dollars. The committee members rejected those things.

We wanted to allow the minister to go back and review past state-owned acquisitions through the national security review process, allowing for a flexible review process. They rejected that ministerial power.

• (1615)

We know that public servants do take a risk-averse approach in crafting regulations and providing advice during the legislative process. That is not necessarily a bad thing. That is a good thing. However, politicians must be willing to make the tough decisions, weighing the potential benefits against the repercussions of any decision.

Going back to that first rejected amendment, Conservatives moved to include companies headquartered in an authoritarian state in the definition of state-owned enterprises to ensure that they are automatically subject to security reviews. We just want to protect our sovereignty.

Public servants warned against calling out certain nations like this, as it could conflict with WTO obligations. However, when we look at the 2019 annual report from the national security committee of Parliament, NSICOP, it highlighted activities carried out by the People’s Republic of China in Canada, stating, “they are a clear threat to the security of Canada.” The report also stated that “foreign interference represents a significant threat to Canada’s society and fundamental institutions.”

The government’s own Indo-Pacific strategy reads:

China has benefitted from the rules-based international order to grow and prosper, but it is now actively seeking to reinterpret these rules to gain greater advantage. China’s assertive pursuit of its economic and security interests, advancement of unilateral claims, foreign interference and increasingly coercive treatment of oth-

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er countries and economies have significant implications in the region, in Canada and around the world.

Despite all that, the Liberals and the Bloc members voted down our amendment. Frankly, it is not surprising, given how long this government has ignored the 2019 NSICOP report, which called for a foreign agent registry, and given the fact that our Prime Minister has said that he admires the basic dictatorship of China.

The question I want the government members to answer is this: Do they really believe that, without the amendments we put forward in good faith, which they rejected, this bill is as strong as it could be to protect Canadian assets, companies and, most importantly, our sovereignty? I do not believe they can answer with a yes.

Thankfully, a few of our common-sense Conservative amendments were passed.

Number one was to reduce the threshold to trigger a national security review from \$512 million to zero for any investment by a state-owned enterprise. I think if there is one thing to note from the work the Conservative Party did it would be our standing up for Canadian sovereignty by changing this fundamental aspect of the Investment Canada Act. Moving forward, when this is passed, when China is looking strategically to take an asset in Canada, say mining rights or a small mine that would fall under the threshold, which I believe this year is at \$512 million, that strategic move to try to make its way into the Canadian economy would be subject to a security review. That would be thanks to the hard work of the Conservative members.

Number two was to ensure that items reviewable under the national security review process would include acquisitions of any assets by state-owned enterprises. Number three was to work to ensure that an automatic national security review would be conducted whenever a company had previously been convicted of corruption charges. Number four would require the minister to conduct a national security review by changing “may” to “shall” to ensure a review is triggered whenever it is in the review threshold.

That brings us to today. Conservatives have brought forward a common-sense amendment here at report stage that would protect the system of checks and balances in place on the minister’s power to undertake, or not undertake, a national security review. Our amendment would remove clause 15 of Bill C-34, which would revert the language back to the existing text in the Investment Canada Act. This would ensure that cabinet continues to play an active role in ensuring regional representation and in making major decisions about foreign investment in our country.

In conclusion, I understand what the Liberals are trying to do here by streamlining decisions through the minister of industry and the minister of public safety, but we must ensure that regional representation plays a role in national security reviews moving forward.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the amendment to bring the threshold to zero dollars with respect to state-owned enterprises.

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I would like to ask my hon. colleague's opinion about the investments done by multinational companies where they come and capture an entire sector, as it is today with the steel and aluminum sector being entirely foreign owned. They just become the branch office of the foreign multinationals, focusing only on the North American markets, and never attempting to export the talent, resources and expertise that is available in Canada to the countries with which we have free trade agreements across the world.

Does that not also fit into the definition of economic security which, in my view, is the same as national security?

• (1620)

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I missed the first part of that question, but I will note that the member for Nepean actually stood alongside Conservative members in the House during second reading when he called for some of the changes to the national security review.

More broadly to his point, I think when we look at the Investment Canada Act, the Government of Canada needs to be looking very closely at protecting strategic interests, and that is what we were trying to do. That is not just from foreign state-owned actors, but that does include multinational companies as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague was criticizing the Bloc Québécois for voting against the Conservative amendments. I just want to make it clear that the Conservative amendments were intended to label just about every state-owned enterprise not run by our Five Eyes partners as hostile.

I do not know if he is aware that 40% of European investments made in Canada are made in Quebec. One example is Airbus, which builds Airbus A220s in Mirabel in partnership with the Quebec government. We would have looked pretty silly if the Conservative amendments had been adopted.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, the question in the House today is whether the Bloc Québécois will protect Quebec sovereignty and support the Conservative amendment, which will keep regional representation in cabinet rather than leaving it all in the hands of a single minister. Imagine if a minister from British Columbia could make a decision for the Quebec nation without cabinet members from Quebec having any say in it.

The Bloc Québécois should vote with the Conservatives in favour of this amendment to protect sovereignty, not just for Quebecers, but for all of Canada.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier, NDP members were talking about the fact that we have no protections in Canada from extra-large corporations that are making billion of dollars in profits and are basically sucking up all the little guys in this country.

Can the member speak to whether they agree that we should have rules, like the United States does, that would allow us to break up these extra-large oligarchies, which are taking over competition in Canada?

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question regarding the Competition Act, which has been debated very recently in the House of Commons. However, the Investment Canada Act is a bit different than the Competition Act.

What we are focused on here today is ensuring, irrespective of political party, that the Government of Canada has the necessary tools and framework to protect Canadian sovereignty to ensure that our elected officials can make appropriate decisions when foreign investment wants to come into this country and make a decision to ensure that it would be a net benefit gain for Canada when foreign investment dollars come to our wonderful country.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why is it so important that we brought down the threshold from \$512 million to zero?

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, it was so important to reduce the threshold to zero to account for intangible assets, for small mines in the natural resource sector and for businesses that could fall below the threshold, but would ensure a strategic asset for a state-owned enterprise or a foreign government that does not necessarily have the best interests of Canada at heart. What we are doing with this amendment is following along the lines of our other like-minded nations to protect strategic assets in Canada or corporations.

• (1625)

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill C-34, an act to modernize the national security provisions of the Investment Canada Act. We have been clear that we will always welcome foreign investments and trade that encourages economic growth, innovation and employment opportunities in Canada.

At the same time, we know that economic security is national security. That is why this bill, which will amend the Investment Canada Act, would bring forward improvements so our government can act more quickly when required. This legislation would represent the most significant update of the ICA since 2009 and would ensure that we could address changing threats that can arise from foreign investment. While our government continues to welcome foreign direct investment, we are modernizing the ICA framework to ensure Canada's continued prosperity while acting decisively when investments threaten our national security.

Let me first appreciate the fundamental importance of foreign investments to our economy. Canada has a long history of welcoming foreign capital, businesses and expertise, and this openness has played a pivotal role in shaping our nation's growth. Foreign investments are a driving force behind economic development in Canada. They fuel innovation, stimulate job creation and enhance our global competitiveness. Foreign direct investment has enabled us to harness the expertise and resources of international partners, thereby propelling our own industries forward.

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These investments result in the creation of well-paying jobs for Canadians and help diversify our economic landscape. Moreover, they facilitate the transfer of knowledge and best practices, fostering innovation and productivity enhancements. While the economic benefits of foreign investment are undeniable, we must not overlook the critical dimensions of national security. Protecting our sovereignty, infrastructure and sensitive data is paramount. National security is not a matter of choice. It is an unwavering obligation of the government to safeguard the interests and well-being of its citizens.

Over the years, the interconnectedness of our world has increased exponentially. Technology and the flow of capital have become global, creating unprecedented opportunities but also potential vulnerabilities. We cannot afford to be complacent when it comes to the protection of our national interests. While our commitment to an open and welcoming environment for foreign investors remains steadfast, it must coexist with a thorough evaluation of the national security implications that each investment brings with it.

As I said earlier, we welcome foreign investments and trade that encourages economic growth, innovation and employment opportunities in Canada. At the same time, we know that economic security is national security.

In my speech during second reading, I had mentioned the importance of economic security. I would like to touch on that again. The importance of economic security in the context of foreign direct investments cannot be overstated. In the pursuit of economic growth, it is essential that we safeguard against any potential threats to our long-term economic security.

The economic security part primarily concerns the stability and growth of our economy, while the national security part pertains to safeguarding our sovereignty and protection from external threats. Foreign direct investment is a powerful tool for economic growth, but it must be leveraged in a way that ensures that all sectors of our economy continue to thrive.

The steel and aluminum industries in Canada, which are 100% foreign-owned, serve as a compelling example of how a failure to address economic security can potentially result in stagnation and even decline. These industries, dominated by foreign ownership, have seen little to no growth in production capacity over the past two decades.

● (1630)

While the rest of the world is expanding its aluminum and steel sectors, Canada's lack of growth and diversification in these areas has hindered our ability to tap into new markets and fully leverage our numerous free trade agreements. In fact, there are hardly any exports from the Canadian steel and aluminum industries outside of North America, even though we have signed 15 free trade agreements with 51 different countries that cover 61% of global GDP.

There is a need for a comprehensive approach to foreign investment that addresses not only national security but also the economic well-being of our nation. We must find a balance that encourages investment while ensuring that the growth and diversification of

our economic sectors continue to contribute to our long-term economic security.

To strike a balance between these economic requirements and national security requirements, we have adopted a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to foreign investments. The approach is rooted in a principled and fact-based assessment of each investment proposal. The key elements of our approach include legislation and regulations, a national security review process, risk assessment, proportionate responses, consultation and transparency.

There are certain principles that guide our approach to foreign investments and national security. The first is sovereignty and security. Canada's sovereignty and national security are not negotiable. The government is committed to safeguarding the country's interests and ensuring that foreign investments do not compromise its security.

The second is openness and partnership. Canada remains open to foreign investments that enhance economic growth and job opportunities. We value international partnerships and the mutual benefits they bring.

The third is transparency and accountability. Our approach is characterized by transparency, accountability and due process. Decisions are made based on facts, expert advice and consultation with relevant parties.

The fourth is proportional response. The response to national security risks is proportionate to the level of risk identified. This ensures that legitimate and beneficial investments are not unfairly restricted.

The fifth is continual adaptation. Our approach is not static. It evolves to address new and emerging challenges. The government remains committed to staying ahead of evolving threats and opportunities.

With this act, we are highlighting that Canada's approach to foreign investments strikes a delicate balance between economic growth and national security. We remain committed to welcoming foreign capital and expertise that contribute to our prosperity, innovation and employment opportunities. However, this commitment is tempered by an unwavering dedication to safeguarding our sovereignty and national security.

The Investment Canada Act, the national security review process and the guiding principles that underlie our approach provide a robust framework to evaluate foreign investments. Through consultation, transparency and a proportional response to identified risks, we ensure that legitimate investments are not discouraged and national security is upheld.

In this era of interconnectedness, Canada's approach is not a mere policy. It is a reflection of our values, our commitment to our citizens and our vision for a prosperous and secure future. We embrace the world while safeguarding our national interests, and in doing so, we strengthen the very foundations of our great nation.

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The ICA provides for both the net benefit and national security reviews of foreign investments into Canada. It was established to provide investor certainty while reserving Canada's ability to block individual investments under specific circumstances. The act is designed to encourage investment, economic growth and employment, only interceding when an investment is not of net benefit to Canada or would harm national security.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a long history of the Liberal government making poor decisions by allowing Chinese Communist state-owned operations to take over operations. I will start with one, Anbang. Members will remember that then minister Navdeep Bains bought health care for seniors in B.C. It was a total disaster thereafter, and during the pandemic, the B.C. government had to step in and take over. For that reason, we do not need one individual making a decision on whether there should be a security review.

Does the member agree with the Conservative amendment that it would be better to have the Governor in Council or all cabinet members weigh in on those kinds of decisions?

• (1635)

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, national security issues due to investments made by certain state-owned enterprises were always a concern. In fact, I think we have gone back and re-reviewed some of the decisions made to allow foreign investments by state-owned enterprises.

My view is that this bill is comprehensive enough to take care of the national security review of any investment made by any foreign entity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I like the parts of my colleague's speech where he says that sovereignty is not for sale and other such things, but that we must not block appropriate investments. I understand the argument.

I would like to know what he thinks about the importance of protecting strategic investments in small business innovation or land ownership, for example. This issue has not been discussed in much detail yet. Some foreign countries are buying land. Farmland comes to mind, but it is not only farmland. There is a speculation problem in this regard.

Does my colleague agree that we should study the issue and try to limit foreign access to our land?

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that any investment that promotes innovation in Canada is always welcome. A question will only come up if that innovation affects national security. If there are any speculative investments, like the purchase of agricultural land just for the sake of holding it, they too should be looked into. At the end of the day, the ownership of limited and productive resources does constitute a national security threat.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member about breaking up large corporations that have limited the competition happening in Canada. My partner from the NDP was speaking about many of

them recently, whether it was Target taking over Zellers or Lowe's taking over Rona. Does the member believe that this is a good idea for Canadian consumers?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, fundamentally, the idea of breaking up private sector companies just because they have gotten large may not be great for the limited market that Canada enjoys. However, more competition in every sector is required and should be encouraged. That is my position.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the importance of trade agreements and foreign investments. When we look at Canada and the number of trade agreements it has achieved over the last number of years, I like to think that has made Canada open to foreign investment. That is one of the reasons we need the modernization of legislation. What are his comments on that?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is exactly right. The 15 trade agreements we have signed with 51 countries, covering 61% of the world's GDP, show the world that Canada is an attractive place for foreign investment.

We want to attract foreign investments that are strategic, that promote innovation and that provide high-quality jobs in Canada. We are always open to that. However, this particular bill focuses on investments that affect national security.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we are talking about Bill C-34 and the final amendments to it. I want to outline briefly, as many others have done, but with my own spin, details on the context of Bill C-34.

We have to look at the economy as it is today, both in Canada and around the world. Twenty or 30 years ago, or even a decade ago, the economy was much different than it is today, both in Canada and around the world. Economies were winning in the 1950s and 1960s if they had a manufacturing base. That was the primary driver of the economy. It was the new economy of the day, as we moved from an agriculture economy to a manufacturing economy.

This has radically changed in the last decade. We have moved to an economy that is largely based on intellectual property. Knowledge is truly power in today's economy. It will determine who are the winners and the losers in the future economic growth of the world.

The 1950s, the 1960s and even the 1970s were characterized by a Cold War, both economically and geopolitically. On the one hand, the Soviet Union was advocating for a centrally planned economy ruled by an authoritarian regime, and on the other hand, the other power, the United States of America, called for a free market system, a system that empowered people around the world to hit their maximum. Our economies and frameworks were built around that.

The challenge today for Canada is that too often our legislation, our frameworks and even our mindsets in certain instances are still back in the sixties, seventies and eighties. We need to adopt a framework. I am pleased the government put Bill C-34 forward, but in some ways it is the exception that proves the rule. When we look at major pieces of legislation, the major frameworks required, unfortunately Canada is falling further and further behind.

If we look at the Income Tax Act, nearly every other OECD country has had a major reform to its taxation regime in the last 40 years. Canada has not. The last time Canada had a major income tax reform was back in the 1970s when the capital gains tax was brought forward. We are not modernizing. We are not keeping up with the rest of the world.

Even Bill C-34 is a dollar short and a day late in many instances, because in some cases the horses are already out of the barn. We have talked about a number of examples, including the lithium mine, which was just rubber-stamped by the government. We have had examples of predatory state-run companies that have walked into our market, purchased our goods and left, with us smiling all along the way. As Canadians, we have to not be afraid to stand up for the Canadian economy and for our fellow Canadians.

We have precious resources, and when I say “resources”, I am sure many members' minds go to our natural resources, which are critical. However, we have a resource that is far more valuable than lithium, gold, platinum or other natural resources we might have. We have the intelligence and ideas of our young and our workers across this country from coast to coast. Right now, we do not have an effective regime to allow those people to be successful here in Canada. We see far too often that our best and brightest, instead of growing great Canadian companies, are taking their ideas abroad, often to the United States of America but also to Europe and other countries, where they are given the opportunity to fully promote and exploit their ideas. We are lacking the intellectual property framework that allows Canadians to be successful.

In Canada, from coast to coast to coast, including in the great province of Quebec, we have some of the best ideas in the world. The difficulty is the transition of those ideas into a commercially viable product. We have resources, which might be gold, lithium or the ideas generated by the great Canadian workforce, and those ideas and resources are among the best in the world and are incredibly valuable. However, what happens far too often in Canada is that we just let them go away, whether it is a lithium mine being sold to state-owned enterprises or our ideas.

• (1640)

Instead of grounding those works in a framework where those individuals can make the most of them, people feel that they cannot make the most of them in Canada because we do not have intellectual property. There are ideas like patent boxes and other tax reform ideas that could have been implemented yesterday. They are not partisan ideas. They have appeared in both Liberal and Conservative, and maybe even Bloc Québécois, platforms, and they just make sense, but we need to get a move on. We need to modernize, but unfortunately the government is slow to act. Even Bill C-34 is very modest and moderate movement. It was with the pushing of some great Conservative members on the committee that we were

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able to be a bit more aggressive, such as by reducing the cut-off for a national review from \$512 million to zero. We have to look at the world not as it was, but as it is.

Another key element that has changed since the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s is that then, we had the Soviet Union. It had state-run enterprises, but for the most part they simply did not engage in trade with the west. The need to protect our local economies and our national economies from the Soviet Union was limited, because it really did not trade with us very often. That is completely different from, diametrically opposed to, what the People's Republic of China, the regime in Beijing, is accomplishing. It is engaged in trade throughout the world and with Canada, and aggressively so. We have to acknowledge that, and the bill starts to do so, which is good. It is very different, when we have a company coming to our shores to invest and do business, if it is a privately owned company really motivated by one thing, as most companies are: profit. That is not a bad thing in my opinion. The NDP might disagree.

There are other companies that are state-owned enterprises. Their goals and targets are often much more obscure and vague. They are sometimes looking to promote an authoritarian regime within our own country, to have power and to take charge within our economy. We have to acknowledge the reality of state-owned enterprises and the differences and challenges they pose for our economy. While Bill C-34 is a step along the way, we still see a number of challenges going forward with respect to protecting our national security.

Canadians cannot be afraid. We are good people. We are nice, polite people, and there is no doubt about that. Even the member for Kingston and the Islands is. I will throw that in there, as a good, polite Canadian. We cannot be afraid to put our elbows up a bit in a respectful way to protect our economy and our national interests. We simply can no longer allow our ideas, which I believe are the most valuable resource we have, or our natural resources to simply flutter away. What happens is that those natural resources and ideas get combined outside our shores into commercially viable products, and we end up paying billions of dollars that could have been Canadian. That is a huge issue for us because we are lacking productivity in our country.

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We have the lowest per capita GDP since the 1930s, and productivity is based on a three-legged stool. One leg is technology. We talked about the issues with that. We have to look at ideas such as patent boxes and putting in frameworks to protect our intellectual property. The second leg is capital. We need to be able to attract and invest capital. The third leg is people, and like I said, we need to make sure we keep those great young minds from coast to coast to coast right here in Canada, so they can contribute and build our country into the great country it should be.

With that, I look forward to the members' questions and comments.

* * *

● (1645)

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate agrees with the amendments made by the House of Commons to Bill S-12, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act, without amendment.

* * *

● (1650)

[English]

**NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS
MODERNIZATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was quite interesting to listen to the speech by the hon. member. He talked about the movement from an agriculture-dominated economy to a manufacturing-dominated economy and then to the intellectual-property-dominated system that we are in. He also mentioned critical minerals. In fact, The Globe and Mail recently ran a story titled “Canada Wants To Be a Global Leader in Critical Minerals. Why Is Australia Eating Our Lunch?” Most of the companies in the critical mineral sector are now foreign-owned. Maybe soon, 100% of them will be.

I want to ask the honourable member this question: In the changing, multipolar scenarios in the world, and with the need for more self reliance, should we look again at the entire way we promote local industries manufacturing minerals? Is it time to take a new look at these things?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I think it is time for us to have a discussion, both on Main Street and on Bay Street, and also here in Ottawa, about the future of the economy, because things are changing rapidly with the rise of artificial intelligence and other technologies. We need to have those discussions, and there is an opportunity for Canada to be ahead because we do have great critical minerals and natural resources, but most importantly, we have great

minds and great workers here in Canada who deserve for us to be a leader in the world.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech, because he highlighted the positives of Bill C-34. The United States, the Americans, thought of us as a sieve, and they were right. Now, Bill C-34 fills in the holes, particularly in the review process, which is basically a copy of what is being done in the United States. They are likely to take us more seriously now.

However, we are saying that Bill C-34 focuses solely on national security. Should we not be focusing on economic security as well?

[English]

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, the question is whether we should focus, in general, on economic security. Absolutely we should. I know that no one says the word “COVID” anymore, but I am going to dare, as a politician, to say it. I think COVID really proved to us the challenges that occur, when bad things are happening in the world, if we do not have supply chains that come from our allies, but more importantly from ourselves. Economic and national security are things we should be discussing and looking at to make sure Canada is in the best possible place in the coming years and decades.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about people wanting to invest in Canada, there are many issues that do come up. One is actually the carbon tax and what it does for competitiveness. A few minutes ago, we heard that the Prime Minister made a big announcement that he is actually going to suspend the carbon tax on home heating oil for three years. What does my colleague think about that?

An hon. member: Make that relevant to the bill.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I will. We are struggling economically. We are struggling productivity-wise. We are facing down the barrel of potential stagnation, and the carbon tax is not helping. It is good that the Prime Minister acknowledged that, but he has got to be desperate now. This is his primary legislation. He is flipping and flopping on the carbon tax. Our leader, the hon. member for Carleton, is holding a huge axe and is ready to cut the carbon tax, and I cannot wait until he does.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for starters, I thank the member for the great compliment the member paid to me earlier. I will be sure to put that on the front of my campaign letter next time around.

In all honesty, he talked about jobs leaving Canada. Meanwhile, in a neighbouring riding to his and mine, there is a brand new manufacturing facility for EV battery parts that will create up to 600 direct jobs. What does he think about that?

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Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, if the member made it to cabinet, that would be in his riding. In all seriousness, that is a great announcement. It is great that we have electric vehicle battery manufacturing in Canada. That is fantastic. The challenge is that there is not enough of it. Canada's productivity is among the lowest. We are predicted to have the worst economy in the OECD. This is bad.

• (1655)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start where the last comment left off. I should remind the hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South that it was the Harper government that saw 40,000 auto sector jobs leave this country over a 10-year period. That was 40,000 people and their families who had to make very difficult decisions about what to do next.

Since then, the government has been working with other partners throughout the world to attract investment here, and now we have attracted new investments to this country. This is what I will get to in why this legislation is so important, but in the process of attracting investment, we are now seeing, in a riding neighbouring both his and mine, a brand new manufacturing facility for raw minerals, to make electric vehicle batteries. It will produce enough materials to make 800,000 cars a year. There will be a piece of my riding, his riding and, indeed, Hastings—Lennox and Addington and a couple of other neighbouring Conservative ridings in every vehicle in North America in the future. This is great not just for our ridings but also for our country.

Therefore, I took great exception when the member said in his speech earlier that jobs are leaving. On the contrary. Despite the fact that some other members of the House think they are all going to catch on fire, with respect to manufacturing specifically and the vehicles of the future, we are going to see, in the future, that Canada is a leader in those manufacturing jobs. That is why bills like this are so important, because what we are talking about is protecting the interests of Canadians at the forefront. The bill is about modernizing the legislation, to give the minister and those responsible the tools they need to be always watching out for the best interests of Canadians.

This is another one of those bills where I would think it would go without saying that all members of the House would support it, and the indication I am starting to get is that they will. I am lost, because I was actually supposed to speak to this much earlier in the day but did not get the opportunity because, instead of talking about very important things like this, once again we saw the same old Conservative delay tactic of introducing a concurrence motion on a report. Again, these reports from committees come in abundance to this place. Typically, they are just tabled and dealt with, but Conservative members thought that this would be a great way to burn three hours of government time today. I am forced to speak to this later, and they know what they are doing; they are basically pushing everything down the line. The next time my good friends from the Bloc or the NDP stand up and ask why we need a time allocation motion, this is why; it is because of what is happening in the House today.

The legislation before us is so critically important in order for us to be able to protect intellectual property, investments and, quite frankly, Canadians. What the bill would do, specifically, is autho-

rize the Minister of Industry, after consultation with the Minister of Public Safety, to impose interim conditions on investments in order to prevent potential national security injury from taking place during the review. It would also authorize the Minister of Industry, where they consider that the investment could be injurious to national security, to make an order for further review of the investments under the national security provisions of the act.

I think that why this legislation is so important now is that we are getting to a point where investments are flowing freely in and out of countries and where this government has brought in more trade agreements than every other government in the past, in terms of working and trading with other nations. There was a time, many decades ago, when, believe it or not, Liberals were not in favour of trade. Where have we gotten to now? We have gotten to the point where it is now Conservatives who are questioning trade.

• (1700)

Before our eyes, we are seeing exactly what is going on in the United States of America. Republicans who are supposed to be pro-economy and pro-trade have now turned into isolationists. I hear Conservatives heckling me, but it was just yesterday or the day before that the member for Cumberland—Colchester asked me a question and referred to the trade agreement with Ukraine as woke legislation and questioned whether or not Canada was taking advantage of Ukraine.

All the Conservatives who are currently heckling me are going to have to explain to me why a party that is in favour of trade so much would start questioning a basic trade relationship with a country that we see as an ally, a country that we are supporting during a war. They are going to have to explain that to me, because I can say with a great degree of confidence that we will not hear that MAGA terminology used on this side of the House.

I know we will not hear it from my Bloc colleagues and I know we will not hear from my NDP colleagues, but now we are getting a new faction of the Conservative Party that is openly questioning why we are supporting Ukraine and why we would even think about trading with Ukraine. That is where we have gotten to in this country. That is where we are now. This is not the Brian Mulroney Conservative Party. This is the new MAGA of the north. That is what we are looking at across the way.

I am not saying all Conservatives are like that. They are? Some of them are nodding. I could be wrong, but they come into this House and start making wild claims, like electric car batteries spontaneously burst into fire, like we heard a couple of days ago. The member tried to substantiate that claim on a number of points of order, as she is trying to do now.

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Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As we know, the Speaker issued guidelines to try to improve decorum in the House that says we are not to question the honesty of members in the House.

When talking about batteries, I provided the statistic from the Bureau of Transportation that said 3.5% of hybrid and electric vehicles have battery fires.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Before giving the floor to the hon. member, I would remind all colleagues to try to be more careful and respectful in their comments.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands may continue his speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I never even mentioned which member it was. I did not state who it was. She chose to stand on her feet and say that. I never questioned her honesty. I believe that she actually believes that, which is what makes it so incredible. That is what makes it so outlandish. That is what makes it fit perfectly into the mould of the MAGA Republicans, and that is my whole point. That is what we are starting to see. That is what is coming from the other side of the aisle, and I think Canadians are becoming very aware of that fact. Again, I will not name members, but I am seeing some confirmation on the other side.

At the end of the day, this bill is about protecting Canadian interests, making sure that we can always continue to have these open relationships with other parts of the world where investments can flow because we see the benefits of trade on both sides when we have a healthy trade relationship with another nation, but we also understand that with that globalization and the free flow of capital and resources throughout the world comes risk. This bill attempts to put into parameters what those risks might be and how the government can effectively and quickly respond to those risks.

I really do encourage all members to support this legislation. More importantly, I encourage all members to allow Bill C-34 to move through the process as quickly as possible so that we can have a final vote on it. I would strongly encourage my Conservative colleagues not to continue to play games on this issue, but, rather, allow a vote on it and see it through to its completion so that we can continue to protect the interests of Canadians, which is really what we are seeking.

With that, I will leave a minute on the floor in the hope that I encourage others to be quicker, too.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): 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 Kelowna—Lake Country, Public Safety.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this legislation is to protect Canadian interests here at home by not allowing foreign companies to come in and buy

things, buy up companies and resources, that are strategically important to us.

One thing the pandemic also taught us was that relying on foreign supplies of certain things that are very strategically important to Canada turned out to be a very threatening situation for us. There were things that were withheld from Canada that we would ordinarily depend on other countries to provide.

I am wondering if the hon. member could talk about some companion legislation or work that needs to be done to re-home, re-shore, re-friend the source of things that are important to Canada that actually do not get manufactured in Canada right now?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, one of the most important things that came through in the pandemic was our ability to manufacture vaccines, especially at a very quick rate. That might not be something the Conservatives are interested in, because just yesterday they had a bill on the floor to basically forget about vaccines.

The member is absolutely right. This is an area, and if we are being honest, it happened over several decades, where manufacturing left our country. We started to rely on other countries in order to import vaccines. That is why the government made a commitment to re-establish manufacturing facilities within Canada so that we could provide our own supply of vaccines when we need them. That was the right move.

Are there other opportunities in other areas where we could do the same thing? Absolutely, and I certainly think that we should.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a part of this bill that talks about the ability to review any state-owned companies looking to purchase in Canada.

We have seen in the past how long it sometimes takes for the government to make a decision. I am wondering if the member opposite would agree that it would be good to possibly strengthen something in this bill to make sure there is a timely response, to make sure that that review gets done as soon as possible, so there is some certainty for investment that is needed in Canada, but that it is done in a proper way so that Canada is not being exposed to actors who maybe do not have the best of intentions for our country.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the bill does address that. The bill specifically gives new powers to the minister to be able to react in a much quicker way, to be able to deal with circumstances like this, the Minister of Industry working in conjunction with the Minister of Public Safety.

This bill, at least from my understanding and my reading of it, does exactly what the member is suggesting in terms of being able to be more nimble, quicker and able to react to things and issues as they arise, including the purchase of assets by state actors.

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Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we are debating an important bill that looks at security, particularly investment security for Canadians.

It is no secret that our economy is subject to many attacks, including corporate attacks from foreign entities. What we are also seeing, and something New Democrats have called for for a long time, is a direct connection between the corporate private lobbying interests of some of the largest corporations in the world and members of Parliament. It is no secret, for example, that we have seen Conservatives accept a meal for \$6,260 and \$600 bottles of champagne in order for them to advance their corporate interests.

What does the member have to say in terms of how we could do better at legislating protections against, for example, corporate interests that are right now infiltrating the Conservative caucus towards private interests?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, for starters, I would love to know what a \$600 bottle of champagne tastes like. I have not had that luxury to be able to do that, unlike some of my colleagues across the way.

What we are seeing and what the member is ultimately pointing out here is some of the hypocrisy that comes from the Conservatives. They certainly talk a good game when it comes to protecting our interests, but then they do things like what the member just mentioned or move concurrence motions when we are supposed to talk about this important issue.

The Conservatives talk a really good game, but at the end of the day, they do not seem to be able to produce any kind of result that would suggest they actually believe in what they say.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on this important bill for the Canadian economy. It is also a pleasure to know that you are presiding over our debates today. I would like to salute you. You and I are from the same cohort, from the 2015 election. We were both elected eight years ago, so I would like to salute you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to see you in the chair.

Bill C-34 is obviously very important, because it focuses first and foremost on our international trade. As we all know, Canada is one of the countries, if not the country, that is party to the most agreements with other countries. I already did this earlier in the week, but I would once again like to highlight the extraordinary record of the member for Abbotsford, who served as minister of international trade for nearly six years under Prime Minister Harper. The member for Abbotsford has an exceptional record, having given Canada access to markets in over 40 countries. His legacy definitely benefits all Canadians today. Once again, I salute him.

The issue, of course, is that the world is changing and evolving. What was happening in China 10 years ago was not as alarming as what is happening there now. What is happening in China today is completely degrading and unfortunate, especially for its people and for those living here who are originally from that country. Unfortunately, the attitude of China's authoritarian government is poisoning international relations and trade relations. That is why it is impera-

tive that the government take drastic action to ensure that international trade relations are profitable and, above all, safe and secure.

We agree with the spirit of Bill C-34. We proposed roughly 10 amendments, four of which were adopted. I will come back to that later.

Before going any further, I had the privilege of being appointed international trade critic under the leadership of the Hon. Candice Bergen, who was our interim leader two years ago. I had requested the post. I would like to thank Ms. Bergen once again for giving me the opportunity to serve in that role for several months. I was very impressed by the work of my colleagues, because this is a department where details really matter. There are many specific elements that need to be understood and that have repercussions on many other areas. I was very surprised and seized by this reality.

I would like to commend the work done by our colleagues, especially the member from Nova Scotia, who is with us, and the member for Bay of Quinte, who sat with us on the committee at the time. They are doing a great job. Of course, I cannot leave out the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. Wow, that is a long name, but I think I got it all.

Mr. Luc Berthold: I think there is another name in there somewhere.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for this lack of decorum when it comes to properly naming the riding. If there is one thing I dislike in federal politics, it is that riding names are so long. In provincial politics, it is a maximum of two words, and that suits me just fine.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I agree.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, we agree. For once, the member for Winnipeg North, from the Liberal Party, supports me. That is great. Finally. It is never too late to be good.

[*Translation*]

Let us come back to serious things, because this bill is very serious. As I was saying, it seeks to tighten the rules that govern our international trade with countries that are no longer our friends, countries that have a hidden agenda that is covert, hypocritical, cowardly and, most importantly, dangerous for our national security. That is why I must remind the House that, unfortunately, some very serious incidents, in our view, have occurred in relation to international trade.

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In 2017, the Minister of Industry failed to request a full national security review of the acquisition of B.C.-based telecommunications company Norsat International and its subsidiary, Sinclair Technologies, by the Chinese company Hytera Communications, which is owned in part by the People's Republic of China. A careful review should have been done, but it was not. In 2020, even more insultingly, the Department of Foreign Affairs awarded a contract to the Chinese company Nuctech, which was founded by the son of a former general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, to supply X-ray equipment to 170 Canadian embassies and consulates.

● (1715)

Foreign Affairs is doing business with a company with a checkered past and close ties to the Chinese government, the communist dictatorship in Beijing, and this equipment is being sent to 170 of our embassies. That makes no sense. How did the government let that happen? Clearly there was a greater need than ever for more rigorous analysis around international transactions.

The other example I am going to share is no better. In December 2022, the RCMP awarded a contract for sensitive communications system equipment to Sinclair Technologies, which used to be a Canadian company but became a wholly owned subsidiary of Norsat International, which was itself acquired by Hytera Communications. Hytera Communications, which is headquartered in Shenzhen, China, is partly owned by the People's Republic of China, and it is a major supplier to the Chinese ministry of public security.

The RCMP is doing business with that company. Something had to be done right away. That is why we welcome the government's intention to take action on this. We did our job conscientiously during clause-by-clause in committee, where we proposed some 10 amendments. Four were adopted, and I want to talk about them.

The first amendment sought to reduce the threshold for triggering a national security review to zero for all public companies with assets worth \$512 million among countries not on the list of trade agreement investors. The goal is to ensure that all investments by public companies can be reviewed. I should add that we can keep doing business with countries we have free trade relationships with.

The purpose of the second Conservative amendment adopted by our colleagues was to ensure that an automatic national security review was performed every time a company had been convicted of corruption in the past. That is a very good thing; I do not think we can ever go overboard on ethics.

The purpose of the third amendment was to ensure that the items examined during the national security review process would include acquisitions of assets by public companies and not only by new commercial establishments, share purchases and acquisitions. If by chance a foreign company wants to buy part of one of our domestic companies, that is precisely the kind of case that is reviewable, which is why we allow it. We need to pay very close attention to that.

The fourth Conservative amendment adopted by our colleagues proposes implementing the requirement for the minister to automatically trigger a national security review every time the investment review threshold is met. This amendment requires the minister to review all investments or acquisitions made in Canada by a compa-

ny with a value of more than \$1.9 billion. The national security review is no longer an option or a choice.

Now more than ever, our country is a free trade country. Now more than ever, terrorism is rampant, and some countries have a bad attitude and act in a heinous way. We are obviously thinking of Putin's Russia and what is happening in Ukraine, among other places. What is certain is that our country must be more vigilant than ever when it comes to international transactions. We have to ensure that we maintain trust with our trading partners with whom we have free trade relations, but we still have to be very careful.

Before I sit down, I feel compelled to comment on the Prime Minister's announcement today that he intends to scrap the carbon tax on home heating. I would like to recall one thing: A year ago almost to the day, on October 22, 2022, the House spent an entire day debating this very proposal, which had been moved by the member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition. Who voted against the measure that the government adopted today, a year later, a year too late? It was the Liberal Party, with support from the NDP and the Bloc Québécois. Unfortunately, voting for the Bloc Québécois is costly.

Concerning Bill C-34, we take a positive view and are very pleased that our amendments were adopted.

● (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, periodically, we hear members across the way talk about trade, and they try to glorify the Conservatives. It reminds me of Maurice Richard, the great hockey player, the Rocket. He knew how to get the puck in the net. I would say that the current Deputy Prime Minister is kind of like the Rocket: She gets the puck in the net when it comes to trade agreements. That was a sidetrack as I make reference to trade agreements.

When we talk about international trade and all the agreements that are out there, a message we are sending to the world is that Canada is very much open to the world economy. We want to be engaged in foreign investment.

Today, we are debating an important piece of legislation because it would modernize it, after 14 years of no real changes, and would ensure that Canadian interests are best served from economic and security points of view. Would the member not agree that the principles of that legislation would be good for business?

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Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, obviously we do agree to have more trade agreements with other countries. I am very proud of what we did when we were in office under the strong and proud leadership of the Right Hon. Stephen Harper and the wise actions of the member for Abbotsford, who was the international trade minister. He did a tremendous job signing around 40 deals with 40 different countries. Therefore, yes, we do support that.

The reference to the Rocket with respect to the Deputy Prime Minister reminds me of something. I am sure the member is a hockey fan. Maybe he remembers a series in 1986, I think. Does the member remember the guy from the Oilers who shot and scored on his own net? That is what I think of when I see the Deputy Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question of my colleague, who defended former prime minister Mr. Harper's legacy on foreign investment.

I am proud to say that I come from Thompson and represent this northern Manitoba town. Unfortunately, this is one of the towns that suffered major losses as a result of the deal to sell the Inco mining company to Vale in 2006. This deal, which was supported by Mr. Harper, resulted in the loss of half our jobs. They were good jobs. It forced dozens of families out of my town and caused a rift with workers in Sudbury.

The member was quick to defend Mr. Harper's foreign investment policy, but we know the cost. Does he have any comments on that?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Manitoba for that reminder and her excellent question.

We are aware of the fact that international agreements have consequences. I would like to point out that, sometimes, countries step in directly to protect things. That can result in a degree of nationalization to protect Canada's greater interest. I clearly remember a time when I was active in provincial affairs. I think I was a journalist back then. I was very surprised when the Conservative government bought a Saskatchewan potash company that was in danger of falling into foreign hands, where the risks would have been a lot greater.

Yes, I am very proud of the Harper government's record, especially in the international relations and international trade arena. I have said it before and I will say it again and again: As Canadians, we have tremendous respect for the member for Abbotsford, the foreign affairs minister who signed more agreements than anyone else in the world, and he deserves it.

• (1725)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent on his excellent speech. His knowledge of hockey should deter my colleagues across the way from ever taking him on on this particular rink. They would find themselves on thin ice, just like anyone else who would want to challenge him on the subject.

I want to mention something else before I start my speech. We know that several MPs have the joy and good fortune of being able to rely on parliamentary interns who shadow us for two parliamentary periods. I have the honour and pleasure of having Jean-Samuel Houle working by my side as a parliamentary intern. He is the one who helped me research and write this speech that I am delivering today. It is with much gratitude that I thank him for his work and commitment, as well as all parliamentary interns who are working for MPs. Do members know why this is a good program? Interns learn to work with the opposition parties and the government. It is a rather extraordinary school for people who might lead our country one day. I am sure that our future colleagues are among them.

I will now begin the speech prepared for me by Jean-Samuel. For years, the Liberal government has continually failed to address the issue of foreign interference because it does not take it seriously. Our colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills and other members of Parliament have been targeted by the Communist regime in Beijing. Unfortunately, our colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills had to learn about this from *The Globe and Mail*. That was two years after the Canadian Security Intelligence Service submitted an important management memo to the Department of Public Safety stating that the member was being targeted by a diplomat of the Communist regime, right here in Canada.

The minister responsible for the matter, who was the public safety minister at the time and is now the Minister of National Defence, said in committee that he was never informed in 2021 by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. However, his testimony was contradicted by that of the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, David Vigneault, who said that he forwarded this information to his office, to the department, to the minister, in a very high-priority memo that came with a very clear stipulation to pass on this information to the minister.

Unfortunately, the minister continued to deny any knowledge of the matter when he appeared in committee this week. He made all kinds of excuses. He said that the special, secure encrypted computer to receive the email was somewhere else in the deputy minister's office, not in his office. They are both on the same floor of the same building, by the way. In short, there were all sorts of reasons not to take responsibility for the actions. Everyone recognized that this was a very serious error in the transmission of information. Even the minister himself recognized that. The problem with this government is that there is never anyone to take ultimate responsibility for these actions. Everyone knows how hard that is for the Liberals.

The Prime Minister must be held responsible for this monumental failure that is jeopardizing our democracy. This was confirmed by the testimony of the former member for Durham, who appeared before the committee today and told the government how it is failing to act when it comes to foreign interference. While the government and the Liberals are asleep at the switch, foreign actors are setting up shop and intimidating us more and more.

We know that Beijing has set up police stations in Canada to monitor Chinese Canadians. There are at least five in Ontario, western Canada and Montreal.

Government Orders

This week, members of the House were notified by Global Affairs Canada that a number of Canadian politicians had fallen victim to another interference campaign designed to silence any criticism of the Communist Party. According to Global Affairs Canada, it is a campaign known as “spamouflage”. I had never heard of it before, but I learned that the word actually does exist. It is a combination of the words “spam” and “camouflage”, and it is spam that is camouflaged so no one can tell where it is coming from. The campaign began in August and targeted dozens of MPs of all political stripes, across several geographic regions in Canada. Victims include the Prime Minister, the leader of the official opposition and several ministers. A number of my colleagues have also been victims of this campaign.

The integrity of our elections and conducting our internal affairs without foreign interference should not be partisan issues. However, it seems that the Liberals have difficulty hearing and acting when our agencies take measures and try to advise them of the importance of what is happening.

• (1730)

It really makes me wonder what the Liberals have been up to. For years, the Conservatives have believed that agents of foreign governments should be registered. On April 13, 2021, Conservative MP Kenny Chiu introduced a bill to create a foreign agent registry. However, an election was called and the registry did not pass.

To make matters worse, it was our colleague Mr. Chiu who was the target of an intense disinformation campaign by the Chinese Communist Party during the election, because he wanted to implement this foreign agent registry. That is totally unacceptable. We need to know who is operating within our borders.

Months ago, the Liberals promised that such a registry was one of their priorities, but they have yet to do anything. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has not even included the issue on the list of the government's fall priorities. When will the Liberals take action? With the Liberals and the Prime Minister asleep at the switch and doing nothing about foreign interference, Beijing's influence is taking hold. That is the consequence. The regime sees Canada's lack of reaction as an invitation to go further and do more. This has to stop.

That brings me to the subject of Bill C-34, which is before us today. After eight years under this Liberal government, Canadian companies continue to be bought up by actors with malicious intent. More and more state-owned companies that are connected to dictatorships like China have acquired interests in flagships of the Canadian economy. They have bought shares directly or even taken control of certain companies. They are particularly interested in Quebec's and Canada's intellectual property in our high-tech sectors but also in people's private information, which is very worrisome. This is an extremely serious situation.

We must admit it is not a problem in and of itself that foreigners want to invest in Canada. In fact, such investments make a major contribution and help grow our economy. However, an important line must be drawn. Some actors do not come to Canada in good faith. When it comes to money from state-owned companies led by dictatorships, that is a problem. When it comes to money from countries that do not respect Canada or our values, that is a prob-

lem. Unfortunately, there are still companies that do not respect us at all and that come and buy our businesses, not to help the economy grow, but to become richer and take possession and control of our resources and intellectual property. For years, we have talked about Canada's findings, research and technology being copied. Who was the expert in that? It was the Communist regime in Beijing. Today, not only are they still imitating products that are made all over without respecting property rights, but they also want to directly purchase the intellectual property that they copied in the past. That cannot continue.

In 2017, the Minister of Industry did not require a full national security review prior to the acquisition of telecommunications company Norsat International and its subsidiary Sinclair Technologies by Hytera Communications, a Chinese company. Hytera Communications is partially owned by the People's Republic of China. In December 2022, the RCMP awarded a contract for sensitive communications equipment to Sinclair Technologies, a wholly owned subsidiary of Norsat International, which was acquired by Hytera Communications. The headquarters of Hytera Communications is located in Shenzhen, China. I repeat that the company is partially owned by the People's Republic of China. A company that belongs to the People's Republic of China cannot hide any information from the government if they request it. That is why it is so important to take action.

That is why, with the Conservative amendments, we intend to support Bill C-34. We were able to improve it, but frankly, it was time to take action and do something.

• (1735)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as in the past, the government has brought forward very positive legislation. It went to committee. Ministers and committee members with very open minds saw a number of amendments passed through the committee. The government was very supportive of some of the amendments that were proposed. Other amendments were questionable, but at the end of the day, with what we have before us today, we will see a better, more modern act. Hopefully, the government amendments will pass.

That would be in the best interests of all Canadians, given the changes in technology, with AI and the amount of interest around the world, in terms of investing in Canada. This bill is in the best interest of Canadians, both economically and security-wise. Would the member not agree that it is sound legislation and even that it would be nice to see the legislation pass before Christmas?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I am always surprised, astonished, when a government member, an MP, particularly the hon. member for Winnipeg North, asks me whether or not a bill will be introduced and passed by a given date.

Government Orders

The government House leader is responsible for the government's agenda. It is the House leader who is responsible for ensuring that bills are passed according to the government's agenda. If the government House leader cannot get bills through in a timely fashion, perhaps he should ask his leader, not me.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague is a Quebec MP. I suspect he is sensitive to the interests of Quebec.

Some of the Conservative amendments proposed during the review of Bill C-34 may have cast suspicion on certain foreign state-owned companies outside the Five Eyes group.

What impact would that have had on the A220 aircraft currently being assembled in Mirabel in partnership with the government of Quebec? What impact would that have had on the fact that 40% of European investments in Canada take place in Quebec? I think it would have hurt.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I was not at the committee, but what I do know is that these amendments did not target companies and investors from countries with which Canada has a free trade or trade agreement. Saying things like that today is a little like scaremongering because we all know the Conservative amendments were no threat to those investments.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was delighted to hear the member of the Conservative Party speak about the risks that are present to our economy here in Canada should we entertain the asset purchase of Canadian goods and the production of those goods by bad-faith foreign actors. However, I want to remind the member that, in 2012, the Conservative government of the day sold one of Alberta's greatest assets, which was our oil company.

At that time, the Harper government gave the green light for a \$15.1-billion takeover from an Alberta-based company stationed in Calgary, which provided many good jobs for our economy and many well-paying jobs right across Canada. However, Harper sold it off to the Chinese national offshore oil company. How can the member explain what he is saying compared with the truth?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I love it when a member who was not here at the time of a particular event asks another member who was not here at the time of that particular event to comment on decisions that were made at that time.

The important thing now is to recognize that the Liberal-NDP coalition rejected 10 amendments that would have dramatically improved the bill in committee. However, we did get four of them through, and those amendments will protect Canadians, making this bill more acceptable.

• (1740)

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-34 as the Bloc Québécois critic for international trade.

This bill seeks to improve the Canada Investment Act to add certain control mechanisms for foreign investments that might under-

mine national security. Is Canada, a laggard in so many sectors and industries that have an undeniable strategic value, breaking from its idyllic vision of globalization where humankind would unite in joy at the abolition of states and in the feel-good naivety of laissez-faire? Sadly, we are not there yet.

Let us only consider the lack of aerospace policy or how Ottawa shrugs its shoulders to the softwood lumber crises and the forestry issues. Let us be clear, globalization has not abolished state strategies, powers, empires, nor hegemonies. To believe the contrary is to be vulnerable to those who have completely grasped the reality. That reality is one of conflict and a lasting economic war, corollary of a geopolitical confrontation between major world powers.

The main weapon of this economic war is intelligence, economic espionage and obtaining information through aggressive trade. When we lose a headquarters, it is not just the pride of seeing a leading player leave that is at stake; it is effectively a loss of power.

Although Bill C-34 does not go far enough, it does make seven worthwhile changes including the following: new filing requirement prior to the implementation of investments in prescribed business sectors; authority for the minister to extend the national security review of investments; stronger penalties for non-compliance; authority for the minister to impose conditions during a national security review; a ministerial power to accept undertakings to mitigate the risk of national security breaches; improved information sharing with international counterparts; and new rules to protect information during a judicial review.

We support the committee's efforts to broaden the notion of sensitive sectors to include intellectual property and databases containing personal information, and to improve Bill C-34. We are also pleased that the committee rejected the proposed Conservative amendments, which sought to have all foreign Crown corporations considered hostile unless they belong to the the Five Eyes. This threatened the interests of Quebec, which accounts for 40% of Canada's European investments. Let us consider, for example, Airbus, a French-German state-owned corporation that manufactures its A220 aircraft in Mirabel, in partnership with the Quebec government. This kind of progress should be commended.

These measures are inspired by the American model—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize. The hon. member will have seven minutes the next time this matter is before the House.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS****PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Conflict of Interest Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is one motion in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-290.

[Translation]

Motion No. 1 will not be selected by the Chair as it requires a royal recommendation.

There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

[English]

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there might be consent to have the amendment defeated.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I seek consent to adopt the report on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

• (1745)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. You are saying that the vote on the amendment is going to be next Wednesday. If that is the case, I suggest we go to Adjournment Proceedings.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Winnipeg North wanted to see the bill defeated. The hon. member for Mirabel wanted to see it concurred in at report stage.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, we would require unanimous consent at this point, so let me make a suggestion. If the member wants us to debate the bill today, the best

way to do that is to allow the amendment to be defeated on division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is no amendment. The motion in amendment could not be accepted because it did not have a royal recommendation. We are on concurrence at the report stage.

Let me redo the vote, and we will make sure it is recorded properly.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

[English]

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

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be concurred in at report stage on division.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1750)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before proceeding further, the Chair would like to remind members of its November 3, 2022, ruling, in which it determined that Bill C-290 as debated at second reading required a royal recommendation.

[English]

On September 18, 2023, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates reported the bill with amendments, and the House just agreed to the report stage of the bill.

The Chair has carefully examined the amendments adopted by the committee and confirms that the bill, as amended, no longer requires a royal recommendation. Thus, the normal process can continue and the bill can be put to a final vote in the House at third reading.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Madam Speaker, I salute all my colleagues, and especially my colleague from Winnipeg North.

The purpose of this bill, which I introduced on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, is to protect whistle-blowers, public servants who disclose wrongdoing. The reason I introduced this bill stems from my first few weeks and months as a member of Parliament, when whistle-blowers, public servants who had witnessed wrongdoing in departments and agencies, began calling my office and asking for my help. I would tell these folks to use the usual means to try and protect themselves as whistle-blowers. I quickly realized that the Canadian whistle-blower protection regime was completely flawed.

Private Members' Business

At one point, I asked myself this question: Am I alone in thinking that there is no way for a whistle-blower in Canada to disclose wrongdoing without falling into a hole before reaching the end of the process? Over time, I realized that many people agreed with my diagnosis. First of all, the International Bar Association ranked Canada's whistle-blower protection regime at the very bottom of the global list, tied only with Zimbabwe. Of the 20 criteria used to classify whistle-blower protection regimes, Canada met only one. The only criterion it met was having a piece of legislation. The other 19 criteria were not met. The legislation is empty.

Essentially, Canada's whistle-blower protection regime is like an old car chassis with no engine, no transmission, no tires and no carburetor. That is the vehicle our whistle-blowers are supposed to drive. The International Bar Association says so, the International Labour Organization agrees with us, the public service unions agree with us, former whistle-blowers who have gone through this process and know its flaws better than anyone else agree with us. There are dozens of witnesses.

In 2017, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates produced a comprehensive report. The committee held 12 meetings on the issue of reforming this whistle-blower protection regime. Twelve meetings for one study in committee is a big deal. The committee received 52 witnesses and 12 written briefs. The findings of this report are clear. It found that in order to function properly, democracy needs two legs. The first leg is accountability. The executive branch, the departments, all have to be monitored in a democracy. That is what the second leg of democracy, transparency, is for. Without whistle-blowers and protection for public servants who disclose wrongdoing, who do the right thing for the right reasons, at the risk of their health, their life, their finances and their career, democracy would not work. These whistle-blowers are our last line of defence. Not standing up for these whistle-blowers is like hitting the ice without a goalie. A developed country cannot operate like that. This is a matter of protecting public safety and respecting Quebec and Canadian taxpayers, who are losing faith in government institutions.

Today, I am very proud that this bill has made it to debate at third reading and could be voted on. It must be said that this bill is the result of working together across party lines, a collaborative effort by all parties. I want to recognize my colleagues who participated in this process in a constructive manner.

First, I want to thank the member for Hull—Aylmer, who is now our Speaker. At the time, he was working as the parliamentary secretary to the President of the Treasury Board. He supported us in the amendment process, which means that the Liberal Party can vote in favour of the bill this time.

I want to congratulate in advance the NDP member for Courtenay—Alberni, who presented some very good amendments. He worked in co-operation with us. I also want to congratulate the member for Edmonton West, who was the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates when the committee submitted its report in 2017. He has been fighting for this for many years. I know that support and advice are important to him. He is a very wise man. I know that he is very happy that this bill is at third reading stage today.

• (1755)

Of course, I would like to thank all the members of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. In particular, I would like to thank the member who went through the entire amendment process on behalf of the Bloc Québécois. Dealing with a subject like this required a member who, in addition to being detail-oriented and rigorous, has a heart and understands human issues, the human soul and the profoundly human importance of caring for these people. That would be my colleague and friend, the member for Beauport—Limoilou, and today I want to say just how much I respect and admire her work.

I would also like to talk about the people who have had the courage to continue to blow the whistle on wrongdoing at the expense of every aspect of their lives. They have supported us, testified and devoted time, energy and skills to this process. They are the whistle-blowers themselves and the whistle-blower protection groups. I am thinking in particular of Joanna Gualtieri, who testified, offered us her legal services and advised us. She was one of the first whistle-blowers in Canada. She went through the whole process, spent selflessly to get the truth out, and survived some incredible pitfalls. I salute her.

I also want to thank Pamela Forward, of Whistleblowing Canada.

Tom Devine from GAP, the Government Accountability Project, in Washington, D.C., insisted on coming to the committee in person. He is a global expert who has advised hundreds of administrations on these issues. He wanted to be here in person to work on this bill. I also want to thank Ian Bron, a retired Canadian Armed Forces member. I also want to thank David Hutton for his advice.

I want to salute Luc Sabourin, the whistle-blower at the root of the scandal that is unfolding before our eyes, the destruction of foreign passports by Canada behind our allies' backs. This courageous man risked everything: his life, his health, his sense of security and his financial well-being. His pension was taken away. He is here with us today on the Hill. This goes to show that what we are doing today is of paramount importance to Canadian taxpayers, Quebec taxpayers and these people. I salute him. He has my utmost respect.

Let us now talk about the content of this bill. First of all, there are rankings, which I talked about earlier. If Bill C-290 is passed, our whistle-blower protection regime will put us in the middle of the world rankings. We will have a similar ranking to the United Kingdom and France, but we will still be lagging far behind the United States and many American states, the European Union and Australia. That means that this bill is the first of many steps we will have to take when it comes to the protection of whistle-blowers.

Private Members' Business

What are we doing? We are expanding protection to former public servants who are not currently protected but who still have critical information for improving transparency and management in the public sector. We want to get to the bottom of things and give them more channels for filing complaints. Complaints cannot just be brought to the attention of an immediate supervisor because sometimes that person is involved in the wrongdoing. This bill allows for the use of other channels, elsewhere within departments, to file complaints. We included not just administration issues, management issues and the misuse of public funds as wrongdoing in the bill, but also foreign and political interference.

If this bill is passed, we will have the opportunity to work with the government and to monitor it to make sure it is acting in good faith. We have acted in good faith. Foreign and political interference are defined by government regulation. We will remain vigilant but open. We trust the government in that regard because we decided to work together. The government will have to be worthy of our trust.

Whistle-blowers will be allowed to file more than one complaint at a time. Right now, if they file a reprisal complaint, they reach a standstill with the commissioner. They cannot file two complaints at once. No whistle-blower enjoys filing three, four or five complaints at the same time. No one has time in the evenings and on weekends to fool around with five or six complaints for fun. If whistle-blowers have to file more than one complaint at a time, it is because they feel they need to, and because the public sector needs it to happen in order to remain transparent. That will be guaranteed with this bill.

There have been disappointments, and they have been significant, but we have to live with them. It happens often in politics.

• (1800)

The NDP moved an amendment to reverse the burden of proof in some cases. Unfortunately, this was defeated. We supported them. The NDP moved amendments to protect whistle-blowers from reprisals during investigations. That was defeated. I want to thank my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for the work he did. They were good amendments and, one day, we will have the opportunity to go back to them.

This shows, once again, that we need leadership from the government on this issue, because the legislation has not been changed in 15 years, whereas the world has changed. It is not normal to have legislation that does not evolve when the nature of political interference is changing. It is not normal to have legislation that does not evolve when Chinese foreign interference is happening and it was not in the news at the time the legislation was adopted, in other words after the sponsorship scandal.

A law that seeks to protect public servants who disclose wrongdoings should not be like an old piece of meat, an old quart of milk or an old yogourt. It should never expire. There should be a mechanism under which these laws are frequently reviewed. The government has work to do, because I did everything that I could in a private member's bill to advance the cause of protecting public servants who disclose wrongdoing. Opposition members cannot spend money. We cannot cover the legal fees of whistle-blowers, some of whom end up financially ruined for wanting to serve their employ-

er. I cannot emphasize enough that whistle-blowers are people who are loyal to their employer and to taxpayers, who are their real employer. The government will have to continue to work on this and follow our example.

We are here today because we have a minority government, and private members' bills, especially those from the Bloc Québécois, can help change the world. Let us see what we can accomplish in a minority government. We can protect whistle-blowers. We protected the pensions of Quebec workers by making them priority creditors. We succeeded in protecting supply management in trade agreement negotiations. We managed to protect our fruit and vegetable producers' shipments when they are not paid. We managed to protect the Quebec securities commission when Ottawa wanted to move Quebec's financial sector to English-speaking Toronto. We managed to have an independent public inquiry into Chinese foreign interference, in a minority government. We managed to increase the guaranteed income supplement for our seniors by \$600 a year. We managed to get hundreds of dollars for parents by making the universal child care benefit tax-free, because the Conservatives had been taxing parents. The Conservatives are compulsive taxers. We had an investigation into the sponsorship scandal.

It pays to vote for the Bloc Québécois. Quebeckers should vote for the Bloc Québécois. It is important to vote for the Bloc Québécois.

I am looking at the Conservatives, and they are speechless. What a wonderful sight.

Aside from that, the bill we are debating is in the public interest. This bill aims to protect people's lives. It is about protecting human beings and the quality of life of people who are often portrayed as being disloyal to their employers, but who ultimately just want to make things better and work in an environment that values ethics, transparency and honesty towards hard-working taxpayers. We want to protect these people's lives for the benefit of all.

Today, I invite all my colleagues from all parties and political denominations to vote in favour of Bill C-290. There is only good in this bill. Whistle-blowers and public servants are watching us. We must rise to the occasion.

• (1805)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad we were able to get to the member's debate. He articulates quite well. The member made reference to other countries and put Canada in a placement with those countries.

Are there any provincial jurisdictions in Canada that have followed suit? If the member has any insights on that, I would very much appreciate hearing them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, that is a very interesting question. We discussed that with the whistle-blowers in committee. I thank my colleague for asking it.

In Canada, we find that the provinces generally wait for the federal government to make the first move on this issue. It often makes the first move, encroaching on provincial jurisdictions, and then the provinces react. With the resources we have here, we have an opportunity to set an example, while respecting the federal government's jurisdiction, on a whistle-blowing regime that would not be perfect, but would be an improvement. The Liberals have not yet had or taken the time, to put it politely, to improve the law, but yes, we expect most provinces to look to the federal Parliament and read the bill. A bill based on Bill C-290 has already been introduced in the National Assembly. We know that by doing the right thing at the federal level and improving transparency and accountability in the federal government with Bill C-290, others will follow. So there are 10 more reasons in the provinces, and three more in the territories, to vote for Bill C-290.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that in committee there was an amendment that dealt with the matter of subcontractors. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, the matter of subcontractors and contract workers is important, as we saw with the ArriveCAN app and National Defence. Unfortunately, expanding protection to subcontractors would require a royal recommendation. That was the nature of the amendment that the Speaker had to reject earlier today. However, it is still an important issue and that is why the government must consider it, because it has the prerogative to do so.

There is also the constitutionality of the issue. Most subcontractors fall under the governance of provincial labour laws. We will have to examine that issue. Just because it is not included in the bill does not mean that we did not think about it, that we did not try to address it, that it is not important and that we should forget about it.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Mirabel for championing this very important bill.

Some elected members responded to the bill's intent saying that the government formed a committee to look into the whistle-blower protection regime.

Does the member for Mirabel think that is a good excuse not to vote in favour of the bill?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, it is always good to think things over. Fortuitously, it so happens that when I introduced my bill, the government announced the creation of a think tank, an expert panel, that will essentially tell us what the 2017 committee did. I think that the government has to keep reflecting, thinking and improving things. There are steps to be taken. The government is the one who has to take those steps. However, the real committee that has to determine this has 338 members and they are seated here.

Royal Assent

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on this very important bill.

I would like to hear what he has to say about legal fees. Why could these fees not be included in this bill? What does this mean for the courageous people who disclose wrongdoing?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, that would prevent these people from being ruined by legal fees when they are David fighting Goliath, in other words, the government. As we know, under parliamentary rules, a bill introduced by an opposition member cannot result in more money being spent. That is the prerogative of the Crown. In order to have a fund that would cover the legal expenses of certain whistle-blowers, the government has to draft and introduce it. There must be a ways and means motion. Some countries do this. Some countries recognize the fact that it is not right for citizens to have to spend \$1 million, as Ms. Gualtieri had to do, and end up pretty much bankrupt in order to have the right to defend their integrity. Whistle-blowers deserve better.

ROYAL ASSENT

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

October 26, 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 26th day of October, 2023, at 5:18 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Christine MacIntyre

Deputy Secretary to the Governor General

The Honourable

The Speaker of the House of Commons

Ottawa

The schedule indicates the bills assented to on Thursday, October 26, 2023, were Bill S-222, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), and Bill S-12, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Sex Offender Information Registration Act and the International Transfer of Offenders Act.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1810)

*[English]***PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY ACT**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Conflict of Interest Act, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to have the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill C-290, an act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act.

Whistle-blowers are the unsung heroes of our institutions. They are the courageous individuals who put their careers, their reputations and sometimes even their lives on the line to expose wrongdoing. They are the guardians of our democracy and the champions of integrity. Their role in our society cannot be overstated, and their protection is a matter of national significance.

I think everyone will agree that public servants who wish to disclose serious wrongdoing must have a trusted, effective means of doing so and must be protected. As is the sponsor of this legislation, the government is committed to strengthening protections for public servants who make disclosures of wrongdoing. This is why it has already taken a number of actions, which were detailed at second reading.

However, the government is not stopping there. The Prime Minister asked the President of the Treasury Board to build on this progress and “Continue to take action to improve government whistle-blower protections and supports.” Action is indeed being taken. Budget 2022 provided \$2.4 million over five years for a review of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act.

In November 2022, the government announced the establishment of the PSDPA review task force. This task force will recommend amendments to the PSDPA and changes to the administration and operation of the disclosure regime, with a particular focus on the protection of individuals involved in disclosing wrongdoing from acts of reprisal. The task force is composed of people who bring significant experience and diverse expertise in the field. It is currently conducting wide consultations and inviting input from a range of stakeholders to ensure that a variety of experiences related to the federal whistle-blower regime are collected and considered. Experts, public servants and all those with an interest in this subject are being given an opportunity to share their views. The task force will also consider the report issued by the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in 2017 and the discussions on this bill.

In recognition of the fact that work in this area has evolved over the past several years, the task force will look at the latest developments in whistle-blowing regimes since the committee presented their report. As well, the task force will consider reports from the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner and other stakeholders. It will also seek out best practices through research on disclosure

regimes, domestically and internationally. The government's intent is to ensure that the law effectively safeguards and empowers public servants to report wrongdoing. This review will ensure that we are taking an evidence-informed approach to identify improvements to the federal disclosure process. These improvements will mean better protection for public servants who come forward to disclose wrongdoings. Clearly, the government wants to improve the act.

The bill before us proposes a number of changes that the government fully supports. These are expanding the list of persons covered by reprisal protection, extending the time period for a reprisal complaint; increasing penalties for a contravention of the act, allowing reprisal complaints concerning the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner to be made to the Auditor General, ensuring that individuals are provided with reasons when a reprisal complaint is refused and, finally, adding a recurring five-year review of the act.

These would be valuable improvements to the act as it now stands. That said, certain amendments in the bill raise legal and operational challenges, many of which were raised both at second reading and at committee. We can take, for example, the removal of the seriousness descriptors from the definition of wrongdoing. By no longer qualifying the degree of severity of wrongdoing covered under the act, the bill would open up the process to the most trivial of misdemeanours. The result could clog the system and reduce its effectiveness; those who blow the whistle on serious problems may not get the protection we all agree they need and deserve.

● (1815)

This could also lead to duplication with existing recourse mechanisms meant for issues such as harassment, discrimination, workplace grievances and privacy complaints, which could lead to conflicting outcomes from multiple proceedings. Employees need a clear, simple and predictable path to follow. The purpose of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act is to address serious ethical breaches that cannot be dealt with using other recourse mechanisms.

Bill C-290 also proposes to allow an individual to take a complaint of reprisal directly to the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal without a prior investigation by the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner. This would create the possibility of completely removing the commissioner from the reprisal process, including the investigation of the complaint and the opportunity for conciliation.

Private Members' Business

As the tribunal has no investigation authority or capacity, all evidence would have to be gathered through the tribunal process. This would make the process more lengthy and costly for all parties involved. As well, we can predict the surge of cases that would overwhelm the capacity of the tribunal. A backlog of cases, which none of us want, would quickly begin to grow. This could negatively impact the original intent and effectiveness of the legislation for those who truly need it.

Another concern I would like to raise is the coming into force state after royal assent. The bill proposes a timeframe of one year, but implementation would take more time given the breadth and complexity of the changes it contains. These are a few of the important challenges this bill raises, and we hope that the Senate takes the time to review these elements when studying the bill.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Bill C-290. This is legislation that would strengthen the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, which provides whistle-blower protections to federal public servants.

The Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act legislation was shepherded by the previous Harper Conservative government in an effort to restore public confidence in the operations of government following one of the biggest corruption scandals in Canadian history, the Liberal sponsorship scandal, a scandal that involved the waste, mismanagement and misappropriation of hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money as part of a quid pro quo scheme, where Liberal insiders received advertising contracts in return for employing Liberal fundraisers, organizers and so on. These contracts were awarded to people who did little or no work and millions of dollars were funnelled into the Liberal Party as part of this scam. It truly was one of the biggest scandals and really shook public confidence and public trust.

In an effort to restore that trust, the Harper government passed the act that provides a mechanism by which federal public servants can bring attention to wrongdoing in a confidential way, including establishing the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada, as well as other measures to protect civil servants against reprisals. This bill would build upon the Conservative government's whistle-blower protections by expanding the definition of "wrongdoing" to include political interference. It would expand the powers of the Auditor General in taking disclosures of wrongdoing and undertaking investigations and would expand the scope of those who are protected. It would do other things as well, which have been mentioned in debate on this bill, all of which are positive.

This bill could not be more timely given what we have seen over the past eight years from the Liberals: an unprecedented amount of corruption, waste and mismanagement. In that light, it is not a surprise to learn that the Liberal government, based upon the parliamentary secretary's intervention, is less than enthusiastic about this bill. After all, we have a Prime Minister who was found guilty not once but twice of breaching ethics laws. It was unprecedented and never happened before until the current Prime Minister arrived in office. This is a Prime Minister who obstructed justice to protect the corrupt SNC-Lavalin, a Liberal corporation. He fired his attorney general when she called out his corruption.

We recently learned that the Prime Minister obstructed an RCMP investigation into his potential criminal wrongdoing in SNC-Lavalin and there is, as we speak, an active criminal investigation into the Liberal government's \$54-million ArriveCAN app, better known as "arrive scam". It is \$54 million of taxpayers' money that went out the door for an app that does not work, that cost 500 times more than it should have, not to mention well-established evidence of collusion, price-fixing and fraudulent billing to the tune of millions of dollars.

• (1820)

Just when we think we have seen just about enough of Liberal corruption, there is always another Liberal scandal. We are learning of yet another Liberal scandal at the Liberal green slush fund, Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC. Whistle-blowers came forward with evidence of wrongdoing, which prompted a third-party investigation. That investigation, for which forensic accountants went in, resulted in a damning report. The report concludes that tens of millions of taxpayer dollars were handed out to companies that did not qualify. More than that, there have been multiple instances of conflicts of interest at SDTC.

Just to give one an idea, \$38.4 million improperly went out the door as part of so-called COVID relief expenditures. Of those companies that received \$38.4 million, based on the audits that took place, 29% involved conflict of interest disclosures on the part of board members at SDTC, and not once did any of those board members recuse themselves. The cloud at SDTC is so dark that even this spendthrift Liberal government, which has run up the biggest deficit in Canadian history and doubled the national debt, put a halt and a freeze on spending at SDTC.

The cloud at SDTC, involving tens of millions of dollars and conflicts of interest on the part of a board that is chaired by a Liberal insider, a friend of the Prime Minister, underscores why robust whistle-blower protection legislation is needed.

Many whistle-blowers would reportedly like to come forward with further evidence of wrongdoing at the Liberals' green slush fund but are reluctant to do so. Those who have are also concerned that they could face reprisals because, as it stands, they are not protected under the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act because they are not within the definition of a public servant under the act. Although this bill does provide some additional protection to contractors, it would not protect employees and other whistle-blowers at SDTC who would like to come forward.

Private Members' Business

I would submit that, while this bill is a significant improvement, we would like to see it strengthened even further to include contractors and those who are at arm's-length from the government to be fully protected. The sordid affair at SDTC, the Liberals' green slush fund, underscores that, to shine a light on the rot and corruption that is so embedded right across this government, additional protections are needed to root out waste, mismanagement and corruption. No one, no federal public servant, contractor or anyone, for that matter, connected to government, should feel intimidated or be concerned about potential reprisals for speaking the truth and calling out waste, mismanagement and corruption.

On that basis, I support the bill, but it could be improved.

• (1825)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-290 and the importance of better whistle-blower protection in Canada. Canada has a reputation, unfortunately, of being one of the places in the world among those with the worst whistle-blower protection, so obviously there is a lot more that we can do.

We depend on whistle-blowers to be able to identify across a very large government with a large budget where things are not going well. Of course, there is no substitute for the folks who are actually doing the work every day to be able to understand where problems arise and how things are going wrong. We need to be able to create a culture where people feel a lot more comfortable coming forward when things are not going well in their workplace.

We can all appreciate that it is a difficult decision. Indeed, there are a lot of stories of folks who have had the courage to come forward and not only have not been rewarded for that but have been punished; in some cases losing their employment, in some cases losing their home or their families and indeed in the worst cases losing their lives. It is a very serious issue. We should be grateful that there are folks in the public service who are willing; and are dedicated enough to doing the right thing that they are willing to come forward. We need to create a culture that rewards folks for showing that courage, instead of setting examples for others of why they should not do that because they know that it did not work out very well for a colleague.

The beginning of that culture change has to start with legislation because there have to be adequate protections in place for folks to feel that they have recourse. It is not just the legislation, though. We also need to create workplace cultures where folks in positions of influence know that people who do blow the whistle are going to be well protected enough that people should follow the appropriate workplace policies and procedures and conduct their business in the way that we all expect them to, which is to a high standard.

How do they do that? I want to just survey some of the work that my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni did with the sponsor of the bill in order to improve this legislation.

One is allowing increased access to the tribunal. We know that over time the commissioner who was set up to hear complaints about whistle-blowing only referred, in 16 years, nine cases to the tribunal. The idea behind that amendment, which I am glad to see passed, was to make it easier for workers who did come forward

but did not feel they were getting satisfaction through the commission to be able to access the tribunal.

There was also an amendment that passed to create a survey metric so that when whistle-blowers have gone through this process, it would allow getting some feedback from them on how it went and whether they were satisfied with that.

Of course, there were other suggestions and amendments put forward in conjunction with the sponsor of the bill that did not go through. Liberals and Conservatives at committee decided not to put them in.

One of the really important provisions was a reverse-onus provision for cases of reprisal. Right now, the onus is on the person who is the victim to show that it was in fact reprisal for their whistle-blowing activity. That is a high burden of proof and it usually comes with a pretty expensive legal bill for somebody who, if they are experiencing reprisal, may well not have any employment income at all or may already be under a lot of stress due to harassment in the workplace as a result of blowing the whistle. Therefore, this just multiplies that effect by causing a lot of financial distress as well as a long, drawn-out legal process when really it is the employer who has the resources who should be in a position of having to show that whatever workplace discipline may have occurred was not a reprisal for whistle-blowing and that it was based on something unrelated.

• (1830)

I understand that in jurisdictions that have made this change, it has altered the chance of success for whistle-blowers from one in 500, showing that they were in fact the victim of reprisal, to being as high as one in three. When we talk about changing workplace culture and instilling in employees the confidence to be able to come forward, numbers like that show that, even with the improvements that the bill represents, there is a lot further to go if we want to create the legal foundation for a healthy workplace culture that rewards people for coming forward and naming wrongdoing in the workplace rather than creating a chill and a culture where people are afraid of that.

Another way, which is not technically a reverse onus but I think it is of a kind, would have been to protect whistle-blowers from termination automatically, and instead of allowing them to be terminated right away and then having to spend a long time figuring out whether it was the right course of action or not, having some immediate protections upfront would also make a difference in increasing people's comfort to come forward.

Likewise, sometimes people go to the commissioner, as I said, and do not get satisfaction. While having some kind of ability for them to then be able to go to the media or go public in some other way, if they are not getting satisfaction through the normal process, is another way that folks could have been encouraged to bring their concerns forward.

It was unfortunate that, again, the Liberals and Conservatives conspired at committee to defeat those amendments because it means that, in the context of a country that is notoriously behind when it comes to protection of whistle-blowers, this important moment to make significant advances in whistle-blower protection does not take us as far as we could. Hopefully, it will not take as long to get to the next set of improvements as it did to get us to this one because Canadian workers deserve better than to have to wait that long to get protections that are already afforded workers in other workplaces.

I thank the sponsor of the bill very much for his good work on the bill and for his co-operation with the member for Courtenay—Alberni to improve the bill, as much as Liberals and Conservatives, the coalition, if I may be so bold, would allow in this case.

• (1835)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, a year ago, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, of which I am a member, began a study on foreign election interference. We received more than 70 witnesses and sat in committee for more than 100 hours. I personally questioned the government more than 30 times. I spoke with ministers, experts, academics, specialists, intelligence officers. This ended in a public, independent commission of inquiry. Quebeckers are now aware of the challenges of foreign interference. People may be wondering where I am going with this. I am getting to that. The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics tabled a report on foreign interference and all the threats to the integrity of institutions. The Bloc Québécois even said it would introduce a bill to ensure that a foreign agent registry is implemented.

None of this could have happened without the whistle-blower who dared to report the situation. This information was reported in *The Globe and Mail* by a journalist, and we started looking into it. That is why the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs had so much time and energy. We took action, and we are still taking action. It is therefore with great interest that I rise this evening to speak to Bill C-290, the public sector integrity act.

I will give an example that my colleague from Mirabel mentioned, but I am going to take the liberty of digging a little deeper. Who here remembers the 1995 referendum? I do, because it was my first time voting. The Liberal government of the day spent lavishly out of fear of losing the election. In 1995, a whistle-blower blew the doors off what came to be known as the sponsorship scandal. Nearly every day, there were new revelations in the media about the political interference in the way this program was managed and how \$250 million in public funds was squandered. That led the then auditor general to produce a devastating report in 2003.

Once again, it was a federal government official who made the courageous choice to disclose the federal government's actions to journalist Daniel Leblanc. The exact same thing happened recently, and once again I would like to acknowledge the public servants who have the common good at heart, who have chosen a career in public service and who dared to take action.

It was in the aftermath of the sponsorship scandal that the government of the day introduced the Public Servants Disclosure Pro-

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tection Act. I would like to qualify that. My colleague mentioned just one country earlier, but there are 20 others. I will quickly name a few of them. Canada ranks behind Bangladesh, Rwanda, Botswana, Pakistan and the Cayman Islands. The government must take action. We have to do better.

Since then, the government has chosen to ignore this issue. As a responsible party, the Bloc Québécois is thinking about the people who contribute to the common good and who make democracy possible, for example. That is why we introduced this bill, and I commend my colleague from Mirabel. This week, on Tuesday to be exact, the Minister of National Defence told me, word for word, that it is a good thing the opposition is there to bring pressure. He can rest assured that we are going to put pressure on the government. We need to take action, and we are going to get it done. I am convinced of that.

• (1840)

In 2017, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates considered this legislation, but that was more than five years ago. Nothing has happened since then. There was the study my colleague mentioned. There are also six major challenges that we need to review, and this needs to pass.

I will end my speech with the following statement. When a public servant takes their courage in both hands and decides to report wrongdoing to help get the situation sorted out, the current process does not really make it possible to get to the bottom of the matter and expose or fix the problems.

This bill is of the utmost importance. I invite my colleagues to support Bill C-290.

[English]

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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, public safety is one of the most important roles government has. As elected representatives, we create laws and policies to keep Canadians safe, but increasingly, people from my community in Kelowna—Lake Country are feeling that the Liberal-NDP government is not prioritizing the safety of our streets and community. The former public safety minister defended Liberal laws and policies that left people traumatized in our communities. After a summer reshuffle, the Liberals put forth a new justice minister, who denies basic facts about crime rates. In an interview with Reuters, he said that “empirically” it is unlikely Canada is becoming less safe.

Here are a few facts after eight years of the Liberal government: Violent crime is up 39%, and murders are up 43%. Gang-related homicides are up 108%, and violent gun crime is up 101%. Aggravated assaults are up 24%, and assaults with a weapon are up 61%. Sexual assaults are up 71%, and sex crimes against children are up 126%. Kidnappings are up 36%, and car thefts are up 34%. The violent crime severity index is up 30%. Youth crime has risen by 17.8% in a single year. Bills like Bill C-5 and Bill C-75 have created laws that are more lenient on criminals and do less to protect victims.

In British Columbia, disturbing statistics showed that just 40 offenders were responsible for 6,000 negative interactions with law enforcement in one year. Residents in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country are increasingly disturbed by random attacks and by seeing crimes being committed by repeat violent offenders who are out on bail. Criminals who repeatedly terrorize communities do not deserve to be out on our streets. The revolving door does nothing to help victims, to keep people safe and to reduce recidivism.

I introduced a private member's bill, the “end the revolving door act”, to help people in federal penitentiaries receive a mental health assessment and treatment and recovery while they serve out their sentence. A report showed that 70% of people in federal penitentiaries have addiction issues and that recidivism is high. Receiving treatment and recovery would help the person serving the sentence, their family and the community they would go back to. The NDP-Liberal coalition voted down my non-partisan, common sense bill. Instead, its members have chosen to take a very different path by allowing drug decriminalization policies and taxpayer-funded hard drugs in British Columbia. Investigative reporting showed a new drug black market that emerged from taxpayer-funded hard drugs both on streets and also now online.

More than a dozen addictions doctors wrote to the Liberal government calling for changes in policies around government-funded “safe supply” drugs or to not provide them at all. Today, I ask the government, on behalf of those residents in my community concerned about this shocking rise in crime, when will the government reverse course on all its failed policies?

• (1845)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate

the opportunity to speak to the debate brought forth by the member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

As my hon. colleague knows, she spoke about the decisions around bail reform and how transfers occur, as well as decisions about individuals who are in custody and how the Correctional Services of Canada handles each prisoner in the program they are under. The CSC's mandate is to help maintain the safety and security of our communities by managing correctional institutions and offenders in their care.

It is important to acknowledge that operational decisions are not taken by elected officials. In fact, our job as members of the House is to continue to push for best practices and increased transparency in our criminal justice system. While elected officials do not make these decisions on individual offenders, it is important for us as legislators and for the public at large to know why such decisions are made and what we can do to ensure victims of crime feel their voices are heard throughout the criminal justice process.

That is why, earlier this summer, the former minister of public safety issued new ministerial directives to specifically deal with the notification of victims' families. This new directive, as I have said, will help to ensure that CSC takes a trauma-informed approach when considering victims in the case of transfers of prisoners or security reclassifications. These enhanced engagement opportunities also allow for victims to share important input throughout the offender's sentence. This means that the needs of victims and their families will be taken into account, and CSC will place an extra emphasis on the need to not retraumatize those who are most vulnerable.

In addition, I am encouraged that the commissioner of the Correctional Service of Canada has shown willingness to listen to Canadians' concerns and order additional reviews, especially in cases where there are high profile cases that Canadians are concerned about.

In addition, CSC has implemented the recommendation from a recent review committee to strengthen victim notification and engagement, and has put in place a committee dedicated to furthering this work. CSC continues to take its responsibility to protect Canadian communities seriously, and we all agree that offenders whose crimes continue to cause pain and anger across the country deserve severe consequences.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, violent crime and increasing crime numbers do not have to be a fact of life in Canada. The government can reduce these through laws and policies. We can reduce the rate of violent repeat offenders by repairing our broken bail system. Victims of crime need to be a priority once again. We know that the Conservative approach works because, under the Harper government, the crime rate decreased by 26%. Violent criminals were targeted, and there was a focus to keep repeat offenders locked up. The number of prisoners was actually reduced by 4.3%.

We must also reverse the NDP-Liberal government's failed policy of decriminalization and funding of hard drugs. Our communities have not become more safe with these policies. Addiction doctors are calling for federal policy changes. Prioritizing treatment and recovery through healing is the only way to assist those suffering in the terrible hold of addiction.

Reducing crime rates, addiction rates and recidivism are all things a Conservative government could accomplish and has in the past, and the Liberal government is just not worth the societal cost.

• (1850)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, the duty of any government is to keep citizens safe, and this is why, at the public safety

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committee, we passed a motion to initiate a study on the rights of victims of crime, specifically around security reclassification within the Correctional Service of Canada. This study will invite the commissioner of CSC, the deputy minister of public safety, officials from the department of justice and public safety, as well as the federal ombudsperson for victims of crime.

It is important that Canadians have these conversations. It is important that we listen to victims of crime, and it is important that we continue to pass legislation that will keep communities safe.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:52 p.m.)

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