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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 12, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 18 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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PETITIONS

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens and residents of Canada who have called upon the House of Commons to adopt human rights and environmental due diligence legislation when dealing with foreign countries.

I would like to thank and acknowledge all signatories, including those within my riding who have signed the petition. I look forward to the government's response.

FARMERS' MARKETS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to table a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding from Courtenay, Cumberland and Royston.

The petition calls on the government to support a national matching program for provincial farmers' market nutrition coupon programs across Canada that would match provinces, like British Columbia, that are already contributing to their farmers' market nutrition coupon program, and encourage provinces that do not have such a program to implement one by offering matching funding.

The B.C. Association of Farmers' Markets, with 135 member markets, 4,000-plus vendors and its long-term partnership with the province, provides an excellent model for farmers' market nutrition programs, providing almost 16,000 vulnerable families, seniors and

pregnant women with access to weekly coupons, and providing \$1.9 million to local farmers. The current program has an average coupon redemption rate of over 91%.

VACCINE MANDATES

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is just one word to describe the ostracism and financial hardships that have been put upon a segment of society, and the only way to resolve this is to end the federal mandates on COVID.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition on behalf of Cathy Peters, an advocate in British Columbia combatting human trafficking. Unfortunately, human trafficking is an issue that is increasing across our country, and we as legislators have a role to play in combatting human trafficking to keep our communities safe.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1010)
[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CANADA-PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONSHIP

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC) moved:

That, given that the House recognize that

- (i) Canadians of Chinese descent have made immeasurable contributions to Canada,
- (ii) the people of China are part of an ancient civilization that has contributed much to humanity,
- (iii) the distinction between the people of China and the Chinese state, as embodied by the Communist Party of China and the government of the People's Republic of China,

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(iv) authoritarian states, including the People's Republic of China, increasingly pose a threat to the rules-based international order,

the House appoint a special committee with the mandate to conduct hearings to examine and review all aspects of the Canada-People's Republic of China relationship, including but not limited to diplomatic, consular, legal, security and economic relations, provided that:

(a) the committee be composed of 12 members, of which six shall be from the government party, four shall be from the official opposition, one shall be from the Bloc Québécois and one shall be from the New Democratic Party;

(b) the whips of the recognized parties shall deposit with the Clerk of the House the list of their members to serve on the committee within four calendar days of the adoption of this motion;

(c) changes in the membership of the committee shall be effective immediately after notification by the whip has been filed with the Clerk of the House;

(d) membership substitutions be permitted, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2);

(e) the Clerk of the House shall convene an organizational meeting within one week of the presentation of the final report of the Special Committee on Afghanistan;

(f) the chair of the committee shall be a member of the government party, the first vice-chair shall be a member of the official opposition, the second vice-chair shall be a member of the Bloc Québécois and the third vice-chair shall be a member of the New Democratic Party;

(g) the quorum of the committee be as provided for in Standing Order 118, provided that the Chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive evidence and to have that evidence printed when at least four members are present, including one member of the opposition and one member of the government;

(h) the committee have all of the powers of a standing committee, as well as the power to (i) travel, accompanied by the necessary staff, inside and outside of Canada, (ii) authorize video and audio broadcasting of any or all of its proceedings;

(i) the provisions of Standing Order 106(4) shall extend to the committee;

(j) the committee shall, notwithstanding paragraph (r) of the special order adopted on Thursday, November 25, 2021, have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings;

(k) the evidence and documentation received by the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations during the first and second sessions of the 43rd Parliament be referred to this committee and taken into consideration in this session; and

(l) any proceedings before the committee, when hybrid committee meetings are authorized, in relation to a motion to exercise the committee's power to send for persons, papers and records shall, if not previously disposed of, be interrupted upon the earlier of the completion of four hours of consideration or one sitting week after the motion was first moved, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

In the last Parliament, the 43rd Parliament, the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations played a constructive role in furthering Canada's policy on the People's Republic of China. The committee met 30 times and issued three reports to the House. We heard from dozens, if not hundreds, of witnesses.

We focused on espionage, foreign interference and intimidation operations here on Canadian soil. We focused on Hong Kong. We focused on the genocide of the Uighurs. The committee also focused on the plight of the two Canadians who were wrongfully detained: Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. Arguably, it was the focus on the two Michaels, as they became known in this country, that put pressure on the People's Republic of China and others involved with this issue to release them last year. The committee

played a constructive role in furthering Canada's policies in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly on China.

Much more needs to be done. Much more study and analysis needs to be done, because the relationship between Canada and China is broad and multi-faceted and touches on so many areas of Canadian life: diplomatic, economic, military, security, academia and many others. China is one of the world's superpowers and we need to be mindful of the impact that the People's Republic of China has on the day-to-day lives of Canadians. I can think of no better place to do that than in a special committee of Parliament, where we can call experts, where we can listen to testimony and where we can explore the multi-faceted relationship that we have with the People's Republic of China.

Up to this point, it has not been possible to establish a special committee. In the last Parliament, the 43rd Parliament, two additional committees were added to the House of Commons. Those two committees were the special committee on Canada-China relations and the special committee on Canada-U.S. relations. Because of the pandemic and because of hybrid sittings, House administration resources were taxed to their limit with the addition of those two committees.

That has been the case in the 44th Parliament up to this point. We have had two additional committees added to this Parliament. We have the new Standing Committee on Science and Research and the Special Committee on Afghanistan. The addition of these two committees in this 44th Parliament has taxed the House's resources to the limit. All members of the House realize and understand this, because not a week goes by that we do not have trouble booking additional meetings or additional time for committees because of the constraints regarding staff and information technology.

However, on June 8, that will change. The order of the House that established the Special Committee on Afghanistan orders this committee to be wound up and to report back to the House, so we will have only one additional committee added to the House in this 44th Parliament, that being the permanent Standing Committee on Science and Research. We have an opportunity to resurrect the Canada-China committee, which we believe is a very important thing to do.

• (1015)

There are so many more things we have yet to study. We did not complete our study of national security issues concerning the relationship between Canada and the People's Republic of China. We have not even begun to tackle the issue of the People's Republic of China's belt and road initiative.

Business of Supply

Since the last election, new information has come to light that needs urgent study and analysis, which is the foreign interference and disinformation on the part of the People's Republic of China that we saw in the last election. Professor Fung, who is a McGill University professor and a Canada research chair, and Ms. Lee, a researcher at McGill University, both published a piece in *Policy Options* recently, in which they concluded that proxies acting on behalf of the leadership in Beijing spread disinformation in the last election campaign that led or contributed to the defeat of a number of colleagues in this House. This is an urgent issue that requires study and analysis. It is an issue that we cannot let slip from the radar screen of public consciousness.

Democratic institutions, both here and abroad, are under immense pressure and threat, from both internal and external forces. We need to ensure the integrity of these institutions, whether it is our electoral process or Parliament in between elections. The research that these two McGill University researchers conducted after the election, which found that there was disinformation spread on social media platforms by proxies acting on behalf of Beijing, is something that is critical and requires urgent attention. I believe the Canada-China committee would be a very good place for that to be studied and analyzed.

We also have a need, because China is a superpower and because it is so integrated into the global economy, to study how we can engage with it on issues such as supply chains and natural resources, and how we should be approaching it on the issues of rare earths, critical minerals and climate change. All of these things need to be studied and focused on. A new special committee on Canada-China relations would be the perfect place to do exactly that.

I think the committee could play a constructive role in assisting the government. Clearly, the government has struggled with establishing a policy on China. The third Minister of Foreign Affairs promised to come forward with a new framework on China by the end of 2020. That never happened. The fourth Minister of Foreign Affairs came forward with an approach that was summed up by the three Cs: co-operate, compete and challenge. However, that same minister, shortly after the last election, in 2021, changed that policy to the four Cs and added the fourth C of “co-exist” to the policy. The current Minister of Foreign Affairs, the fifth in just over six years, has now been tasked with coming forward with a new Indo-Pacific strategy, which we have yet to see. Clearly, the government is struggling to come forward with a written, clearly defined policy on China and the Indo-Pacific region. That is where I think the committee could be of great assistance to the government.

Let me conclude by saying this. The most important reason for the establishment of this special committee on Canada-China relations is February 24, a day that shocked the democratic world. For the first time since 1945, two states in Europe were at war. Russia attacked a democracy, upending the international order that has ensured peace and stability for some eight decades. We have to be mindful that what is happening in eastern Europe today could also happen in the Indo-Pacific region. That is why we need to focus on all aspects of the Canada-China relationship, to ensure that we are prepared for any eventualities that may take place.

• (1020)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that the relationship between Canada and China is of critical importance. In fact, I have said that many times at our foreign affairs committee.

The hon. member and I have the pleasure of sitting on our parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, and I would submit to him that that is the appropriate place for us to have these extremely important conversations. Indeed, later today during our foreign affairs committee meeting we will be discussing and studying Taiwan. We have the ability to address our relationship with China within this standing committee.

I would further submit that it would be inappropriate, and perhaps my colleague could comment on this, to remove this critical aspect of Canada's foreign affairs policy from our discussions at the foreign affairs committee.

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs is an appropriate place to study Canada-China relations. The challenge is that that committee is seized with so many other issues. It is seized with the issue of the COVAX facility, for vaccines for developing countries. It is seized with the issue of Ukraine. It is seized with so many other issues. This is the reason why we established the Special Committee on Afghanistan, because the foreign affairs committee is seized with so many other issues, and it is why we should be establishing a special committee on Canada-China relations.

The relationship between Canada and China is so broad and multi-faceted, particularly in light of what has happened in recent years, that we need a special committee to continue to further the study. I would point out that in the 43rd Parliament, the amount of media attention that the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations received is an indication of the need to re-establish this committee in the 44th Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois welcomes this motion with great interest.

We know that China now has the financial means to hire foreign agents who interfere in the economic and democratic affairs of major economies.

One of the current candidates for the leadership of the Conservative Party has worked for Huawei.

Would my colleague be in favour of lobbying to have all the unredacted contracts between Mr. Jean Charest and Huawei tabled in the House?

• (1025)

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

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The Canada-China relationship is a broad one. There are many issues between our two countries, particularly with respect to economic matters. There is no question that we must pressure the government to develop a policy on companies such as Huawei.

For four years now, the government has been saying it will present a policy on Huawei. However, a decision has yet to be made. That is another reason to establish a special committee on Canada-China relations.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills for his great explanation and presentation on the need for this committee.

He referenced, in his answer to the previous questioner, the need to provide the government some help on a policy with respect to Huawei, hopefully to ban Huawei from Canada's 5G network.

What other policies should the committee inform the government on? What other existential issues is Canada or the world facing with respect to risks in the Indo-Pacific and our relationship with the People's Republic of China?

Hon. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, the issue of Huawei is one that needs attention. Then public safety minister Ralph Goodale, in May 2019, said that the government would be delivering a decision on Huawei before the 2019 election. Then the government changed its mind on it. Several months later, it said the decision would be coming after the 2019 election. We still have no decision. Last September, the Prime Minister indicated to Global News that a decision would be forthcoming in several weeks, and yet there is still no decision today.

It is another reason why we need this committee, to help the government along with its policies on Canada-China. There are so many aspects of the security relationship that need attention that I cannot elucidate them here in my short answer to the hon. member.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadians of Chinese descent are great contributors to Canada and are part of an ancient heritage and civilization that has contributed much to humanity. I have a thriving Chinese Canadian community at home, which has been very kind to me over the years.

As the shadow defence minister, it is my job to critique the government's defence policy and posture, with the goal of making national security more sound and stronger. This is very close to my heart as the former associate minister of national defence.

When I look at China as a strategic player on the global stage, I can visualize its progress over time from what westerners considered a backward, developing state to now a great power, a superpower on the rise. It is a non-status quo power, in that it has an interest in carving out a sphere of influence for itself, not just in the Indo-Pacific but also around the globe. In so doing, it brings itself into conflict with other great powers, like the United States. It is time for the Canadian government to take seriously the threats that the Beijing communist leadership poses to Canada's national interests and security, as well as our values.

On July 24, 2019, China published its first defence white paper in four years, "China's National Defence in the New Era". The document outlines the strategic guidance for the People's Liberation Army. The white paper commences with a review of how China sees the global security environment. In China's view, there has been a redistribution of power in the international system, in that there is no one superpower anymore and this has led to a multipolar system. This trend toward multipolarity and the decline of the world's only superpower, the United States, has led to greater instability and strategic competition. The world is no longer "a tranquil place".

Beijing views the United States as the biggest threat to international stability and security. The white paper warns about American "growing hegemonism, power politics, unilateralism", but the document does not stop at examining the U.S. It also looks at U.S. allies and other significant states in the world. It notes that "NATO has continued its enlargement, stepped up military deployment in Central and Eastern Europe and conducted frequent military exercises." As well, it notes that "Russia is strengthening its nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities for strategic containment and striving to safeguard its strategic security space and interests". Furthermore, it points out that "[t]he European Union is accelerating its security and defense integration to be more independent in its own security".

The document is transparent in its statement that the goal of Chinese defence policy is countering the U.S. and replacing it as the world's superpower. China singles out those states that it sees as U.S. allies and partners in disrupting the region, particularly South Korea, Japan and Australia. The document also singles out Australia for its military alliance with the U.S. and its military engagement in the Asia-Pacific region as "seeking a bigger role in security affairs". Not surprisingly, the document claims that Chinese policy in the Asia-Pacific region has been a resounding success and suggests a China-led security architecture for the future. It seems that Beijing views the Asia-Pacific region in almost the same manner as imperial Japan did immediately before and during World War II.

The white paper asserts that the fundamental goal of national defence in this new era is to deter and resist aggression; safeguard national political security, the people's security and social stability; oppose and contain Taiwan independence; crack down on proponents of separatist movements, such as Tibet independence and the creation of East Turkestan; and safeguard national sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security. Other strategic national security objectives include safeguarding China's maritime rights and interests and its security interests in outer space, electromagnetic space and cyberspace, as well as safeguarding China's overseas interests and supporting the sustainable development of the country.

The white paper notes that the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, which are also claimed by China, are inalienable parts of the Chinese territory. It vows that Beijing will defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity via patrols in the waters near the disputed islands. Other states that claim parts of the South China Sea are told that the sea is also an inalienable part of China.

• (1030)

The white paper states:

China exercises its national sovereignty to build infrastructure and deploy necessary defensive capabilities on the islands and reefs in the South China Sea....

With regard to Taiwan, the document uses plain language not seen in previous defence white papers. It states that:

To solve the Taiwan question and achieve complete reunification of the country is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation and essential to realizing national rejuvenation. China adheres to the principles of "peaceful reunification", and "one country, two systems", promotes peaceful development of cross-strait relations, and advances peaceful reunification....

This is what it says.

[*Translation*]

The linchpin of Beijing's political objectives is the People's Liberation Army. China has the world's largest military machine, with more than 2 million soldiers, which can be turned against an adversary like Taiwan at any time and with little warning. China continues to have organizational and doctrinal issues that undermine its effectiveness.

[*English*]

The People's Liberation Army has also not seen real combat since its border war with Vietnam in 1979 and skirmishes with India in the Himalayas. The People's Liberation Army, or PLA, has an increasingly modern military featuring strategic nuclear and conventional rockets and ground, sea and air forces.

In terms of the strategic nuclear deterrent, China has 100 rail-based ICBMs that may be targeted on the U.S. right now, and has developed two new fields of some 250 silos for its reportedly growing nuclear arsenal. It is important to note that the increase in the Chinese nuclear strategic deterrent tends to move away from its past minimalist approach to nuclear counterstrike, which it has reportedly had for decades. It suggests that Beijing is about to drop all pretenses of a no-first-use policy.

In August 2021, China reportedly tested at least one nuclear-capable HGV that was launched from a Long March 2C rocket and orbited the earth before it attacked its intended target. The HGV travels at an extremely high speed to its target: above Mach 5. It is manoeuvrable, unlike a ballistic warhead on a parabolic path, and it may strike its target with little or no warning almost anywhere on the globe.

Fractional orbital bombardment systems, FOBS, are designed to place nuclear warheads into a fractional orbit from the southern hemisphere where they would likely go undetected, instead of launching them by a ballistic missile over the North Pole. The advantage of FOBS is that they avoid the North American Aerospace Defense Command. NORAD's constellation of radar stations looks out into the Arctic space, and satellites are positioned to look at the

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northern hemisphere, rather than to look south. As well, the FOBS have no range limit, are incredibly fast and have no predictable path to give away their target.

The Communist Party of China has at its disposal an army of about 975,000 soldiers to defend Chinese interests, with enormous reserves potential and important paramilitary forces of around 660,000 soldiers. Beijing now has the world's largest navy, with 250,000 sailors and 355 warships that it can focus on the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

The PLA navy has four modern amphibious dock vessels and two amphibious helicopter assault ships. The navy has two aircraft carriers, one cruiser, 32 destroyers, 49 frigates, and about 125 smaller corvettes and missile craft of various capabilities. It has a submarine force of nuclear-powered ballistic missile and hunter-killer boats along with many conventionally powered subs. The two operational aircraft carriers are of modest capability, with a larger third carrier under construction. However, the surface combatants are peers or near-peers to their western counterparts.

For Canada, it is important to remember that China is interested in our Arctic region and the riches there, as well as the prospect of a sheltered area where its nuclear-powered ballistic missile subs might hide during possible tensions with either the U.S. or Russia. Chinese state media have reportedly called the Northwest Passage a golden waterway for future trade. To Denmark's concern, Beijing has expressed an interest in Greenland.

In conclusion, Canada ignores China's growing global interests and its military might at our peril. We have to step up, join our allies in Quad and AUKUS and vote for this committee to reconvene and do some very good work.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech, and I will play nice. Yesterday the Conservatives attacked us mercilessly on the prayer issue on the grounds we should be talking about inflation instead. Unfortunately, they are not talking about inflation today.

That is not my business; it is theirs. Maybe Jean Charest's presence is forcing them to go off on a China tangent.

I have one very simple question for my colleague. I think a committee on our relationship with China makes sense, but should the special committee not have an end date?

That might make it easier for people to agree to it.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I would suggest the terms of the committee's mandate can be worked out among the parties, but the crucial thing is that it be reconvened. We understand the work is very crucial to our sovereignty as a nation as a whole, to our allies and in our Arctic, which is very vulnerable. We need NORAD modernization: It has not happened yet. We are under in our numbers of personnel in our armed forces. We are under-equipped. We need to be more vigilant.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the members for South Surrey—White Rock's and Wellington—Halton Hills' interventions, and I do not disagree with a lot of the concerns they raise. Specifically, I heard about national security, foreign affairs, economic relations and supply chain issues. We have committees that deal with all of these things.

I am just curious why the opposition feels as though we need a special committee. Is the member not afraid that might actually take away from the work of these other committees, when we are basically telling them not to deal with this issue, because we have a different committee for it?

• (1040)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I think that is a good question and an important one in this discussion, because, yes, we do have committees that touch on this. I am on the national defence committee, and I know the global affairs committee deals with some of these issues, but as my colleague has pointed out, they are very taxed, in terms of the amount of work they have to do. In the national defence committee, we have already looked at national security threats, recruitment and retention. We are looking at aid to civil authorities, and we are trying desperately to get out a couple of reports, so we need a special committee focused on this issue.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard that party, time and again, cite that the targeting of an individual nation, such as Israel, was cause for anti-Semitism, yet it seems that party has a fixation on China. In fact, yesterday it was a Conservative MP who blocked a very basic motion to condemn the murder of a journalist in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Why does the Conservative Party seem to have a double standard when it comes to upholding international law and basic human rights?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, how dare the member for Hamilton Centre make a veiled accusation—

Mr. Matthew Green: It is not veiled; it is a true accusation.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: —on this? This is a very important issue. It is about our national security, and it has nothing to do with the people who make up a very proud nation. It has to do with the communist leadership and what it is doing, in fact, even to Chinese Canadians. It is scaring them to death here in our own country, as it did recently in the last election.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we go to a brief question, I want to remind the member for Hamil-

ton Centre that he had an opportunity to ask a question. If he has other questions, he should wait, as opposed to yelling out other questions or comments.

A brief question from the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague knows that our NATO allies have re-evaluated their positions on how they deal with China. How would this committee assist Canada, as a whole-of-government approach, against the Chinese communists, with respect to their asymmetric belligerence toward our country?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, it really comes down to focus, I would suggest to the House. It is a big issue and it is a complex issue, and it should be dealt with using the proper focus and taken seriously by Parliament.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I hope that I can get a question from the member for Hamilton Centre, given his passion in this particular debate.

I am pleased to rise today in the House to address the motion brought forward by the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. My remarks today will focus on the bilateral relations between China and Canada, as well as on China in the context of the development of our government's Indo-Pacific strategy.

The relationship between Canada and China dates back to the early days of the history of our country. As the motion highlights, Canadians of Chinese descent have made immeasurable contributions to Canada and are interwoven into the fabric of our society. Today, nearly two million residents of Canada are of Chinese origin and form one of the largest groups among Canada's immigrant population. In many ways, these people-to-people ties represent the closest link between our two countries.

International trade is another important aspect of our relationship with China. China is Canada's third-largest merchandise export market. With the world's largest population and a growing middle class, China offers Canadian exporters important opportunities, as well as ongoing challenges in certain sectors.

There can be no doubt that China has changed significantly in recent decades. It has benefited selectively from a rules-based international order in pursuing its economic rise. China seems determined to reshape the international order to meet its own needs, and its aggressive actions in the South China Sea and East China Sea threaten regional and global stability.

The mounting evidence of China's disrespect for basic human rights, freedom of expression and freedom of religion, including the treatment of Tibetans, Uighurs and other Muslim minorities in China, who continue to face repression, forced labour and discrimination, and national security law imposed on the people of Hong Kong in 2020, are all deeply troubling and at odds with Canadian values and interests. In response to these actions, Canada and other countries must continue to speak up and challenge China. We cannot allow any country, regardless of its size, to disregard human rights. At the same time, if we hope to make progress on global issues such as climate change, the environment and public health, we must find ways to engage and collaborate with China.

Our government is prioritizing a comprehensive approach to the Indo-Pacific region that will guide our foreign policy for the next decade. This is not just a strategy for one region of the world, but a strategy for Canada that will impact our peace and prosperity for decades to come. No region will be more important to Canada's interests than the Indo-Pacific.

As the prosperity, security and well-being of Canadians become increasingly linked to the Indo-Pacific region, Canada is deepening our partnerships and expanding our engagement in the region. Canada must engage in the Indo-Pacific with a comprehensive, responsive and integrated approach. It must be one that continues to advance trade and economic objectives while protecting Canada's national security and other security interests, defending a rules-based international order, advancing sustainable development goals and, of course, fighting climate change.

Canada's evolving policy for advancing our interests in China is inseparable from, and a critical piece within, our approach in the broader region. We must continue diversifying into the broader Indo-Pacific, and our relations with China are but one part of the Indo-Pacific strategy under development by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

As we all know, our bilateral relations have suffered from China's use of coercive diplomacy. This has led Canada to reflect on and assess China's sincerity in constructively resolving issues. We are taking a step-by-step approach to assessing Chinese intentions and managing our interests in China.

While our government acknowledges the complexity of Canada-China relations, we will continue to co-operate, when it makes sense to do so, on global issues and shared interests. We will challenge the Chinese government's violation of international rules and norms, compete with authoritarian approaches by advancing those that support democracy, transparency and accountability, and coexist with the most populous nation on earth.

• (1045)

As part of this approach, on April 5, the Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke with the People's Republic of China's state councillor and foreign affairs minister, Wang Yi. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has been clear that Canada will continue to stand for and raise human rights concerns, and she reiterated Canada's expectations towards China in resolving outstanding bilateral issues. The minister also emphasized the need for China to play a constructive role to stop the war in Ukraine, as the nations of the world were watching Chinese actions on this file very closely. The minister has also

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highlighted the many areas on which both countries can work together, such as climate change, the environment and global health.

In conclusion, bilateral relations can be complex and dynamic, but our national interests and long-standing Canadian values are a constant. Canada and China will continue to have deep people-to-people ties and share many economic, social and cultural interests, which will continue to enrich the fabric of both our societies. Our government continues to advance Canada's interests by managing relations with China through a principled approach, and we will be steadfast and firm in upholding Canadian values and interests.

I want to end by addressing the proposal to create a new special committee. There are already several existing parliamentary committees where bilateral relations issues can be and have been raised. At the top of this list is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which has, already this year, undertaken a thorough and constructive study of China-related matters. The foreign affairs committee remains best placed to study these matters, and I am concerned that my colleague is simply creating a vehicle to duplicate its work with this proposal.

• (1050)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the dimensions of the multi-dimensional relationship between Canada and China is justice. One of the things that this special committee could study, if it were to be established, is the issue of justice between Canada and China. Just yesterday, Canadian Denise Ho was arrested in Hong Kong.

On the court of appeal of the high court of Hong Kong sit a number of Canadian, Australian and British judges. Some of those judges have resigned. The former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada sits on the court of appeal.

I am wondering whether the member thinks it continues to be appropriate for a Commonwealth judge to continue to sit on the court of appeal of Hong Kong, in light of the degradation of the rule of law and the independence of the judicial system in Hong Kong since the rollout of the draconian and illegal national security law.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I do not disagree with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills on the importance of the various issues this potential committee could discuss. Indeed, I am sure, if it were to be created, it would discuss some of those things. My concern is more about the vehicle or the mechanism by which it is being proposed to study it. We have established committees, standing committees of Parliament, that can look at these issues. The issue that he raised specifically with respect to justice, could be studied through the foreign affairs committee, for example, to see what China is doing and if Canada needs to take a certain position on it or make a recommendation, at least, to Parliament to do that.

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My concern is not about the issues. I think that the member raises important issues, as did the member who spoke after him. I am sure we will hear more of them today. My concern is more with the vehicle and the mechanism by which we are being asked to study these.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always such a pleasure to hear the member for Kingston and the Islands speak, and today's speech was one of his most dynamic yet.

He laid out many potentially problematic issues that Parliament would have to examine closely. He spent 10 minutes listing all those problems, but then rejected the idea of creating a parliamentary committee to study them. Does he see the contradiction there?

Would the member reconsider his position if, say, an amendment were moved to set an end date for the committee?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I think all my speeches are quite dynamic. I would not limit that to just this one, but I appreciate the member's comment.

What I attempted to do in my speech was highlight the various issues in the relationship between Canada and China, which have been going on since pretty much the creation of this country, and the fact that we have to make sure that we continue to assess and address them, not just while this committee would be formed, but, indeed, into the future. We need permanent mechanisms and vehicles to study and contribute to that relationship from a parliamentary perspective.

I am submitting that we have those vehicles and established ways of doing that through the existing committees. I am saying that we could do this work using the committees that are already in place. I find it surprising that the Bloc, given the concerns that we continually hear them raise about the resources in the House, the interpretation services and whatnot, is so willing to just stack another committee onto all of the other committees and the strained resources we have to deliver on those.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, certainly the issues with Canada and China are important. What concerns me is that we are in the middle of a horrific war with Russia, and in recent weeks, I have noticed the Conservatives have sort of gone radio silent on the Russian war.

Given the fact that the Conservative backbench is running issues of vaccine disinformation, voodoo Bitcoin economics and planning to fire the president of the Bank of Canada, we know that Putin's disinformation team is very much tied in with the disinformation that is being promoted by the extreme right. Is it possible that the Conservatives on the backbench are getting more and more uncomfortable by Parliament standing up to Putin, so they want to change the channel at this historic moment?

• (1055)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am really trying not to go after Conservative rhetoric with my speech, but the member for Timmins—James Bay has just lobbed that ball to me in such a manner that it is very difficult not to.

What concerns me more, given the member's comments, is the narrative out there that somehow we do not live in a free country. This has been purported by the individual who is presumed to be the next leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Carleton. His entire platform is based on this notion that we do not live in free country, which I think is alarming. It goes right into the narrative the member for Timmins—James Bay spoke about concerning Russian misinformation and disinformation.

Members of Parliament need to come to terms with the fact that it is not appropriate to be peddling that misinformation for the purpose of political gain. It might help the member for Carleton get elected as leader of the Conservative Party in September, but it certainly will not help this country in the short, medium or long term.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree that the member's comments were dynamic, as he always is, but I was also going to add they were measured and non-partisan, which shows me he can do this really well.

Is the member aware if anybody has ever gone before the foreign affairs committee or the trade committee to bring forward a proposal for a study on China and some of these issues that was rejected by the other members of that committee?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I am not personally aware of any of the studies that may have been brought forward. I am not going to say that they have not because I just do not know, but I would like to know if that is the case.

This idea would be so much more justified, and we could justify the argument for creating this special committee, if we could back that up by saying that we had tried to go to these different standing committees, raised these issues to start studies on them, and they refused to do them. Then, at least for me, it would definitely have more legs to stand on in terms of the argument to propose this committee.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the speech by the member for Kingston and the Islands there may be some disinformation when it comes to being measured, but the misinformation from the member for Timmins—James Bay is completely false.

The situation that we are faced with today in defence around the world is probably one of the major reasons, as pointed out by my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills, that committees are already busy. This is an emergency. When there are references to interference in elections and a committee is not taking the time to look at that, does the member not think that would warrant having a committee to look into this special situation with China?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, if I understood correctly, the member said that he is on the defence committee. No, he did not say that? Okay, I am sorry. He was talking about the defence committee.

I would think that, if we had issues related to defence and with China specifically, the best place to discuss those would be at the national defence committee, not to establish a new committee. I do not really understand the logic of the member's argument of committees being cancelled as a result of the election, whether it is the China-Canada committee, the defence committee or the foreign affairs committee. Any committee would essentially be eliminated as a result of an election.

Specifically concerning where to study this, I still have not heard the argument come forward as to why, given all the issues the member talked about that are going on in the world right now, namely the war in Ukraine, for example, we need a special committee to study this and why it could not be studied at the existing committees.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Speaker, this feels a bit like *Back to the Future* or *Groundhog Day*, as we keep reliving the same thing over and over again. Of course we have always been in favour of creating a committee to examine the relationship between the People's Republic of China and Canada. It is no different today; we have not changed our minds. We believe it is still relevant to have a committee to take a closer look specifically at this matter.

There is no denying that the People's Republic of China is a military, political, and economic superpower. It was a real Eldorado for the Liberal government of the 1990s. Everyone said we should relocate all our businesses to China and take advantage of China's cheap labour. By doing business with China, we would eventually help raise the standard of living there, which would inevitably advance democracy and help it blossom like a flower in the spring.

A few decades on, we have become a little disillusioned with the logic and narrative that the Liberal government of the day was trying to impose. Nevertheless, the fact remains that China is an undisputed economic power.

We need to recognize that relations between the People's Republic of China and Canada were excellent for decades. We can think of the time when Canada provided wheat to contribute to famine relief in the People's Republic of China or the influence Dr. Bethune had during the Chinese revolution. There is also the fact that former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau was among the first western heads of state to establish relations with the People's Republic of China.

Relations between our countries were always extremely positive until they faltered significantly with the request to extradite Meng Wanzhou, followed by the illegal detention of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig. I thought it was important at that point to take a look at what could have happened and how we might try to restore relations.

Then something happened that had me completely shocked. I was floored. We came to realize that the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations was not the least bit interested in finding solutions to improve relations with the People's Republic of China. It had become a partisan political tool to try to put the government in a tough spot. I will not get into details because we will probably

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have an opportunity to come back to it. The whole thing was abruptly interrupted when an entirely unnecessary election was called unexpectedly last fall.

In the meantime, thanks to the election of a new government in Washington, a solution was found that, although somewhat questionable, made it possible to resolve the problem of the U.S. request to extradite Meng Wanzhou, which then led to the almost immediate release of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig.

After the election results were announced, we came back to the House and, lo and behold, the Conservatives decided that they needed a new toy, a new tool with which to play partisan politics. All of a sudden, now that the two Michaels had been released, they felt there was no longer a need for the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. Now, the Conservatives wanted a special committee to examine the disastrous Afghanistan evacuation. Our Conservative friends were convinced that this would win them political points. They no longer needed the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations at that time.

• (1100)

We criticized the fact that the Conservatives were abandoning the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. Obviously, we were not against creating the Special Committee on Afghanistan because, admittedly, some missteps and bad decisions were made, and we needed to try to identify any problems in advance just in case we should ever find ourselves in another such situation.

Incidentally, the late premier Jacques Parizeau often said that we must never underestimate the federal government's ability to disappoint us. In this case, it seems as though the federal government never learns from past lessons. Although we have to hope that the federal government will learn from what happened in Afghanistan, I must admit that it may disappoint us again this time.

In any event, we put pressure on the government to bring back the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. However, for their own reasons, the Conservatives were not ready for the committee to be reinstated at that time. I will let my colleagues speak to the reasons why they may not have wanted that committee to be re-established.

Let us see where we are this morning. The Special Committee on Afghanistan is wrapping up its work. The Conservatives' new political toy or tool will soon be a thing of the past. What issue has become their new political football? They have suddenly proposed a special committee on the relationship between Canada and the People's Republic of China. That is rather extraordinary.

Our Conservative friends did not think it would be useful to bring back the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations even though the world has changed profoundly in the months since the election, due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Now their priority is suddenly to reinstate the committee, so what made them change their minds?

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I want to make it clear to my colleagues that we agree. We have always believed that this committee served a purpose. However, I sincerely wonder about why our Conservative friends are bringing this proposal forward now. It was relevant after the election, but they were not at all interested. Suddenly, now that Russia has invaded Ukraine, they find it relevant again, with the Special Committee on Afghanistan a few weeks away from wrapping up.

I cannot speak for my colleagues, but I think that if someone suspected partisan motives were behind this proposal, they might be right. In any case, we must acknowledge that it certainly seems that way. However, as I have said from the beginning, even though I have serious doubts that our Conservative friends' motives are honourable, we will vote in favour of this motion because we believe and always have believed that this committee served a purpose.

I would now like to take some time to talk about the wording of the motion moved by my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills, whom I salute. It is always a pleasure to work with him.

I want to draw my colleagues' attention to one of the points early in the motion: "(iii) the distinction between the people of China and the Chinese state, as embodied by the Communist Party of China and the government of the People's Republic of China". I think we can essentially all agree on that one.

I think the next line is worthy of a little commentary. It states, "(iv) that authoritarian states, including the People's Republic of China, increasingly pose a threat to the rules-based international order". The Conservatives seem to have discovered that there are authoritarian states in the world. It may come as a shock to some, but less than half of our fellow humans on this planet live in democracies.

• (1105)

Given Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the People's Republic of China's threats against Taiwan, I understand this sudden desire to highlight the fact that "authoritarian states, including the People's Republic of China, increasingly pose a threat to the rules-based international order", but I simply want to point out that this is not new.

Authoritarian states are not new. Because of some kind of agreement or tacit alliance between the two countries, the authoritarian states of Russia and the People's Republic of China may constitute a threat to the international order established after the Second World War.

I remind members that when the United Nations was created, we appointed the five largest powers at the time to maintain balance within the international system. The invasion of Ukraine, however, has highlighted the limits of this system, as one of the five powers meant to help maintain international order has gone out of control.

We find ourselves in a situation where neither the People's Republic of China nor Russia are what one might call democratic states. It appears that they have decided to collaborate, and we fully understand the threat that poses to the world order as we knew it, until recently at least.

Let me digress for a moment to share another fascinating point. By invading Ukraine, Vladimir Putin thought he would discourage

all states from wanting to eventually join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, or NATO. However, the exact opposite has happened. Do not forget that under Donald Trump's administration, President Macron described NATO as being virtually brain dead.

There were questions about the usefulness and relevance of NATO, but Vladimir Putin has made the organization relevant again—so much so that states that have traditionally been neutral for decades, such as Finland and Sweden, are now considering joining NATO. Vladimir Putin has pushed countries into NATO's arms by trying to prevent Ukraine from joining the organization.

Moreover, after Brexit, some European countries, such as Poland and Hungary, started questioning the point of the European Union. After the invasion of Ukraine, people stopped questioning whether the European Union was relevant or useful. In response to the Russian threat, the European Union, like NATO, closed ranks like never before.

We may agree with our colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills that this kind of tacit alliance between Russia and the People's Republic of China represents a significant threat to the international order as we knew it until very recently.

Even so, that does not take away from the problems we are seeing inside and outside the People's Republic of China as acknowledged in point (iv) of the motion. One example is the new silk road, China's move to establish itself as a force to be reckoned with in Africa and ultimately render former colonial powers, such as France, and even countries without a colonial past, such as Canada, irrelevant. Canada had a notable and noted presence in Africa for decades, but it literally missed the boat.

• (1110)

While China was investing heavily in Africa, Canada withdrew from that continent, especially under the influence of Stephen Harper's Conservative government. This opened Africa's doors to the Chinese. We missed the boat, and the Chinese are emerging as the power to be reckoned with in Africa. Russia is doing the same thing in Mali now. As the French pull out, the Russians are moving in. As point (iv) indicates, this contributes to a possible destabilisation of the international order.

I was talking a moment ago about the incredible and surprising solidarity shown by NATO and EU states in the face of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. We all thought about our friends in Taiwan, because we know that China is keeping a close eye on what is happening right now. Xi Jinping has made no secret of the fact that he would like to bring Taiwan back into the fold of mainland China. There have been concerns about the repercussions this would have.

At a reception in Taiwan's honour last night, it was noted that Taiwan is Canada's 11th largest trading partner, the fifth largest in Asia. This is significant. Taiwan is inextricably intertwined with the global economic system. However, if the People's Republic of China were to invade Taiwan, given the influence of Chinese banks on assets in Europe, would Europe be able to show the same level of solidarity in imposing sanctions on China, which is even more inextricably intertwined in the international economic system than Russia is?

What is happening right now is extremely concerning. It is not a matter of if the People's Republic of China will invade Taiwan but when, and the question is how the international community will be able to respond to this new transgression of international rules.

It is important to create a new committee on Canada-China relations. We think it appropriate to support this motion even though, once again, I highly doubt the good intentions of our Conservative friends, who moved with this motion at such an odd time, after Russia invaded Ukraine and a few days after the Special Committee on Afghanistan wrapped up its work, which did not give the Conservatives the political dividends they were hoping for. Now they are turning their attention to something else, and it seems that the political panacea for the Conservatives today is to reactivate the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations.

We will step up. We will do what we can to ensure that this committee does not become another partisan circus, and that we can lay the foundation for a better understanding and, we hope, better relations with the People's Republic of China, given the country's significance in the international system.

• (1115)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. However, I want to clarify one thing: I always intended to move this motion.

I am moving it now because the House of Commons Administration did not have the resources to add another special committee until now. However, since the Special Committee on Afghanistan will be completing its work on June 8, there is now an opportunity to create a new committee on Canada-China relations.

It was difficult to make the decision to move a motion on Afghanistan last fall, but now we have an opportunity to have a committee on Canada-China relations. That is why I moved this motion today.

• (1120)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I do not doubt my colleague's intentions. However, I would like to point out that, without disclosing any caucus secrets, and setting aside this noble argument that another committee could not be created because the House of Commons just did not have enough resources, I know for a fact, from what some Conservative colleagues have confided to me, that there were internal disagreements about whether it was advisable to bring back the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. That is the truth.

Now the Conservatives are dissatisfied, and I will admit that I am as well, with the negotiations between the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party on the committee that will examine the situa-

tion that occurred at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.

The Conservatives very clumsily presented a motion at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Because it was not adopted and they were not pleased with the committee that was created, they are proposing to create a special committee on the Canada-People's Republic of China relationship in the hope of again strong-arming the government on the issue of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I must interrupt the member because there are others who want to ask questions.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, as my colleague probably recalls, Canada signed the FIPA trade agreement under the Stephen Harper Conservatives, which locked Canadians into a trade agreement for over 31 years that cannot be cancelled. Under this agreement, Chinese companies can seek redress against any laws passed by any level of government that threaten their profits. There is a secret tribunal they can use if there is a lawsuit with respect to their rights around this.

We saw Chinese state-owned companies get access to energy, and I will quote from a story by a reporter who wrote, "If Stephen Harper ever gets tired of being Canada's Prime Minister, he might like to consider a second career in China—he'd fit right in."

I would ask my colleague this. Does he believe this committee should first look at what the agreement did with respect to opening up threats to our Canadian security? Has the former prime minister benefited at all from the trade agreement he signed?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, my simple answer to my colleague is yes.

If we need to reconsider Canada's existing relations with the People's Republic of China, everything must be on the table and we will have to consider the positives and negatives of each issue.

We have to acknowledge that Canada's economic relationship with the People's Republic of China is quite deep. This became clear during the pandemic when supply chains were completely disrupted. That led some companies to reconsider their decision to use Chinese suppliers, which is a far cry from the El Dorado the Liberals promised in the 1990s. Everything must be on the table, and that includes economic relations.

If our friends in the New Democratic Party think it is worthwhile reviewing the agreement signed by Stephen Harper's Conservative government, that is fine, we will review it.

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Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Montarville for his speech.

My understanding is that he intends to support the motion. I am just curious as to why he thinks it is important to establish a committee on our relationship with China instead of having it studied at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, the answer is simple. Realistically, there are only so many resources, technically speaking, that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development can devote to addressing these topics and issues. Right now, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is getting a lot of attention. There are plenty of people and conflicts elsewhere in the world that have suddenly been forgotten because this conflict in Ukraine is getting all the attention and sucking up all the oxygen. There are only so many issues that can be addressed by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. The same is true of the Standing Committee on Health, where it was decided to create a special committee to conduct a special study on medical assistance in dying.

In relation to the People's Republic of China, given its importance, we think that there must be—

• (1125)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am going to allow more questions, because I know there are several other members who wish to speak.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found the answer to that last question very interesting. The member was asked why this could not go to the foreign affairs committee, and the response was that the foreign affairs committee seems to be seized with one issue right now, which is the war in Ukraine, and does not have time for these other issues. Then the member also said there are a lot of issues going on around the world and that is why we need to establish this committee.

Is the member then saying we should be establishing committees for every issue the foreign affairs committee cannot handle? That is what he basically just said in response to his last question. He said that we do not have enough resources so we need a special committee, but he also said there are a number of issues going on throughout the world. Do we establish a special committee for every issue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, taking that logic to ridiculous extremes, I wonder if it is even worth trying to answer that.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Montarville on his speech. I have learned more about international politics and global issues from his speeches than I did during all my years at university.

I would remind my colleague that, in 2020, the House of Commons adopted a motion calling on the federal government to develop a strategy to combat Chinese aggression and make a decision on Huawei. Nothing has been done since.

As we all know, one of the Conservatives' new friends, Jean Charest, has returned to the fold and is trying to win the party leadership. He has a history of professional relations with Huawei and is a friend of the company. Should a special committee on the relationship between Canada and the People's Republic of China be formed, does my colleague think that the Conservatives' demands and intentions with respect to this committee could change, given their new relationship with Mr. Charest?

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, my colleague asked a very interesting question, and he is absolutely right.

There is reason to be concerned about Huawei's presence in the 5G sector in Canada, despite the company's good intentions. For example, when the Chinese offered to build an ultramodern building for the African Union, it turned out that the company and Chinese authorities were spying on the African Union.

Given the danger, our other four Five Eyes allies, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, decided to remove Huawei from their 5G networks.

Strongly influenced by our Conservative friends, the House of Commons asked the government to remove Huawei from the Canadian 5G network, but the government continues to drag its feet. This is hurting our businesses, because many of them have chosen Huawei technology.

Our Conservative friends will therefore have to deal with an aspiring leader who is a close friend of Huawei. I look forward to seeing where they stand on this issue at the special committee on the Canada-People's Republic of China relationship.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is my honour, as always, to speak in this place and share my thoughts. I want to start today by saying that I appreciate very much the incredible insight of my colleague from London—Fanshawe, so I will be splitting my time with her today.

This motion is very difficult for me, to be perfectly honest. I am going to spend the next few minutes talking about things that I am very supportive of with regard to this motion and things that I think are very problematic with it.

I want to thank my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills for bringing this motion forward. I have great respect for the member. I think he is very knowledgeable and experienced. I have depended on his experience in the past.

I appreciate the portion of this motion that notes:

Canadians of Chinese descent have made immeasurable contributions to Canada

I think that is an important note we need to make. It also says:

the people of China are part of an ancient civilization that has contributed much to humanity

That is also an extremely important piece to this.

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I support the idea of Parliament and members of this place spending more time looking at our relationship with China. We have seen very problematic things coming out of the China-Canada relationship. Many of them are very well known to all of the members of the House.

I have been listening to the debate this morning, and I have been hearing people say that this can happen at the foreign affairs committee. I am going to touch on this a bit later on, but I have to say that the foreign affairs committee has not been particularly good at getting things through when either the Conservatives or the Liberals do not want them to get through. I am going to touch on that later.

Just so members know, we have constraints within the foreign affairs committee because of the enormous amount of work we need to do, and also because there are tricks and whatnot being used within the foreign affairs committee to limit the amount of work we can do, by both the government and the opposition, to clarify.

The Canada-China committee would be an opportunity for us to look at those myriad issues that affect Canadians with regard to our relationship with China. I have met with many stakeholders and many constituents who are deeply concerned about that relationship. It is a vital relationship. We have an incredibly strong economic relationship with China that should have parliamentary oversight. However, we have serious concerns about what is happening with regard to human rights in China and other areas of the world. As someone who has spoken many times to Hong Kongers who are deeply alarmed and devastated by what has happened in Hong Kong, and as someone who has spoken to people in Taiwan who are quite worried, I know a lot is happening.

Consider the situation with the Uighurs. I was a member of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights that did the initial study on the genocide against the Uighur people. I heard the harrowing testimony from witnesses, experts and legal scholars on the genocide that is happening in China. That is very important as well. We were all seized by the hostage-taking of Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, but they were not the only Canadians who have been held in detention. There are still Canadians being held in detention, and we need to find a way to work with China to have that situation resolved.

Even just recently, I was deeply concerned about the news I heard that our previous ambassador, Ambassador Barton, was able to take a very lucrative job with a mining company after meeting with that company as an employee of the Crown. After holding that highest of positions, he was able to translate it into a lucrative opportunity for himself. I know, because I did check with the Ethics Commissioner, that laws were not broken in that situation, but it certainly did not pass the smell test for me and I am sure for many other Canadians around the world.

• (1130)

There is a rationale for this committee. However, I have some serious concerns, and I think I share them with many members of the House. A lot of them stem from this question: Why should we single out China at this time? Knowing the scenario we are in and knowing there is a war after the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine, which is deeply troubling for all parliamentarians, the use

of this motion to single out the issues we have with China is problematic for me.

I want to go through a few of the areas where we could also have committees.

I look at what is happening in Ethiopia. I look at what is happening to the Tigrayan people. It is devastating to see what is happening to the Tigrayan people. We have a Tigrayan diaspora, and it has reached out to me so many times to ask for help and ask for us to do more, so work needs to be done there as well.

I look at Yemen. My goodness. The Conservatives and the Liberals have sold arms to Saudi Arabia, which is fuelling the violence in Yemen to the point that Canada has been called out by the United Nations. Canada has been called out and shamed at the United Nations for fuelling a conflict. David Beasley from the World Food Programme has said it is the “worst place on earth”. Maybe we need to have a conversation about that. Maybe we need to have a conversation or committee about arms sales and where we are selling arms in this country.

We are also selling them to Israel. We have not, at the foreign affairs committee, looked at what is happening in the Middle East. Yesterday, we brought forward a motion in the House about a journalist who was murdered. He was shot and killed, and we condemn violence against journalists. However, the Conservatives did not allow that motion to go forward.

If we are so concerned about human rights abuses around the world, which members know is something that I deeply believe in, then protecting human rights is protecting human rights. Why does it only count in some situations? Why does it not count when it is a journalist attacked in the Middle East? Why does that not count, yet something happening to the Uighur people does? It is of course something we need to look at and study, but I do not understand how the Conservatives pick and choose. How do they cherry-pick human rights? Human rights are human rights, whether they happen in Canada or any other country in the world.

When I started, I talked about the foreign affairs committee. I agree with my colleague from the Bloc that the foreign affairs committee is extremely busy right now. Everyone in this House can appreciate the amount of work and effort that we are putting toward the conflict in Ukraine. It is seizing our attention and we are deeply engaged in that particular issue.

I see the need to have other opportunities to look at other conflicts. Maybe we need two foreign affairs committees, to be perfectly honest, because the world has changed. The world is a very difficult place at the moment. However, I want to reiterate that the foreign affairs committee has made choices in the past not to study things that are important. Members of that committee have made choices to filibuster, to delay and to use stall tactics so that we do not always meaningfully look at Canada's role in the world and the important role Canada could, should and used to play in the world. There is something to be discussed in that place as well.

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I am going to spend the next several days really thinking about this motion. I am going to be talking to my constituents. I am going to be talking to stakeholders. I am going to be engaging with the community. I am going to be talking to my colleagues. We have to have a bigger conversation about how we want Canada's role in the world to be articulated and how we as parliamentarians want to move forward in this changing geopolitical climate.

I will end my remarks there. I look forward to questions from my colleagues.

• (1135)

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her intervention. I always appreciate hearing her in the House.

My colleague who brought this motion forward today talked about the need for this committee. He had many different, great reasons for that.

One thing that has been mentioned today is the foreign affairs committee, which is dealing with the war on Ukraine. China has a big role in that and it has not condemned the war. When it comes to relations with Russia and China, they are very amicable, at a time when our Prime Minister, who was in Ukraine this week, is donating \$50 million more in taxpayer dollars to it.

Does that alone not warrant, notwithstanding the rest of the reasons, the establishment of this committee, apart from the foreign affairs committee?

• (1140)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, one of the issues I am grappling with is the geopolitical situation we find ourselves in. Russia and Ukraine are, of course, front and centre in that, but the ripples and implications of it on a broader scale are very clear.

One thing that I have been working on has me quite worried. When we look at China, it appears to me that it is determining whether it is going to side with Russia or against it.

I am also looking at nuclear disarmament. Now, more than ever, we need to look at the fact that we have a megalomaniac madman in Putin, who has a nuclear bomb. I do not think any of us wants to be held hostage by somebody with a nuclear bomb.

What we also need to be looking at in the foreign affairs committee is how to disarm. I would love to have a committee, to be perfectly honest, on nuclear disarmament in this world. We could move that further so that countries like Russia cannot not hold us over a barrel and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Sorry, but I have to go to other questions.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's passion for defending human rights. I sit with her on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

I completely agree with her. There are many problematic conflicts around the world that are not getting any media attention. In fact, when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees came to Ottawa a month ago, he said that this was a problem because all eyes are on Ukraine right now, but there are conflicts all over the place.

I would like to talk to my colleague about the very specific case of one of my constituents. Lazhar Zouaïmia is a human rights advocate for Amnesty International. He went to Algeria and was imprisoned there. He had a hard time leaving that country, but has finally returned to Longueuil.

This morning there was an article in *Le Devoir* about the huge number of Canadians who are still trapped over there, not necessarily in prison, but—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to be fair about speaking time. The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, it is an excellent point. We are unable to acknowledge the areas around the world where there are other challenges. What is happening in Ukraine is going to have ripple effects geopolitically, but it is also going to have massive ripple effects in food security. We know that Lebanon, for example, is going to have real problems, and we should be looking at that.

The member talked about Canadians who are being held captive. I have to say that northern Syria should be an area that every parliamentarian is ashamed of. We have Canadians and children in northern Syria and our country refuses to repatriate them. These are innocent children.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her wonderful insight. I agree with her. In particular, the Conservative Party has demonstrated that it picks and chooses when it wants to uphold human rights. I can think of yesterday, when a Conservative member voted against a unanimous consent motion calling out the brutal assassination of a Palestinian journalist. Foundational for any democracy is freedom of the press.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would agree that in light of this, the committee needs to do better in prioritizing all human rights, not just picking and choosing them when it feels like it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have run out of time. I will allow the hon. member to answer in 20 seconds, if possible.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, absolutely, we need to do a better job.

I brought forward a motion to look at reproductive rights around the world, and the Conservatives blocked that. I brought forward a motion to look at Palestinian rights, and the Conservatives blocked that. We do need to examine why we are picking and choosing.

Business of Supply

• (1145)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for bringing forward this motion today. I also would like to thank my hon. colleague from Edmonton Strathcona for sharing her time with me and for her incredible insight on this. I am always so grateful to share these issues with her, and I learn from her every day.

The member for Edmonton Strathcona put forward a lot of really key points in her speech about what the House needs to think about. While I certainly think it is important to re-establish the special committee to examine and review all the aspects of the relationship between Canada and the People's Republic of China, I think we have to do so with all of the issues that she has brought to the point here in mind and with an understanding that this is a specific committee, a special committee. However, it needs to be brought forward in such a way that we get to the heart of what we need to determine the international foreign policy that Canada holds.

I also want to note that when I refer to China today, I am referring to the People's Republic of China and not the people of China. There have been a lot of references to the need for further discussion about future studies from this special committee, and of course, the continuation of issues that were already brought up by the former committee but that have not been fully addressed yet.

As a member for the Standing Committee on National Defence, I know we are wrapping up a study on security threat analysis, Canada's position in this quickly changing world and the deterioration of relations with China. These were part of the study, and they are very concerning. It is inadequate to simply say that China is an integral component of our international future, whether it be in trade, the economy, or social or security actions and considerations. It is about how we are moving forward in this world.

At a time when insecurity is heightened due to Russia's illegal war in Ukraine, we must ensure that China does not follow suit, and an example of that is with Taiwan. Last night, I had the honour to attend Taiwan night, which is a celebration from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, and many from this place spoke last night about the incredible contributions of Taiwan to the world. It was one of the first countries that helped Canada during the pandemic by sending much-needed PPE, and Taiwan has shipped over 50 tonnes of medical supplies to Ukraine because of its urgent humanitarian considerations.

This must continue and grow. We must support that. I am proud that Canada has joined with many allies in the world to fight for and hold true to the democratic principles of the rule of law and the international rules-based order in Ukraine. Again, as my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona so wonderfully, so eloquently, so rightly noted, Canada does not do this consistently.

We can no longer pick and choose which human rights we will uphold. It is time that all parties, mine included, take a long look at our own internal policies, our determination to fight against the violation of human rights domestically and internationally for our allies, and those who are not yet aligned but hopefully will be in the future, to clearly define the principles of international human rights and a rules-based order for all.

As I mentioned, I am a member of the national defence committee, and we have clearly heard from witnesses at that committee that China is a security concern. Canada sent the HMCS *Winnipeg* through the Taiwan Strait as a signal of support and a showing of strength against that aggressive posturing of the People's Republic of China.

That is simply one example of why I support this motion and the re-establishment of this committee. The global security environment should be a focus of this committee. I would also insist that the committee study the vital need to fix the diplomatic crisis between Canada and China. We need to do a deep dive into the past four years and the mismanagement of this diplomatic disaster.

The incarceration of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor continued for more than three years. They experienced severe conditions and a failure to have legal counsel or contact with their families. This was a horrendous situation. Although they were thankfully released, as my colleague noted, there are so many that still remain incarcerated. I know that Canadians from coast to coast to coast are still very concerned about this issue.

• (1150)

Canadians asked us to work together and New Democrats are always willing to do that work. We must work together to make life better for Canadians and for everyone all over the world.

Canadians are concerned about what is going on in China. The protests and demonstrations in Hong Kong have been of much concern for a long time now. Canadians are concerned as to what is happening to the people of Hong Kong and Canadian citizens in Hong Kong. They are concerned about human rights in Hong Kong and the imposition of the government of China's one country, two systems policy. It is a complex relationship, certainly from a human rights perspective.

Concern for the Uighurs is extremely high in Canada. We have to find ways to put pressure in whatever way possible to seek to resolve some of these issues. Of course, we have long-standing concerns about Tibet as well.

Again, we have that complex relationship and significant trade relations with China. We have seen how disruption in that trade can so quickly and seriously affect Canadians, particularly as we have seen for Canadian farmers with canola, soybeans, peas, beef and pork, which have cost millions and millions of dollars for Canadians and farmers. Some of these issues have been resolved, but others are still outstanding. This important relationship is something we have to take very seriously.

This motion could put into effect the kind of collaboration that Canadians want to see in the government of Canada. We still have a Liberal government, at which I shake my head sometimes, but we have other voices that will come to the table. I believe that the continuation of this committee in another Parliament is an important part of the collaboration.

Business of Supply

Interestingly, my colleague, Jack Harris, the former member of Parliament for St. John's East, spoke to the first Conservative call for this special committee in 2019. He spoke about that collaboration. While he is recently retired from this place, I am sure he heard his fair share of rhetoric and raised tempers in the House, and maybe sometimes it was his own. I would have to say that I believe those have increased since he left. In his speech to the House, Jack spoke to the former special Canada-China committee, stating:

That is an opportunity for a special committee to look at that whole [nation-to-nation] relationship and see if there are ways that we can improve that relationship beyond what is being done now and in different ways. There may well be things that are being overlooked. There may be other opportunities.

I certainly hope that the government would see this as an opportunity to reset the tone, to set up a new relationship and send a signal to China about what we want and how we want to achieve that in ways that we could not do in another form in this Parliament. Of course, I cannot prejudge what will happen at the committee, but New Democrats certainly do not want this to be another point for political battle between the opposition and the government or to see finger pointing. We do not think that is going to help the circumstances.

As my colleagues have rightfully mentioned at the foreign affairs committee, as well as other committees, this can be where things get held up, when we do not get to the key issues or talk about all the incredible ways that Canada could be an important part of that human rights conversation. It is one thing to be critical, of course, of the government's failures. I am, and they are certainly obvious in some cases.

In his discourse, Jack Harris stated:

We have to recognize that diplomatic relations are just that, diplomatic, and they have to be carried out in a spirit of willingness by all members in this House who might participate in this committee, and by all parties in this House, and that must be kept in mind in the operation of such a committee. Without that spirit of collaboration, there could be a danger that the relationship could be harmed. It is a leap of faith of the members of this House, a test of the notion of collaboration and a test of the maturity of this Parliament to be able to operate such a committee in a way that meets the needs of Canada in trying to find a solution, but it is also an opportunity for constructive criticism or at least for attempting to find out what does work and what does not work.

I will conclude my remarks by saying that we do support this opposition motion. A Canada-China committee is an important tool for parliamentarians to study the many issues that affect Canadians in our relationship with China. We support that reset of that relationship. We support Canadians knowing that they are safe and that they will benefit from this important and challenging relationship.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, first off, I give my thanks to my colleague for the support of the NDP in this motion.

I would like to give her the opportunity to expand a little bit more on one of the aspects that this committee should be looking at in detail, from my viewpoint, which is the economic impact of and our concerns about global supply chains and the supply chains between Canada and China. I would also like her to comment on the climate change concerns about China being responsible for over 50% of global greenhouse gas emissions and how this is something that the committee should be looking at as well.

• (1155)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, there are absolutely so many possibilities for this committee. There are so many challenging issues that could come before this committee. That kind of study would be an incredible opportunity to look at the environmental impacts China is having on the world, but we need to look at our own impacts and to take stock by looking within and internally. We need to look at that impact and ensure that we are not only criticizing, but also moving forward in the ways we need to in order to ensure we all have a world left to defend.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I appreciated hearing the member for London—Fanshawe's reflections that all folks in this place need to consider more broadly human rights around the world. The member for Edmonton Strathcona had offered to do so. Considering arms sales to Saudi Arabia as one example, she offered the potential to start a second committee on foreign affairs that could look more broadly at these issues, as opposed to what is being proposed here, which would look at one specific relationship. I wonder if the member for London—Fanshawe could elaborate on what this approach could look like.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, that is a possibility. Certainly we have often seen subcommittees formed from standing committees to address certain things. We have not only seen special committees, such as the one we are discussing today. I would imagine, though, that a lot of that has to come from committees, which are determinants of their own destiny. They would have to come to a point where all parties in the House agree to look at those human rights violations and Canada's positioning on it.

Unfortunately, as my colleague mentioned, the Conservative Party has been unwilling to do so. Therefore, part of the collaboration we need to talk about is a willingness to look at our own policies internally and the inconsistencies that we have.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's advocacy for human rights.

One thing we know, and that she recalled, is that the Conservatives signed the FIPA, that trade agreement that locked in future generations for 31 years to a trade agreement with China. In this agreement, if the Government of China, state-owned companies or Chinese companies run into social, environmental and economic policies that interfere with the profits of Chinese companies, they go into a secret tribunal. Does my colleague believe that this new committee should be able to have access to all memos and notes from the Stephen Harper government about why these tribunals are done in secret?

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is absolutely right. It is one of the things that we were discussing here, that democratic right to openness and dialogue. It is interesting to me that both the Conservative side and the Liberal side continue to play the same games and then criticize each other for those games.

In terms of that secrecy, I have long fought against any idea of the ISDS provisions within any trade agreement in any form that they take, and that the giving of special powers and considerations to one group over ultimately another simply cannot happen. That does not exist within that idea of democracy that I want to see in this world.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

I rise today to speak to the proposal for the creation of a special committee on Canada-China relations. At the outset, I want to make it clear that we have no quarrel with the people of China, who have contributed so much to humanity. As a parliamentarian, I have the greatest respect and admiration for the Chinese people. Chinese-Canadians and Canadians of Chinese descent have helped build this country and have made it a far better place. Their contributions simply cannot be overstated. Our quarrel is with the Chinese Communist Party. In my comments today, when I speak of China, I want to be clear that I am, in all cases, speaking of the Chinese Communist Party.

Some members are asking why we need this committee specifically dedicated to Canada-China relations, why we need to study our relationship with China, and why the Conservatives are so concerned about the CCP. It is because Conservatives see an authoritarian China as the most consequential foreign policy relationship Canada will face in a generation. Through policies of repression and aggression, China has frightened countries near and far.

In recent years, China has expanded aggressively on multiple fronts. Wolf warrior diplomacy has replaced friendship diplomacy. Perceived slights from foreigners, no matter how small, are met with North Korean-style condemnation. A combative attitude has seeped into every part of China's foreign policy, and it is confronting many countries with their gravest threat in generations.

This threat is most apparent in maritime East Asia, where China is moving aggressively to cement its vast territorial claims. Beijing is churning out warships faster than any country has since World War II, and it has flooded Asian sea lanes with Chinese coast guard and fishing vessels. It has strung military outposts across the South China Sea, and dramatically increased its use of ship ramming and aerial interceptions to shove neighbours out of disputed areas. In the Taiwan Strait, Chinese military patrols, some involving a dozen warships and more than 50 combat aircraft, prowl the sea almost daily and simulate attacks on Taiwanese and U.S. targets.

China has gone on the economic offensive, as well.

Its latest five-year plan calls for dominating what Chinese officials call “choke points”, goods and services that other countries cannot live without, and then using that dominance, plus the lure of China's domestic market, to browbeat countries into concessions. China has become the dominant dispenser of overseas loans, loading up more than 150 countries with over \$1 trillion in debt. It has massively subsidized strategic industries to gain a monopoly on hundreds of vital products, and it has stalled the hardware for digital networks in dozens of countries.

Business of Supply

Armed with economic leverage, it has used coercion against more than a dozen countries over the past number of years. In many cases, the punishment has been disproportionate to the supposed crime. For example, China is slapping tariffs on many of Australia's exports after that country requested an international investigation into the origins of COVID-19, and here at home in Canada, when China wished to steamroll over our courts and the rule of law to free Meng Wanzhou, it banned Canadian canola. This is something that cost the industry over \$2 billion. Later that same year, it suspended Canadian beef imports and placed sanctions against our colleague in this House, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

China uses subsidies and espionage to help its firms dominate global markets and protects its domestic market with non-tariff barriers. It censors foreign ideas and companies on its own Internet, and freely accesses the global Internet to steal intellectual property and spread CCP propaganda. China has also become a potent anti-democratic force, and sells advanced tools of tyranny around the world.

By combining surveillance cameras with social media monitoring, artificial intelligence, biometrics, and speech and facial recognition technologies, the Chinese government has pioneered a system that allows dictators to watch citizens constantly and punish them instantly by blocking their access to finance, education, employment, telecommunications or travel. The apparatus is a despot's dream, and Chinese companies are already selling and operating aspects of it in more than 80 countries.

● (1200)

It is time for this government to take seriously the threats that the Beijing communist leadership poses to Canada's national interests and security, as well as our interests and values. For example, it is has been over a year, and the Liberal government has yet to release the Indo-Pacific strategy.

This committee is critical to examining all of these challenges and threats. It would be all-party and multidisciplinary, with the ability to look at all aspects of the Canada-China relationship, from complex consular cases to national security issues and from trade to global affairs, within the context of a committee that could go in camera with respect to sensitive information.

Business of Supply

It is crucial that we uphold Canada's role in defending the rules-based international order. Canada must play its traditional role as a "linchpin", as Winston Churchill described us, between Europe and America. We are a G7 nation. We are a NATO nation. We are a NORAD nation, and we are a Five Eyes nation. For a country small in population, Canada punches far above its weight when it comes to building relationships that are necessary to influencing our national interests, the freedom and liberty of others and the interests of the western alliance.

We do not need a three-day study at a standing committee. We need a specialized, multidisciplinary committee that has the ability to explore not just complex consular cases, but trade, defence, security and the actions and impacts of China. We need to grapple with the moral and ethical complexities of a bilateral trade relationship with a country that this Parliament has declared is committing genocide against the Uighur people.

China is a country that is quickly eroding the strong democracy of Hong Kong. It is a country that, just in February, signed a sweeping, long-term agreement with Russia that challenges the United States as a global power, challenges NATO as a cornerstone of international security and challenges liberal democracy as a model for the world. It is a country whose aspirations toward Taiwan may be emboldened by Mr. Putin's brutal war of tyranny in Ukraine. Also, we must be ever mindful of the threat of espionage in a digital world.

All this bellicosity and belligerence on the part of China is simply not working. In fact, it is only sparking an international backlash: one that our Prime Minister seems to have not fully comprehended. That is why we need a committee, independent of the PMO and executive branch of government, to study these issues and take a serious look at our relationship with China.

There has never been any doubt about what China wants, because Chinese leaders have declared the same objectives for decades: to keep the Chinese Communist Party in power, reabsorb Taiwan, control the East China Sea and South China Sea, and return China to its rightful place as the dominant power in Asia and the most powerful country in the world.

Competing with and containing China will be fraught with risks for Canada and its allies, but it might be the only way to avoid even greater dangers. That is why it is critical we reinstate the Canada-China committee so that all parliamentarians can study, discuss and carefully consider how best to protect our interests and our sovereignty.

I would like to close with a Chinese proverb: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." I humbly ask my colleagues in the House to let us take that step together.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am sure my colleague heard the government's argument that there is no need for such a committee because that work could be done by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

We know that the totalitarianism and foreign policy of the People's Republic of China are creating issues in many different areas. Take, for example, Huawei, the crackdown in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and what happened at the Winnipeg lab.

In short, this committee could examine many issues and then hand over what they discover to the standing committees for a more in-depth study.

In order to get everyone on board today, does my colleague not think that it would be wiser to put a time limit on this committee's mandate and have it disband on a specific date? There seems to be some concern that this committee would become permanent.

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, it is plain and simple. The foreign affairs committee is seized with so many issues, and the relationship with China is so complex and multi-faceted, that we really do need another committee to study it. My friend referred to a couple of things, but when I think about the list, there is Huawei, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Uighurs, Tibet, the recent pact with Russia, trade issues, espionage and human rights. There are just simply not the resources or time at the foreign affairs committee to deal with these.

Around the discussion of the timing of the committee, that is a reasonable question. Let us see how the debate unfolds.

• (1210)

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it laughable that the Conservatives basically reference the Communist Party of China now as though it was not the Communist Party of China when Harper signed FIPA. I will reference some of the ways in which that deal was described. It was absolutely "naive" with "capitulation to China on everything", and, "The terms agreed to by Ottawa are unprecedented and would be laughed out of Britain, Brussels, Canberra or Washington. Beijing has negotiated a heads-I-win-tails-Canada-loses deal."

Would the hon. member not agree that much of the malaise that we are in right now with China economically is due to the 31-year deal that the Harper government signed when he was in power?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, what is laughable is that the member seems to want to live seven years in the past. The world has changed substantially. As I said in my speech, we need to be taking the role of China in the world extremely seriously, particularly in the context of Mr. Putin's invasion of Ukraine, how President Xi Jinping views this aggression and how it might impact his decisions as they relate to Taiwan.

What is laughable is that the member is living in 2015 when he should be living in 2022.

Business of Supply

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague just listed a whole host of reasons. We can go back in history all we want, but we have a war in the world right now that started about two months ago with Ukraine. This changes the dynamics of all of our export opportunities in this country. It even changes the role of our exports to our allies in western Europe, which are that much more important because those natural resources, and I am on that committee, are also impacted by events in China. We have seen some of the interference it has had in our own democratic process here in Canada, and it is much more relevant to speak to that right now than it was in the past.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, the question touches on a couple of important areas. When it comes to food security and energy security in Europe, the world changed in February when Mr. Putin invaded Ukraine. That is a really important point. It should not be lost on any member of the House that food security affects countries everywhere, including China.

This is just another reason why we need to have this committee: so we can have a good analysis and understanding of the geopolitical implications of China's position on a whole host of issues.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is indeed an honour to stand today to talk about the re-establishment of the Canada-China special committee and the work we need to undertake with respect to our relationship with China.

I want to thank my colleague from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley for his very strong intervention, and indeed all members of the House as we consider taking on this important work.

The month of May is Asian Heritage Month, and I want to recognize all the great contributions that Asians and Chinese Canadians have made to this country. I want to mention the Hon. Philip Lee, who was the lieutenant governor of Manitoba, and the great work he did in representing the Crown in Manitoba, which he did with dignity and grace. He was an excellent representative of the Government of Manitoba.

Earlier this week, a number of my colleagues were outside on the front lawn talking about the 30th anniversary of Falun Dafa, which is known as World Falun Dafa Day. We talked about all of the great contributions that Asian Canadians are making to Canada. We can look at how Falun Gong practitioners have come here and how they practise what they preach: truthfulness, tolerance and forbearance. They have brought those qualities and values to Canada and made us a better country.

Unfortunately, Falun Gong practitioners in China are being persecuted, arrested, subjected to illegal organ harvesting, which is disgusting, and brutalized by the communist regime in Beijing. They expect us to use this committee to get to the bottom of what is happening under the communist regime and to stop it by sanctioning those who profiteer from this disgusting illegal organ harvesting. We need to make sure there is legislation coming through. There is a bill coming from the Senate, Bill S-223, that will address this issue and hold to account not just those who are committing the atrocities in China, but those around the world who are paying for

and benefiting from those organs in a way that would be considered illegal in Canada. We need to put a stop to it.

As we look at the work that this special committee on Canada-China relations can do, it can dig down into the human rights abuses that are happening, not only to the Falun Gong practitioners I have mentioned, but also to the Uighurs, Tibetans, Christians and other minority religious groups throughout China that have been completely ostracized by the regime in Beijing. We know they are not allowed to practise freedom of religion. We know they have not been able to assemble peacefully because they will be arrested and ultimately end up in prison or in forced labour. We are seeing more and more the Chinese government using people of ethnic and religious diversities as forced labour, and we have to make sure that no Canadian companies are profiteering or using supply chains that involve this type of forced, illegal labour.

We have talked about supply chains. If we look at what has happened in Canada during the pandemic, the supply chains have been disrupted, partly because so much of that is coming out of China itself. We need to have sovereign control over a lot of those supply chains. We need to make sure we are working with our friends and allies around the world so we can have dependable supply chains, so we can get the electronic chips that go into the cars that are now sitting at parking lots and auto dealerships around the country; they cannot move because they lack some of the computer chips that are needed to operate the vehicles.

We know that supply chains were disrupted when it comes to PPE and that we were scrambling because of the unwillingness of mainland China to bring forward any of the supply we so desperately needed. We need to look at how we can strengthen our supply chain and work more with our allies and trading partners without having Chinese companies, which are often controlled by the state, coming into that supply chain and disrupting it. For our own economy, for our own citizens, it is important that we have control. It is about national security.

● (1215)

One of the biggest disappointments in the past six years under the Liberal government, and now the Liberal-NDP coalition, is that Huawei is still out there as a potential supplier of 5G technology to our mobile cellular system and Wi-Fi systems. We know Huawei has been tied to espionage around the world. That is why our Five Eyes partners, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, have all banned Huawei from their mobile systems, yet here we are, still waffling because the government cannot make a decision. That is despicable. We need to make these decisions.

Business of Supply

We can look at how Huawei in particular has worked, even here in Canada. When I was parliamentary secretary for national defence, we took over the Nortel campus, when Nortel unfortunately closed its doors, and made that into the new campus for National Defence. It took years to clean out all the switches and wiring installed by Huawei, which had the ability to spy on Nortel, and ultimately on National Defence as it took over these buildings. National Defence was not there when this was originally installed in the Nortel campus, and it was not meant to be used against National Defence, but with National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces moving into the Nortel campus, the dynamics changed completely.

There is a huge track record by Huawei of not being trustworthy. It is under the Communist Party of China's control through its own charter as a corporation, and it has to co-operate with the Government of China when it wants Huawei to spy on other nations, corporations or individuals. We need to be very forthright in how we deal with it.

One of the things the committee should look at is how Canada can insert itself in some of the national security conversations that are happening on a global scale. In the Pacific, there is already what is called the quadrilateral dialogue, which involves India, Japan, the United States and Australia. Canada is not part of that discussion, and it should be.

This committee should look at how Canada can get involved in these conversations to strengthen the Indo-Pacific region, how we can make sure we counteract some of those geopolitical games that the communist regime in Beijing has been playing in the South China Sea, how it has been rattling sabres to scare Taiwan, and how it has installed a new administrator for Hong Kong and continues to violate the democratic and civil liberties of the Chinese community in Hong Kong, which includes 300,000 Canadians. We need to make sure we deal with this at the special committee on Canada-China relations.

The other organization that was just set up is being built around a national defence co-operation agreement called AUKUS, which includes Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. They are co-operating not just on intelligence sharing, which the Five Eyes has done, but also on national defence issues, including empowering the Australian navy with submarines, as well as on greater training, co-operation and collaboration among those three allies of Canada.

We should be part of that group. It may be too late for us to get in, and maybe there needs to be a path forward on how Canada can become part of that security agreement, but we are a Pacific nation. As a Pacific nation, we should be more involved in defence issues in the South Pacific, and indeed in the Indo-Pacific region, to counterbalance what is happening with the Chinese geopolitical sphere and the way China is trying to influence and potentially use force as it builds up its military to levels we have never seen.

Finally, when we look at China through this committee, we also need to look at how China is being used as a back door to take Russian goods and enrich the Russian military machine that we see waging war in Ukraine today. We need to make sure we are counterbalancing that, by looking at China and trying to get it to move

away from enriching Putin and his kleptocrats. We need to make sure we get more sanctions on Russia, and that includes talking to China about how it should participate in the rule of law under the international agreements we have and isolate Russia, rather than enriching it so it can wage war on the great people of Ukraine.

• (1220)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am looking at an article entitled “Chinese firm's Canadian contracts raise security fears: Barred by the U.S. and Australia, tech giant Huawei makes inroads in Canada”. It is dated from 2012. In that article, former prime minister Stephen Harper is touting the greatness of Huawei.

As the hon. member mentioned that Huawei's charter makes it subservient to the Communist Party of China, did that charter also exist in 2012?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, it is a sad state of affairs when my friend has to go back a decade to find any article that links our former government to Huawei.

I will say this. Huawei was here for a while and it has been trying to break into the Canadian and American systems. It had access to 3G technology and was supplying 3G technology to Canada, to the United States and to European nations. Everybody, at that point in time, 10 years ago, was hoping that the communist regime in Beijing was going to march forward into market-based economies that would respect human rights, democracy and civil liberties.

That is not the case today. We know a lot more, and we should be banning Huawei.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague criticized those benefiting from the Chinese government's largesse.

Jean Charest, a Conservative Party leadership candidate, is among those who have supposedly benefited from this regime. He allegedly was paid tens of thousands of dollars by Huawei, an appendage of the Communist regime.

I am relying on the knowledge of my colleague, who has been a member of the House longer than I have. Would the study of the contracts between Jean Charest and Huawei fall under the new committee being proposed by the Conservatives, or rather under the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, on which my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman sits?

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, well, just to put it on the record, I am supporting the member for Carleton in this leadership race, and I do share some of the concerns that my friend from the Bloc just raised.

Let us go back, again, to the issue of Huawei. We now know that, within the Five Eyes relationship we have with the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, all four of those countries have banned Huawei. Why is Canada still dancing around the issue?

The excuse used to be that we had to get the two Michaels out of detention in Beijing. Well, they are back in Canada, so why are we dancing around this issue when we should be banning Huawei from having any access to our 5G network?

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it was the Conservative Stephen Harper government that did a trade deal that allowed a large oil sands project to be purchased by a Chinese state-owned company. It was that Conservative government that signed the FIPA trade agreement. The Conservatives want us to have amnesia. They want us to forget about those trade agreements, but they locked that trade agreement into 31 years. That is affecting us today and the next generation and the generation after that. They signed a deal that allows those companies to seek compensation. Not only are they allowed to seek compensation, but they are allowed to do it in secret, at the discretion of the sued party.

Would the hon. member agree that this committee should have access to all memos and all documents about why the Conservatives allowed that tribunal to be done in secret?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I would just say this to the Liberal-NDP backbencher. We know there was a time, 10 years ago, when we were trying to get China more integrated into the free market system, to work with capitalism-based nations and to work with democratic nations. We now know that this has all been in folly. I do have grave concerns over any of our natural resources being controlled by state-run Chinese companies, which are ultimately controlled by the communist regime in Beijing.

I do believe the committee should make its own decisions about what documents it should be looking at and what documents should be brought forward. No stone should be left unturned. I think that, at the end of the day, Canada would be better served by it. The people of China would be better served by it, and Chinese Canadians here would appreciate us being able to work more collaboratively with them and the contributions they make to our great nation.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kings—Hants.

The Conservative opposition day motion we are debating today has two points I agree with, while I completely disagree with the objective of the motion to appoint a special committee to examine and review all aspects of the Canada-China relationship.

While it is good to have opportunities to review Canada's relationships with any country so that we can find ways to improve or further strengthen our relationships in a positive way, the objective of this motion is to establish a platform that provides for further degrading Canada's relationship with China. This motion is designed to provide a stage for harsh and one-sided critics of China. There are things about China that we can and should criticize. I do not foresee any positive outcomes from this proposed committee.

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Before I talk about the negative implications of having this committee, let me mention the points I agree with. First, the motion states that Canadians of Chinese descent have made immeasurable contributions to Canada. Absolutely, yes. Our wonderful country, Canada, is an ongoing success story of a nation with extraordinary cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity.

I would like to recognize and appreciate the important contributions that Chinese Canadians have made and continue to make to Canada's socio-economic, political and cultural heritage. The history of Chinese Canadians goes back as far as the 1700s, but the big movement started in the late 19th century. The road has not always been smooth. Chinese Canadians faced and continue to face discrimination.

If this motion passes and the committee is established, I foresee increased negative perception about Chinese Canadians in our country. In spite of the historical discrimination they have faced, Chinese Canadians, with hard work and determination, have built on the opportunities our wonderful country offers and have been successful in every aspect of society, in the arts, sciences, sports, business and government. To put it simply, Chinese Canadians have made big contributions in building a dynamic and prosperous Canada.

The second point the motion makes that I agree with is that the people of China are part of an ancient civilization that has contributed much to humanity. Again, yes, absolutely. China is a country with a 5,000-year-old civilization. Chinese people have contributed greatly to many fields during their long recorded history. Some of the greatest inventions that have been momentous contributions of the Chinese people to world civilization include paper-making, printing, gunpowder and the compass.

Other than these two points, everything else in this motion aims to design a platform for degrading Canada-China relations, and negatively contributes to Canada's interests.

If this committee is established, I expect, first, an increased negative perception about Chinese Canadians in our country. We have seen anti-Asian racism on the increase in recent times. The kind of rhetoric I have heard before, and which I am sure will be repeated again in the committee, would lead only to increased negative perceptions of about 1.8 million Canadians who form over 5% of the population.

The second negative effect, if this committee is formed, is further deterioration of our relationship with one of our major trading partners, thus affecting our businesses. China is one of our major trading partners. Canadian exports to China in 2021 were worth about \$29 billion. Canadian imports from China were worth about \$86 billion.

In addition to low-tech, mundane products, China is also a major technology and high-end products supplier to the world, from telecom equipment to batteries for electric vehicles. China is also a manufacturing base for many products our industries need.

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The proponents of this motion appear to be in a make-believe world with no China. Make no mistake, China is and will continue to be a major economy in the world. Canadian businesses need a smooth trading relationship with China, but the end results of this motion, if successful, will achieve anything but that.

● (1230)

The third outcome, if this committee is formed, is the negative impact on the flow of Canada's most valuable and precious resource requirement, which is immigrants with knowledge, expertise and skills. China, for a long time, has been an important source of our skilled immigrants.

Highly trained Chinese immigrants have become a significant part of our growing knowledge-based economy. While I do not expect a dramatic slowdown in new Canadians from China, the harsh rhetoric will certainly act as a dampener in our efforts to recruit the best and brightest brains as immigrants to Canada.

The fourth negative issue, if this motion is successful, is a further fall in new technology-trained international students from China and a further decline in the numbers of these highly skilled students who become permanent residents and later citizens.

In the growing knowledge-based economy, it is not natural resources that give us prosperity or a competitive edge. It is the knowledge, expertise and skills of the younger generation that can continue to keep us prosperous. In the digital economy, it is the bright, young graduates of today who give us the competitive edge.

China has been a major source of international students, and while China remains the second-largest source for international students to Canada, the trend is declining. It was about 10% less in 2021. The decline began in 2019 and increased due to the pandemic. The anti-China bullhorn diplomacy will only add to the current problem.

Is China perfect? No. China ignores the desire of the people of Taiwan, who have established themselves as an economically successful entity with a vibrant democracy. China has erased the culture and heritage of minorities in its land and the distinctive identities of Tibetans and Uighurs, and we have legitimate concerns for the people in Hong Kong.

As one expert put it, China is neither as benevolent as it claims nor as malicious as it is criticized for being. Let me mention what Jeremy Paltiel, a China expert at Carleton University, said in an article on Global News on May 8, 2021. He said that to see China in the context of "friend or foe" is an overly simplistic approach. "I think that's a false dichotomy," he said. "China can be both different and not an enemy." This nuanced understanding helps countries like Canada that are grappling with thorny issues, including human rights.

The key to a successful Canada-China relationship is to be mindful of the differences without necessarily agreeing with or accepting them. Understanding is not the same thing as pardoning. "We have to be able to find a way of talking across difference without defining 'difference' as being 'enemy'," Paltiel says. "And if we can't do that, we can't live in a diverse world."

To conclude, this motion is not in the interest of Canada and Canadians. Testifying before the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations in the previous parliament, the former Canadian foreign affairs minister and the member of Parliament for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount mentioned a four Cs approach of Canada to its relationship with China: compete, co-operate, challenge and coexist.

He stated, "China is rapidly becoming a global influence with which all countries must learn to coexist. That means that we must recognize situations in which it is necessary to cooperate with China." He continued, "[I]t also means that we are competing with China when it comes to trade and to promoting our values. It also implies challenging China when human rights are violated or Canadian citizens and interests are jeopardized."

● (1235)

However, the objective of the proponents of this motion is not to add value or have a meaningful discussion, but to degrade the relationship between Canada and China—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is all the time we have.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a motion put forward by Conservatives to look at China-Canada relations. Again, the Conservatives believe that we should have amnesia and that we should forgive them for signing the FIPA trade agreement, for basically allowing the Chinese state-owned purchase of a large chunk of the oil sands and for signing a trade agreement that overrules provincial and local governments and indigenous rights.

Does my colleague believe that we should be examining the FIPA and that we should have access to all information, especially why the Conservatives created secret tribunals for companies that dispute or go against social, environmental and economic policies that might hurt the profits of Chinese state-owned companies?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, I am opposed to this motion, hence I am opposed to the formation of this committee, so this question is not relevant to me.

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Madam Speaker, the relationship with China is very complex and the member has touched on a couple of those issues. We have a large trading relationship that is very beneficial to Canada. It is \$20 billion, up from \$3 billion in 1992. However, as the member mentioned, we have human rights concerns. We have Huawei and we have concerns about that, etc.

When it comes to looking at these issues and dealing with them, we know it is tulip season and the Tulip Festival here in Ottawa, but why are we tiptoeing through the tulips when it comes to China and not putting a committee together that is going to deal with it, ensuring we treat that relationship with the utmost professionalism that it needs?

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• (1240)

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, the member mentioned human rights. Why focus on China alone? Why do we not focus on the killing of the Palestinian American Al Jazeera reporter, Shireen Abu Akleh, by the Israeli military even though she was wearing a press vest that clearly marked her as press? What about the human rights violations in Israel and Palestine as highlighted by the Human Rights Watch report? What about the apartheid that is practised by Israel on Palestinians, according to an Amnesty International report or what the former Israeli attorney general, Michael Ben-Yair, says, which is that the country is following the apartheid system? Why not discuss human rights beyond China? Why not include the Middle East issues too?

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I look at the text of this motion, I think it is particularly narrow. Yes, the foreign policy concept and the landscape have changed, particularly with the war in Ukraine. As I have said before to the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, there is actually an important conversation to be had about a changing foreign policy landscape.

Would the member opposite welcome the idea of bringing a motion forward, not necessarily in a committee format but just even to have a debate day on Canada's role in the world? Would he welcome that? That would allow for a broader discussion, not just on China but indeed on the whole foreign relationship that Canada has in the world.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, absolutely, I said that any discussion about Canada's relationship with China and any other country is good. We should have it so that we can understand what we can do better to further strengthen our relationship with different parts of the world. Canada is a trading nation. We need to have good relationships with all countries, and any discussion that can positively add value is always welcome.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague did not answer my question because he does not support the motion. However, should the motion pass, maybe then he could answer the question. Would he then be open to examining the FIPA trade agreement and why the Conservatives signed an agreement that allows foreign companies to sue the Government of Canada for compensation, in private, at the discretion of the party being sued?

Would my colleague at least speak to that? Does he agree with that provision, or does he disagree with that provision, which locks us into that agreement for 31 years, for a future generation, and overrides indigenous, local government and provincial rights? The Conservatives signed this agreement despite human rights violations happening in China in 2012, in 2014 and in 2015. It was happening then and it is happening—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give a few seconds for the hon. member for Nepean to answer.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, as I said before, I am not supporting the motion. I do not support the formation of this committee because in my view, this committee is going to be a one-sided, China-bashing drama. The rhetoric will only further degrade the relationship between Canada and China.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today we are debating a Conservative Party opposition motion moved by the member for Wellington—Halton Hills that would create a parliamentary committee to study the Canada-People's Republic of China relationship.

I have read the motion and will share my thoughts about it and about global affairs, as they relate to China.

I will start with the provisions of the motion. Overall, they are normal for a committee and I have no objection to most of them. However, I think it is important to discuss the resources available to the House of Commons. The current hybrid format is already putting pressure on the resources available to the House and its committees. The creation of a committee would put additional pressure on the House of Commons staff.

It is also important to recognize that Canada-China relations can be studied by the existing standing committees. For example, this is something that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade could study.

If the Conservatives want to look at the relationship between Canada and China, that could be dealt with by the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology. The relationship between food security and energy could be dealt with by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, which I chair, or perhaps the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

My point is that the issues related to this motion can be dealt with by the parliamentary committees already in place.

I also object to the part of the motion that deals with paragraph (r) of the order adopted on Thursday, November 25, 2021, and seeks to give the proposed committee priority over all existing committees. As chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, I may be a bit biased, but we are currently conducting an important study on the environmental contribution of agriculture. We are also looking into a future study on how Canada can best respond to the global food crisis caused by the war in Ukraine and on the future of food. I believe that this work will be important. I have a problem with the possibility that this work could be delayed by the creation of the proposed committee, since the member for Wellington—Halton Hills can raise this issue in other committees.

I do want to acknowledge the merits of the motion, the first part of which tries to separate the issues and tensions between the Chinese government and Chinese Canadians or the Chinese people in general. There are no Chinese residents in my riding of Kings—Hants. However, I do believe that the manner and tone taken by the Conservative Party in their approach to this issue during the 43rd Parliament made many Chinese Canadians feel singled out.

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● (1245)

[English]

Let me also take this opportunity, while we are on the subject, to talk about the broader global issues that relate to China. As I have mentioned almost every time I have a chance in the House, the foreign policy landscape has changed significantly since the war in Ukraine on February 24. This presents an opportunity for all of us as parliamentarians and for Canadians to evaluate, position and think about Canada's role in the world, because the world has changed.

China's positioning in the world has taken a very different tone, and I want to highlight and talk about some of that.

There has been extensive debate in the House about the Chinese government's treatment toward Uighur people and about the human rights abuses. Indeed, in the 43rd Parliament, a resolution was passed condemning that behaviour.

There is also Hong Kong. The way that arrangement always intended to work was that Hong Kong would be a separate democratic unit, and what we have seen over the last year has been anything but. The Chinese government has used its authority to change laws and legislation such that freedom of the press and freedom of assembly are not being recognized in Hong Kong. It is not Hong Kong in the way we have known it.

I have heard other colleagues speak to aggression in the South China Sea as well. China is positioning some of its military force in that area in some of the disputed territories. I think that is problematic.

Let us talk about the belt and road initiative. This is something of an economic policy that is tied to diplomacy and the way China is positioning itself in the world, particularly the developing world. China is using economic incentives to draw political and diplomatic interest toward Chinese-influenced spheres. That is something the western world will have to contemplate. Canada needs to be part of the conversations with our allies about making sure we have a response to democracies and countries that might be vulnerable to undue Chinese influence.

I think what is perhaps most concerning has been the abstention of China on the UN Security Council votes, and indeed future votes the UN will have, to condemn Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. China has abstained. It has not shown a willingness to work with western allies to condemn what I think we all know to be true regarding the egregious and terrible actions on behalf of the Russian Federation.

Those are but a few examples that suggest we have to be mindful of how Canada's public policy and global position will relate to China as the western world considers its next steps as a result of the war in Ukraine. We have seen great integration in NATO in its response to military and humanitarian aspects and immigration. I think it is fair to say that the war in Ukraine has actually strengthened resolve for the west to be an important player in the global element and to make sure that countries such as the United States, Canada, the European Union and other western allies are working together.

We have a lot to offer in this domain, such as critical minerals. I have mentioned this before. China is a dominant player in the critical minerals sphere, but Canada has so much potential. I was proud to see this government introduce a \$3.8-billion strategy for critical minerals, because our allies will need them to make the transition to a low-carbon economy. These are going to be important in the days ahead and we have the propensity to deliver them.

I have made a number of interventions about the work on energy security and what we can do in this country to provide it to our allies.

Finally, there is diplomacy and the importance of bringing like-minded countries together. Canada does have a role to play as a moderate power in the world. It is a convening role to bring countries together to help make a difference and move forward multilateral issues. These are all legitimate conversations that we should be having in the House.

I will finish with this. I would love to see the member for Wellington—Halton Hills bring forward a motion that actually highlights the fact that the war in Ukraine is shifting the sands of the foreign policy landscape, and put in some provisions on how he or his party believes Canada should be positioning itself in the world. As I said to him on natural gas, the conversation is too narrow.

● (1250)

Why does the Conservative Party not have a mature debate about where it sees Canada's role on three or four principles, and how best we can address Canada's role and position in the world? I think it would be an important conversation. At the end of the day, this is too narrow and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will have to leave the rest for questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, all of this has me wondering.

I sometimes understand the political game of Liberals systematically opposing motions that come from the Conservatives and vice versa, on the principle that nothing good ever comes from the other team. However, I think it is a fairly old-fashioned idea that really should be reconsidered.

Many of the indicators and facts here have already been proven. There is plenty of material to pore over, particularly in the case of Canada-China relations. Chinese Canadians are justifiably concerned about being harassed by the Chinese communist regime.

I do not understand why the Liberal Party stubbornly refuses to support such a sensible motion. As one of my colleagues suggested earlier, perhaps we could consider limiting the duration of this committee's mandate so that it is accountable to the House of Commons for a specific period of time.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that. Given the current context, does he not think there are enough concerns to warrant a specific committee to address the issue of Canada-China relations?

• (1255)

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

First, I think that I am an MP who generally recognizes that there are a lot of good ideas coming from everywhere in the House, including the opposition in some cases.

I absolutely feel that the issues affecting Canada-China relations are important, but there are other important issues too, including Canada's relations with other countries and other regions.

Perhaps it is important to raise this issue in the House, but my concern is the burden that this would place on the House's available resources. There is also the fact that this committee would focus exclusively on China without regard for the global context.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, given the member's comments and what we have been hearing from the government side so far, they certainly seem to have some reservations with this motion. I note that in the last Parliament, if my memory serves me correctly, the Liberals voted against the creation of this committee.

Having seen the committee in action, and seeing the very important work and information that has come from it, does the member not see the value of this committee? Would he perhaps consider voting for it this time around?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, this question gives me the opportunity to thank my hon. colleague, the former member of Parliament for Halifax West, Geoff Regan, who was the chair of that committee. I had the opportunity to speak with him a number of times.

My issue does not lie in the importance of the relationship between Canada and China. It is that we are going at this too narrowly. Now, indeed, if the House votes for the motion today with a majority and we move forward, of course the government will oblige and this committee will move forward. However, my issue is that there are a number of relationships that Canada has in the world right now that we could be studying, and there is already a place on a permanent committee, such as foreign affairs, where these types of studies could be done quite exhaustively. This is creating an additional committee, and where do we stop? That is my question in return.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, if there was a new committee created under the government, it should be looking at the toxic drug supply crisis in this country. About 27,000 people have died, and the government has not put forward one single piece of legislation to address it. The Conservatives have also not brought forward a single response to that crisis.

As to the motion, we know that indigenous people have been impacted deeply by trade agreements like the FIPA, which overrides indigenous rights. The Hupacasath First Nation, in my riding, and

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Brenda Sayers went to court against the Harper government to fight the FIPA, because with its provisions, companies can get redress should laws be put in place to protect land and water.

Does my colleague agree that the impact on indigenous peoples of all trade agreements needs to be examined?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, let me first address the member's opening comment on the opioid piece.

Our Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, our government and our Minister of Health are working directly with the province the member resides in, British Columbia, to find ways to address the opioid crisis. We know that this is important. I know that there is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Unfortunately, we do not have time for more.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

When I was asked if I wanted to speak to our motion, I jumped at the opportunity, of course. Since the beginning of the debate this morning, I have been hearing my Liberal colleagues making assumptions about the way we see Chinese people. I would therefore like to read the first four paragraphs of our motion, which I think are very important, because in them we recognize the following:

- (i) that Canadians of Chinese descent have made immeasurable contributions to Canada,
- (ii) that the people of China are part of an ancient civilization that has contributed much to humanity,
- (iii) the distinction between the people of China and the Chinese state, as embodied by the Communist Party of China and the government of the People's Republic of China,
- (iv) that authoritarian states, including the People's Republic of China, increasingly pose a threat to the rules-based international order,

It is very important to make this clear right away: The members of the Conservative Party recognize that there is a fundamental difference between the people of China and the Chinese communist regime.

We feel it is very important to reconstitute the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations, and that is what our motion would do. This motion is not designed to have the committee study the people, but rather the regime and what it is doing against its people and against states like Canada. We would ask the committee to conduct hearings on all aspects of the Canada-China relationship, including diplomatic, consular, legal, economic and security relations.

I want members to understand why the Conservative Party wants this committee to resume its very important work. As I said, the Chinese people have a rich, ancient culture and plenty of goodwill. The problem is the communist regime, and we must remain vigilant and ensure that Canada is not oblivious to the actions of this regime.

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I will give an example. A young man of Chinese descent came to work as an intern in my office here, on the Hill, when I was a member of the former Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. He was very enthusiastic and helped me read some texts in Mandarin. We came up with discussion topics together and he told me about the government in his country of origin.

He was very angry about how the Chinese communist regime attacks its own people. Take, for example, the political crisis in Hong Kong or China's view of Taiwan. These are all very important issues, and that is why this committee is so important, so that we can understand what is going on and study Canada's relations with China.

When I was a member of the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations, many experts came to testify and brought up some issues that most people are unaware of. Parliamentarians from all parties were able to learn more about those issues.

I moved a motion that enabled us to spend a few months studying the implications of China's national security vis-à-vis Canada's. Again, several witnesses came to testify.

We had one particularly important witness, Philippe Dufresne, law clerk and parliamentary counsel at the House of Commons, who explained what happened with the Public Health Agency of Canada documents about the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg. We learned how that worked.

The committee also had an opportunity to hear from experts from the Pentagon, who shared information about China's Arctic ambitions. They explained that, in 2015, the Chinese government designated the polar region, the deep seabed and outer space as China's new strategic frontiers, having evidently recognized that these regions were rich in natural resources. The Pentagon also published a report in which it warned that the Chinese government is mapping the Arctic seabed.

● (1300)

That is another reason for the Government of Canada to hurry up and build a polar icebreaker. We need to be present and start monitoring the borders in that highly strategic region.

Huawei is another file we heard a lot about. We on this side of the House do not understand why the current government has not shared its decision on whether Huawei will be banned from Canada's 5G network, when the four other member countries of the Five Eyes have confirmed that there are obvious national security concerns with Huawei's 5G technology.

Christopher Parsons, from the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab, came to talk to us in committee. He said:

A rising concern is the extent to which Canadian companies, such as our telecoms, might become dependent on products made by Chinese companies, inclusive of Huawei. Dependency runs the risk of generating monocultures or cases in which a single company dominates a Canadian organization's infrastructure. In such cases, up to three risks can arise.

First, monocultures can enable foreign governments to leverage dependencies on a vendor to apply pressure in diplomatic, trade or defence negotiations. Second, monocultures can create a path dependency, especially in 5G telecommunications environments, where there's often a degree of vendor lock-in into vendors' telecom equipment. Third, monocultures risk hindering competition among telecommunica-

tions vendors, to the effect of increasing capital costs to Canadian telecommunications providers.

One of the benefits of having this committee on Canada-China relations was receiving this type of expert who could explain to us the risks of having business relationships with a company like Huawei. Some will say that it is an independent company. However, the way things work in China, the Chinese communist regime can decide to take control and require Chinese businesses to meet its demands. Even though the company claims to be independent, the regime has full control over all businesses, subject to its whims.

The Liberal government said that it was not worried, that there was no danger, that the communists were not dangerous. I find it really strange that the government would deny being concerned about a regime like the Chinese Communist regime.

Another witness, David Vigneault, director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, also appeared before the committee. He said, and I quote:

I will tell you that the Chinese government is indeed engaged in all those activities.... With respect to interference, as I have said publicly, Chinese government entities are interfering with Canadian democratic life. They are interfering with people in Canada using people from China, cyber threats and also people here in Canada, who are co-opted to work with the Chinese government. It's something we are looking into. With China, but also with other countries, we must absolutely keep our guard up, take very concrete steps to protect Canadians and do it in a coordinated way with our allies. It's the only way I believe we can protect Canadians.

It was not me, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles who said that. It was David Vigneault, the head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, who said that in his testimony.

All of this was included in the first version of the committee on Canada-China Relations, whose meetings and studies were unfortunately terminated when the session ended with the 2021 election. We were not even able to write a final report. Our work came to a halt and was never restarted. However, there is still too much information missing that is critical and vital to national security and to economic and diplomatic relations between the two countries. That is why I believe that it is important to resume the work of the committee on Canada-China Relations.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, the target is the Chinese communist political regime. It is certainly not the people, who are too often the victims of this regime.

● (1305)

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am a bit concerned about the appropriateness or relevance of taking a full opposition day to talk about our relationship with another country. Foreign policy is very important, but right now in Canada, there are a bunch of major crises that we could have debated all day.

For example, there is the housing crisis, which I think is quite important. There is also the climate crisis, and we could have spent all day trying to come up with solutions to that. There is the health crisis that we are just now emerging from.

The Bloc Québécois has proposed holding a health summit. Health transfers are extremely important. There is also the language crisis in Quebec. We could have spent a day on that to find real solutions, not the solution that the government has come up with, the modernization of the Official Languages Act, which will not solve the problem of French in Quebec.

The Conservatives could even have spent the day on inflation. They never stop talking about that. We could have spent a day discussing inflation. In my opinion, that would have been much more worthwhile.

Why did they choose this topic?

• (1310)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, what planet is my colleague from? China is one of the biggest economies in the world, and that has a direct impact on Canada's economy.

Let us not forget what happened when China blocked canola imports with billions of dollars at stake. How about hospitals and health care? Chinese nationals worked against Canada and Quebec to steal intellectual property and research. There are plenty of ways in which China has acted aggressively toward Canada, and we have to talk about them.

Let us not forget the environment either. Canada emits less than one-tenth of 1% of global pollution, whereas the Chinese are major polluters. Why would the Bloc want to hush that up and not talk about it? That makes no sense.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert talked about the important issues. I talked earlier about the 27,000 Canadians who have died from a toxic overdose and the Conservatives want to ignore the expert task force on substance use and its recommendations, which are science-based and evidence-based, because they do not believe in experts. They do not believe in science.

To the motion, it is as though the Conservatives have a new-found concern about human rights because, back in 2014 when they signed FIPA, there were human rights violations against the Uighurs and the Tibetans, yet they chose to ignore them. In fact, they signed an agreement with China and overwrote indigenous rights here in Canada.

Maybe my colleague can speak to that, or does he think we all have amnesia? I know the Conservatives want us to forget about it and say it is from the past, but it is a 31-year agreement. That agreement is going to lock in my kids and my grandkids.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, at the beginning of his question, my colleague spoke about drugs. Do members know that fentanyl comes from China and that this opioid comes into our country through Vancouver, British Columbia, my colleague's re-

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gion? We need to mobilize a lot more resources to control that fentanyl, which is another public health and safety issue we need to talk about.

My colleague mentioned an agreement that dates back before 2015. It is important to remember that the Chinese Communist regime really changed starting in 2015, when its new president took office.

Canada's former foreign affairs minister, now the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, told the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations that today's China is not the same as yesterday's China. When we say "yesterday", we are talking about just a few years.

Since the new president took power, the Chinese Communist regime has undergone drastic changes, and the situation is now completely different. That is why we need to keep our eyes wide open.

[English]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, what I heard in the member's speech was that we have to be prepared. That is the key when we look at protecting our democracy and when we want to help people, other nations and, in this particular case, the people of China. How important is this committee to being prepared?

What we have always seen from the government on the other side is a lack of preparedness, a lack of a plan, a lack of knowing what to do. How important is this committee for being prepared?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, knowledge is the best resource to have. We need to understand the Chinese Communist regime and its approach to the economy and national security. With that information, we can make the right decisions for Canada.

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to the opposition day motion that we have before the House with respect to reinstating a committee to look at our country's relationship with China.

I would be remiss not to first mention, during Asian Heritage Month, the more than six million people of Asian heritage who live in Canada and who have enriched our country with their unique cultures, languages and traditions. Asian Canadians have made countless contributions to Canada in medicine, music, literature and business, and I could go on. Asian Canadians have blessed Canada and added to the incredible richness of our diverse and wonderful country.

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I hope they have already been mentioned today, but if not I will mention some noteworthy Asian Canadians and their contributions to our country, such as Douglas Jung, the first Chinese Canadian MP; another proud Asian Canadian, Bev Oda, the first Japanese Canadian MP; and a friend of mine, Nelly Shin, the first Korean Canadian MP. All of them have one terrific thing in common: They are all Conservatives.

There is an interesting nexus, when I talk about the contribution of these folks. While we talk about the need for this committee, I will say that Ms. Shin, a former hon. member of this place, and several colleagues and candidates were targeted in the most recent election by agents of the Chinese Communist Party. They were subjected to an organized campaign of disinformation and misinformation, perpetrated on Canadian soil and online platforms in an attempt to destabilize the community, and in particular to punish some Asian Canadians, such as Ms. Shin and Mr. Kenny Chiu, for having the courage to speak out against the communist regime in China.

Not only does the CCP target MPs of all parties; it also targets students and new Canadians with threats, harassment and intimidation. This is one of the reasons why this committee is so important. This committee did a great job in the last Parliament of looking at all aspects of the relationship between Canada and China. I would note one of the reasons why this committee's creation has not been pressed to this point is because of the limited lack of resources that we have in the House of Commons and the emerging opportunity that comes with the programmed wind-up of the special committee on Canada and Afghanistan.

In the context of the resources that we have, it would be good to engage the House resources and members of the House on this committee. I have heard in the debate today, which I have been listening to, thoughtful comments from all sides of the House. Does the committee undermine the work of other standing committees, such as the foreign affairs committee? I would have to say no, because those committees are seized with other important issues and their agendas are full through June, when they are busy getting reports prepared, but also through the fall. This issue of Canada's relationship with China, and with the government of China, is a big one. It is incredibly important.

I want to talk about a couple of reasons it is so important. I would be remiss not to mention the contrast between Canada and countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. The contrast is this: Those four countries have all identified a national security risk from Huawei, a company that is effectively controlled by the Communist Party of China, and has banned it from their 5G networks. Those four countries have a particular relevance to Canada, because they are our partners. They are our allies in the Five Eyes partnership.

• (1315)

The focus of that partnership is national security and the sharing of information. We have a consensus forming with four of the five, but the government has not taken action with respect to that. Based on the evidence that we have seen out of those other countries and what we have heard in this country, even at the special committee on Canada-China relations in its previous iteration, which is that we

need to ban Huawei from our 5G network, it speaks to the larger issue of Canada's relationship with China.

We have heard comments and questions from other members about previous engagement with China under previous governments. We have heard testimony at committee that the reality, the global picture and the actors within the CCP are very different today than they were even a few years ago. If decisions were taken in previous years that some members in this place feel should be re-examined, as I have just outlined with respect to a decision on Huawei, this is all the more reason why members in this place should see this motion passed.

Speaking of the issue of information technology, the involvement in our ever-evolving and growing digital world by companies with an interest controlled out of Communist China, I would hearken people back to a time when, in Ottawa, we had a very proud IT sector and a globally recognized company that was on the cutting edge of IT. It was a huge employer: Nortel Networks. Nortel Networks, we know, fell victim to infiltration and theft of intellectual property by agents of the Government of China. It had devastating effects on IP in Canada, devastating effects on employment and, frankly, devastating effects on that sector in this country.

I also should note that the House has recognized, and that the world is waking up to, a reality that I do not think we have talked about before. It speaks to the need to further magnify the role that China is taking, and what business we want to do with that country. It is the ongoing genocide perpetrated by the Communist government in China against the Uighurs and Turkic Muslims. We cannot turn a blind eye to that. This should colour much of our relationship and potential future dealings with China.

We know that with the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, China has signalled a very close relationship with Russia, and a comprehensive strategic partnership. Mr. Putin described it as "a relationship that probably cannot be compared with anything else in the world". That should send chills up and down the spines of people around the world, and certainly of all members of this place.

I have to mention that we saw, in the last Parliament, the effects of having state agents operating in this country: Foreign agents were operating in this country. We saw that with the Winnipeg labs. State actors from China were being expelled from this country. We saw much drama in this place. Precedents were set. Actions were taken that had not been taken in 100 years. We were looking for truth and transparency for Canadians.

There is more work to be done, and I think it is so important when we live more in this global society, that we have our eyes wide open about who our partners are, who are friends are, who our allies are, where there are risks and where there are threats. We can do that while being respectful of the important contributions of Asian Canadians and Chinese Canadians, and of Chinese people who want to come to Canada, live here and contribute to our wonderful country.

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However, we cannot be strong on the world stage without first knowing the fullness of our relationship with the CCP here at home, and that is why the Canada-China committee must be reconvened.

• (1320)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my hon. colleague this, because I sat at the ethics committee with him last year. There has been a very well-funded revisionist campaign by supporters of the WE group to try to rewrite the history of what actually happened at the parliamentary committee that was looking at the Kielburgers. I think my hon. colleague would remember that there were four threats of legal summonses, unprecedented, to try to get their key financial people to actually testify. We did not get them all to testify. In the recommendations, the all-party committee said that, “after 10 months of study we were unable to ascertain how money flowed through the charitable wing and their for-profit operations, and we were denied information on the ownership structure of their multitude of side companies.”

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what it says about accountability when a group that claims to be there for a charity for children will not turn over to Parliament basic infrastructure on who is actually making the money in their multitude of companies and international holdings.

• (1325)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, that is a really important question. It speaks to the work that parliamentary committees can do. It also speaks to the importance of transparency: A parliamentary committee was demanding answers when the government of Canada had done a lot of business over successive years with this company, the WE group, that said it was there to help Canadians and help young people. It would not exercise basic levels of transparency when, frankly, ordered to legally by Canada's Parliament and by members of the House of Commons. It is unacceptable. Frankly, it cannot go unanswered. We know now that they are undertaking a very likely expensive PR campaign to try and rewrite history, and maybe clean up their image.

Frankly, it is a very telling lesson on what we can do as Parliament, but also that more work still could be done because we certainly did not get all the answers that we were legally entitled to, as the people's representatives here in Canada. Canadians deserve better than what they saw from the WE organization.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I completely agree. I believe that the Bloc Québécois has already stated several times that we will support this motion to create this committee.

However, there is something that I find to be somewhat paradoxical. I draw a parallel with Bill C-11. The Conservatives are arguing that we must not regulate the Internet, and that we must be careful not to put up barriers in the free market of the Internet. However, one of their reasons for creating this committee is to study the concern or fear that the Chinese Communist Party could be meddling with the Canadian population, the Asian population in particular.

I would like my colleague to comment on that. Where exactly is the logic in that? Why can we not regulate the Internet in the case of web giants dominating the broadcasting market, but we could do it to curb possible Chinese interference in Canadian communities?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, it is very simple. It is a question of content created by individual Canadians who have seen that the government has taken unprecedented steps to, frankly, intervene when it does not like what Canadians are saying. We saw that with the government trying to quash dissent with its use of the Emergencies Act, as one example. We need to be on guard against that, but when info ops are being perpetrated on Canada by a foreign government, and Canadians are not speaking out within their rights in a democratic framework against their own government, those are two very different things.

We need to study this. We need to examine what foreign governments are undertaking in Canada. Specifically with respect to this motion, we need to find out the full breadth of what the CCP is doing, and what that should look like for our future involvement with them here in Canada.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

I appreciate this opportunity to participate in today's debate. Canada has a deep and long-standing relationship with China, and even in difficult moments, we can and must work together to resolve these differences.

That being said, this motion takes a narrow view of Canada's potential in the region, and I would like to speak to the potential here for Canada's future. Our government is prioritizing the Indo-Pacific and developing a whole-of-government approach to the entire region. This is not just a strategy for one region of the world, but a strategy for Canada that will impact our peace and prosperity for decades to come.

Now more than ever, there is a need to reinforce the rules-based international order globally, including with partners in the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific does not only refer to geography. It also refers to the growing interdependence of the Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions, as well as the important role Canada and our allies play in this region as a whole.

I will put this into context. The Indo-Pacific region is home to 21 of the world's 30 largest cities and 60% of the world's population. Indo-Pacific shipping lanes carry no less than one-third of the world's bulk cargo and at least two-thirds of the world's oil. It is also home to 30% of the world's least fortunate people, and countries in the Indo-Pacific will require an estimated \$26 trillion for infrastructure by 2030.

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There are also significant global climate change impacts that must be addressed. Fifty-three per cent of global CO₂ emissions originate from the Indo-Pacific region. No region will be more important to Canada's interests than the Indo-Pacific. As the prosperity, security and well-being of Canadians becomes increasingly linked to the Indo-Pacific region, Canada is deepening our partnerships and expanding our engagement in the region. We know economies across the region continue to grow quickly.

At the same time, many countries in the region face important challenges in matters of governance, equity, human rights and the rule of law. The region is also, by a wide margin, Canada's top source of new immigrants and students. This is a pattern that over time has made Canadians of Asian origin this country's largest diaspora. In fact, half of Canada's foreign-born population is from the region, and 18% of all Canadians trace their heritage to the Indo-Pacific. On education, more than 60% of our foreign students come from the Indo-Pacific region.

This motion is unnecessary and would simply lead to ostracism and discrimination toward Canadians of Chinese descent, given the shameful rhetoric that continues to be pushed. We know Canada must engage in the Indo-Pacific with an approach that continues to advance trade and economic objectives while also protecting our security interests, defending a rules-based international order, advancing sustainable development goals and fighting climate change.

The region faces challenges that Canada can play a co-operative and supportive role in addressing, such as geopolitical shifts, pandemic management, socio-economic pressures and a disproportionate share of climate change impacts. A climate stable planet also depends on a low-carbon transition in the Indo-Pacific, as over 50% of global greenhouse gas emissions originate there, and this share continues to rise.

The Indo-Pacific also presents opportunities for Canadians. It is the fastest-growing region in the world and likely to make up over half of the global GDP by 2040. I believe taking advantage of these dynamic trade opportunities in the Indo-Pacific will create jobs across Canada. As a Pacific-facing nation, Canada seeks to support economies in the Indo-Pacific to achieve their goals and advance shared priorities.

● (1330)

Like many of our partners, we will promote a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific trade with ASEAN at its core. Canada is committed to keeping democratic values, the rule of law, good governance and human rights at the centre of our foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific. Doing so is the key to working with like-minded governments in support of common values and principles.

In advancing these values, we continue to diversify our engagement with countries and partners. This involves work on all fronts, including diplomacy, security, trade, economics and sustainable development.

Diplomatically, we will work closely with our friends and partners to uphold the rules-based international order and promote inclusive and open regional governance, and key norms and values,

as well as open societies, accountable governance and human rights that underpin Canada's approach to global governance.

Likewise, we recognize the need to reinforce our active support for Indo-Pacific regional security and stability in concert with our like-minded partners to ensure that the future security environment is favourable to Canada's interests and those of our friends and allies in that region.

Economically, while the region was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains a critical hub for trade, investment and production, with important supply chains originating and flowing through it. Canada will continue to promote and support business opportunities and to secure productive investment while fostering a more open, predictable and sustainable regional economic order. As a concrete example of our commitment to deepening commercial ties with the region, Canada has launched free trade agreement negotiations with ASEAN. This marks a significant milestone in the deepening of Canada's economic partnership and engagement across the Indo-Pacific.

Sustainable development is fundamental to Canada's aspirations in the region to strengthen governance and the rule of law.

Aligned with our feminist international assistance policy, Canada will remain engaged as an active supporter of the Indo-Pacific in its efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals. No region will be more consequential than the Indo-Pacific in shaping our ability to meet and exceed global commitments and targets on climate change. Few other regions are more vulnerable to rising oceans, changing weather patterns and natural disasters.

Our government is prioritizing a comprehensive approach to the Indo-Pacific region, which will guide our foreign policy for the next decade. We are going to give Canadians a seat at the table, protect our interests and do it together with our partners and friends, both old and new.

● (1335)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, sadly, the critique of our motion the member advances in the speech she just read is quite disgraceful. I mean, her comment that somehow critiquing the violence being committed by the Communist Party of China and the threat that this poses to our own security is impermissible because that might expose people to prejudices is really missing the fundamental point.

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We have great admiration for the Chinese people, and for the contribution of Chinese Canadians and others, but we have to recognize that the primary victims of CCP violence are the Chinese people. The House has recognized that the Government of China is responsible for an ongoing genocide.

To put it in clearer terms for the House, committing genocide against Uighur Muslims is a rather severe form of Islamophobia, and it is something the House should be calling out very clearly and responding to.

We dealt, in the past, with the detention of the two Michaels. Just this week, we had the arrest of a Canadian citizen and democracy activist, Denise Ho, in Hong Kong, as well as the arrest of Cardinal Joseph Zen, a 90-year-old retired cardinal, who has also been a strong voice for democracy.

Can the member see past her desire to cast this issue in woke domestic political terms and recognize that these horrific acts of violence require a clear and decisive response from Canada and that creating this committee is a part of that response?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, as I said during my speech, this motion is unnecessary and will simply lead to greater ostracism of and discrimination against Chinese Canadians. We have been seeing it for many, many months, the attacks on the Asian community, and these types of motions only seek to perpetrate that kind of discrimination and violence against a certain community.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it quite amazing that the Conservatives keep stating that human rights violations basically starting happening in China after a regime change in 2015, after they signed the FIPA trade agreement. It certainly was not a condition of FIPA that human rights were a priority in their negotiations, or indigenous rights for that matter. We know who protested from my riding. The Nuu-chah-nulth people fought that agreement to protect them from the investor state dispute resolution mechanisms that allow for secret tribunals.

I really appreciate my colleague's speech. Would she agree, should this motion pass, that we should take a look at FIPA and the ways we can better protect indigenous people in all trade agreements moving forward and human rights for people in both countries where we are signing a trade agreement?

• (1340)

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, I would like to say that there are already two committees studying these subjects. One is international trade and the other one is foreign affairs. It would just be redundant to have another committee and stifle debate in this manner.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am finding it difficult to understand my colleague's logic.

She said that creating this committee would exacerbate reprehensible actions in the area of human rights.

Is she not giving in to bullying?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for his question, but I do not agree with him.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, in my time here I have heard the member speak often with respect to standing up for human rights all around the world. I understand she is not supportive of this motion. I wonder if she would be open to sharing other opportunities that parliamentarians in this place, if we were serious about upholding human rights all around the world, could look toward doing exactly that.

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, I do agree with my hon. colleague, but there are already, as I mentioned, committees studying these issues, and this place is a place of debate where we can openly speak about such matters.

I thank him also for acknowledging that human rights is a very important and crucial issue, especially in this place. I will continue to work with him and other colleagues across the aisle to make sure that we have respect for human rights.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is great to speak to this motion and to be in the House this afternoon.

First off, May is Asian Heritage Month, a time to reflect on and recognize the many contributions that Canadians of Asian heritage have made and continue to make to this blessed country that we call home, Canada.

This year also marks 20 years since Canada officially declared May as Asian Heritage Month, and with this year's theme, "Continuing a Legacy of Greatness", we highlight the rich and varying contributions made by generations of Canadians of Asian descent in Canada, and everything they have overcome. We continue to have a responsibility to come together, from coast to coast to coast, to combat anti-Asian racism and discrimination in all its forms.

During this month we have an opportunity to learn about the many different Asian cultures and communities through the arts, films, literature and beyond. I know the city of Vaughan is home to a very vibrant Asian Canadian community. I interact with them on a daily basis. Whether they are from Vietnam, the Philippines, China, Hong Kong or elsewhere, it is great to learn about their heritage and culture and how they enrich the social fabric of this country.

With respect to today's motion, brought forth by the official opposition, I want to provide my personal view on Canada's relationship with China. I view it in terms of three principles: We compete in global markets; we collaborate when the opportunity presents itself, and we must challenge the Chinese government when our values conflict with its actions and values. Those three Cs, as I call them, competition, collaboration and challenge, are something I feel very strongly about.

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I would also say that I look to the words of someone who I have a deep respect for, not only in his current capacity as the prime minister of Italy, but in his former capacity as the president of the European Central Bank. Last year, at a G7 meeting, he noted with respect to China, and this really represents my view, “It’s an autocracy that does not adhere to multilateral rules and does not share the same vision of the world that the democracies have. We need to cooperate but we also need to be frank about things that we do not share and do not accept. The U.S. president said that silence is complicity.”

That is my personal view when I think about the Canada-China relationship. Yes, there is competition and collaboration, but we must also challenge and always stand up for the values we in Canada have with respect to minority rights, human rights, the rule of law, democracy and, yes, multilateral institutions.

I will now move on to my formal remarks. I will be highlighting human rights in my remarks this afternoon.

The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canada's foreign policy and will continue to guide our government's engagement with China. Canada is deeply concerned about the ongoing repression and targeting of ethnic minorities and religious and vulnerable groups in China, including the Tibetan Buddhists, the Uighurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities, Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, women and girls, and members of the LGBTI community. Canada has consistently called on China to uphold its international commitments to protect and promote the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and freedom of religion or belief of all Chinese citizens.

Canada is also concerned about the ongoing efforts by Chinese authorities to curtail media freedom in China and Hong Kong, where there have been increasing obstacles for independent reporting, including censorship, visa restrictions, intimidation and even imprisonment affecting journalists. Canada has raised these issues bilaterally with the pertinent Chinese government individuals at all levels. Canada has also raised the human rights situation in China on numerous occasions at the UN, including before the UN Human Rights Council and at the UN General Assembly.

For instance, on June 22, 2021, at the 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Canada led a joint statement on behalf of 44 countries regarding the human rights situations in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet.

Canada is also proud to have launched, in 2021, the “Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations”, which has been endorsed by over 65 countries. This is a commitment of Canada's resolve to uphold the rules-based international order and the core principles and values that underpin it.

At a time when many are questioning the future of multilateralism, and of diplomacy altogether, Canada is committed to showing up and playing an active role in shaping the norms and engaging the institutions that underpin our global community. However, we know that only so much can be changed in the halls of power. Absent the voices of those being oppressed, change cannot last, nor can our policies be effective.

• (1345)

That is why we continue to engage directly with diaspora communities, activists, civil society, journalists and human rights defenders. Without their expertise and without their bravely sharing their stories with the world, including online, human rights violations and abuses would be swept under the rug. They are how the world knows about crackdowns on freedom of assembly and suppression of democracy in Hong Kong, including the recent arrest of a Catholic cardinal, I believe, which Canada has spoken out against, alongside our international partners. For instance, on May 9, 2022, the G7 foreign ministers issued a joint statement on the selection process of the chief executive in Hong Kong, underscoring our grave concern over this process as a part of a continued attempt at assault on political pluralism and fundamental freedoms.

The mounting evidence of a systemic campaign of repression in Xinjiang cannot be ignored. In Xinjiang, there is substantial, credible evidence that documents masked arbitrary detentions of Uighur and other Muslim ethnic minorities, directed by the central and regional Chinese governments under the false pretext of countering terrorism and violent extremism. Evidence provided by academics, NGOs, human rights defenders and journalists and the testimony of victims show that Uighurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities face cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, obligatory patriotic and cultural education, forced labour, and arbitrary, forced separation of children from their parents by authorities. Throughout this region, Uighurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities also face repressive physical and digital surveillance. It is unacceptable.

Our government is also deeply disturbed by the recent reports from victims of sexual violence at the hands of the authorities in Xinjiang. Canada condemns these dehumanizing acts in the strongest terms. We stand with victims and survivors, and call on all governments to seek justice and hold the perpetrators to account.

Canada also remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation affecting Tibetans, including the restrictions on freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief, and the protection of linguistic and cultural rights. In the 21st century, there is no excuse to be unaware of these issues.

Canada is committed to engaging unilaterally as well as alongside our partners to advocate for the human rights of those individuals, those citizens in China. We will continue to call for unfettered access to Xinjiang for international independent observers, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, and to work closely with Canadian firms doing business in or with China to help them understand and mitigate the risks of doing business with entities possibly implicated in unspeakable forced labour.

We will continue to oppose China's persecution and prosecution on the basis of religion or belief, including for Muslims, Christians, Tibetan Buddhists and the Falun Gong. We will continue to support restored respect for civil and political rights in Hong Kong, in line with the legally binding joint declaration signed by China and the United Kingdom, which Canada has continually called on since 2018, including through joint statements with G7 and Five Eyes partners.

We will also continue to oppose the death penalty and undertake clemency interventions in all cases of Canadians facing execution in China. Canada will continue to call for the abolition of the death penalty internationally. A Canadian is a Canadian, regardless of the position taken by a foreign government. Canada will stand up for Canadian citizens' consular rights, even when the Chinese do not recognize these rights.

Canadians expect their government to stand up against injustices around the world, and this is exactly what our government is doing. As elected officials, let us bear this spirit in mind and work together in our fight for human rights and the rule of law. Canada will always engage with China in our own interests. There remain areas of pragmatic co-operation between our two countries, such as on climate change or the global fight against COVID-19. The path forward must include coordination with our partners, and Canada will work with others to hold the Chinese government accountable for its international obligations and to defend the rules-based international order.

Finally, Canada will continue its collaboration in pursuit of national interests. We will also vigorously defend our values and our principles of democracy and human rights, and we will protect the security of Canadians at home and abroad.

• (1350)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciated the speech from the member opposite in the House today.

What I would like to talk to the member about is the issues that arise specifically with Canada and China that do not fit neatly in the box of any particular committee in this place. With the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Canada has an excellent record on the reduction of mercury, to make sure it does not poison our environment, our fish or our people. However, Canada's rates of mercury are much higher, particularly in indigenous people up north. Why is this? Well, it is because many Asian factories dispose of mercury by simply throwing it into the fire, and it comes up and lands on the second-largest land mass, that of Canada.

This is an issue that does not fit neatly in the environment committee, because we are a signatory to this convention, but we need to press the Government of China on the Minamata Convention and on the harm it is doing to indigenous people and other Canadians.

I would ask the member: Does he believe that this issue needs to be pursued? Will he support this motion to have a special committee formed so that we can take these issues that are important to Canadians and to our indigenous people and make sure we have some accountability on these matters of the environment?

Business of Supply

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, when it comes to issues of environmental rights and human rights, Canada will always stand and work within multilateral institutions and, obviously, have conversations directly with any government where there are externalities occurring in their economy and their industry that are spilling over into the environment and impacting negatively any of our citizens, including impacting our indigenous peoples.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must admit that I am having a hard time following my colleague's logic.

He quoted Joe Biden, who said that silence is complicity. He talked about all of the human rights violations in China, censorship and the Uighurs. That is why I do not understand his opposition to creating this committee. Given that this is exactly what the committee proposes to study, among other things, I find that somewhat inconsistent.

Does my colleague have anything to say to that?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

• (1355)

[*English*]

Canada will always stand for human rights and environmental protections across the world. We have committees here on Parliament Hill, such as the foreign affairs committee and the international trade committee, that can deal directly with these pertinent issues. There is also, I believe, a human rights subcommittee that can look into these issues. We have great members of Parliament on these committees, doing great work, day in and day out, and if they so decide, because a committee is the master of its own domain, they can pursue the studies they wish to pursue, including ensuring that human rights are protected around the world, and that where there are abuses of human rights and environmental rights, they will be called out.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I feel it is like a watershed moment this week between the NDP and the Conservatives. We saw the Conservatives actually stand up for the first time in a decade to fight against the big banks on merchant fees, something that we have been fighting since the late Jack Layton and my good friend from South Okanagan—West Kootenay did. We saw the Conservatives stand up to call on the government to roll out mental health transfers, something the New Democrats have been calling for. We are hoping for a triple crown; we are hoping the Conservatives are going to stand up to force the government to do something about the toxic drug supply crisis that is killing Canadians, which the government is doing nothing about.

Statements by Members

One thing I want to bring back to this speech that we do agree on is combatting foreign interference from China and other state parties here in Canada, including Russia, and I am banned from Russia, so I am sure the bot army is going to get out and come after me. Will the government commit to bringing forward legislation to combat foreign interference from China and other state parties, like Russia, here in Canada?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, first of all, any state interference, and that by an authoritarian state even more so, in the domestic affairs of our country is completely unacceptable. I share the concerns of the member for Courtenay—Alberni about the opioid crisis in Canada that has been going on. Literally thousands of Canadians have died. I know our government is seized with this issue. We are working with our provincial partners, our municipal partners and all levels of government on this issue. Too many Canadians are dying via the opioid crisis, and we need to ensure we are assisting those families and these individuals, so they can get the help and so that it does not continue.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

We are here today to talk about the creation of a parliamentary committee to look at the relationship between Canada and the People's Republic of China. This is a very important issue, given that China is a major player, to say the least, both economically and in terms of national security, the environment, and so forth. That is why we want a parliamentary committee to look into this.

Why should such a parliamentary committee be created? A parliamentary committee is independent from the executive. This makes it independent from the Office of the Prime Minister, which can give orders to his members. In a parliamentary committee, all members are theoretically independent from the executive.

Some may be wondering why we are using an opposition day to talk about this. The reason is that this is how to go about creating a committee. We could have come to an agreement with the government party to create this committee, but unfortunately, the government party refuses to create it.

The Conservative Party believes that this is important. The way to create this committee is to have a vote in the House. Every member will be able to vote freely. We shall see what the result of the vote is, but we assume members will vote in favour of creating a committee.

I remind members that the proposed committee will study many matters presently affecting Canadians: the economy, national security, the environment and the supply chain. The issue with supply chains directly affects our producers and our economy and has a direct impact on inflation, which affects all Canadians. We support creating this committee, which will address issues that affect or are of concern to all Canadians.

I also remind members that this committee already existed in the former Parliament, that is before the Prime Minister very arrogantly triggered an election in the midst of the pandemic. The committee met over 30 times to hear from more than 100 witnesses. The com-

mittee tabled three reports after studying matters that were damaging for China, but very important to Canada. I—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I must interrupt the hon. member, who will have eight minutes after question period to finish his speech.

[English]

Before we go to Statements by Members, I would like to ask the hon. members in the House, but also and especially in the courtyard, to please keep quiet so we can hear what is being said in the House. It is very difficult right now, so I would ask, if possible, to quiet the noise in the courtyard. I thank the members.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise virtually. This is May 12, the birthday of Florence Nightingale, hence the focus on nurses and nursing this week. I want to mention that Florence Nightingale, in the 19th century, was a leader. If she had been a man, she would have been known as the father of public health science and as one of the trailblazers in the use of statistics, but the misogynistic lens of history does not end there.

Fast-forward to 2022, and our nurses are struggling. The website of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions states, “nurses and health care workers are experiencing a silent mental health crisis. Short staffing, punishing workloads, widespread violence—these are everyday realities”. That is not good enough.

I know all parliamentarians in this place would like to join me in saying thanks to all the women and men in the nursing profession. We thank them, we stand with them and we owe them so very much.

* * *

[Translation]

ECOFRIENDLY PRODUCTS COMPANY

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have some wonderful, talented women in Vimy.

[English]

Dispersa Inc. is a woman-led company that focuses on biosurfactants, which are biodegradable and ecofriendly products for cleaning and personal care.

[Translation]

Since being elected in 2019, I have seen Dispersa grow and gain recognition for the incredible work its team is doing to make our homes greener.

[English]

This week, Dispersa was selected as one of the top five global chemical start-ups to watch in 2022. I want to personally congratulate Nivatha Balendra and the Dispersa team for this amazing recognition and for showing young girls across the world that women scientists are leading society into a more sustainable and greener future.

I congratulate Nivatha and hope she keeps up the good work. She is making all of us, including our Tamil community, very proud.

* * *

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN CANADIAN ELECTIONS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this House needs to take seriously the efforts of the Chinese Communist Party to undermine our democracy and, in particular, target and pressure Canadians of Chinese descent.

Experts from McGill University and the Digital Forensic Research Lab have sounded the alarm over a disinformation campaign launched by the Chinese embassy during the last federal election. Several members of Parliament were targeted, including the former member for Steveston—Richmond East. It sought to spread disinformation to the Chinese Canadian community and physically intimidate Canadians on our own soil.

As members of Parliament, we have the duty to protect our elections from foreign influence. Canada must adopt a foreign influence transparency scheme similar to those in the U.S. and Australia. A failure to do so will only allow foreign intimidation to continue. Canada must reject a culture of appeasement and stand up to the rise of authoritarianism within and beyond our borders.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honour International Nurses Day and the thousands of nurses in this country who dedicate their lives to care for Canadians.

My own family has been blessed with two nurses. My mother was a young nurse in World War II London. I am also deeply proud of my sister Fiona Hanley, who is a devoted environmentalist and nursing instructor at Dawson College in Montreal.

At 50% of our health care workforce, nurses form the backbone of our health care system. Let us be frank; this is a workforce in crisis. Two years of a pandemic have worsened the strain nurses were already experiencing: long hours, staffing shortfalls, lack of supplies and resources, and stress. Today, 45% of nurses experience symptoms of burnout, and half are thinking of leaving their job.

Today is a day to celebrate nurses and honour their critical work, but we must deliver on providing the support nurses need in order to stay and to thrive in their jobs to support the health of Canadians.

Statements by Members

For today, I thank Fiona, Meghan, Sean, Brooke and all the nurses of the Yukon and of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION IN BEAUPORT

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is a big year. It is the 40th anniversary of a terrific organization in our riding called Le Pivot.

Today I join with my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou to pay tribute to Le Pivot and to highlight the enormous contribution this organization makes to our beautiful region of Beauport. Every day, regardless of the circumstances, dozens of generous volunteers pitch in to support people in their community by distributing food, running the thrift shop, looking after children at the drop-in child care centre, preparing income tax returns or helping out with one of the many other services. Le Pivot is quite obviously the beating heart of the Beauport community.

I would like to commend the executive director, Ginette Faucher, for her hard work, friendliness and empathy. Ginette is a true inspiration for the next generation and has been with Le Pivot since the beginning.

I thank Ginette for those 40 years. I also thank the board of directors and, above all, the volunteers at Le Pivot who freely offer their love and support.

I hope Le Pivot keeps going for many more years. The world needs more of this kindness.

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● (1405)

ESTIM AWARDS

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the great pleasure of attending the 34th edition of the ESTim awards gala last week.

I would first like to congratulate the entire team at the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Montreal on this event. After two years of pandemic, the gala was finally able to take place in person with more than 500 entrepreneurs, organizations and businesses in attendance. This gala recognizes the determination, leadership and innovation of entrepreneurs, businesses and community organizations in the east end of Montreal. The people of eastern Montreal are proud people with a strong sense of belonging to the region.

I salute all of this year's winners, especially those from my riding. Congratulations to Dermadry Laboratories, winner in the manufacturing category; Annie Martel, of Terre à soi, winner in the women's leadership category; and the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve community kitchen, winner of the Orchidée Organisation award.

Statements by Members

The ESTim awards recognize the talent and innovation of all these extraordinary people who contribute to the development of Montreal's east end.

* * *

[English]

BRIAN FRANKLIN

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the life of Mr. Brian Franklin, who sadly left us all too soon after a brief battle with cancer. He was a pillar in his community of Deloraine, and he was known far and wide for his public service and his love of hockey. Brian was a teacher for 36 years and was one of the best math teachers in the province of Manitoba. He served as a town councillor, and then as mayor of Deloraine for 16 years. He brought people together and was always willing to listen to those who needed help.

My greatest memories of Brian were seeing him at the hockey rink or on the golf course, and I was thrilled when he became the president of Hockey Manitoba. I was incredibly proud of how he led the organization and helped shape the future of so many players.

I consider him a friend, and I know that all who knew him are grieving his passing. My heart goes out to his wife, Val, and his children, Tony and Carrie, as they celebrate his life. May he rest in peace.

* * *

FIBROMYALGIA AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Fibromyalgia Awareness Day. We join the millions who are participating on this day by holding various events to raise awareness of fibromyalgia, an invisible and debilitating chronic condition.

In my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, Ms. Susan Monaco has been a strong voice for those affected by fibromyalgia. After being diagnosed in 1986, Ms. Monaco suffered quite a bit, just like more than 1.5 million Canadians, mostly women, who suffer from the fibromyalgia syndrome. Today, Ms. Monaco leads a local support group for all those suffering from fibromyalgia. I hear that the most frustrating thing for those suffering is that on the outside they look just fine, but in reality fibromyalgia can severely limit a person's ability to carry out ordinary daily activities.

In honour of the 30th anniversary of the International Fibromyalgia Awareness Day, I am pleased to share that the City of Mississauga Civic Centre clock tower will light up purple.

I would like to give a big shout-out to my constituent Susan Monaco and her Mississauga fibro group for their tireless advocacy to bring awareness to fibromyalgia.

* * *

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me share some names of people who are an important part of the fabric of this country: Léa Roback, social activist and feminist; Moshe

Safdie, architect; Rosalie Abella, Supreme Court justice; William Shatner, actor and now astronaut; Geddy Lee, Leonard Cohen and yes, even Drake, all musicians and creative people.

The month of May is Jewish Heritage Month across Canada. It is an opportunity to celebrate the diversity, creativity and contributions of Jewish Canadians that have been woven into the fabric and history of Canadian life. Jewish Canadians have shown leadership in academia, law, medicine, music, sports, theatre, literature, community service and so much more.

Jewish leaders have been our teachers, our neighbours and our friends. They have advocated for and inspired us to pursue peace, equality and inclusivity in the Canada we share today, and they have often done it in the face of unspeakable discrimination and anti-Semitism. Through their dedication and allyship, they have shone the light on what is possible, for the better, for everyone.

That is why this month is about celebrating those I have mentioned and many more. I encourage all Canadians to take some time to learn and celebrate the heritage and accomplishments of Jewish Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

● (1410)

INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, on International Nurses Day, I rise to pay tribute to nurses across Canada and the world who selflessly serve their communities, often at a great personal sacrifice.

I would particularly like to honour one of my constituents, who has tirelessly served her community throughout the entire pandemic caring for COVID-19 patients at the Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington. She is a hero who came home with goggle marks imprinted on her face, tired after over twelve hours on her feet in full PPE and putting her own health at risk to care for hundreds of Canadians who needed it most. She is a hero who, despite the challenging conditions and understaffed hospital, woke up every day and went to work, her eyes smiling to her patients above her mask. She is a hero who, above all, is the most amazing mother to our two daughters.

Most of all, my wife Angela, who is on the Hill today, is my hero. I love her.

The Deputy Speaker: I really like these S. O. 31s. These statements are awesome, but I have to remind folks not to acknowledge the presence of somebody in the gallery, although I am glad she is here.

The hon. member for Niagara Centre.

*Statements by Members***LYME DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH**

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May marks Lyme Disease Awareness Month. Families across Canada have their lives turned upside down because of Lyme disease, like the Peters family in my riding. This family has two daughters who have battled chronic Lyme disease over the past eight years, with debilitating neurological symptoms.

Like many Canadians, the Peters family does not know when, where or how they were bitten by a tick and acquired Lyme disease. The Peters sisters did not have a bull's-eye rash, similar to many other people who get Lyme disease, but there are difference instances where we would know we have Lyme disease.

I encourage all members of the House to educate themselves on the experiences of individuals with Lyme disease and to visit canlyme.com to find out more and get more information.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 7,500 health care professionals were promised for rural Canada by the Liberals in the 2021 election campaign. Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, like much of rural Canada, is in a health care crisis. My constituent, 40-year old Preston Parby, who happens to be in Ottawa today, spent five days on a stretcher in an understaffed hospital after suffering a heart attack. Weeks later, he was transferred to Ottawa, where he finally received his triple bypass surgery.

Constituents of mine like Preston do not want to hear the Minister of Health give them COVID stats from the U.S.A., or talk about the wonderful relationship that the NDP-Liberal government has with the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The government and the Prime Minister have broken their promise to rural Canadians like Preston, and it is time for them to address this crisis and put the care back into health care.

The Deputy Speaker: Of course, as always, we recognize and are happy that people are joining us here in the House of Commons today.

The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

* * *

VACCINE MANDATES

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been more than two years since COVID arrived in this country, and public health experts across Canada have been abundantly clear that we will live for years with COVID.

Vaccination rates in this country are incredibly high, and the fourth dose of vaccinations are being rolled out. Transmissions, hospitalizations and deaths are all down significantly from the peak, and Canadians want to get their pre-COVID lives back again.

Most of the provinces and territories across this country, including mine, the province of Saskatchewan, have lifted all mandates. It is time for the government of Canada to join the provinces and remove mandates from all areas within the federal jurisdiction.

• (1415)

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the month of May marks the 20th anniversary of Asian Heritage Month. This year we celebrate the theme of “Continuing a legacy of greatness”.

I am honoured to represent Richmond Centre, a riding with a predominantly Asian population that has helped shape Canada into the great, diverse nation it is today. I want to thank the generation of Asians who have chosen to call Richmond their home and who share their unique culture, religion and history with all of us.

Despite the unfortunate rise in anti-Asian sentiment during the pandemic, Asian Canadians have continued to show their strength through their resilience and activism. I hope we can all work together to build a more peaceful and multicultural community.

This month, let us celebrate the legacy of greatness that Asian Canadians have contributed across Canada. Happy Asian Heritage Month.

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*[Translation]***COMMUNITY FUTURES NETWORK OF CANADA**

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the Community Futures Network of Canada and the excellent work it is doing to diversify, support and strengthen economies in rural and remove communities.

[English]

The Community Futures Network of Canada works to support communities by providing small business loans, tools and training to people looking to start or expand their business. In Ontario alone, during 2020-21, the Community Futures Development Corporation recruited over 1,000 volunteers, issued over \$7.5 million in business loans and created over 6,000 jobs. In addition, the CFDC has provided over \$116 million in business loan relief and helped maintain 8,500 jobs.

In Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, many entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the services provided by CFDCs, more specifically those of Waubetek, East Algoma, Superior East, Nord-Aski, LAMBAC, North Claybelt and Sault Ste. Marie, whose team members are dedicated to making northern Ontario a business-friendly destination. Today, I say thanks.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the pandemic is coming to an end, the annual pro-life demonstration has returned to Parliament Hill. People who oppose women's rights and safe abortions of course have the right to demonstrate, and Parliament Hill is the most appropriate place to do so. It is certainly more appropriate than intimidating young women outside clinics.

The Bloc Qu b cois has no problem with the religious right gathering on the lawn outside Parliament. We do, however, have a problem with religion being brought into Parliament, into a Canadian Parliament in which the official opposition is funded by churches, into a Parliament in which 40 Conservatives consistently vote in line with the anti-choice right, into a Parliament that just voted to continue praying every day before we start our daily business.

In the context of the Parliament that I just described, the Bloc Qu b cois wants to let Quebec women know that it will stand up for their rights. We will not accept any erosion of these rights.

* * *

[English]

VACCINE MANDATES

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians proudly oppose discrimination, but today seven million Canadians are being subjected to government-imposed discrimination that bars them from boarding an aircraft in Canada because they have not been fully vaccinated against COVID.

This is uniquely Canadian. Currently, no other country in the world has a similar policy. In fact, most countries have lifted and ended their COVID restrictions. Canada's chief public health officer has been clear that it is time to end these discriminatory policies, but the Prime Minister has maintained this rule to foster hate, suspicion and division.

I remind my colleagues in the House that the Prime Minister can only maintain this discrimination if the majority of us allow him to do so. Consider the seven million Canadians who continue to be separated from their families, job opportunities, studies, weddings and funerals. I implore my colleagues in the Liberal and NDP benches to do the right thing and end the Prime Minister's vindictive and divisive mandates.

* * *

● (1420)

NATIONAL MINING WEEK

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize National Mining Week. Mining activity stretches right across our country and employs nearly 700,000 direct and indirect workers, nearly 17,000 of whom are indigenous. In 2020, the industry contributed \$107 billion to Canada's GDP. Canada is a global mining power thanks to world-class people, deposits and environmental practices.

The TMX lists more mining companies than any other stock exchange in the world, and in a net-zero economy, people in this in-

dustry know they can reach even higher and are ready. That is why we made a historic commitment of \$3.8 billion to implement the critical minerals strategy. It is for infrastructure to establish value chains and for unlocking projects. We also doubled the mineral exploration tax credit and are investing in R and D so that we can move closer to sustainable mining in the way we know it can be done by Canada.

I ask hon. members today to join me in recognizing National Mining Week and the importance of mining to Canadian prosperity.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Luc Berthold (M gantic—L' rable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in January 2017, the Prime Minister himself caused a major problem at Roxham Road with his #WelcomeToCanada tweet. Because of his attempt to thumb his nose at the U.S. president, a loophole in the safe third country agreement resulted in thousands of migrants crossing our border illegally.

Five years later, there is a new president in the White House, but the situation is worse than ever. Quebec wants Roxham Road closed. The Prime Minister did not hesitate to close the borders during the pandemic, but he does not want to do it now. Why is he incapable of negotiating a new agreement with the United States?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we believe our asylum and immigration systems are strong. We are working closely with stakeholders on the border situation.

We are working with our U.S. counterparts on issues related to our shared border, including the safe third country agreement. We always work very closely with our partners to respect our national and international obligations towards asylum seekers.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Luc Berthold (M gantic—L' rable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they work hard, but produce no results.

The Prime Minister has to stop turning a blind eye to gang violence, especially in the Montreal area. All his fine words have not changed a thing.

Since he was elected, the number of shootings keeps going up. In Laval alone, since January, police officials have identified 28 incidents involving firearms, all tied to street gangs.

Does the Prime Minister agree with the acting mayor of Laval, who says that the situation is unacceptable? Will he admit that his policies have missed the mark?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

As an MP from Toronto, one of the biggest cities in Canada, I absolutely agree that we have a serious gun problem.

That is precisely why our government has taken significant steps to limit the presence of firearms in our country, in our communities and in our cities. I urge the Conservatives to support the strong measures we are taking.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is trying to create a false sense of security in Canada. Tightening the screws on honest business owners and law-abiding gun owners will not keep violence from escalating on our country's streets.

Mothers fear for their children. Gangs are not afraid of anything. Shootings happen in broad daylight, with children nearby. That is the reality and it is getting worse. What is the government's plan to fight illegal gun trafficking and street gangs that terrorize people in Laval, Montreal and across Canada?

• (1425)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I really want to thank the member opposite for his question, because I agree that guns pose a great danger to those living in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver.

That is why our government is prepared to take strong action; its very purpose is to protect mothers and children. I encourage the Conservatives to support us.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Liberal-held ridings across the country, gun and gang violence is escalating, and it is not escalating because of law-abiding firearms owners. Last Saturday, around three in the morning, there was a deadly shooting on Sheppard Avenue in Scarborough. On Tuesday, police arrested the suspect who had been arrested 48 hours earlier for an unrelated robbery.

There have been 137 shootings in Toronto in 2022. Instead of wasting time going after law-abiding firearms owners, why is the minister not protecting public safety by going after the gangsters shooting up his streets in Toronto?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am an MP for a downtown Toronto riding. I am the mother of Toronto teenagers. I am very aware of the danger that guns pose in our cities, in our communities and on our streets. That is why our government is taking strong measures to ban military-style assault weapons. I would invite the Conservatives to join us.

Oral Questions

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, violent crime is not limited to the GTA. Monday night, there was a drive-by shooting not far from the Prime Minister's office in his riding of Papineau. That shooting came less than two days after another drive-by in Laval, a Liberal-held riding, where a family was shot at while driving back from a birthday party.

Instead of targeting criminals, the Liberals prefer to punish law-abiding hunters, collectors and sport shooters. Can someone explain to me why the Prime Minister is more interested in protecting violent criminals and gangs in his community than the families in his community?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farmers and hunters in rural communities do not use military-style assault weapons to hunt or to protect their cattle. These are weapons that terrorize our communities. They terrorize our big cities, but they terrorize all Canadians. That is why our government is acting to ban them. I would welcome all members of the House, and surely we care about Canadian lives, to do the right thing together.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am beginning to think that the Trans Mountain pipeline is made of solid gold. The government started by spending \$4.5 billion in taxpayers' money, and now the tab has reached \$21 billion. Why? For a pipe that will be used to sell oil.

That is the government's genius plan to fight climate change. What a bunch of heroes.

Best of all, today we learned that the government just announced another \$10-billion loan to Trans Mountain. That brings the total to \$31 billion.

When will it end?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have said from the start, we do not intend to own Trans Mountain long term. This project is a responsible investment in the public interest and is creating over 12,700 well-paid jobs for the middle class.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they call it a loan guarantee, but we are not fooled. It is another subsidy in disguise. They are trying to surreptitiously finance their golden pipeline with our money again. They are embarrassed, so they are doing it in secret, but they do it anyway.

As for the \$10 billion, either Trans Mountain, which is owned by the government, pays for it or the government pays for it. Either way, it is the taxpayer who will pay for it.

Oral Questions

When will the government stop taking our money to support Trans Mountain? There are limits, at some point. [English]

• (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands how important it is to get a fair price for our resources on international markets.

The government has no intention of owning the pipeline for the long term. A divestment process will be launched when the project is more advanced, less risky, and when consultations with indigenous peoples are completed.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer last year found that the Canadian government was giving massive tax exemptions to oil and gas companies, to the tune of \$2.3 billion. A year later, those very same companies are posting massive profits while gouging Canadians at the pumps. It is clear the government continues to take the side of oil and gas companies, and it is hurting people.

Will the government finally stop giving away these massive tax exemptions to profitable oil and gas companies and instead be on the side of people and help them out?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are absolutely, clearly and explicitly committed to eliminating fossil fuel subsidies. We are going to do that by 2023. We have also put forward a limit on emissions from the oil and gas industry, we have committed to gradually reduce emissions until we reach net-zero in 2050, and we are going to eliminate the flow-through share regime for fossil fuel sector activities.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty bizarre to end fossil fuel subsidies by increasing them by billions of dollars. I do not get that.

[Translation]

The Liberal government gave the oil companies massive exemptions, worth nearly \$2.3 billion. These same companies have made massive profits this year, and they continue to squeeze people at the pumps.

Why does the government continue to help large corporations that make massive profits instead of putting an end to these massive exemptions and putting the money back into people's pockets?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for years our government has been promising to get rid of oil subsidies, and we are even going to do it ahead of schedule—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Thank you.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, we are even going to do it before the target date of 2023 because we know that it is important. We have also put forward a plan to put a hard cap on emissions from the oil and gas industry and to gradually reduce emissions until we achieve net zero.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, leave it to the Liberals to censor Bill C-11. In less than an hour, they forced a bill through the House that negatively impacts each and every Canadian who watches videos or listens to music on the Internet. Making matters worse, the Prime Minister refuses to answer a simple question about how the CRTC will use its new powers to regulate the Internet.

Why is the government ramming through this bill while providing no transparency? What is it trying to hide?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our culture needs fair rules for tech giants, and that is exactly what our online streaming bill creates. Our artists, our creators and all workers in the cultural sector depend on it.

The Conservatives are abandoning them, yet again. Again and again, they prefer to play politics. Canada needs a modern law and its cultural sector needs a modern law. It is time to move forward, and I look forward to our debates at committee.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again and again, there is more disinformation from the Liberal government. This is a flawed bill. The Liberals are keeping the directives they are giving to the CRTC secret until after the bill receives royal assent, and now they are forcing the bill through the House of Commons.

Why? Why is the government ramming this bill through, rather than providing certainty to digital first creators?

• (1435)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for some reason, the Conservatives have decided to abandon our culture and our artists.

The objective is the same. We want platforms to contribute to Canadian culture. We heard the concerns that were raised about social media, we got the message and we fixed them.

We are making it extremely clear. Users and their content will not be regulated. The bill makes platforms contribute. That is it. It is written in black and white in the bill: platforms in, users out.

SENIORS

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, seniors across this country are calling in to my office and pleading for parliamentarians to help alleviate the debilitating effect that the cost of living is having on them. Their dollar is not going as far as it was before, and it keeps getting worse. Many seniors on fixed incomes cannot make ends meet and they have lost hope.

Our seniors deserve better and our seniors need better. When will the government take realistic steps to lower the inflation that is devastating Canadian seniors?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, who actually prolonged the age of retirement for seniors, from 65 to 67, on this side of the House we have been delivering for seniors, whether it be the increase to the GIS that has actually helped over 900,000 single seniors or, of course, during the pandemic when we took action to provide for seniors who needed support with special tax-free payments and a GST top-up. Of course, this summer, we are delivering on our promise to increase the OAS by 10% for those seniors 75 and up.

Seniors know that we have got their backs and we are going to continue to deliver for them.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has its hand in their back pocket, perhaps. For nearly eight months, we have been asking the government to take substantive action to ease the crippling cost of living for our seniors. Dental care in two years will do nothing to lower food prices today. A one-off, one-time payment last year does nothing to lower the cost of medicine tomorrow.

As a nation, we have relied on our seniors for their sacrifices, and now they are relying on us. Our seniors have been neglected. How can this Liberal government be comfortable with that?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we on this side of the House have been delivering for seniors since 2015.

This actually allows me to talk a bit about budget 2022, which has made sure that seniors are supported. This includes \$5.3 billion over five years for a dental care for Canadians program for seniors aged 65 and over with an income of below \$90,000, as well as an additional \$20 million for the New Horizons for Seniors program. We are also doubling the qualifying expense for the home accessibility tax credit. On this side of the House, we are delivering for seniors, and we are going to continue to make sure that we have their backs.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is more misinformation.

I was speaking with a senior from Kelowna—Lake Country who said she and her husband had to go back to work part-time just to pay for basic necessities. She said she had her electricity bill in one hand while she was looking at her empty pantry, and they had to make the decision whether to pay the electricity bill or purchase food.

Inflation numbers do not capture all the costs that are increasing for people. Seniors on fixed incomes are some of the hardest hit.

Oral Questions

Can the minister tell us what specific actions the NDP–Liberal government is explicitly taking to reduce inflation?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning, our government has been delivering for seniors. One of the first things that we did was restore the age of retirement back to 65 from 67. We have enhanced the CPP. We have raised the GIS for single seniors, which has helped over 900,000 seniors.

This summer, we will be increasing the OAS by 10% for those aged 75 and over. We are making high-speed Internet more affordable for seniors. In budget 2022, we announced the creation of a dental care program for low-income seniors. Seniors know we are delivering for them, and we are going to continue to do just that.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing they are delivering is less prosperity.

When it comes to housing, the housing minister likes to talk about what he has invested. What he does not like to talk about, though, are results. Why is that? It is because there are none, when housing prices have doubled over the last seven years. If this housing minister had a radio show, it would be entitled “All Talk, No Rock”. Will the housing minister admit that his and his government’s strategy has been an abject failure, with all talk and no rock?

• (1440)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are dead set on making sure that we continue our investments in housing. Budget 2022 has prioritized affordable housing investments, help for first-time homebuyers and doubling the housing supply. We are making sure that, through the national housing strategy, we work with developers, the private sector, non-profits, municipalities and provinces to get the help Canadians need so that each and every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, gas prices are hurting Quebecers and our businesses, especially in rural areas. In the meantime, oil companies raked in record profits in the last quarter: almost \$3 billion for Suncor and \$1.1 billion for both Imperial and TC Energy.

Oral Questions

What is most infuriating is that regardless of these profits, the federal government is giving Trans Mountain \$10 billion in loan guarantees. There was \$2.4 billion for carbon capture in the budget.

Does the government agree that it is embarrassing to be subsidizing oil companies instead of helping people who are being bled dry?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to point out that inflation is a global phenomenon caused by the pandemic, Putin's illegal war in Ukraine and China's zero-COVID policy. However, we understand that the cost of living and the cost of gas are a problem for Canadians. That is why our budget includes dental care for Canadians, doubles the first-time homebuyers' tax credit, establishes a home renovation tax credit and provides for a one-time \$500 payment to people facing housing challenges.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, dirty oil producers are double-dipping. Consumers are paying twice, once at the pumps and a second time through the taxes that fund the subsidies that the federal government pays to these oil companies, which are sitting on piles of money, like Scrooge. The simple fact is that the middle class is seeing all of their hard-earned money go to oil billionaires.

The oil companies do not need this money. Will the Deputy Prime Minister stop sending them public money and instead provide support for those most affected by the increase in gas prices?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to talk about carbon capture, which goes beyond the oil and gas sector. Steel, concrete and aluminum, for example, are important industries in Quebec and are crucial to Canada's and Quebec's economies. These are other industries that need to reduce their emissions. Carbon capture will help these industries as well.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, fuel prices are catastrophic for entrepreneurs in farming, fishing, trucking and the taxi industry.

These people are on the verge of bankruptcy. Entire industries in Quebec are suffering major losses without the least bit of support from the federal government. Meanwhile, the oil industry is reaping record profits and continues to be heavily subsidized.

When will the government stop showering our public money on oil companies and instead fund the victims of fuel prices and the energy transition?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I want to talk about the importance of carbon capture. We need carbon capture to meet our greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Enhanced oil recovery is excluded from this tax credit. This will create good jobs in the technology sector and support the energy transition. It will also benefit Quebec's concrete, aluminum and steel industries, among others.

• (1445)

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Mental Health Awareness Month. Everyone in the House can agree that the mental health of Canadians is a very important issue. Well, maybe not everyone can.

During the election, the government promised to invest \$4.5 billion in funding mental health services through the Canada mental health transfer, including \$250 million in 2021-22 and \$625 million in 2022-23. However, there is no mention of the funding timeline in the federal government's budget 2022.

Why did the government break its commitment to fund mental health?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has made historic investments in mental health, including \$5 billion to the provinces and territories through ongoing bilateral agreements. We are also engaging with provinces and territories to inform the development of a new mental health transfer, building on the principles of the Canada Health Act, and sharing data on indicators and outcomes. We remain fully committed to the additional \$4.5 billion over five years to ensure mental health care is treated as a full and equal part of Canada's universal public health care system.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while it was trying to get elected, the Liberal Party used the words "mental health" 66 times in its platform, but we are losing 11 Canadians every day to suicide, and we still do not have a three-digit suicide prevention hotline. We are losing 19 Canadians every day to a raging opioid crisis that continues to worsen, and now the Liberals have broken their cornerstone mental health commitment from an election campaign fought just months ago.

Can the minister explain to Canadians struggling with their mental health why her party broke the commitment it so solemnly made to help them when it was looking for their votes?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working to implement this crisis line as quickly and as effectively as possible. While the CRTC is completing its process, PHAC is working concurrently to ensure there will be capacity for the new line to connect people to the most appropriate support in the most appropriate way. We are also working closely with U.S. Admiral Levine, Dr. Delphin-Rittmon and their team to learn from the ongoing American crisis line implementation process, which started back in 2018.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that did not even come close to answering the question we actually asked.

We have asked consistently very fair, straightforward questions on the issue of the Canada mental health transfer. Last week, the minister dismissed them as “annoying” and “despicable”. If the minister is annoyed with anyone, perhaps it should be with her own Prime Minister, who has put her in such an awkward, indefensible position by breaking a clear promise to the most vulnerable Canadians. If anything is despicable, it is that.

Why did the Liberal government break a clear commitment on one of the most critical issues facing Canadians today?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

We are conducting a thorough process. The CRTC has reviewed the comments received during recent consultations and it is working to ensure that every call is routed efficiently. This will require significant changes to the Canadian telecommunications system, including converting telephone switching stations across the country.

We have also invested an additional \$3.7 million of a total \$50 million commitment to support distress centres across Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals just approved a new \$10-billion loan guarantee for TMX. Instead of supporting workers in the transition to the green economy, the government is continuing its failed approach and handing over billions to big oil.

The Liberals should never have bought the pipeline. Their own watchdog confirmed they should expect to lose money when they sell it. Now they are putting even more public dollars on the line for this financial boondoggle. How many more billions is the government willing to risk for a pipeline that is fuelling the climate crisis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands how important it is for us as Canadians to get our resources to market and to get a fair value for them. We do not intend to be the long-term owner of the Trans Mountain pipeline. A divestment process will be initiated once the project is more advanced, de-risked and, essentially, consultations with indigenous people are completed.

* * *

● (1450)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a “carbon bomb” is any new fossil fuel project that would plunge the planet dangerously past the 1.5°C limit into a climate crisis. That is why the International Energy Agency has said there simply cannot be any more fossil fuel projects, so let us talk about the billions the government has put into the carbon bomb it owns, the TMX pipeline.

Oral Questions

It can spare us the talk about an emissions cap. This is about burning an extra million barrels of oil a day. Given what is at risk, why did the environment minister decide to act as a sock puppet for the big oil lobby?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that we have decided to go after pollution. That is exactly what we are doing with our plan. In fact, as oil production increased in 2019, pollution went down, and the New Democrats should be happy about that. Production went up; pollution went down. What else do they want?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next week will mark Endangered Species Day, and soon after is the International Day for Biological Diversity. It is a time to reflect on nature and conservation, particularly in Canada's urban spaces, which are home to three-quarters of Canadians.

Urban parks have a role to play in supporting species to survive and offering residents benefits like cool spaces among the heat islands in our urban environments. It was of great interest to many Canadians when the national urban parks program was announced last August. Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change share with the House how this program has advanced since then?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for London West for her hard work. I would also like to thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for his ongoing support for this file.

I am happy to announce that Parks Canada and Transport Canada are signing a memorandum of understanding to pursue a transfer of the Ojibway shore-lands from the Windsor Port Authority to Parks Canada so they can be included in the future national urban park. This is a significant step forward in establishing the park. We will continue to work closely with partners to establish Windsor's first national urban park.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner for the RCMP, Brenda Lucki, just gave shocking testimony at committee, which contradicts a key claim of the Liberal government. For weeks, the Minister of Public Safety has claimed that law enforcement asked the government to invoke the Emergencies Act. In fact, on May 3, the minister said he acted on the recommendations of law enforcement.

Commissioner Lucki testified that the RCMP never asked the government to invoke the act. Will the minister tell Canadians who in law enforcement asked the government to invoke the Emergencies Act, or will he admit he just made it up?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me take the opportunity to refresh my hon. colleague's memory about what Commissioner Lucki actually said at the committee. She said that the Emergencies Act allowed police to "maintain a secure perimeter" and "refuse entry of individuals travelling to the illegal protest with the intent of participating". She said it gave police "the enforcement authority to arrest individuals who continued to supply fuel, food and other materials". She said it gave police "new powers to compel individuals to provide essential goods and/or services for removal". That is what the commissioner said, not the paraphrasing of my hon. colleague.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in further shocking testimony, the RCMP commissioner admitted at committee that border protests were cleared without using any powers under the Emergencies Act. On May 3, the minister said that the government needed to invoke the act to clear the border. Clearly, the minister and the commissioner cannot both be right.

Will the minister tell Canadians: Is the RCMP commissioner misleading Canadians, or is he?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will tell this chamber who is misleading Canadians. It is that hon. colleague over there who continues to paraphrase, very recklessly and inaccurately, the actual testimony of the commissioner, who said that she used the Emergencies Act to restore public safety.

We will continue to be transparent with all members of this chamber and all Canadians about why it is that we invoked that act. It was to protect Canadians.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP commissioner's testimony in committee flatly contradicted the Liberal government's position. For weeks, the Minister of Public Safety and the Prime Minister asserted that law enforcement asked the government to invoke the Emergencies Act.

On May 3, the minister said he acted on the recommendation of law enforcement, but Commissioner Lucki testified that the RCMP never asked the government to invoke the act. Can the minister tell us who asked for the act to be invoked or will he admit that he made it up?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said several times, the commissioner testified that invoking the Emergencies Act helped restore public safety. It gave police forces new powers and new authority to protect Canadians' health and safety. That is why we invoked the Emergencies Act.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is the minister denying that the RCMP commissioner, in her testimony, said the police did not need the emergencies act to clear the borders?

Maybe the act helped the authorities do other things, but the salient point here is that the commissioner confirmed the RCMP did not need the act to clear the borders. Is that true, yes or no?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner said in her testimony that the Emergencies Act has discouraged the return of illegal protests in the community.

These were illegal protests. The events were very clear. Only the Conservatives do not understand the gravity of the situation. We invoked the Emergencies Act to protect Canadians.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, these are challenging times for the current environment minister. He is being sued by Équiterre, the environmental group he founded. Équiterre is accusing the minister of betraying his global climate obligations by approving the Bay du Nord project.

The minister must have known that he could not allow a billion barrels of oil to be extracted in the middle of a fragile marine ecosystem, and at depths that would prevent any rapid response in the event of a leak. He knows Équiterre very well; it is his family. Deep down, is he really surprised that Équiterre is suing him?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

On the one hand, a province is suing us because it says we are going too far in environmental assessments. On the other hand, environmental groups say we are doing too little. What we are doing is striking a balance and finding the best possible way to advance environmental assessment and environmental protection in this country.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the current Minister of Environment and Climate Change was appointed, even us Bloc members were happy. We saw this as a sign of hope. Finally, an environmentalist, we said. That goes to show just how disappointed we are. We never would have thought that this man, who made decisions like authorizing Bay du Nord, would ever be lauded by Conservatives in the House and sued by Équiterre.

When will the minister recognize that his attempt to change the system from within the Liberal government of a petrostate has failed?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a friend recently told me that when there is a fire, we need more firefighters, not fewer.

We need more environmentalists in the House, and definitely within government, to advance environmental issues. I am very pleased to be here with my colleagues because, over the past five months, we have presented a plan that will allow Canada to meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets. No matter what happens with oil and gas production, pollution will go down.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we saw reports Tuesday of an Afghan interpreter for the Canadian army being thrown into a steel container and beaten within an inch of his life by the Taliban. For members to respond about bringing 40,000 already outside the country is to be deliberately misleading. Between 600 and 1,000 of our allies, who the government left behind, have been executed by the Taliban.

If Canada has our Afghan allies' backs, why are so many being hunted down and executed with no help from the Liberal government?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the kind of circumstance the hon. member described is exactly why we have made one of the most substantial commitments of any nation in the world to resettle 40,000 Afghan refugees here in Canada.

I am pleased to share that, as of this week when we arrived in Ottawa, there were 12,600 Afghan refugees. Today, there are 12,900. By tomorrow, there will be 13,200. We are seeing a regular pace of arrival because we have made a commitment and put a plan in place to welcome some of the world's most vulnerable people to Canada. We will not waver on our commitment until we make good on it to the people who helped us during our time of need.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, testimony at the Afghan committee has been filled with tragic personal stories and underscores the crisis Afghans are facing under Taliban rule. People are being tortured and killed while waiting to come to Canada. We even saw a 10-year-old girl killed while her application was stuck in the Liberal-made immigration backlog. Delays, red tape and unreasonable requirements have made this process almost impossible for stranded Afghans.

Will the government do the right thing and implement the Conservatives' ask for single journey travel documents for Afghans?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member's use of one party's name for his own political interest is beyond disgraceful. The reality is the Conservative Party of Canada campaigned on a commitment to bring precisely zero Afghan refugees to Canada. When they were in power over the course of four years, they were able to bring 800 people to Canada. Their extended families were not allowed to come. That demanded that we create a special pathway to make space for 5,000 of them because they are the very people that the Conservatives left behind.

Oral Questions

I will not take lessons on the Afghan resettlement initiative on the basis of their history. They do not deserve that credit. We will continue to go forward to help the world's most vulnerable, with or without them.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during testimony at the Afghanistan committee, both Global Affairs Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces confirmed that lessons learned reviews were conducted by their respective departments in regard to the evacuation of Afghans from Kabul. Further testimony confirmed that there was an interdepartmental review, led by PCO, conducted.

Will the chair of the Afghanistan committee highlight why it is essential that the Liberal government release these crucial reviews immediately to the committee for inclusion in the committee's mandated report back to Parliament by June 8?

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the hon. chair of the Afghan committee or the hon. vice-chair?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, as vice-chair of the committee, I will respond. Parliament—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Members can only ask questions about the agenda of the committee, unfortunately.

The hon. Minister of Immigration.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard of pitching around a hitter in baseball, but never on the floor of the House of Commons.

The Deputy Speaker: Let us clarify the question.

The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound can re-ask the question.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during testimony at the Afghanistan committee, both Global Affairs Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces confirmed that lessons learned reviews were conducted by their respective departments in regard to the evacuation of Afghans from Kabul. Further testimony confirmed there was an interdepartmental review, led by PCO, conducted.

In this case, in the interests of transparency, will the Liberal government release these completed crucial reviews immediately to the Afghanistan committee for inclusion in the committee's mandated report back to Parliament before June 8?

• (1505)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and for the many conversations we have shared seeking to only improve the government's efforts to welcome more Afghan refugees. I take his efforts as being sincere.

Oral Questions

I will point out that we continue to work with different departments to ensure that we can put a plan in place to succeed in the effort to bring 40,000 Afghan refugees to Canada. There are certain pieces of information, obviously, in the middle of the operation that could put at risk the security of some of the individuals who are seeking to come to Canada. To the extent that we can offer increased transparency, including through my own two-hour appearance before the committee, we will do whatever we can to ensure we enhance that transparency without compromise on the security interests of those involved.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada recently announced many contributions to support Quebec businesses, including \$1.2 million in financial assistance for Chocolat Lamontagne, in Sherbrooke.

Could the minister tell us how this sort of contribution will help this and other Quebec businesses that have received or will receive financial assistance from the federal government?

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and for the outstanding work she does for her constituents.

Unlike some colleagues in the House, we believe that the issues that really matter to Quebecers are having a strong economy and good jobs. That is why we are proud to help SMEs in every region of Quebec, like Chocolat Lamontagne in Sherbrooke, in order to give local entrepreneurs the means to achieve their goals.

That is just the start. Canadians should stay tuned to find out what comes next.

* * *

[English]

PASSPORT CANADA

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jonathan applied for his daughter Victoria's passport at the Service Canada centre in Fort McMurray in March. The passport still has not been processed, and he does not have the luxury to drive five hours each way to the passport office in Edmonton and camp out overnight to hopefully get a walk-in appointment. They want to travel to see Victoria's dying great-grandmother.

This is hurting rural Canadians. When will the minister admit this is a crisis and help little Victoria get her passport?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her question. Our public servants have been working night and day, overtime and weekends, to catch up with the overwhelming demand of Canadians for their passports. We understand that there are unique circumstances for

some individuals in travel, and our current priority is to ensure that Canadians with planned travel are able to do so.

Those who have emergency needs can have those needs met through special measures at Service Canada offices and through the additional phone lines that have been opened. Every single wicket across this country, all 564 of them, has been opened to serve Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in normal times, it used to take 20 days to get a passport. Now it takes more than 40 days.

People are unable to get through on the phone, and Service Canada is even billing people for the cost of transferring their file when it is sent to Quebec, even if they are not responsible for the delays.

This was all foreseeable. We knew that after the pandemic, people would start to travel again for pleasure and for business. We have also reached the anniversary for renewing 10-year passports.

Can this Liberal government show a shred of leadership and ensure that people like Josée, Roger, Pierre, Isabelle and everyone waiting for their passport can get it as soon as possible, in the regular amount of time?

[English]

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since December of last year, we have hired 500 additional passport workers and opened three new processing centres, with now 303 Service Canada centres. In addition, those who followed the process and have submitted the correct required documents according to the guidelines have no additional fees to pay for expedited passports.

We will continue to serve Canadians.

● (1510)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituency office is inundated with calls from constituents unable to access passport services, and I am not alone. I am sure that every Liberal member of the House, including the minister herself, is experiencing exactly the same thing.

The backlog caused by the government's lack of preparedness affects Canadians' ability to travel abroad for work, for school or to be reunited with family members. Will the minister tell us on what date the backlog will be cleared?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, 100% of the Service Canada passport wickets are open from coast to coast to coast, serving Canadians. In addition to the 500 additional employees and the additional three processing centres that we have opened, each Service Canada centre is available to reach Canadians when they need it most.

SENIORS

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Liberal government restored the age of eligibility for old age security back to 65 from 67. Our government knows that the older seniors get, the more financial difficulties they have. Could the Minister of Seniors please update the House on the work that the government will do to enhance the financial security for older seniors in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora and in Canada?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Newmarket—Aurora for his advocacy for seniors, not just in his riding but indeed from coast to coast to coast.

We know that as seniors age, their health care and home care costs rise, all while they are more likely to be unable to work, have disabilities or be widowed. Older seniors face increased care expenses and are at greater risk of running out of savings. That is why, this summer, we will be delivering on our promise to increase old age security by 10% for seniors 75 and older.

Since 2015, seniors know that we have had their back, and we will continue to deliver for them.

* * *

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today an open letter to the Prime Minister, signed by nearly 300 top scientists and scientific organizations, highlighted that Canada's best and brightest graduate, post-graduate and post-doctoral students are living in poverty due to the inadequate funding they receive. The scientists point out that the dollar value of federal scholarships has not changed since 2003.

We need to increase the scholarship amounts and index them to inflation. How can we expect to keep these brilliant young scientists in Canada when we force them to work for less than minimum wage?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last seven years, we have helped to rebuild Canada's world-class science and research sectors. Our government has been steadfast in its support of all scientists and researchers. That is why, in budget 2022, we proposed \$38.3 million over four years for the federal granting councils to add new, internationally recruited Canada excellence research chairs in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math. Budget 2022 also provides \$40.9 million to Canada's federal granting councils to support targeted scholarships and fellowships for promising Black student researchers.

We will continue to support a robust science research ecosystem that reflects Canada's strengths and advances Canadians' interests.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, today in response to questions from the Bloc and the NDP on a new \$10-billion loan guarantee for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, the Deputy Prime Minister cited a “net zero by 2050” condition.

Points of Order

Well, net zero by 2050 does not matter if we blow through our carbon budget decades before. She calls it “responsible”, while the PBO has said that the project does not even make economic sense. She cites a cap on emissions, when she plans on increasing production and exporting the emissions.

When will the government invest as much in the prosperous transition for workers as it has in this economic and ecological failure?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government absolutely understands the urgency of climate action. That is why we have invested more than \$100 billion in climate action. That is why we have introduced a price on pollution, the most powerful market-based mechanism for changing the way we run our economy.

When it comes to TMX, I think all Canadians understand how important it is for our country to get the value for our natural resources.

The Deputy Speaker: That is all the time we have for question period today. I am sure we have a couple of points of order.

The hon. member for Sturgeon River—Parkland.

* * *

• (1515)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order arising out of question period. In response to my questions about what appears to be contradictory testimony from the RCMP commissioner and the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Public Safety accused me of being reckless and misleading the House. It gets hot in here, and I know I am guilty of that, but I would ask that the minister apologize for the unparliamentary language.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for his intervention. I would give the opportunity, but I would say that we all have to be careful about what we say. Our words are important in the House of Commons for all Canadians.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Government Orders

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion: Whereas there is a significant amount of evidence and testimony indicating that the government of the People's Republic of China is committing large-scale, systematic atrocities against the Uighur people and Turkic minorities of East Turkestan—

The Deputy Speaker: I am already hearing some members say no.

I still want to ensure that there were discussions among the parties.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, misleading the House is a serious matter and I am aware that it requires demonstration that a member or a minister knew they were misleading the House. The Minister of Immigration today made some comments with respect to what allegedly the Conservatives' targets would have been for Afghan immigration. This was the subject of discussion at a March 3 hearing of the immigration committee, in which the minister acknowledged—

An hon. member: This is debate.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, it is not a point of debate. It is a point of misleading the House.

The Deputy Speaker: I will let the hon. member continue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Immigration acknowledged at the March 3 meeting of the immigration committee that he was aware that the Conservative platform commitment applied only to non-emergency situations and that he was not aware of targets.

I think the minister needs to clarify whether what he said on March 3 or today was accurate. Otherwise, it is a matter of misleading—

The Deputy Speaker: If we are asking for clarification, we are getting into debate here.

The hon. Minister of Immigration. Fair is fair.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if you go to the Conservative Party platform from the last election, you will not find a commitment to resettle any particular number of Afghan refugees.

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, misleading the House is a serious matter, and the member for Kitchener Centre continues to mislead this House on environmental matters. I have the report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and I do know that he has not indicated that the Trans Mountain pipeline is not economically viable. If the member has a different report, I would ask him to table it in the House, or else recant his comment in front of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting into lots of different debate here, but let us clarify. In this chamber, “misleading the House” is said a lot, whether right or wrong. If members are accusing someone of deliberately misleading the House, that is saying someone is lying, and that cannot be said in the House of Commons.

I believe the member for Kitchener Centre has a comment.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to send the member the PBO report that makes it really clear that the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion only makes sense if the—

The Deputy Speaker: We are getting into debate here again.

I believe the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands also has a point of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, to be clear, I am rising in support. I put my hand up on the point of order when the hon. member from Calgary alleged something about the statement by the member for Kitchener Centre that cannot be said in this House.

I also read the report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, but if I commented on the facts of the matter, it would be entering into debate.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for the intervention.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I have enormous respect for you and I am not trying to enter into debate. I stand by everything I said in the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1520)

[*English*]

ONLINE STREAMING ACT

The House resumed from May 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:20 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the amendment to the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-11.

The question is on the amendment to the amendment. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to the amendment to House*]

● (1530)

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(*Division No. 87*)

YEAS

Members

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Benzen
Bezan

Albas
Arnold
Barrett
Berthold
Block

Government Orders

Bragdon	Brassard	Chabot	Chagger
Brock	Calkins	Chahal	Champoux
Caputo	Carrie	Chatel	Chen
Chambers	Chong	Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cooper	Dancho	Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Davidson	Doherty	Coteau	Dabrusin
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Damoff	Davies
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis	DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Desilets	Desjarlais
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Ferreri	Findlay	Diab	Dong
Gallant	Genuis	Drouin	Dubourg
Gladu	Godin	Duclos	Duguid
Goodridge	Gourde	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Gray	Hallan	Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Jeneroux	Kelly	Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Kitchen	Kmiec	Fillmore	Fisher
Kram	Kramp-Neuman	Fonseca	Fortier
Kurek	Kusie	Fortin	Fragiskatos
Lake	Lantsman	Fraser	Freeland
Lawrence	Lehoux	Fry	Gaheer
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Garneau	Garon
Liepert	Lloyd	Garrison	Gaudreau
Lobb	MacKenzie	Gazan	Gerretsen
Maguire	Martel	Gill	Gould
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)	Green	Guilbeault
McLean	Melillo	Hajdu	Hanley
Moore	Morantz	Hardie	Hepfner
Morrison	Motz	Holland	Housefather
Muys	Nater	Hughes	Hussen
O'Toole	Patzer	Hutchings	Iacono
Paul-Hus	Perkins	Idlout	Ien
Poillievre	Rayes	Jaczek	Johns
Redekopp	Reid	Jones	Jowhari
Richards	Roberts	Julian	Kayabaga
Rood	Ruff	Kelloway	Khalid
Scheer	Schmale	Khera	Koutrakis
Seeback	Shields	Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Shipley	Small	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Soroka	Steinley	Lametti	Lamoureux
Strahl	Stubbs	Lapointe	Larouche
Thomas	Tochor	Lattanzio	Lauzon
Tolmie	Uppal	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Van Popta	Vecchio	Lemire	Lightbound
Vidal	Vien	Long	Longfield
Viersen	Vis	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Wagantall	Warkentin	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
Waugh	Webber	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Williams	Williamson	Martinez Ferrada	Mathysen
Zimmer — 109		May (Cambridge)	May (Saanieh—Gulf Islands)
		McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
		McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
		McLeod	McPherson
		Mendès	Mendicino
		Miao	Michaud
		Miller	Morrice
		Morrissey	Naqvi
		Ng	Noormohamed
		Normandin	O'Connell
		O'Regan	Pauzé
		Perron	Petitpas Taylor
		Plamondon	Powlowski
		Qualtrough	Robillard
		Rodriguez	Rogers
		Romanado	Sahota
		Sajjan	Saks
		Samson	Sari
		Savard-Tremblay	Schieffe
		Serré	Sgro
		Shanahan	Sheehan
		Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
		Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
		Singh	Sorbara

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey

Government Orders

Spengemann
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Weiler
Zahid
Zuberi— 209

Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Vuong
Yip
Zarrillo

Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Patzer
Perkins
Rayes
Reid
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 111

Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Redekopp
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shiple
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

PAIRED

Members

Champagne

Deltell— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the amendment. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

The Deputy Speaker: If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the amendment be adopted on division, I invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

• (1535)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

• (1545)

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

(*Division No. 88*)

YEAS

Members

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Benzen
Bezan
Bragdon
Brock
Caputo
Chambers
Cooper
Davidson
Dowdall
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferrer
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Kelly
Kmiec

Albas
Arnold
Barrett
Berthold
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Dancho
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Généreux
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chabot
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Casey
Chagger
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fergus
Fisher

Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser
Fry
Garneau
Garrison
Gazan
Gill
Green
Hajdu
Hardie
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Idlout
Jaczek
Jones
Julian
Kelloway
Khera
Kusmierczyk
Lalonde
Lametti
Larouche
Lauzon
Lebouthillier
Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
Ng
Normandin
O'Regan
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Rodriguez
Romanado
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Spengemann
St-Onge
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Trudel
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandenbeld
Villemure
Weiler
Zahid
Zuberi— 209

Fortier
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Gaheer
Garon
Gaudreau
Gerretsen
Gould
Guilbeault
Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Ien
Johns
Jowhari
Kayabaga
Khalid
Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lapointe
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Naqvi
Noormohamed
O'Connell
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Schiefke
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Vuong
Yip
Zarrillo

Government Orders

PAIRED

Members

Champagne

Deltell— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion.

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

[Translation]

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

[English]

The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

● (1600)

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

(Division No. 89)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Ali
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Bachrach
Bains
Barron
Battiste
Beech
Bennett
Bérubé
Blaikie
Blanchet
Blaney
Boissonnault
Bradford
Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr
Chabot
Chahal
Chatel
Chiang
Collins (Victoria)
Coteau
Damoff
DeBellefeuille
Desilets
Dhaliwal
Diab
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Ehsassi
Erskine-Smith
Fillmore
Fonseca

Alghabra
Anand
Angus
Arya
Atwin
Badawey
Baker
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bendayan
Bergeron
Bittle
Blair
Blanchette-Joncas
Blois
Boulerice
Brière
Cannings
Casey
Chagger
Champoux
Chen
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Desbiens
Desjarlais
Dhillon
Dong
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
El-Khoury
Fergus
Fisher
Fortier

Government Orders

Fortin	Fragiskatos	Baldinelli	Barrett
Fraser	Freeland	Benzen	Berthold
Fry	Gaheer	Bezan	Block
Garneau	Garon	Bragdon	Brassard
Garrison	Gaudreau	Brock	Calkins
Gazan	Gerretsen	Caputo	Carrie
Gill	Gould	Chambers	Chong
Green	Guilbeault	Cooper	Dancho
Hajdu	Hanley	Davidson	Doherty
Hardie	Hepfner	Dowdall	Dreeshen
Holland	Housefather	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Hughes	Hussen	Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Hutchings	Iacono	Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Idlout	Ien	Ferreri	Findlay
Jaczek	Johns	Gallant	Généreux
Jones	Jowhari	Genuis	Gladu
Julian	Kayabaga	Godin	Goodridge
Kelloway	Khalid	Gourde	Gray
Khera	Koutrakis	Hallan	Jeneroux
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Kelly	Kitchen
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Kmiec	Kram
Lametti	Lamoureux	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Lapointe	Larouche	Kusie	Lake
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Lantsman	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Lemire	Lightbound	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Long	Longfield	Lloyd	Lobb
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAtulay (Cardigan)	MacKenzie	Maguire
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor	Martel	Mazier
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Melillo	Moore
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Morantz	Morrison
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)	Motz	Muys
McGuinty	McKay	Nater	O'Toole
McLeod	McPherson	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Mendès	Medicino	Perkins	Poilievre
Miao	Michaud	Rayes	Redekopp
Miller	Morrice	Reid	Richards
Morrissey	Naqvi	Roberts	Rood
Ng	Noormohamed	Ruff	Scheer
Normandin	O'Connell	Schmale	Seeback
O'Regan	Pauzé	Shields	Shiple
Perron	Petitpas Taylor	Small	Soroka
Plamondon	Powlowski	Steinley	Stewart
Qualtrough	Robillard	Strahl	Stubbs
Rodriguez	Rogers	Thomas	Tochor
Romanado	Sahota	Tolmie	Uppal
Sajjan	Saks	Van Popta	Vecchio
Samson	Sarai	Vidal	Vien
Savard-Tremblay	Schieffe	Viersen	Vis
Serré	Sgro	Wagantall	Warkentin
Shanahan	Sheehan	Waugh	Webber
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Williams	Williamson
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné	Zimmer— 111	
Singh	Sorbara		
Spengemann	Ste-Marie		
St-Onge	Sudds		
Tassi	Taylor Roy		
Thériault	Therrien		
Thompson	Trudeau		
Trudel	Turnbull		
Valdez	Van Bynen		
van Koeverden	Vandal		
Vandenbeld	Vignola		
Villemure	Vuong		
Weiler	Yip		
Zarrillo	Zuberi— 208		

NAYS

Members

Aitchison	Albas
Allison	Arnold

PAIRED

Members

Champagne Deltell— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been quite a week around here. I already know the answer to this question, but I have an obligation to ask the government House leader the Thursday question.

What price have he and his Liberal Party paid in selling their collective souls to their partners in the NDP to determine this week's schedule?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to stand and answer a Thursday question, even when the member opposite is not excited to ask it.

This evening, we will continue, and hopefully complete, debate at second reading of Bill C-13, concerning official languages.

Tomorrow, we will commence debate on Bill C-18, an act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada. We will return to this debate next Wednesday.

At noon on Monday, we will resume debate on Bill C-14, which deals with electoral representation in Quebec.

Next Tuesday and Thursday shall be allotted days.

Finally, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), I would like to designate Thursday, May 19, for consideration in committee of the whole of the main estimates for the Department of Public Works and Government Services. Furthermore, the debate for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans will take place on the evening of Monday, May 30.

If the member opposite has any ideas on how to make this place work or has any ideas on how we can improve legislation, I am always here to hear it. Unfortunately, to this point in time, nothing has come forward.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—A SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CANADA-PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONSHIP**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: When the debate on the opposition motion was interrupted, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent had eight minutes remaining.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to resume debate on our motion to establish, or re-establish, the Canada-China parliamentary committee in order to study issues directly affecting our country's relationship with this very strong, yet concerning global power.

We would like to re-establish this committee, which was struck in the last Parliament but was disbanded when the Prime Minister called an unnecessary election that cost Canadians over \$600 million and ended up being nothing more than a cabinet shuffle. The

Business of Supply

committee still managed to table three reports on the topics of espionage, the relationship with Hong Kong and the Uighur tragedy.

I would also like to remind you that this government has had five foreign affairs ministers in the past six years. This is in no way a negative assessment of the people who have held that position, quite the contrary. They are people of quality and goodwill, for whom I have esteem and respect.

It should be noted, however, that the fact that we have had five different foreign affairs ministers has an impact on our country's credibility in the eyes of the world, especially when it comes to an issue as sensitive as our relations with China. We hope that the current Minister of Foreign Affairs will stay in that role long enough to build a truly meaningful bilateral relationship with our partners.

Now I would like to talk about the committee that would study issues of importance to all Canadians.

First, the economy. We know that China is one of Canada's economic partners, and not a small one. China is our second-largest economic partner in terms of both imports and exports. Our great friend, ally and neighbour, the United States of America is, of course, the first.

When the economy is directly tied to our trade relationship with a superpower like China, we cannot pretend nothing is going on there. If the committee wants to, it can study economic issues and tackle the supply chain head-on. We know the whole world is experiencing serious supply issues, not just because of the pandemic, but also because of tense relationships between certain countries. I will say more about that later.

We need to be able to get to the bottom of this supply problem, which is causing very serious damage not only to our economy, but also to the daily lives of Canadians. When our businesses do not have access to the parts they need, it delays manufacturing, pushes prices up and creates inflation. The committee needs to address these things. We are talking about our second largest trading partner.

We also have concerns about safety, as my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles mentioned this morning. We also have to think about the Arctic, which the committee studied in the previous Parliament. China has a presence in our territory, in our waters and on our Arctic lands, which makes no sense. We must exercise our sovereignty and get to the bottom of this, because our national security is at stake.

We also have concerns about our telecommunications and the possibility of spying by China, which may have taken place or could take place here in Canada. We need to be careful and vigilant and get to the bottom of things, which is what a parliamentary committee does.

The same goes for natural resources. Our country, which is rich in people and natural resources, is in direct competition with China, which does not have the same manufacturing quality standards, nor the same respect for the environment or human rights.

Business of Supply

When our primary competitor slashes wages left and right and can sell its natural resources for a much lower price than would be possible for us, since we respect people and the environment, it is time to investigate. This is especially important when it is a matter of rare metals or the metals of the future, such as lithium.

Canada is full of these natural resources, and it is up to us to develop them intelligently, with domestic secondary or tertiary processing facilities. We know that China also has a lot of natural resources, and it is up to us to study the situation in order to improve it globally.

• (1605)

This brings me to the climate. Canada is responsible for 1.6% of global greenhouse gas emissions. If Canada were to shut down tomorrow morning, the entire planet might be better off because there would be 1.6% less pollution. China, on the other hand, produces 27% of greenhouse gas emissions. That is a massive amount.

As China's economy expands, the country is producing even more pollution and moving towards energy resources like coal, which is highly polluting. Even if Canada does a thousand things to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, nothing will change if China continues to pollute non-stop, without attempting to reduce its emissions. Greenhouse gas emissions do not need a passport to travel around the world.

Yes, we support Canada's efforts, but we also realize that if other countries are not making an effort, then pollution will not go down. At the end of the day, it is the planet that pays.

In closing, what has been happening since February 24 does have an impact on international relations. Ever since Putin's Russia decided to illegally invade the peaceful and non-aggressive country of Ukraine and wage war on it, there have been global consequences. I know that we will have the opportunity to discuss this at another time. For example, Canada's economy and natural resources could be helping Europe at present. Instead, European countries are currently subsidizing Putin's war through their dependence on Russia's natural resources. Yes, this war has a direct impact on our relations with China.

To conclude, we believe that it would be a very good thing if the House unanimously, if possible, decided to vote in favour of our motion. Unfortunately, the government does not want to reinstate the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. Reinstating this committee would make it possible for us to closely examine the strong relationship that we have with our second-largest trading partner. This relationship must be based on the economy, but also on respect for human rights, national security and the future of our natural resources.

• (1610)

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want the hon. member's comments on what is an underlying issue in this kind of debate, which is that criticism of the Chinese government is criticism of Chinese people. It is felt by the diaspora community and promoted particularly by the Chinese government that any criticism of the Government of China and the

Communist Chinese Party is in fact a criticism of the Chinese as a people. I am interested in his comments on that.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has been here for a long time and I appreciate his contributions to Canadian democracy.

Speaking of that, what he said is totally wrong. There is a huge difference between the state of China and the Chinese people, especially those who live in this country. They have been selected by this country and have decided to live here. Some are descendants who are very proud. In my own riding, there are people whose grandfathers and grandmothers came from China. We welcome them. They are proud Canadians and we have to be proud of them. There is a huge difference between the people of China and the dictatorship we see in China.

Let me be clear. We will never attack any people from China, but we will be very strong against the republic and state of China.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I always like hearing what he has to say.

He concluded his speech on China by talking about greenhouse gas emission rates. He said that Canada produces 1.6% of greenhouse gas emissions, while China produces 27%. I would like to bring to my colleague's attention to the fact that the entire world did not experience the industrial revolution at the same time. Canada's greenhouse gas emissions rate has not always been what it is today.

Does my colleague not think that we can work on both fronts? Of course, China could probably be doing something, and I will not get into that, but at the same time, there is certainly something we could be doing as well. For example, today the government was asked to stop subsidizing oil companies. Should we not be doing both if we really want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, the member for Manicouagan is well aware that hundreds and thousands of families in her riding need access to cars that have to run in the winter and cover great distances because there is not much of a public transit system in her riding. She has won the past three elections. She was re-elected three times. She is well aware that this is the everyday reality for people in her riding.

She is also well aware that Canada is a leader in clean energy production. She will be pleased to learn and to remember that Alberta is the top producer of wind and solar energy. The biggest solar farm is in Alberta. Our country has the highest environmental standards for energy production. We are an inspiration to the whole world, and that is great.

The more clean, efficient energy Canada produces for all Canadians, the more clean energy there will be for the whole world and the less polluting energy there will be in China.

Business of Supply

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent.

He asked about the climate change crisis. What he said is true. This problem is not limited to just Canada or China. At the same time, it is not true that we have clean fossil fuels here in Canada. That does not exist. There is a crisis, and we only have three years to reduce greenhouse gases on a global scale.

That is why I want to ask him if he has an answer for the IPCC.

• (1615)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Green Party for her question.

Canada is a model country when it comes to the environment and energy production. As long as we need oil and gas, I will always be the biggest supporter of this Canadian energy. I would rather have it here in Canada, and purchase it domestically, rather than send billions of dollars to Saudi Arabia, Venezuela or Texas.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I just want to clarify that I completely agree with my hon. colleague. I was trying to elicit from him the distinction—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is not a point of order; that is a point of clarification. I will not allow a back-and-forth on this.

We will resume debate with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am so pleased that our party is once again pursuing the resumption of the work of the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. The committee was initially created in December of 2020, through a motion put forward by the then foreign affairs shadow minister, the member for Durham, and I want to recognize his leadership in bringing this initial motion forward. At the time, about the need for a special committee on Canada-China relations, he said, “this is the most fundamental foreign-policy relationship Canada will face in a generation. We do not need a three-day study at a standing committee. We need a specialized multidisciplinary committee”.

From its creation, the committee did critical and relevant work. One indication of that is that, while most parliamentary committees barely get mentioned in the press, this special committee broke news stories at virtually every single public hearing. Its work fed a public hunger to understand the challenges facing Canada in this context and to propose concrete solutions. Its work was covered and discussed not just here in Canada, but around the world. I have met with legislators in the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, India, Lithuania, and many other countries who were deeply interested in the work of and the information uncovered by the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations.

The committee had partisan moments and unifying moments. My hon. friends on the committee will remember that there were times when we heckled each other because we disagreed about the appropriate courtesy owed to a witness. There were also times when we cried together over the systemic sexual violence targeting victims

of the Chinese Communist Party in East Turkestan. Regardless of these variations, it is beyond dispute that the committee was working.

The committee was driving public awareness and policy toward solutions that had not previously been on the Canadian or even the global political agenda. It unanimously endorsed Magnitsky sanctions for those involved in human rights abuses in Hong Kong. It unanimously endorsed the middle way approach for Tibet. It unanimously ordered the production of documents related to the Winnipeg Lab affair. It played a key role in furthering discussions about the Uighur genocide, which led to this Parliament to be the first in the world to recognize it. It highlighted the arbitrary detention of Canadians, including the ongoing detention of Huseyin Celil. It exposed the ongoing reality of the Chinese Communist Party's interference in Canadian domestic affairs.

Whether it was in agreement or disagreement, it must be acknowledged that what came out of this committee on Magnitsky sanctions, Hong Kong, Tibet, Uighurs, the Winnipeg lab affair, and many other points, were defining points of conversation that shaped the life of the 43rd Parliament. It was sometimes messy and not always easy, but the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations clearly got results, and it got those results in spite of the fact that it had its work repeatedly interrupted by the government.

The committee was suspended during the early months of the pandemic, even though all opposition parties wanted it to continue. It was then shut down for prorogation and dissolved prematurely with the election. All together, given the interruptions, the committee only got in about a year's worth of work. While it presented multiple reports and advanced key recommendations, the committee was not able to complete its agenda and many critical items remained unexplored. This special committee deserved an opportunity to at least bring its work to a fruitful conclusion, to bring forward recommendations out of its study on national security, to study strategic dependency and trade, to engage further on threats to Taiwan and various other human rights issues, and to speak to Canada's overall policy framework for principled engagement with China and broader engagement with the Indo-Pacific region.

As a result of the committee's diligent work, I believe the CCP, which actively seeks to advance its interests here in Canada, has clearly identified the fact that it does not want this committee to get back to work, and it is doing so shamefully by trying to suggest that criticism of the CCP, and even of the CCP interference in Canada, is somehow an attack on the Chinese people. Those slanders were repeated today on multiple occasions by some Liberal MPs.

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As I have said repeatedly, the opposite is true. The Chinese Communist Party in its early years was explicit about trying to annihilate China's ancient and beautiful civilization. Today, the CCP is more subtle and seeks to co-opt the symbology of China's history and historical ideals as tools to serve Marxist materialism. However, Marxism is not China, and China is not Marxism. As I told the House two years ago:

...we must advance a decoupling of these ideas, a recognition that Marxism's dehumanizing materialism is deeply alien to China's rich and ancient traditions of personal responsibility, reverence for beauty, continuity with the past and respect for the non-material aspects of life.

It is no contradiction, and in fact it is quite a natural combination, to love China and hate communism.

The CCP wants this committee gone, yet here we are. I want to recognize the hard work and the courage of the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Portage—Lisgar, and I particularly salute the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. He has steadfastly worked to bring about the return of this committee, and he is the only member of the House to be personally named in Chinese government sanctions, which he has rightly recognized as a badge of honour.

● (1620)

As much as I would have liked for the work of the committee to continue uninterrupted, even last summer and last fall, it is important to use this opportunity to take note of what is happening right now and what has changed since the work of this committee was aborted just under a year ago. The global context has obviously shifted significantly. In the early months of this committee's existence, public attention was very much focused on the actions of the Chinese government because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The world was faced with immense disruption as a result of a pandemic that began in China and which was covered up for a long time by the Chinese Communist Party.

Even in the midst of that pandemic, many nations and many international organizations were unwilling to talk about the fact that a novel coronavirus emerged in the same region where gain-of-function experiments were performed on coronaviruses and where authorities did everything they could to hide the outbreak until it was too late. Although our initial motion was proposed and passed before the pandemic, its work aligned with broader public discussion, though a discussion that was ignored and dismissed by many elites, about the way that dangerous experimentation and the suppression of dissent may have created the environment in which a pandemic could start and spread.

For those who thought that China's basic dictatorship offered a model for more efficient and effective administration and management, the COVID-19 pandemic powerfully demonstrates the opposite. Although free societies did not always handle the pandemic well, they had the tools to hear the truth and to grow and change in response to new information. In the absence of open deliberation about the pandemic, scientific opinion was suppressed in China, and leaders who pursued failing strategies that caused this global pandemic were not held accountable for their failures. I think that the special committee should return to questions around the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic and the guard rails that we need in the context of scientific co-operation, as well as the pressing problem of CCP and other foreign state actor interference in Canada.

The context in which we holding today's debate is also one in which the focus of our foreign policy has rightly shifted to Putin's invasion of Ukraine. It is worth asking this question: In light of the invasion of Ukraine, can we still say that the Canada-China relationship "is the most fundamental foreign-policy relationship Canada will face in a generation"?

I believe that it is. To start with, the invasion of Ukraine reminds us of past acts of violence by the CCP and future acts of violence no doubt being contemplated. The military and rhetorical attack on Ukraine's separate existence reminded many of the invasion of Tibet more than 60 years ago.

The attacks on linguistic and religious freedom we have seen in Russian-occupied Ukraine since 2014 mirror the escalating attacks on linguistic and religious freedom we are seeing in Tibet. The invasion of Ukraine could also establish a precedent, whereby revisionist powers ignore hard-won norms of international law and instead try to violently control their determined sphere of influence. Ongoing aggression from the Chinese state in the South China Sea and threats to Taiwan demonstrate that Russia is not the only revisionist power seeking to extend itself beyond its borders in violation of international law.

What is happening in Ukraine also demonstrates a profound failure of deterrence. Although the world has responded to the invasion of Ukraine, we failed to sufficiently demonstrate in advance what the costs of that invasion would be for Russia. We need to make sure that we do not repeat this failure of deterrence in the case of Taiwan. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia signed onto the Budapest memorandum guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Ukraine in exchange for Ukraine's relinquishment of its nuclear weapons. Prior to the handover of Hong Kong to China, the Chinese government committed to a one country, two systems framework, which was supposed to guarantee, as a matter of international law, the protection of Hong Kong's unique status.

Both the Putin and the Xi regimes have shown flagrant disregard for their own past commitments. This dishonesty in their dealings needs to be recognized, for our own security and our own protection. I note as well that while we have taken RT off the airwaves, Chinese state-controlled media continues to push disinformation, including disinformation about Ukraine.

There are, of course, many important differences between Russia and China. Notably, China is a much more important global player than Russia. It has a much larger economy. It has more institutional capacity, and it likely has a much more capable military. We also do not have the same developed structures of strategic co-operation among like-minded nations in the Indo-Pacific region as we do in Europe with NATO. In a scenario of potential further escalation of conflict with the predominant authoritarian power in the Indo-Pacific and in the world, we face a potentially larger threat, and we are potentially less ready to respond, compared to the situation in Europe.

This should underscore that what is happening in Ukraine should lead to a deepening of our commitment to engaging in the vital conversation around our position in the Indo-Pacific and our response to the growing power and aggressive potential of the Chinese state. In light of all these challenges, I look forward to engaging with colleagues and getting back to work at a special committee on Canada-China relations as soon as possible.

• (1625)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on one of the member's latter points, which was that the Russian economy is largely oil and gas, and that is it: It is an unimportant economy. It is about the same size as Canada's, with a population of 145 million people. The Chinese economy, on the other hand, is very integrated. It is integrated into the world system, and very much more dependent upon various trade routes and supply chains.

In the member's view, is the threat of conflict greater with China or greater with Russia?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think there are some similarities, but there are also some important differences. What we have seen in the case of the response to the Russian invasion is that by working together, the community of democratic nations can inflict serious economic consequences through sanctions. In the case of Russia, we on this side of the House believe that there is still more work to do.

It is important to point out that while a similar tool kit could potentially be used in response to an act of aggression against Taiwan, it would be much more difficult to do so against a relatively much larger and more integrated economy. If we were ever to get into that situation, I would advocate that we do what was necessary to deter that aggression, of course, but the goal here should be deterrence. The goal should be to recognize that there was a failure of deterrence in the context of Russia and Ukraine. We need to do better, in the case of possible aggression against Taiwan, and to be clear about deterring that aggression and about what the consequences would be.

This is why this committee is necessary, to dig into those critical issues at such a critical time.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, could the member expand on what issues Conservatives would like to see addressed at this committee? For example, would they like to see the safety of Canadians in China, human rights concerns for the Uighur population or forced labour and its impacts on our supply chain?

Business of Supply

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I mentioned a number of items in my speech that we should address, but the member mentioned at the end of her question an important point that I did not address directly: the issue of forced labour in our supply chain. The government has been behind on action on this. We could be doing more to collaborate with other countries. There are other countries that have stronger regimes in place.

Personally, I am very supportive of something like the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act that has been passed in the United States, which seeks to designate the area of East Turkestan. Perhaps we could envision a framework where regions could be specifically designated as being of particular concern, where there are high levels of slave labour.

There are various bills before the House right now that seek to deal with issues of slave labour. I see we are going to be debating Bill S-211 in this place very soon. These are important pieces of legislation for us to discuss and move forward on, but as well we should consider frameworks that are a bit different from that framework: frameworks such as the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, where we specifically identify regions with high levels of slave labour and place particular restrictions around trade involving those regions.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, throughout the debate today, I have heard a lot of conversation about Huawei, Canadian security and issues along those lines. One of the issues that we came across in the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates was the purchasing of scanners for our embassies. In particular, the company Nuctech is a Chinese company that has a connection with high-ranking officials in China.

We still need those scanners, and I would like to hear how the member feels. Might this be something the committee would also consider pursuing?

• (1630)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the issue of Nuctech was discussed at certain points in the committee. More broadly, we see this trend where my party, and some members of Parliament in other parties as well, are aware of the significant risks that come with doing business with Chinese state-owned and state-affiliated companies: the risks to our security and also the risks to human rights.

Notwithstanding the fact that these issues are being discussed, there does not seem to be a sort of fulsome penetration of the recognition of this problem within all aspects of the bureaucracy, where there still are significant gaps in terms of procurement happening that raise major questions and concerns about national security and human rights. We have yet to hear a decision from the government on allowing Huawei into our 5G network. It has been years that we have been told the decision is coming. We need to have decisions on this, and we need to move forward in a way that reflects the recognition of the problem across all levels of government.

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[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Langley—Aldergrove, The Economy; the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, Health.

[English]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am splitting my time with the member for Avalon.

I consider it an honour to offer a few thoughts on this debate, and I appreciate it being brought forward onto the floor of the House today. May I say, as a starting proposition, that I regard the government of China as an asymmetrical, existential threat to Canada unlike any of our other potential opposition. I also take the view that we, as Canadians, are exceedingly naive about the ambitions of the Communist Party of China, and I also take the view that the Chinese government knows a great deal more about us than we know about it.

I thought it would be helpful if I went through my week and talked about the various times this issue had come up. This week was science meets Parliament, and I had an absolutely fascinating conversation with a scientist from the University of Toronto who is a leading scientist on the CRISPR technology for gene editing and gene splicing. He was brilliant. It was fascinating, and the mind leaps to all kinds of possibilities; however, on second thought, not all of these possibilities are to the betterment of humankind.

When I asked the scientist about Chinese involvement, he said that this was open source technology and that there was an exchange of research, but I got the distinct impression that the knowledge flow seemed to be one way. We are in a situation where Canadian brains and Canadian taxpayers' money funds leading-edge research and someone else benefits. Then, the someone else who benefits turns it into commercial technology and sells it back to us. It is not a happy cycle. This is a serious, serious issue in the academic community.

Second, last night was Taiwan Night at the Chateau Laurier. I cannot imagine that anyone walked away from that evening thinking that the Ukrainian issue was anything other than the number one threat to the disturbance of world order. I can also not imagine that anyone would walk away from that night not thinking that a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan was anything other than the number two threat to world order. This is our eleventh largest trading partner, and fifth largest trading partner in Asia. It shows that this is a threat that we think is kind of over there, but in fact it is quite relevant to us.

I just point out as an illustration the speed with which the independence of Hong Kong was simply rolled up, regardless of the millions of Hong Kongers who took to the street to protest their rights and their freedoms, which have now effectively been lost. Can we be so naive as to think that the Chinese government wants to do the same thing in Taiwan?

The third item was the election of yet another Marcos in the Philippines. The name Marcos stands for infamy and for rapacious greed. The Marcos family, over the generations, has looted the Philippines of its wealth and then sold off the assets to the highest bidder. China must be delighted with that outcome. No longer is it going to be challenged on building a military island in the South China Sea, nor is it going to be challenged by the severely out-gunned Philippine navy in the South China Sea. This is simply a terrific outcome, as far as China is concerned.

• (1635)

The fourth incident just this week was that I had a conversation with someone who everyone in this chamber would know, and his comment was, "China does not regard Canada as a serious player." This was in the context of how we take care of our own security, and the multiplicity of covert and overt intrusions into Canadian society and life by the Government of China.

Regarding the fifth incident, members will know that last week there was an opportunity to speak with the governments in exile from Tibet. Some members here might even have Tibetan interns working with them. Does anyone actually believe that Tibet is a free and independent country? That is perfectly the way the Chinese government likes it.

Sixth, it is my intention next week to initiate debate on Bill S-211, which was alluded to by my friend. The simple summary of the bill is that Canadian companies and governments would have to examine their supply chains and certify they are free of forced labour. This week, I was asked by one of my colleagues about solar panels being sold in Canada, and whether either the panels or components were infected by slavery. The concerning answer is that there is a strong likelihood they were.

The day before that, I was in a conversation with one of Canada's leading journalists, and he asserted that 90% of the cotton products coming out of Xinjiang are produced by slaves, likely Uighurs.

That was just my week. That is the concern that Canadians are expressing to me in various forms.

I would also commend to the House's attention a book I just finished by Peter Frankopan, a professor from Oxford, called *The New Silk Roads*. In it, the author outlines all of the initiatives around the world the Chinese government has taken with respect to the new silk roads. The fly cover says:

All roads used to lead to Rome. Today they lead to Beijing.... In the age of Brexit and Trump, the West is buffeted by the tides of isolationism and fragmentation. Yet to the East, this is a moment of optimism as a new network of relationships takes shape along ancient trade routes.

It is a very clear-eyed analysis of what is going on in the world, literally under our noses. We naturally look to our American colleagues for leadership, but as many have rightly pointed out, the American leadership is fractured along partisan lines and self-consumed by difficulties within its political orbit.

Some of the deals that have been consummated under the silk road initiative have been disastrous for many other countries. One of the classic examples of this is Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was dominated by the greedy and kleptocratic government run by the Rajapaksa family, which indebted the nation through vanity projects and then was forced to sell off the country's assets at discounted prices.

As I wind up, I want to thank my colleagues for bringing this debate forward. It is a serious debate, and it is something that needs to take place. I therefore will be supporting the idea of a standing committee.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood and say to him that, earlier, I misspoke when I said that he was wrong. What he said was false, but not what he thought, of course.

I want to clarify the situation. It is the opposite of what was suggested. That happens sometimes.

[*English*]

At the end of his speech, the member said that he agreed with the principle behind the motion. I would like to know if he will be supporting it.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I should probably tell my whip before I tell the member.

Brian Mulroney used to say there is no more important relationship that a prime minister has to manage than the Canada-U.S. relationship. Times have changed. In my view, frankly, there is no greater relationship that the Parliament of Canada, and indeed the Government of Canada, has to manage than the relationship with China, the ascendant world power.

Therefore, I will be supporting the motion.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I am glad to stand as I represent Nunavut. Since I was elected in September I have been surprised with how many foreign interference issues we have had to deal with.

I would like to ask the member if he would commit to having the government bring legislation forward to combat foreign interference from China and other state parties here in Canada.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, that is an attractive idea. It has been pursued in other countries. In principle, I would support it. I do not know how it would play out in practice.

While I am on my feet, I would like to talk about the north and the critical importance that the rangers play in the assertion of our sovereignty in the north. It is not only a military establishing of presence, but also the building of the infrastructure in the north in order to facilitate the extension of our sovereignty. The biggest challenge to our sovereignty is the government of China.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. He is very articulate and knows a lot about this issue. I appreciate his support for this motion to have a China-Canada committee set up again. I think

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that is what he said in his closing remarks, and if not, he can correct me on that.

I am looking at all of the things the member said were important to be dealt with, and I know the other committees are so busy. I am on the natural resources committee myself. There are a lot of issues around natural resources today, as well. China has control of a greater chunk of those in the world than any other nation. We do as well, and it may impact us in regard to being able to get the critical minerals we need for some of the EV situations we are looking at.

What are the member's feelings in regard to having discussions there, because we are already tied up in natural resources committee on the transition issues?

• (1645)

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I chair the national defence committee. We have just done a threat analysis study. I think it will be an excellent report. However, we were distracted. The distraction was, naturally, to Ukraine, Europe and NATO. The threat of the Indo-Pacific was not dealt with nearly as well as it should have been.

I am assuming that your committee is much like our committee, challenged for time and challenged for resources, and not able to deal coherently with some pretty important issues.

That is the reason that I think this is not a bad idea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I want to remind the member that he is to address all questions and comments through the Chair. I do not have a committee, so I know he was not addressing it directly to me.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Avalon.

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will focus my remarks on Canada's engagement with Taiwan.

The connections between Canada and Taiwan are very deep and strong. Our two societies share a commitment to democratic values and a respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The approximately 60,000 Canadians who live in Taiwan today comprise the fourth-largest Canadian diaspora community in the world. Daily direct flights between Vancouver and Taipei have helped to deepen these people-to-people ties.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Taiwan was among the first to donate masks to Canada. The economic relationship between Canada and Taiwan is also thriving. Canada's two-way merchandise trade with Taiwan totals \$10.2 billion in 2021, up 38.1% from \$7.4 billion in 2020. In 2021, Taiwan was Canada's 11th-largest merchandise trading partner and fifth-largest trading partner in Asia. Taiwan is a critical link in global supply chains, particularly for chip manufacturing and international shipping.

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To strengthen trade, Canada and Taiwan co-operate through select multilateral organizations, including APEC and the WTO. To advance economic people-to-people and cultural co-operation, senior representatives from both sides participate in the Canada-Taiwan Economic Consultations, an annual meeting. During the most recent meeting, our representatives discussed a broad range of topics related to trade and investment, such as the green economy, supply chain security, intellectual property, access to agricultural markets and greater collaboration on science, technology and innovation.

Canada and Taiwan, along with Australia and New Zealand, recently negotiated the indigenous peoples economic and trade co-operation agreement. The arrangement establishes a framework to identify and remove the barriers that hinder the economic empowerment of indigenous peoples. Earlier this year, Canada and Taiwan announced their intention to hold exploratory discussions toward a possible foreign investment promotion and protection arrangement, also known as FIPA. Canada is keen to pursue trade, innovation and investment relations with Taiwan, consistent with our long-standing policy.

Over the past two decades, Taiwan was able to participate in select UN specialized agencies as an observer or as a special guest. More recently, however, Taiwan has been actively excluded from key international agencies and events. This exclusion has negative impacts not only on the 24 million people of Taiwan, but also on the global community. For instance, Taiwan continues to be excluded from the World Health Assembly, even though the island has much to contribute to global pandemic efforts. The international community faces an unprecedented number of complex issues, from climate change to public health to environmental degradation and more. Collaboration among all partners offers our best hope for resolving these issues. Where a technical imperative exists, we must enable meaningful contributions from all stakeholders. It is on this basis that Canada supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in relevant global discussions, including in the secure skies initiative led by Transport Canada.

Taiwan should participate meaningfully in international organizations whenever there is a practical imperative to do so, and whenever Taiwan's absence is detrimental to global interests. Consider, for instance, the question of Taiwan's ongoing exclusion from the World Health Assembly, the WHA. During the pandemic, it is clear that the exclusion of Taiwan from the WHA has been detrimental to global efforts to track and combat COVID-19. The pandemic provides a practical imperative for Taiwan's inclusion as an observer.

• (1650)

In recent months, we have observed tensions across the Taiwan Strait. Canada has communicated directly to the Chinese authorities its concerns about destabilizing military actions across the strait while reiterating Canada's strong support for constructive efforts that contribute to peace and stability in the region. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has discussed this situation with many of our allies and is working with our like-minded partners to support the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific as a whole. Additionally, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development is currently seized of this issue and is scheduled to meet today to hear testimony on the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

To be clear, we remain committed to advancing our interests with Taiwan within the framework of Canada's long-standing policy. Canadian engagement with Taiwan is multi-faceted and has, on its own merits, an important role to play in advancing Canadian interests. The value of this engagement between our two societies goes beyond the cross-strait security question.

During the last two decades, China has emerged as an economic powerhouse and a critical partner and stakeholder across a range of pressing issues of global concern. China's inclusion is necessary toward overcoming the daunting global challenges, including climate change, pandemic management and global economic recovery, as well as international security. It is in our interests to remain committed to a long-term, constructive and mature relationship with China. We will continue to seek frank but respectful dialogue and co-operation where it makes sense to do so, but also to defend and promote values we have always stood for.

Everyone benefits when we work together to identify mutual interests and negotiate creative arrangements that serve these interests. Canada engages both sides of the Taiwan Strait to advance complementary interests, respect for rights and freedoms, and the rule of law. This approach has informed the approach of successive governments for more than five decades and will continue to do so well into the future.

As a progressive democracy, Taiwan demonstrates that Confucian values can coexist effectively with the protection of individual rights and freedoms, including those of women, the LGBTQ+ community and indigenous peoples. At the same time, Taiwan's strengths in semiconductors, biotechnology and information technology have supported its dynamic, export-driven economy and contributed to global growth. Canada will continue to pursue Taiwan's meaningful participation where its presence provides important contributions to the public good.

Finally, with respect to the committee proposed in this motion, there are several existing parliamentary committees where bilateral relations issues can be and have been raised. At the top of the list is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, which already this year has undertaken thorough and constructive studies and briefings on China-related issues, including the Xinjiang Uighur autonomous region and Tibet. As I mentioned earlier in my speech, the committee is currently studying the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

The parliamentary committees already in place are the right venues for studying these topics, and it is unfortunate that the Conservatives are proposing a motion that will at best lead to a duplication of work.

Business of Supply

• (1655)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, to the member's final comments, I serve on the foreign affairs committee and we are concurrently trying to study the issue of Taiwan, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the question of global vaccine equity. All three are critical points of global crisis.

We are putting forward the humble suggestion that the special committee on Canada-China relations, which was a multidisciplinary committee looking at issues of foreign policy, security and a broad range of other issues, be allowed to continue its work. It is disappointing to see the Liberal members oppose it.

I want to ask the member a specific question about Taiwan, the primary subject of his remarks. At the transport committee, my colleague from Thornhill put forward a motion calling for the full participation of Taiwan in ICAO, and the Liberals proposed an amendment to say they do not want "full" participation but "meaningful" participation, which is ostensibly something short of full participation.

The member spoke a lot about meaningful participation, but I think the public will notice that that is different from saying Taiwan should have full participation and be able to participate on an equal basis. Could the member clarify whether he supports the full participation of Taiwan in international organizations?

Mr. Ken McDonald: Madam Speaker, for the full participation of Taiwan, yes, I myself would support that, both as an individual and as an MP.

In regard to adding a committee, there were members who spoke here earlier and said committees are jammed up now with doing work. They cannot get space; they cannot get interpreters, and they cannot get staff. I think we should deal with it under the present structure of our committees.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague when he says that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development is there to discuss international affairs.

That being said, the China file is enormous. It might take an inordinate amount of time to study it. There are 191 other countries for the foreign affairs committee to discuss.

Does he not think that given the scope of the China file, it would be good to have a committee for this file and possibly for other urgent files such as Afghanistan and Yemen?

[*English*]

Mr. Ken McDonald: Madam Speaker, I believe I answered the member's question in my first answer. We hear all the time at committees, including at the committee I am on, that we cannot get any extra time. We are trying to do studies and hear from witnesses. We cannot get interpreters. We cannot get a room. We cannot get extra time.

Again, rather than adding another committee on top of the committees we already have, we can deal with it in the structure that

currently exists. If that creates a problem, we should look at doing something different.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, today it is clear that we are hearing a great deal about human rights. Two days ago, an Al Jazeera reporter, Shireen Abu Aqla, was executed while doing her job and wearing clearly delineated press gear. Her life was so tragically taken away.

When will Parliament condemn this act and speak out against the atrocious violence we are seeing waged against Palestinians by Israel?

Mr. Ken McDonald: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her thoughts on what happened to the reporter.

I could not agree more. It should be condemned totally and it should be condemned by all of the free world. We should let the world know that we do not stand for this in our world, or in any world for that matter. For a reporter, who is there to report on events or what is happening in whatever territory, to be shot and killed like that is absolutely disgraceful, and there should be a full investigation into what actually transpired.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know that debate on the motion is set to adjourn shortly, so I will try to make my remarks brief so we have time for questions should members have any.

This is an important vote that will be taken on an important motion, for it seeks to answer questions regarding Canada's complicated and increasingly difficult relationship with the Government of the People's Republic of China. Should the House of Commons pass this motion, a special parliamentary committee would be reconstituted, with MPs from all recognized caucuses, to investigate and study how Beijing is influencing or has influenced the federal government, how Beijing is advancing PRC national interests within our country and how Beijing is even at times skirting Canadian laws meant to protect our citizens, values and security.

I am supporting the motion before us because of my commitment to Canada. I am also supporting it because I want better nation-to-nation relations with mainland China. Our connection with Beijing cannot be based on blind trust, especially when we as parliamentarians consider its reversal on Hong Kong, its aggressive posture around the South China Sea, the terrible genocide against Uighurs and Beijing's stated hostilities toward the Republic of China, an independent democracy also known as Taiwan.

Business of Supply

In the last Parliament, I served as a member on the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. Over approximately 30 meetings, which I think would have continued had the election not been called, we issued three reports and heard from dozens of expert witnesses concerning Canada's relationship with the People's Republic of China. While it was always illuminating, it was not always news or information that our government wanted to highlight. One example was the concern around security at the Winnipeg lab. There was a debate and struggle at the highest levels on this, including in this chamber, far outside of the special committee. That issue remains unresolved.

Nevertheless, despite this at times divisive and heated debate, our work largely was conducted across party lines, even on contentious issues, such as studying the deteriorating democratic and human rights situation in Hong Kong. There was a consensus among members that Canada can and should do more. We saw also consensus on the motion concerning the genocide of the Uighurs within China.

The reason for this consensus is that a growing number of Liberal MPs, mainly those who sit outside of cabinet, feel that the Government of Canada has overstated the importance of China to our nation's well-being or, worse, has abandoned our values and has at times even kowtowed to Beijing. This is something that parliamentarians do not want to see and Canadians certainly do not want to see, and it is why I think the committee operated as well as it did to raise issues, ask questions and seek answers.

These members on the opposite side believe that it is wrong to promote an economic relationship with Beijing as a primary tenet of Canada's foreign policy while staying largely silent on the mistreatment of Uighurs, Tibetans and Falun Gong practitioners, who are prosecuted, as well as on Christians, citizens of Hong Kong and Taiwan, and democracies throughout Asia. These MPs understand that in the years ahead, it will be more important to partner and ally with democratic nations than with totalitarian regimes.

Finally, with the Special Committee on Afghanistan preparing to present its report to the House of Commons, there is opportunity to resurrect the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. It is an opportunity that I ask other members, regardless of party affiliation, to support by voting in favour of this motion.

• (1700)

One reason that I am so outspoken on issues related to Beijing's mistreatment of its own citizens is my time spent in and travelling throughout China. I have long admired China, its diverse people and all its parts. I am what one might have called a Sinophile before relations between Beijing and western nations worsened.

I moved to Hong Kong 25 years ago, and within months of my arrival, the territory's national allegiance shifted from British colonial rule to the People's Republic of China. This was done peacefully, and I know Hong Kong's then 6.5 million residents had hope twinned with trepidation.

The British government had negotiated a 50-year agreement with Beijing that would maintain Hong Kong's domestic autonomy and basic freedoms. Sadly, today those freedoms are largely gone, or they exist on paper but are not respected in the courts or by Hong

Kong's leaders, who are appointed by Beijing in mainland China. Democrats have been jailed or forced to flee, the free press has been shuttered and its owners jailed, and the agreement with Beijing on these supposed freedoms is not worth the paper it was printed on.

While Beijing was abandoning its commitment to Hong Kong, it was also becoming more hostile elsewhere. In July 2020, I highlighted the mistreatment of Uighurs. I called on the former minister of Global Affairs to launch an independent investigation into forced labour camps operating in mainland China. In January 2021, Ottawa finally acted by announcing its intention to support tougher restrictions on products being imported from that region.

This announcement was six months late, and unfortunately unlike other international allies, which are taking tougher actions to root out forced labour in commercial supply chains, Canada's government will not impose financial penalties on companies that do not comply with our government's directive. This is largely due to its practice of prioritizing mainland China's interests in order to "get along" with Beijing.

The government must go further to safeguard Canada's values and interests. Financial penalties on companies that use forced labour in supply chains must be added to its reforms. Also, Magnitsky sanctions must be applied to top Communist Party officials who continue to commit crimes. Now, more than ever, Canada needs a principled foreign policy that promotes freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law abroad.

If this special committee was important when it was established several years ago, it is now urgent with the deteriorating war situation in Ukraine. That is because the parallels between what is happening in eastern Europe and possibly in Asia, and I pray it does not, are all too clear.

Russia has declared war for no other reason than to gobble up the independent country of Ukraine. Beijing too claims a piece of territory as its own, in this case Taiwan, as a province. Like Russia, it has said it will use force to retake this piece of territory.

This should concern parliamentarians not only in this country but around the world. We have been put on notice that this is a real possibility, not only because it is happening now in Ukraine, but because China has said it is an option going forward. Of course, we can see the devastating results every day, sadly, on our televisions and smart phones regarding what is happening in Ukraine. Force is an option that Parliament must deal with, recognize and confront.

Questions for this committee could include the following.

Business of Supply

As we have seen regarding Russia, Canada has imposed many economic sanctions as a way to punish and deter Russia's aggression. Can we do this with respect to mainland China, and if we do, what is Canada's exposure to sanctions?

• (1705)

What is our ability to help democratic Taiwan, which many members on the government side profess friendship and even admiration for? Can we help Taiwan continue to govern itself peacefully, should Beijing's rhetoric move from words to military action? Importantly, as well, and this is where the committee could probe the federal government, are there voices or opinions in the federal government that Taipei should simply surrender its autonomy so that other nations can maintain good relations with mainland China, in effect trading off friends for opportunity elsewhere?

We see the need for this committee to act and to ask questions by looking at Europe, where Putin's war machine continues to commit atrocities against the Ukrainian people every day for one purpose alone, and that is submission and control. This is something we never imagined would happen after the Iron Curtain fell, but it has created deeper concerns about how the world would respond if Beijing invaded Taiwan in the same fashion. I think parliamentarians have a duty to ask some of these questions and to receive responses from the Government of Canada, if for no other reason than for us to satisfy ourselves that they are being considered and that solutions are being drawn up in concert with our allies.

At the same time, there must be a study into how Beijing continues to deepen its influence in our domestic affairs, through our markets, espionage and intimidation. Many of us will recall the Zijin Mining Group, a state-owned enterprise from China, purchasing Canada's Neo Lithium Corporation earlier this year, a fire sale of a critical mineral mine in Canada that should have prompted a national security review and should have been blocked. Unfortunately, this did not happen. This is another area where the committee should investigate to see what information went into this decision. Why, when it comes to Beijing, is the government reluctant to turn down these kinds of purchases? I believe that members on both sides of the House believe that critical mining projects in Canada should be owned and operated by Canadian firms or trusted allies, in order to maintain and protect our national security.

There is another study this committee could look at. What about the Canadian success story of Nortel Networks? In 2004, over 70% of the world's Internet traffic ran on Canadian fibre optic technology produced by Nortel. It is believed that the Chinese military launched concentrated cyber-attacks for 10 years against Nortel's headquarters in Canada, stealing thousands of sensitive documents and other company secrets. Nortel simply could not compete against Huawei, and ultimately ended up in bankruptcy. To quote Global News, "it would be similar to a foreign army constructing a hidden tunnel into Canada's treasury vault, and marching out unimpeded with gold bars." Were Canadian pensions, life savings and technology stolen? Again, another question for this committee.

A third one, which I think is of growing importance, is the use of our capital markets by the People's Republic of China and its state enterprises to advance China's financial interests. This is something that has gone largely unexplored. I do not think there is a sense of

the exposure that Canadian capital markets have toward the People's Republic of China. This is something that could be detrimental to our country's well-being, should we ever see a conflict erupt between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China.

I have heard some of our friends opposite talk about the need to help Taiwan join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. I think this is welcome news. I think it is a sign of great progress that there is certainly bipartisan support for seeing Taiwan step up and play a greater role in international relations and affairs. Taiwan's entry into the CPTPP would also promote high-standard trade rules. Regrettably, China also wants entry into this organization, but I do not believe it meets the labour, environmental and human rights issues that would see it come in. Having said that, I think this is a discussion for parliamentarians to engage in.

• (1710)

I will end with a request that members consider this on the merits of the motion, with some concern that while we saw all opposition parties unite on this in the past, that might not happen this time. I do not know the reasoning or the deal-making that went behind Motion No. 11, which has now tied the NDP and the Liberals into a pact. It is my deep hope that the NDP will show its commitment to human rights and international affairs and vote, as it did before, to continue this committee, for no other reason than to ask questions and see where the answers take us. I think it would be wrong and the NDP's standing would fall should it vote otherwise on this motion just as a way to keep relations happy with the Liberals.

It is important that all members, from all parliamentary caucuses, have the opportunity to be heard on these issues, that we ask questions, look for answers and table reports that will protect Canada, ensure that our citizens are safe and, in the long run, work to improve relations between the People's Republic of China and Canada.

I appreciate the time to make these comments.

• (1715)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I applaud my hon. colleague for the excellent job he did in explaining the complexity of the relationship between Canada and China. However, where he failed to convince is on the necessity of this particular committee, knowing that there are already four existing committees that can deal with the different complexities and issues related to the Canada-China relationship. Could the member explain what this committee would add that is not already covered by the four existing committees?

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, the hon. member recently mentioned one, the foreign affairs committee, which is already overworked with looking at a number of international issues.

Business of Supply

What it would bring that the others do not is a focus on one of our most important foreign relations in the world. That focus would allow it to raise questions, seek answers and hear from Canadians, from expats from mainland China and from observers around the world. It is the intensity and the focus. I can understand why the government would prefer to avoid that, but that makes it all the more important, particularly as we see what is happening in Ukraine, and how Beijing's threats have gone from being something we had a difficult time wrapping our brains around to what we now see every day in eastern Europe.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from New Brunswick Southwest for his fine speech.

We know how important technology is and how serious the repercussions can be if there is no oversight. China has so much economic power that any direct or indirect support for Taiwan would have serious repercussions for Canada's economy, given that a large part of the supply chain is in China.

I would like my colleague to tell me once again about the importance of the Special Committee on Canada-China relations. Why is it important?

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, I believe this is a key question for the committee to consider.

If there is a confrontation between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China, what will be the impact on Canada, our workers and our goods?

Until now, no one has asked these questions because we did not really believe it was possible before the war in Ukraine broke out. Today, it is possible. We must ask these questions and get answers for Canadians so that Canada can respond accordingly.

[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we absolutely have to uphold human rights, without qualification.

Yesterday, the NDP put forward a motion condemning the murder of a Palestinian journalist. It was voted against by a member of my hon. colleague's party. I wonder if he agrees with me that it is important not to be selective about when to uphold human rights and when not to uphold human rights. Especially with the motion the Conservatives have put forward today, it seems like they are contradicting themselves in terms of the Conservatives being actual human rights defenders.

• (1720)

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, like the NDP or any party, the Conservative Party does not speak with a single voice. There are many different opinions. As to the issue that is being raised, illuminating difficulties and challenges in one area where there is a relationship, in this case China, does not mean Parliament or a committee does not look at it elsewhere. The wrong approach would be to say that because a motion was rejected yesterday, this motion should be rejected.

To my NDP colleague, who obviously feels very passionately about what has happened with the murder of the journalist, which is

something terrible, I would just say that I think she would agree that not looking at either does not make this country a better place. Let us look at the motion ahead of us and vote on it. We can come back to other debates on other days.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, just briefly to the previous question, I think all members of the House agree that it is a terrible thing that a journalist was killed in a war zone. However, to presume, as one member of this House did, that this person was intentionally shot, execution-style, is not something that any independent investigation has concluded. It is important to have that independent investigation before making the presumptions that members of the House make. It is typical of some members of the House, when we try to have a conversation about the genocide going on in China, that they always want to say, "Well, what about Israel?"

I know the member spent some time living in Hong Kong. Many people were deeply concerned about the arrest we saw this week in Hong Kong of Cardinal Zen, who is a great champion of democracy. He is a 90-year-old retired cardinal who is much loved within the Catholic community and beyond. There is also the arrest of Denise Ho, a singer who is a Canadian citizen and a prominent activist on LGBTQ issues. There are a number of other people who were arrested as well. It is disappointing to see such prominent figures, including a Canadian and a senior religious leader, arrested. It shows the flagrant disregard of the Chinese government for the agreements it has made with respect to Hong Kong.

I wonder if the member, as someone who has spent time in Hong Kong, has a reaction to those events.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, I do, because it is a pattern we have seen, not just with Beijing's increased heavy-handedness in Hong Kong, but with its outright control of the institutions of government there, which had been free, self-governing and a beacon for people throughout not just Asia but the world.

My hon. colleague mentioned a number of people. There is Jimmy Lai as well, who was the owner of the Apple Daily. What the government seeks to do by these arrests, whether of people in the arts, religious figures or business figures, is to send the signal that if it can arrest and stop these people, it can arrest and stop whomever it likes.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The committee in question existed before the election was called. That is another consequence of the snap election that was held last year. As far as I know, the situation in China has not changed since then. As the critic for status of women, I am particularly concerned about what is happening to Uighur women. My colleague talked a lot about human rights. Uighur women are being forcibly sterilized.

I am also a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. What is happening in factories in China and the impacts on the supply chain show how important it is that we examine this issue. Those are some other reasons to reinstate the committee. Let us not forget that it existed before the last election.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, that is absolutely true. Had there not been an election, that committee would still be sitting.

When we talk about human rights in China, we are talking about the same rights that we have here in Canada, for indigenous people, women and parents. Those same rights need to apply to citizens of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

As parliamentarians and Canadians, we need to consider these issues, ask hard questions and find solutions to make the world a more peaceful place with fewer wars.

• (1725)

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am very concerned that we do start such a committee, and that one of the first things we take up is the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, which has been lopsided and given the People's Republic of China abilities to suppress Canadian interests.

As it was the member's government under former prime minister Harper that executed this extremely lopsided agreement, would he support that we study it at this point?

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, I would. I think many of us have miscalculated China. Twenty-three years ago, when I was writing for the National Post, I believed, like a lot of people, that trade and globalization would see China develop and respect human rights. I was wrong, as I think a lot of western commentators were. I am prepared to adjust course now and look at China with a more critical eye. If that includes looking at deals as the member mentioned, I think there should be no bounds on this committee, because, believe me, I think Canada has made mistakes. We could correct those mistakes and move forward.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will resume debate with the hon. member for Brandon—Souris, but he will have only four minutes to deliver his speech.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to stand in the House today to discuss this opposition day motion that has been put forward on the issue of re-establishing a Canada-China committee in the House of Commons.

I believe there is a great need for it. I was asking questions earlier in the debate today around some of the issues that I felt strongly about. They are not all to do with defence and those areas, but I believe there are many issues that can be discussed in the committee if it is re-established. When the committee was established before, there were many things for which answers still need to be given. They were not fully reported. Some of them were fully discussed, perhaps, but the reports never came out. We could even go back and discuss some of those issues, but there are many other areas.

Business of Supply

First of all, I want to comment on the relationship that I have had with Chinese citizens or people of Chinese descent. I say I am of Irish descent, but my family came here in about 1850. Many of them were here long before that. They are in all of our communities across Canada. They have been great Canadian citizens, and have contributed greatly to their families and the Canadian economy, but that is not what we are here to talk about. This is about some of the differences we have had with the communist regime in China, not the people on the ground in China. It is not their fault we are seeing some interference and involvement in Canadian elections and some of the discussions that have taken place around human rights in their own country.

We talked a lot about the pandemic in the past. We have talked about the Uighur people in China, as well. They are being oppressed, which may be a mild word for how they are being treated within their country. There is the labour they are being forced to do, as well as other denigrations we have talked about here in the House. China is an authoritarian state, and the people are probably trying to look after their families, just as we are here in Canada, but they are under great duress sometimes to do that. Many of them may know of the freedoms they have, but they are being suppressed.

I had the experience of seeing what happened in Russia before the wall came down in Germany, as I had the opportunity to be in Leningrad before Russia even opened up. That is, somewhat, what the whole fight in Ukraine is about with President Putin today. He just did not want his people to continue to have the freedom that they saw from world communications that took place in that time. When the world opened up and people in Russia could get a hold of things called televisions and other media, their attitudes changed. I think we could do the same in other areas of the world and try to create more discussion and greater freedom for some of those folks as well.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made Monday, May 2, 2022, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[Translation]

The question is on the motion.

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

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Monday, May 16, 2022, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

It being 5:30, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business, as listed on today's Order Paper.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***CRIMINAL CODE**

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC), seconded by the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, moved that Bill S-206, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (disclosure of information by jurors), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise to speak on Bill S-206, an act to amend the Criminal Code. It is a bill that will go a long way to supporting juror mental health in Canada, and it is quite appropriate that we are debating the bill this week, as it is Jury Duty Appreciation Week. More specifically, this proposed legislation would amend section 649 of the Criminal Code, which is often known as the “jury secrecy” rule.

As it stands, it is a Criminal Code offence for a former juror to disclose any aspect of the jury deliberation process with anyone for life, even a medical professional. The bill before us would carve out a narrow exception to that rule, whereby a former juror who is suffering from mental health issues arising from jury service would be able to disclose all aspects of that service, including the deliberation process, to a medical professional bound by confidentiality.

The bill would implement a key recommendation from the unanimous report of the justice committee in 2018 arising from a study on juror supports, which was initiated by the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, whom I am very proud to have as a seconder. I want to acknowledge his advocacy for juror mental health.

This legislation is based on a law that currently exists in the Australian state of Victoria. It is a bill that has had unanimous support all the way through. I introduced a substantively similar bill back in the 42nd Parliament that passed all legislative stages in the House unanimously. Unfortunately, it died on the Order Paper due to the call of the 2019 election.

Following the 2019 election, I reached out to Senator Pierre Boisvenu and Senator Lucie Moncion, who is a former juror who suffered from mental health issues arising from her jury service. Senator Boisvenu, with the support of Senator Moncion, introduced the same bill in the Senate. We hoped that it would proceed expeditiously there. Unfortunately, it did not: not because of a lack of support, but because of COVID and the fact that the other place took up largely government business through the 43rd Parliament.

Then, we had another election. Senator Boisvenu introduced a bill yet again and, thanks to his leadership and the leadership of Senator Moncion, it passed the upper place unanimously in December. In the nearly seven years that I have been a member of Parliament, I have not seen very many issues on which there was such broad agreement: unanimous support from all parliamentarians at all legislative stages, and unanimous support from key stakeholders including former jurors, lawyers and medical professionals.

Jurors play an integral role in the administration of justice in Canada, often at a considerable cost, including to one's mental health. I think a lot of Canadians appreciate the work of jurors, but

unless one is a former juror, sometimes it is difficult to fully comprehend exactly what jury service involves.

● (1735)

When we commenced the juror supports study, we heard from former jurors who had gone through very difficult trials, who had been exposed to horrific evidence and who suffered from mental health issues arising from their jury service, including PTSD. I think it is important that some of the testimony we heard before the justice committee is entered into the record of this place to provide an understanding and a context for why this bill is needed.

One of the jurors who appeared before the justice committee was Tina Daenzer. Tina served as juror number one in the Paul Bernardo trial. This is what she had to say about her experience:

Imagine watching young girls being raped and tortured over and over again. You couldn't close your eyes and you couldn't look away because your duty was to watch the evidence.

Tina suffered from PTSD following the Bernardo trial. That trial was in 1995. Twenty-seven years later, Tina is still dealing with the residual effects of that trial.

Mark Farrant came before our committee, and I was honoured to have him join me and colleagues across party lines today. Mark is one of the leading advocates for juror supports and addressing the issue of juror mental health. He is the president of the Canadian Juries Commission, which is doing important work in that area, but at one time Mark was a jury foreman in a particularly gruesome trial. This is what he said when he came to the justice committee:

As a juror, you are extremely isolated. You cannot communicate with anyone in any form about the events in court or even really with other jurors. I would leave the court in a trance, not remembering even how I got home. I would stare blankly into space during meetings at work or at home while my three-year old daughter tried desperately to engage with me. My then pregnant wife, who had such an engaged husband during her first pregnancy, now had an emotional zombie in me, unable or unwilling to communicate.

I expected these feelings to subside as I left the courthouse on the day the verdict was delivered...

My feelings didn't subside. They intensified and deepened. After the trial, I cut off communication with all friends and family, only interacting with colleagues at work, and then only superficially. I became hypervigilant around my kids, refusing to let them walk alone, even a few steps in front of me. I became unable to handle crowds and public spaces. My diet changed. I was unable to look at and prepare raw meat without gagging, something that persists to this day.

Patrick Fleming, who was a juror on a 10-month murder trial, also shared a similar story. He spoke about the need to get help. He said, “I so desperately needed to talk to a professional, someone who could help me work through my feelings and thoughts.”

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• (1740)

That is just a taste of the testimony that we heard at the justice committee from these and other former jurors. Their stories and their experiences are felt by thousands of jurors across Canada. Of course, not everyone has PTSD and not everyone suffers from mental health issues, even jurors who go through very difficult trials, but different people react differently. It is a very serious issue involving jurors that has to be addressed for them to get the help they need. Clearly, jurors should not be cast aside and ignored, when they are merely fulfilling what is the last mandatory forum of civic duty since the abolition of conscription.

At the justice committee, one of the things we looked at in impediments for jurors to get the full support and help that they need is the juror secrecy rule. That is because, in part, the deliberation process is one of, if not the, most stressful aspects of jury service. I ask members to imagine being sequestered with other strangers, having to go through horrific evidence with the pressure of making a decision, and having the regard for the gravity of that decision, including, perhaps, sending someone to jail for the rest of his or her life, not to mention the impact that such an outcome could have on victims and victims' families, and the desire to see that justice is carried out.

Dr. Sonia Chopra, a psychologist who was a former juror and who has done considerable work around juror supports, identified, as a result of conducting a number of interviews with former jurors, that of the 10 top stressors of jury duty, seven of the 10 involve the deliberation process and the determination of a verdict. That, then, begs the question, of how can one get better. How can one get the help they need to get better when they cannot talk about what is at the core of their injury?

That is where this bill comes in. It carves out a narrow exception to the jury secrecy rule so jurors are not inhibited, all the while protecting the integrity of that rule. There are good reasons for the jury secrecy rule. They include the need to see the finality of the verdict, to respect the privacy of former jurors and to respect the sanctity of the deliberation process. None of those things are impacted or impeded upon as a result of this bill because, again, this narrow exception would be posttrial in a strictly confidential context, namely with a medical professional bound by confidentiality.

This bill has been studied exhaustively. It has received unanimous support at all stages. We owe it to jurors in Canada to support them and to help them be able to get the help they need. This bill is a small but important step in that direction. I urge its speedy passage.

• (1745)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for championing this bill. It is not often that we see a New Democrat seconding a Conservative PMB, but that speaks to what this bill is all about.

I do not really have a question for my colleague, just more of a comment. I want him to reiterate that the concept behind this bill has been studied. Could the member offer his comments about the House doing its job to see this bill through speedily so we could get

it before the Governor General to be signed into law, where it so rightfully deserves to be?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, my friend from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford is absolutely right. This bill has been studied at the justice committee twice. First, during the study on juror supports and then at the justice committee again when I put forward Bill C-417. It received a clean bill of health all the way through.

There were, in fact, no objections from any witnesses, and as far as it being in place, it has been in place in Victoria, and the evidence that we heard is that it has worked quite well. It is truly a common-sense piece of legislation. It is modest, but it will go a long way to supporting juror mental health in Canada.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite may know, one of my former constituents, Mark Farrant, has been a very strong advocate on this issue and has really pushed it far.

This is a very great piece, and I am really happy the member is bringing it as a private member's bill. What does he see as what can be complemented from our provinces and territories in addition? I know that some changes were made in Ontario as well. What can this drive as change at the provincial and territorial level?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Toronto—Danforth for her support of the bill and her support of Mark Farrant, who I know has engaged with her on multiple occasions. There is a long way to go in terms of providing juror supports across Canada. There has been some progress in recent years, but we still have a patchwork.

The federal government does have a role to step up to provide funding to the provinces to implement better juror supports. That was a key recommendation of the justice committee report. What I will stress from the justice committee report is that the only recommendation that falls exclusively within the jurisdiction of Parliament is to fix the jury secrecy rule to carve out this exception because it is a Criminal Code issue, which falls exclusively within the jurisdiction of Parliament. The first thing we need to do is our job to get this piece of that report implemented into law.

• (1750)

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech on the bill.

As he mentioned, this week, we are highlighting the importance of jurors' work within our justice system. Jury duty is an obligation. Because it is an obligation, the government has to help jurors as best it can by making their task less arduous.

The testimony in certain trials can be difficult to listen to. Would recognizing the possibility of PTSD in that context be a way to help jurors in some of these cases?

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[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the member for Shefford is absolutely right. There are jurors, and we heard from them at the justice committee. Mark Farrant, who is a leading advocate, suffered from PTSD. His life has forever been changed. Despite the enormous difficulties that he experienced, he is trying to put those challenges to good use to help other jurors so they can get support and they can get help.

I do want to underscore one thing. These former jurors are not complaining about jury service. They are proud of having been a juror. They are proud of having performed their civic duty. All they are asking for is that they should not have to do their civic duty at the expense of their mental health.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first off, I would like to acknowledge that I am speaking from the traditional lands of the Algonquin people. I also want to acknowledge the work of my friend from St. Albert—Edmonton and his persistence in bringing forward Bill S-206, an act to amend the Criminal Code (disclosure of information by jurors).

The amendment proposed by Bill S-206 would permit jurors to discuss jury deliberations with health care professionals following a trial in order to address the health issues that have arisen as a result of their jury duties. It would do so by adding an exception to the offence of “Disclosure of jury proceedings” under section 649 of the Criminal Code.

I am pleased to say that the government will be supporting this bill. Bill S-206 is nearly identical to former bills introduced in previous parliamentary sessions, notably Bill C-417, which the government also supported. Bill S-206 includes a change to the Criminal Code that has garnered unanimous support, and I believe it should once again receive the same treatment, as it is a worthy objective.

I want to thank Mark Farrant and the Canadian Juries Commission for their tireless advocacy on this bill, and on behalf of Canadians who have served on juries across Canada.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity this bill provides to consider the important civic duty of jurors, including the pivotal role they play in the criminal justice system. I would also like to speak about the purpose of section 649 of the Criminal Code and what effects the amendments proposed in Bill S-206 are expected to have.

Juries are critical in their contributions to the justice system in Canada and have an important role in upholding our Constitution. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to a jury trial for offences carrying a maximum penalty of imprisonment of five years or more. The charter also guarantees a right to a trial before an independent and impartial tribunal.

Under the Criminal Code, certain criminal offences, such as murder, provide for a presumption that the accused will be tried by a judge and jury. For other offences, such as sexual assault and robbery, an accused can elect to be tried by a judge alone or by jury and judge. In a trial involving a judge and jury, jurors act as the triers of fact and replace the judge in this role.

The right to a jury trial is not a constitutional one in the civil context. The right to demand a civil jury trial is a statutory right that is limited to certain circumstances found in provincial and territorial legislation. However, in some jurisdictions, such as Quebec, juries are not available at all for civil cases. Canada also has juries in the context of coroner's inquests, whose important role can involve making recommendations in relation to the death of an individual.

The Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Davey* held that a jury “reflects the common sense, the values, and the conscience of the community.” The jury has also been described by the Supreme Court, in *R. v. Sherratt*, as an “excellent fact finder” and a “final bulwark against oppressive laws or their enforcement”, which increases societal trust in the justice system as well as public knowledge of the criminal justice system. Moreover, as the Supreme Court stated in *R. v. Find*, “Trial by jury is a cornerstone of Canadian criminal law. It offers the citizen the right to be tried by an impartial panel of peers and imposes on those peers the task of judging fairly and impartially.”

These statements and observations by our highest court inform us of the great value placed on juries in Canada and the individuals who make up a jury, with notable references to the significance of juries in the criminal justice system.

The provinces and territories are responsible for the administration of justice, and their legislatures enact laws relating to the establishment of juries for civil, criminal and other proceedings, such as coroner's inquests. Provincial and territorial legislation also provides the basis for identifying potential jurors from the community, determining who may meet the criteria to act as jurors and summing jurors to court, among other things.

● (1755)

With respect to matters within the federal jurisdiction, federal responsibility over criminal law includes the Criminal Code's procedural rules regulating jury trials and the jury selection process that takes place in the courtroom. This includes the requirement that 12 jurors be selected, in addition to one or two alternatives at the discretion of the judge.

The challenge for cause process and the trial judge's power to excuse or stand aside prospective jurors provide mechanisms for removing prospective jurors whose impartiality may be in question. The federal government also has a responsibility for enacting criminal offences and penalties, such as those set out in the Criminal Code.

The common law has long provided for a secrecy rule, which excludes the evidence of a juror who reveals statements or opinions made during jury deliberations. Section 649 of the Criminal Code is a codification of this rule. It was enacted in 1972 and provides for a summary conviction offence that criminalizes the disclosure of information obtained during jury deliberations that was not otherwise disclosed in open court. The offence applies to every juror and every person who provides technical, personal, interpretative or other support services to a juror with a physical disability. The offence is currently punishable by a maximum penalty of imprisonment of two years less a day and/or a fine not exceeding \$5,000. There are no known or reported convictions pursuant to this offence.

There are existing exceptions under section 649 that permit disclosure of information relating to the proceedings of the jury. These are in respect of an investigation or prosecution of a charge of obstruction of justice in relation to a juror, under subsection 139(2) of the Criminal Code.

The common law jury secrecy rule and offence in section 649 serve the purposes of promoting free and frank debate among jurors, protecting them from harassment, maintaining public confidence in the administration of justice and helping preserve the constitutionally mandated integrity of the jury system. However, section 649 has been identified as a barrier to jurors seeking mental health support.

We heard in the course of testimony before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights during its study and in its report, “Improving Support for Jurors in Canada”, from May 2018, that jury duty for some individuals involved significant personal sacrifice, stresses and strains, with some former jurors experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health trauma. Former jurors have reportedly encountered resistance from mental health professionals in serving them because of section 649 of the Criminal Code. This is very concerning, as the individual jurors who make up a jury are invaluable to our justice system and the difficulties they encounter must be recognized and acknowledged.

The narrow exception being proposed in Bill S-206 is meant to make it easier and clearer for jurors to get mental health treatment for issues relating to their service so they are able to disclose information about what went on during jury deliberations that may have impacted them. For example, they would be permitted to disclose information beyond that which was disclosed in open court, such as graphic photos and disturbing testimony, and discuss with a health care professional other aspects of the trial and jury duty that may have affected them, such as the weight of the decision they had to make.

Finally, the bill includes a coming-into-force period of 90 days after the bill receives royal assent. This would allow the provinces and territories some time to effectively implement the change to section 649, given their primary responsibility over the administration of justice and jury trials, as well as juror supports generally.

It seems that this will be welcomed as an improvement for jurors involved in the criminal justice system, who, as previously described, may face the need for mental health support following a

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trial. This help should be accessible. I hope that all members of the House will join us in supporting Bill S-206.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill S-206 proposes a change to the existing rules regarding the confidentiality of deliberations between members of a jury who have to decide the fate of an accused person.

The rule about the confidentiality of jury proceedings is set out in section 649 of the Criminal Code and is also called “Lord Mansfield’s rule”. It is a cornerstone of common law and the British criminal justice system.

This rule is anything but trivial. The jury is the trier of fact. The judge presiding over a trial is the trier of law. The judge adjudicates matters of law that arise over the course of the trial and gives the necessary advice to inform and guide the jury regarding these matters. That said, at the end of the day, as intended by the legislator, it is the members of the jury who decide whether the accused is guilty or innocent.

The role of jurors is therefore vitally important to the judicial process. When they deliberate, they need to feel completely free to say what they think out loud without later worrying about being publicly quoted as having put forward a certain idea or opinion. Obviously, the jurors will often disagree with one another when they first begin their deliberations, but they will work together to consider all of the facts entered into evidence during the trial, which could go on for many weeks in some cases.

At that point, the success of their work will basically depend on the flow of their debate and how comfortable they feel talking freely and unreservedly among themselves. I am thinking of the ability to share the uninhibited, unfiltered thoughts that come into our minds as we think about what we are going to say.

The legislator grants the jury a type of legal status—a partial, temporary status—that lasts only as long as the trial. The jury will then speak with one voice and render a unanimous verdict, like a single person who speaks after carefully considering and weighing all aspects of an issue.

It is therefore easy to see that a sound decision requires absolute confidence in the confidentiality of their deliberations, just as every one of us refuses to compromise the integrity and inviolability of our thoughts. Anyone who, rightly or wrongly, believes someone else is probing their thoughts will self-censor and be unable to think freely. That is anathema to a healthy thought process and wise deliberation.

Section 649 of the Criminal Code states that it is an offence for a member of a jury or anyone assisting them to:

[disclose] any information relating to the proceedings of the jury when it was absent from the courtroom that was not subsequently disclosed in open court....

This is the rule that ensures sound, reasonable decisions.

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That said, jury duty is not always easy. Sometimes, the facts and evidence of a criminal case can be so intense that they have a significant impact on the jury members hearing the case. Unfortunately, violence and horror can feature prominently in the crimes a person is accused of.

In some cases, jury members can be traumatized to such an extent that they have to consult a health professional to deal with it. Some experiences have drastically transformed the lives of jurors left to cope with their trauma alone.

These people did not choose to be jurors. They were chosen, and they had a legal obligation to fulfil that duty. They clearly deserve our gratitude and our support. As things stand now, it is more difficult for them to receive care and adequate treatment when they are suffering, as they cannot freely speak about their trauma without contravening section 649 of the Criminal Code.

Bill S-206 proposes to allow members of a jury to be exempt from this rule of confidentiality if they require professional health services for medical or psychiatric treatment, therapy or counselling provided after the trial.

• (1805)

Ensuring access to adequate and efficient health services for those who generously contributed to the justice system is obviously paramount, as common sense dictates. I can only concur with what is fair and obvious.

Bill S-206 asks us to examine a proposed new paragraph (c) under section 649 of the Criminal Code, adding new exceptions to those already established in paragraphs (a) and (b) to allow for evidence to be given in obstruction of justice cases. The proposed paragraph (c) adds an exemption from the confidentiality obligation for the purposes of:

any medical or psychiatric treatment or any therapy or counselling that a person referred to in subsection (1) receives from a health care professional after the completion of the trial in relation to health issues arising out of or related to the person's service at the trial as a juror or as a person who provided support services to a juror.

The proposed subsection 649(3) also adds that the health care professional who provides any medical or psychiatric treatment or any therapy or counselling must be entitled to do so under the laws of a province.

To conclude, Bill S-206 clearly deserves to be adopted at this stage and referred to a committee. After hearing from experts, we will determine if it can be passed in its current form or if it should be improved or even rejected. At this time, the Bloc Québécois intends to vote in favour of sending Bill S-206 to a committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today to speak to Bill S-206. I want to acknowledge that I am doing so in the midst of Canadian Jury Duty Appreciation Week, which runs from May 8 until May 14.

It is very timely that we are having a discussion on Bill S-206. I also want to acknowledge the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, who has sponsored this Senate bill here in the House. I have stood

to second the bill. As I mentioned in my comments to him earlier, it is not very often that one will see a New Democrat standing to second a Conservative private member's bill, but that does speak to the fact that this is an important bill.

In the House, we get exposed to all kinds of ideas for legislation. We have to look at them on their merits and look at what they are trying to achieve, but sometimes a bill of the calibre of Bill S-206 comes around and one knows it is going to make a measurable difference in people's lives, and those people are jurors.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the extremely important role that they play not only in our society, but specifically in our justice system. These are people who are our ordinary peers. Trial by jury means, essentially, a trial by one's peers. They are selected from a broad cross-section of Canadian society, so that we get an exposure to all kinds of viewpoints and all kinds of different backgrounds.

They are, in a sense, ordinary Canadians who are essentially dragged into service and, in the course of their deliberations, have to make extremely heavy decisions. With regard to some trials, their decisions are going to have extremely serious consequences, either for the accused or for the victims. That weighs heavily on people's minds.

In order for those jurors to make those verdicts, they have to be exposed to all of the evidence collected by police services in the course of the investigation. Sometimes that can involve very disturbing photographs that the coroner had to take, the results of autopsies and pictures of murder weapons. In very disturbing cases, it has involved photos of the crime that was perpetrated, and sometimes even video footage.

Jurors have to be exposed to all of that evidence so that no stone is left unturned when they are making their deliberations, and so that they can render an appropriate verdict based on the evidence they have been subjected to.

The problem is that when the jurors do their duty, after having been exposed to horrific evidence, they are essentially let loose back into the public realm with a handshake and thanks for their service. There is no ability for them to discuss, in any way, what they saw during their deliberations. The evidence that they had to deal with, and the discussions they had with other jurors, have to stay bottled up inside them. They have to carry that to the grave, because of a requirement of our existing Criminal Code.

My colleague, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, quoted several jurors during the course of his speech: testimony from Mark Farrant, testimony from Tina Daenzer and testimony from Patrick Fleming. These are the jurors who have really been spearheading this campaign, and it was their work that made sure that, in 2018, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights conducted the first-ever parliamentary study on juror supports.

During that committee, we had jurors come before us to relive their experiences, to share with the committee what they had gone through, and to say why these reforms were so very necessary.

My role in that whole process started a year earlier, in 2017. That is when I first met Mr. Mark Farrant and Mr. Patrick Fleming, two of the individuals who organized the 12 Angry Letters campaign. It was a campaign on behalf of jurors across Canada who had been witness to some of the most horrific and graphic crimes imaginable. I sat in on that press conference with former NDP MP Murray Rankin, and it was at that time that I made the decision that this issue had to be looked at: It had to be studied at the justice committee.

• (1810)

On June 8, 2017, I presented a motion at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. It was during that year that I had the honour of serving as the NDP's critic for justice. I was very fortunate, when I presented the motion, that my colleagues on the committee immediately saw the value in that study, and we had a unanimous vote on it. Stepping forward a year, the motion resulted in a comprehensive report, with one of its recommendations leading us to the conversation we are having today: it very solidly recommended the bill that the House is now deliberating.

The issue comes down to section 649 of the Criminal Code, commonly known as the “jury secrecy rule”. In its current form, it essentially prevents all jurors from relating anything about proceedings. That is the crux of the matter.

We can just imagine putting ourselves in jurors' shoes. They have just gone through a trial and had to render a verdict that has had a very real consequence on someone's life, they have spent time away from family and work colleagues, and they are suddenly back at home and reliving all of those images. They cannot escape them, and are suffering post-traumatic stress disorder with no ability to speak to a mental health professional to try to find some guidance to work through it. This is something that we owe to these men and women to fix. The recommendation in question was very specific, which was that the government amend section 649 so that jurors are permitted to discuss the deliberations with a designated mental health professional once the trial is over.

We are not doing this in a vacuum. Juror access to mental health professionals already exists in the state of Victoria in Australia. That state's Juries Act stipulates that jury deliberations are to remain confidential, but it does provide for an exception. The law states that:

Nothing...prevents a person who has been a juror from disclosing any statements made, opinions expressed, arguments advanced or votes cast in the course of the deliberations of that jury to a registered medical practitioner or a registered psychologist in the course of treatment in relation to issues arising out of the person's service as a juror.

Our committee studied the approach, and we recommended that Canada adopt a similar model, because there have been no negative consequences from having that law in existence.

In the final couple of minutes that I have, allow me to say this: If Bill S-206 is adopted, it would implement an important recommendation, and I underline that point. This issue has been studied to death. We are now five years past when we initiated this study. We have had witness after witness confirm that this would be a beneficial change. I see no negative drawbacks from us proceeding down this route. Really, it is about our service as parliamentarians to rec-

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ognize what the men and women on our juries do for us pretty much every day, right across this country from coast to coast to coast.

There were some conversations around the House today to see if we could get this bill expedited. Ultimately, we could not find agreement on that front, so I will close by saying that I hope the House sees value in passing this bill as expeditiously as possible, and when we send it to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I hope that the members of that committee take note of the great amount of work that has already been done on this bill, that they seek to report it back to the House as soon as possible, and that we vote on it a final time and send it to the Governor General, where it rightly belongs, so that she may sign it into law and we can finally make sure that jurors in Canada have access to mental health professionals as they so rightly deserve.

• (1815)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for asking me to speak to Bill S-206. It has a personal part in my life and in my family. I also want to thank him for his tenacity. He has a gift of identifying an injustice and also suggesting a solution. He is able to recognize a weakness in our system and offer a very sensible, common sense remedy.

Some people may think this is a very small change, but it is going to make a huge difference in the lives of Canadians who have done their civil duty to serve as a juror, which is the last mandatory civil duty. As was mentioned, conscription was previously the other mandatory civil duty, but it was abolished.

This bill would carve out an exception to the jury secrecy rule and allow the disclosure of the deliberation process by jurors to a health care professional who is bound by confidentiality. I can only imagine these trials and deliberations subject jurors to traumatizing evidence and stress. We heard about Paul Bernardo and some of these other trials, and it has been proven that these can cause post-traumatic stress disorder.

These jurors almost always have mental health challenges, and they need the services they deserve. Sadly, today they do not have access to them. As an advocate for victims' rights, I am so proud to speak to this bill because sometimes these jurors, who are stepping up, become other victims of these crimes. I want to thank my colleagues in the House for speaking positively to the bill, as well as those in the Senate. Senator Boisvenu was acknowledged.

The goal here is to help Canadians who step up to accept the duty of being a juror and perform these essential services to the Canadian public. Our system of justice, sadly, often forgets the victims of these crimes. These jurors become victims because of the jury experience, and it is only right we support them. We can and we must do better.

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The member for St. Albert—Edmonton originally introduced this initiative in October of 2018, so it has been going for almost four years now. It is about time, and maybe the third time we will be lucky and we will get this passed. This is an example of a bill supported across party lines. It is a solution brought about from witnesses who were listened to at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Parliamentarians heard first-hand from jurors who had lived through some of the most difficult trials in Canadian history. These are jurors who were exposed to horrific evidence, evidence that in some cases has made permanent changes in their lives.

Imagine someone who sees these horrible pictures. They cannot unsee them. They cannot unhear the screams and the victims' stories. We need to be there to support these people who are so essential to our justice system. There are incessant questions when they go back to their ordinary lives, their work and their families. I ask members to imagine dealing with these incessant questions and repetitions after their duty has been done, as well as the suffering that can occur. There are also the questions from their loved ones who are wondering why they are not the same person they were before jury duty.

Can members imagine being diagnosed with PTSD and not being able to talk to a professional who could make a real difference in their life? This is something that is affecting each and every one of us. As I said earlier, it has affected my family. I have one family member who was asked to be a juror in a child pornography case. That case was only two weeks long, but that was two weeks away from work, family and friends. One cannot not be affected by the things one sees, yet he says he would do it again. He was proud to do it and to step up.

However, we need to make sure they get the support they need. I have another family member who was a juror in a horrible murder trial that was on for two months, and she was in the same situation. She said that it was a horrific case and that one could not go through this case and not be affected after. She realized that Canadians who serve as jurors should not become sick themselves.

● (1820)

With that, I support this bill. I want to thank all members in this House, particularly the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, for allowing this bill to go through.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be very—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Is this a second hour of debate?

● (1825)

The Deputy Speaker: It is the first hour of debate.

The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it is great to see there is continued unanimous support for this bill. As the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford noted, this is a bill that has been studied exhaustively, twice at the justice committee. It has passed in both this House and in the other place, unanimously.

I wish we could have sent it off to the Governor General this evening, but obviously that is not the case. We were not able to reach the consensus to do that. As soon as we can move this forward, the faster and the better it is to get it to committee. I honestly do not know what more about this could be studied at committee. However, it appears that is where we are.

Let us get it done. Let us get it done as quickly as possible. It has already been four years, three Parliaments and three bills. We owe it to the jurors who sacrifice a great deal and play such an important role in the administration of justice to see that this important bill passes.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. opposition House leader.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 18, 2022, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that messages have been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bills, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-203, an act respecting a federal framework on autism spectrum disorder, Bill S-209, an act respecting pandemic observance day, and Bill S-227, an act to establish food day in Canada.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:30 p.m. so we can continue with the business of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

AN ACT FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE EQUALITY OF CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The House resumed from April 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-13, an act for the substantive equality of Canada's official languages. This is an important bill.

As we know, along with indigenous languages, English and French are at the heart of Canada's history and identity. They are a major part of our country's social, cultural and economic vitality. Our government has always emphasized the importance of official languages in Canada, and we consider them to be not only a solemn responsibility, but also a way of recognizing the diversity and inclusion that define our country.

As a proud francophile, Quebecker and Canadian who represents the wonderful riding of Hull—Aylmer, I know how important that responsibility is. I represent what is likely the most bilingual riding in the country. Not only do my constituents speak both French and English, but they speak them well.

Part of this responsibility includes promoting the spirit of the Official Languages Act. The act is not only important to members here and federal public servants, but it is important to all Canadians. It is a reflection of who we are. Our world is changing fast, and linguistic realities are changing too. The linguistic context is in the midst of a major transformation, making an in-depth reform of this law necessary.

The reality is that bilingualism has been part of Canada's identity from the very beginning. In fact, it was in 1867, the year of Confederation, that English and French became the official languages of the Parliament of Canada.

In the 1960s, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, who also wore a bow tie, I might add, today being bow tie Thursday, established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The commission made recommendations for measures to ensure that Canadian Confederation would develop based on the principle of equality between francophones and anglophones in Canada. Those same recommendations would later form the basis of the very first version of Canada's Official Languages Act, which passed in 1969, the year I was born.

For the first time, the act made English and French the official languages in Canada, not just of Parliament, but of Canada. It stated that Canadians had the right to access federal services in the official language of their choice.

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In 1988, the new version of the Official Languages Act updated and clarified the linguistic rights of individuals and the obligations of federal institutions.

As the House knows, our government has taken important measures over the past few years, first by amending the official languages regulations for services to the public, and now with the Official Languages Act.

We held vast consultations with many stakeholders and we listened to what they had to say. Their comments were essential in the context of amending the regulations in order to make them more inclusive and representative of Canadian society.

These changes, which will be implemented over the next few years, will pave the way for the creation of some 700 new bilingual offices across the country. This is a big step forward in terms of providing services to Canadians in the official language of their choice.

• (1830)

Whether on the front lines or behind the scenes, our federal public servants provide these services. Every day, they communicate with Canadians in the official language of their choice. The government is committed to providing federal services in both official languages and to promoting a public service that fosters the use of French and English.

We have made significant progress because today's public service is much more bilingual than it was when I was born. Today, more than 90% of executives in the public service occupy bilingual positions. In surveys, most employees report that they feel free to use the language of their choice at work, but we know that the system is not perfect and that we must do better.

Bill C-13 marks an important step in the modernization and strengthening of the Official Languages Act. I would like to present the changes proposed by the bill.

The bill will do more than just give the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat the authority to monitor the compliance of federal institutions with their language obligations. In fact, it will require the department to do so.

What is more, the Treasury Board will work with the Department of Canadian Heritage to establish policies and regulations that will help federal institutions take positive measures to enhance the vitality of official language minority communities and promote linguistic duality in Canadian society. These policies and regulations will also help to hold federal institutions accountable in this regard.

It will now be easier to ensure that federal institutions meet their official language obligations. This will also help to increase the linguistic capacity of our public service.

What do these changes mean for Canadians? They likely mean two big things: a greater number of services for all Canadians in the official language of their choice and greater emphasis on the needs of Canada's official language minority communities.

Government Orders

For the past 50 years, the Official Languages Act has not only given Canadians basic language rights but also shaped our country's identity. We are a country that respects and celebrates diversity and inclusion.

I think Canada made a unique choice, not on purpose, but out of necessity. The French arrived in the New World, the North American continent, and, thanks to the kindness and hospitality of the indigenous peoples, they survived frigid winters and came to understand that no one could go it alone here, that everyone had to work together.

When the British arrived in North America some time later, instead of absorbing the different societies, as they had done in many other countries, they made room for the French. They allowed the French to keep their culture, their education and their system of laws, and francophones were able to keep their identity as francophones. This makes Canada a country unlike any other.

I do need to point out a certain character trait that Canada has developed over the years, decades and centuries. We tend to accommodate others rather than simply forcing them to adopt our point of view. I think this is reflected in Canada's official languages, and we must promote them, especially for Canadians who belong to minority communities across Canada.

• (1835)

The Official Languages Act is more than just a law. It is a reflection of our country's evolution and a part of our Canadian identity. This bill strengthens bilingualism across the country to make sure that Canadians can access services in the official language of their choice.

I call on all members to work together and support this important bill.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Hull—Aylmer for his speech. It is always a pleasure to remind him that I am one of his constituents when I spend the week in Ottawa. I stay in Hull, a sector of Gatineau, and he is my MP. I therefore regularly receive his always interesting and pertinent, if lengthy, newsletters in the mail. I just want to give my regards to my MP.

My colleague quite correctly highlighted the fact that Canada has been officially bilingual since its foundation, but that the Official Languages Act was adopted in 1969. We learned that this was the year of his birth, which is a fun bit of trivia.

He also noted that over 90% of senior executives in the public service are bilingual. In fact, I spoke last weekend with a high-ranking official from an important department who spoke perfect French despite having an English-sounding last name.

In his speech, my colleague talked about the various milestones, including how Prime Minister Pearson established a commission to study bilingualism and biculturalism and how the Official Languages Act was passed in 1969 under Prime Minister Trudeau. However, he forgot to include one thing in his historical overview and that is that, in 2015, the year he and I were both elected, his party's election platform provided for a review of the act. It took more than six years before his party delivered on that review.

Does he think his government was slow to act?

• (1840)

Hon. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, I will never admit to that. We took the time that was needed to do things right. I think it is important to make the right changes when modernizing this act.

The last time the act was reviewed was in 1988 under the Mulroney government. I commend Mr. Mulroney for updating the act, but that was 34 years ago. Back in 1988, I was a parliamentary page. I remember when this bill was amended.

It takes time to do things right. I am very proud of the proposals that have been made. I hope that all members are prepared to do their part to once again improve this bill.

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for Hull—Aylmer. I have sat with him at PROC and I have really enjoyed his interventions and his commitment to indigenous people's issues. I sat with him as I was at PROC replacing the MP for North Island—Powell River.

In my appreciation for his commitments to indigenous people, I was glad to see that there are protections for indigenous languages in the bill. I wonder if the member could elaborate on how indigenous languages will be protected through this bill.

Hon. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, let me answer in the language in which the member addressed her question. I thank the member for Nunavut for the incredible work she has done. The member for North Island—Powell River is an extraordinary member of Parliament, but I have to say that the contributions the member for Nunavut has made in terms of what we are looking at on indigenous languages will truly be historic.

In the same vein, the update to this law is taking very big steps to protect and to promote indigenous languages. I think the member will be very happy to learn of the provisions in this bill that would allow us to take some really big steps to recognize the first peoples of this continent and to make sure they are able to continue expressing themselves in their language.

I have to say how important this is. Language is a world view. You know this, Mr. Speaker, in the incredible work that you have done in learning the other official language. We all know, those of us who have the pleasure of knowing different languages, that it changes the way we think. Any steps we can take to preserve and promote indigenous languages are steps well worth taking.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind all hon. members here in the House that quick questions and short answers will allow more people to participate in the discussion.

The time for questions has expired, but I will try to give the hon. member for Manicouagan time for a short question.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as someone who wants to take the time to do things properly and to consult, can my hon. colleague tell me why none of the Government of Quebec's requests were accommodated in this new version of the bill?

• (1845)

Hon. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, all stakeholders were listened to. Politics is about making choices, and I think that we arrived at a good compromise that reflects the vast majority of the suggestions we received.

The Deputy Speaker: I have a small correction to make. I did not learn French; I come from a community with Acadian roots.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about your Acadian roots. As the member for the riding of West Nova, you represent two rather impressive francophone minority regions. We have had a chance to talk about this together. Some of my colleagues may get a chuckle out of this, but we talked about “par-en-haute” and “par-en-bas”, two Acadian-sounding names. Since I have known you, you have always supported and stood up for these francophone minority communities. The fact that you stood up this evening to remind us that you are a native Acadian, meaning that you are a native francophone, shows us how important the francophone fact is to you, not only in Nova Scotia, but across Canada. Thank you very much for clarifying that for us following the speech by my colleague from Hull—Aylmer.

This brings me to the topic of this Canadian Confederation, which was created in 1867, 155 years ago, through the union of two founding peoples, one francophone and one anglophone, with help from the first nations, of course.

What I want to talk about is this founding spirit, this spirit of co-operation that still needs to be at the centre of government action today, 155 years later. In 2022, when we make laws and implement policies here in Canada, we must always keep in mind the fact that two nations, one francophone and one anglophone, decided to found this great country, Canada, together.

From the very beginning, one of the key aspects of this co-operation has been the French language. French is part of Canada's identity. As I was saying, it is the federal government's responsibility to ensure that francophone communities thrive from coast to coast to coast.

I am thinking about Acadian communities, such as yours, Mr. Speaker, especially minority communities and the francophone communities “par-en-haute” and “par-en-bas”. I think that I will enjoy using these names. To give people some context, these names refer to St. Marys Bay and Argyle, if I am not mistaken.

Mr. Speaker, you see, we chatted a bit and you had the chance to describe that community to me.

There are also Franco-Ontarian communities, Franco-Manitoban communities, Franco-Saskatchewanian communities and Franco-Albertan communities. With one of my colleagues, I had the chance to visit some francophone communities in Alberta, such as the municipality of Falher. It is rather surprising.

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When we travel around Alberta and enter a village in the middle of the province, we hardly expect to feel like we are in an entirely francophone community, yet that is reality, that is not just a feeling. We go out, we talk with people in shops and restaurants, and French is the dominant language.

There is still a wonderfully strong francophone presence in many regions of Canada. What we expect is for the federal government to take action, instead of being content to talk about the importance of francophone communities to Canada. It is time for action. Unfortunately, in the past, instead of taking action, this Prime Minister's Liberals have often turned a deaf ear to the demands coming from francophone communities and from Quebec.

They have been bragging for years about wanting to promote the Canadian francophonie, but it has to be said that, for some Liberals, francophones are a minority like any other. We must always stand up against this utterly false assumption. This goes back to the foundation of the Confederation.

• (1850)

The modernization of the Official Languages Act was pushed back year after year, in spite of the Liberals' promises to Canadians during the 2015 election campaign. For years, several francophone organizations, including the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, and official languages commissioners have called for an overhaul of the Official Languages Act.

Members will recall that the Liberals proposed a modernization in 2018. It was also a campaign promise in 2019. Finally, a first bill to modernize the act, Bill C-32, was tabled in June 2021. What happened to Bill C-32? It died on the Order Paper because the Prime Minister chose, in the middle of summer and at the height of a pandemic, to call a pointless and costly election that forced us to start from scratch once again.

The last time the Official Languages Act was modernized, it was under Brian Mulroney, a Conservative prime minister who was also proud of his Quebec and francophone roots.

For decades, the Liberals and the Prime Minister have refused to recognize something that is essential to the survival of the French language. It is that, of the two languages that were originally spoken at Confederation, just one is threatened today. Let me be clear. The federal government must make it a priority to protect the French language and to keep protecting it. That is the role of the federal government.

The French language is more than just a simple means of communication. It is more than just the soul of the Quebec nation. It is the soul of Canada and it is a testament to our country's long history. The federal government has a duty to protect the French language and to ensure that it remains valued as part of the government's daily operations and in the enforcement of our laws and regulations. Those of us on this side of the House will not budge on that.

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The Conservatives have been asking the Liberals for years to modernize the Official Languages Act. We proposed many measures to protect French in Quebec and the rest of Canada, meaning in minority communities. I want to commend my colleagues from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier and Richmond—Arthabaska for their outstanding work on the Official Languages Act file. They met with groups from all parts of Canada. They held discussions and sought out people's thoughts and opinions so that we would truly understand the reality of people living in French across Canada, mainly in Quebec, but also in other regions.

How do they live in French? Are they able to get services in French? Do they have enough support in French? Are they able to raise their families in French in other parts of Canada?

That is particularly important in rural areas and in francophone minority communities. I think that is something that the government overlooked in the current version of Bill C-13.

In addition to wanting to modernize the act, we made other proposals, such as increasing the powers of the Commissioner of Official Languages. We want the Treasury Board to have the authority to ensure that the act is applied in all federal departments. We have also suggested that an official languages administrative tribunal be created to settle disputes involving the act, to impose stricter penalties on those who do not comply, and to add more stringent formal obligations to part VII of the act.

Then, we worked to provide federal funding to francophone post-secondary institutions in minority settings, such as the Université de Moncton, the University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean, and the Université de l'Ontario français. We have also proposed a new budget envelope of \$30 million per year, notwithstanding any future funding, and collaborating with the provinces to achieve these objectives.

• (1855)

With the official languages in education program, we increased support for French-language education at the elementary and high school levels to better reflect the demographic growth of francophone students. Yes, demographic growth is happening in several regions with minority francophone communities.

In addition, to ensure that the demographic weight of francophone minorities outside Quebec remains stable, we are setting out to increase the number of French-speaking immigrants, not only in Quebec, but across Canada.

These are some of the measures we put forward to protect minority francophones and their rights.

As the member for Hull—Aylmer said, the government did take its time, unfortunately. It took seven years to introduce its bill. It said it needed to do it right. Unfortunately, despite seven years of consultations, pressure and advice, it seems the government did not really listen to what people directly affected by the Official Languages Act reform want.

Several key points were left out by the Liberal government, but I will talk about those a little later.

This took seven years of work. However, it seems that a few months were wasted on things other than the Official Languages Act.

In our view, Bill C-13 is a rather weak legislative response to the decline of French in this country. As we have already pointed out, what is needed are real reforms, not just minor tweaks.

As it took seven years of work, we were expecting the Liberal bill to deal with the whole picture, the entire issue, all the problems and all the situations. However, it seems that the key reforms promised by the Liberals are unfortunately nowhere to be found in this bill.

As I said, the Liberals could have acted much earlier, not to introduce a bill, but to protect French in Canada. Our concern is not amending the bill or changing the regulations or rules and so on. Our role, and our aim, is to protect French in this country.

As currently drafted, Bill C-13 will unfortunately not stop the decline of French, either in Canada or in Quebec.

As always, the Liberals are good at talking, but not so good at listening. They did not act on the advice that they received from francophone organizations, such as the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada. One of the things that the FCFA called for was the elimination of the division of powers between the Treasury Board and Canadian Heritage. This was a clear, concrete and specific request that would have given the reform of the Official Languages Act some teeth. I will come back to this a little later.

The bill has no teeth. The bottom line is that there is no obligation to deliver results. Bill C-13 is full of good intentions, but it contains little that will really stop the decline of French. When certain situations arise, the government is not going to know who can do what. No one will be able to do anything to fix the situation.

Liane Roy, the president of the FCFA, said, "There are some significant gains, but some things still need to be worked on before we can say 'mission accomplished'."

As my colleagues can see, I am not just saying negative things. Some people have had positive things to say, but others have been more scathing, saying that the bill should have gone much further.

The president of the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario said that, compared with the previous bill, Bill C-32, there are some improvements. It took a bit of time to make it better, but it is not good enough yet. More improvements are needed.

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● (1900)

We identified six major problems with Bill C-13.

The first is the government-wide coordination or the centralization of power in a single department. New subsection 2.1(1) makes the Department of Canadian Heritage responsible for “exercising leadership within the Government of Canada in relation to the implementation of this Act.” Everyone agrees that Canadian Heritage does not have the expertise to manage the other departments, unlike the Treasury Board. The Minister of Canadian Heritage can tell his colleagues to do this or that, but there is nothing he can do if they do not comply, except maybe refuse to give them flags for Canada Day. That is the only thing the Minister of Canadian Heritage can threaten his colleagues with.

If the Treasury Board had been made responsible for enforcing the act, it would be a whole different story. The Treasury Board is the one that holds the purse strings and authorizes all of the departments' spending. It is the one that oversees the other departments. The Treasury Board could have made the other departments implement the new version of the Official Languages Act. However, the government chose to go with the Department of Canadian Heritage. That is ineffective, and we think that only the Treasury Board should have been given the responsibility of implementing this act for many reasons that I will come back to at a later time.

Second, we are talking about promoting French and English. The act is being amended to set out federal commitments, specifically enhancing the vitality of minorities, promoting French and English, protecting French and expanding minority language learning. As I said, we believe that the term “commitment” and definitions of these commitments should be clarified. The Treasury Board should also be responsible for this aspect and for the entire act, as opposed to what is proposed in Bill C-13. Furthermore, part VII of the act is not covered by the new power given to the Commissioner of Official Languages to issue orders, which is also problematic.

Third, we have immigration. The new clause 44.1 proposes that “the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration shall adopt a policy on francophone immigration to enhance the vitality of French linguistic minority communities in Canada”. However, there is no obligation to ensure that targets, objectives and indicators are met and respected. These are once again merely good intentions.

Fourth, the Commissioner of Official Languages is given three powers: to enter into a compliance agreement with federal institutions that contravene the act; to make an order directing any federal institution to rectify the contravention of part IV; and to impose administrative monetary penalties on a limited number of transportation companies offering passenger services that contravene part IV. We believe that these powers should extend to other parts of the act, specifically part VII. What is more, the maximum amount of these administrative monetary penalties is \$25,000. We have to wonder what the deterrent effect of a \$25,000 penalty would be for an organization like Air Canada, which had over \$2 billion in revenue in 2021.

Fifth, the bill does not contain any obligation for the federal government to include language clauses in agreements made with other levels of government to ensure compliance with the Official Languages Act, especially where federal transfers are involved, despite

the fact that the Federal Court of Appeal ruled that agreements lacking language clauses were invalid. Maybe the government should have listened just a tiny bit.

Sixth, the bill includes an important part about federally regulated private businesses. It creates a new act called “An Act to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts”. In Quebec, businesses would have the right to choose between the Quebec regime and the federal one. In other words, businesses would have a choice between getting punished and not getting punished.

In our view, this bill needs improvement. For these reasons, I move the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “That” and substituting the following:

“Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act, to enact the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act and to make related amendments to other Acts, be not now read a second time but that the order be discharged, the bill withdrawn, and the subject-matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.”.

In conclusion, Bill C-13 does not constitute the reform the Liberals have been promising for years and does not fulfill those promises.

● (1905)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Outremont.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. We agree on several things, including on the fact that French is in decline across the country, including in Quebec.

My question is on the very tangible and important measures that our Bill C-13 proposes in order to protect the French fact in official language minority communities from coast to coast to coast. The purpose of the bill is to allow communities to speak and celebrate French across the country.

My colleague just proposed an amendment that will delay the implementation of our bill. Does he not think that urgent action is needed and that we must act now to protect the French fact in Canada?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my hon. colleague, but I have to say that there is something kind of ironic.

Although I agree with what she said about promoting French in official language minority communities, I find it ironic that she accused me of wanting to delay a bill, when it took the Liberals seven years to introduce Bill C-13. They are the ones who decided to call an election rather than adopt the previous bill they had introduced in the House, Bill C-32.

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I proposed an amendment that would allow us to go further, to take into account all of the advice that was given by the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada and by Quebec, for example, and to give us more time to design a better bill. I am not asking for seven years. I am asking for it to be sent to parliamentary committee so that we can improve it and pass a better bill.

I think it is worth taking a few weeks to come up with a better bill for the good and the future of French in Canada.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am rather pleasantly surprised by my colleague's speech. I am addressing my comments to him as a Quebecker because the Official Languages Act is likely the biggest impediment to the application of Bill 101 and to French as a common language in Quebec.

I will give an example. The Official Languages Act is based on the concept of an anglophone minority, when anglophones in Quebec are actually part of the English Canadian majority. I am not the only one saying that.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee rendered the following decision in 1993, and I quote:

A group may constitute a majority in a province [French Quebec, for example] but still be a minority in a State and thus be entitled to the benefits of article 27. English speaking citizens of Canada cannot be considered a linguistic minority.

The so-called “positive” measures under Part VII of the act translate into roughly \$100 million in funding dedicated exclusively to strengthening English in Quebec, funding for English schools that are entitled to the same funding as French schools but that also get additional funding.

All of the organizations that spend their time saying or implying that Quebeckers are racist because they want to live in French are funded by the federal government. That includes the Quebec Community Groups Network.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that. Should the federal government continue to dedicate 100% of funding for official languages in Quebec to English communities?

● (1910)

Mr. Luc Berthold: I thank my colleague for his question, which raises concerns and deserves to be discussed in committee.

This is exactly what we are here in the House to discuss. However, I remind members that Canada was essentially founded on two languages: French and English. Quebec chose French as its language. Quebec was right to do so because Quebec is certainly the minority in North America based on language. Quebec has chosen to speak French. However, for years, there has been a major decline in French. I believe that my Bloc Québécois colleagues agree.

We are surrounded by anglophones on all sides. All the songs and shows are in English. The posts on Facebook and TikTok are in English, and most of the content our young people are watching and listening to is in English. This is a problem that must be taken seriously. Unfortunately, Bill C-13 sidesteps this issue. It does not do enough to ensure that we can stop the decline of French.

Yes, we want to end this decline in francophone minority communities outside Quebec, but also and especially in Quebec, the

bastion and cradle of Canada's francophonie. To do that, I think it is worth working even harder and putting more pressure on the Liberals to obtain further measures to ensure that Canada stays Canada, with two official languages, one of which is a strong French, in a Quebec that is increasingly francophone, and with francophone communities outside Quebec that will be proud and that will have the resources to continue to exist, to grow, to prosper and to develop in French.

[*English*]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, on beautiful Vancouver Island, there is a vibrant francophone community that, as we know, is quite far away from Ottawa.

[*Translation*]

I will ask my question in French because I really enjoy practising and improving my French whenever I get the chance.

The federal government must work much more closely with the provinces to protect the rights of francophones across Canada. Does my colleague agree that the federal government must negotiate language clauses in the agreements it negotiates with the provinces, and that this must be incorporated into the act?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for the quality of her French.

That is the beauty of Canada. If the House did not allow everyone, including our anglophone colleagues, to speak in French, if there were not a strong contingent of francophone members in the House, our colleague would not have chosen to address the House in French. She would not have chosen to learn and speak French and to communicate with her community in French. I salute her and every one of my colleagues who make an effort to learn French. Many of my Conservative and Liberal colleagues are learning the language and making an effort to speak French in the House. It is worth it. Let us continue that trend.

It is true that language clauses are one of the weak points of Bill C-13 that we have identified. We need to go further. That is why we are once again asking the Liberals not to wait seven years, but to actually listen this time, and to refrain from tabling a bill that is convenient for them and does not land them in too much hot water. They need to really listen to what people are saying and adjust Bill C-13 to accommodate at least some of their requests.

● (1915)

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable for his speech.

However, I would like to apologize to you, Mr. Speaker, because I just assumed that you had learned French, but you are a francophone by birth from an Acadian community.

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On that note, I would like to ask my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable what he thinks about the importance of passing Bill C-13 today to help minority language communities. Like Acadians in Nova Scotia, these communities do not all necessarily have access to francophone educational institutions ranging from early childhood to post-secondary education to ensure that the French fact is strengthened in these communities.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I will try to be brief, although it is difficult. I think my colleague is sincere in his desire to strengthen the importance of French.

He tells us that he wants Bill C-13 to be passed quickly, but quickly passing a bill that has no teeth is like trying to bite into an apple without teeth: It does absolutely no good.

We need to give the Official Languages Act some teeth, and we need the Treasury Board to be able to enforce what is in the act. If we can give the act some teeth, we can pass it quickly. However, as long as it has no teeth, there is no point in letting an apple rot on the shelf.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I speak to Bill C-13 today as an Acadian, as someone who worked in education for some 30 years and as someone who has spent a great deal of time in his life promoting the French language in Nova Scotia and across Canada.

I would like to thank the new minister and the former minister for their hard work over the past several years. As a former president of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie and the current and founding president of the Liberal caucus of official language minority communities, I can say that these have been interesting years for pursuing my work.

I will start with a few very important points. My colleague Raymond Daigle, a former deputy minister, told me that in the early 1960s, he read an article saying that, if the trend continued, the French language would die out in Nova Scotia. I am not sure if that would have happened in my community or in yours, Mr. Speaker, but that is what the article predicted.

To be honest, my father also told me that, in the early 1960s, the parish priest and the community were discussing the possibility of eliminating the only French course in our schools, which would have meant the complete elimination of French. It was totally unacceptable. My father and the community stood up to defend their right, but they had no tools to help them. Then, in 1969, like a gift from the heavens, the Official Languages Act arrived.

Since there was no French school, I did all my schooling, from kindergarten to grade 12, in English. Then I went to the Université de Moncton, in French.

That law came along and made it clear that the Parliament of Canada was going to operate in French, and that federal institutions representing the Government of Canada and Canadians could choose to use either French or English. This amounted to exceptional protections for the people of Canada and my part of the country.

What happened after 1969? In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was enacted, giving Canadians certain privileges and rights.

Section 23, on education, is an essential part of this charter. Paragraph 23(1)(a) has to do with language of instruction for people who learned French first and still speak it. Paragraph 23(1)(b) has to do with language of instruction for people who studied at a French school. Subsection 23(2) has to do with the right of a person who has one child in school in a given language to have all their children be instructed in the same language.

I will talk about this later, but no one ever counted the parents and children who studied in French. Our government is the one that did this for the first time this year, and it is very important.

In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms added this right to education. The provinces signed, but then they suddenly started asking questions: What powers would they have? Would it be necessary to build a small French classroom, and how many students would it have to accommodate?

This issue was brought before the courts several times. In 1990, the Mahé ruling changed the world of French education in Canada. A parent from Alberta was demanding the right not only to a French education, but also to schools managed “by us, for us”, which was a major difference. The Supreme Court ruled in his favour.

All of a sudden, francophone school boards were cropping up across Canada. In Nova Scotia, the francophone school board was created in 1996. I believe that there are now 28 francophone school boards across Canada, 174,000 students studying in French as a first language—not in immersion—and 700 schools for students with French as a first language. That is exactly what has happened.

There were other rulings after that, of course. There was Doucet-Boudreau on new schools in Nova Scotia, and Arsenault-Cameron on travel distances in Prince Edward Island.

- (1920)

In 2005, I became the superintendent of the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial. We needed to accomplish two major tasks. We needed to ensure quality education and get schools and community centres built. We had to work with the provincial government and the Department of Canadian Heritage. We have made a lot of progress.

However, I should point out that some parents were hesitant. Their children did not speak French. They had lost it. They were Acadians: the LeBlancs, the Samsons, the Fougères, the Landrys, the Arseneaults, the Béliveaus. We see names like that in Quebec and all over the place. These parents wondered if their children would lose a year or two of schooling because it would take a year or two to learn French.

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That is when the school board, under my leadership, developed a four-year program for all these incoming students. It was not formal school. It was informal. The idea was for them to play in French, have fun in French and learn French. It was great. Parents started sending us their children. It gave the school and the teachers an opportunity to build relationships with families in the community. Before we knew it, our student population jumped from 4,000 to 6,000, which is where we are now, and it is really amazing.

Then, in 2015, I became the MP for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. Chezzetcook is the second-oldest Francophone community in Nova Scotia. That was my opportunity to do something. For 32 years, I was active on the ground. I was a salesman, I talked, I pushed, I convinced the government, Canadian Heritage and others to support us. In 2015, I became a decision-maker. When I was active on the ground, I blamed the decision-makers. They were not moving fast enough. I told them to hurry up and pass bills to help us. Now that I am a decision-maker, I have to work fast. That is exactly what we have done.

What have we done since 2015?

We did not sleep as the opposition member claimed. We got straight down to work. What projects have we completed?

I remember the Translation Bureau. During their 10 years in power, the Conservatives cut, and cut and cut staff, sending texts to consulting companies for translation, saying that they did a good enough job, that it was okay, that it did not need to be perfect. We were the best in the world at translation. People came from all over to see how we did it. All of that had to be rebuilt.

Then the Conservatives started cutting the funding for court challenges. There was no money to do anything. We could not challenge anything to enforce our rights. What did we do? We brought it back, to ensure that people would have access to that program once again. Earlier I mentioned the number of students. That is very important. Appointing bilingual judges to the Supreme Court is another of our achievements of the past six years.

In reality, Bill C-13 is the culmination of many things we have done in addition to things we have heard and arguments that were brought forward. I thank the minister for taking all of this and putting it in a bill that will certainly make Canadians proud of this very important legislation.

Now let us talk about what is in the bill. There are some major changes. For example, stakeholders told us that we should ensure that the central agency is a department and that there is coordination. Who is better placed to do that than the Treasury Board Secretariat, which takes care of this for all the departments? The TBS monitors, evaluates, observes and does the necessary follow-up. It will be responsible for accountability. That is a major improvement we are making. What is more, the discretionary power it had is now mandatory. That is a major change that is going to help people a lot.

• (1925)

Next, we looked at the commissioner's powers. How can we ensure that he has more tools in his tool box? We gave him the authority to impose penalties. We gave him the authority to enter into compliance agreements with different parties and to make orders. If

we were to look at Air Canada today, we could use these measures, impose penalties and ensure that Canadians travelling with Air Canada are able to communicate in the language of their choice. That obligation is also there.

Let us talk about positive measures. We saw in Gascon that positive measures were not adequately defined. They were not clear enough or descriptive enough. The judge stated that tools were needed to make them much clearer. That is what Bill C-13 does. It truly establishes very positive measure that will help advance this file.

Concerning bilingual judges, my colleagues know that we have appointed three. It has been done. The Conservatives are still against this. It is now enshrined in this impressive new law.

In terms of francophone immigration, it is important to note that immigration is very important in Canada. There is a labour shortage, but the situation is even worse in francophone communities where we had a target of 4.4%. That target was not met, but it must be. We are losing our demographic weight. That is serious and that is why Bill C-13 proposes to implement a national strategy that will make it possible to establish clear objectives, targets and indicators and to follow up.

With regard to language of work and language of service in federally regulated businesses, our government is the first to recognize that there is a decline in French in Quebec. We must support French, not just outside Quebec, but within Quebec and internationally. That is exactly what we are proposing. Federally regulated businesses must co-operate to ensure the ongoing promotion of French.

As everyone knows, it is the government's responsibility to provide bilingual services. We must be leaders in that respect. During the pandemic, we saw that there were service shortcomings. We are therefore fixing things through Bill C-13, to ensure the use of both official languages in emergency situations and everyday operations. We have also changed the regulations pertaining to services in French. There will now be 700 additional bilingual offices across Canada. These are major changes.

I have given a broad overview of the situation, but there are still some questions, which is reasonable. There are discussions to be had. That is why we have committees, especially the Standing Committee on Official Languages. Each committee is independent, so there will be discussions and debates to be had there.

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Stakeholders make some good points. It is important to mention it. For instance, the fact that the Treasury Board can delegate its co-ordination responsibilities worries me. It does not worry me in the current situation; it worries me if the Conservatives ever come into power once again. We could lose all the progress we have made regarding bilingual judges and court challenges. That is a major point, and I think the committee has to discuss it further.

There is also the matter of language clauses. My colleague and current Minister of Health was the first to include a language clause for school day care, so it is certainly possible. It is true that we have policies in place that provide tools and improve processes. We could look at ways to ensure results. I have worked on the ground. The money comes, but we have not been consulted and we do not get our share. Something has to be done to achieve this goal, and what I propose is to make language clauses mandatory and to put a system in place to contact organizations and school boards if provincial governments drag their feet. We have seen that before, provinces that do nothing and fail to contribute their share of infrastructure funding, which puts everything on hold. We have to find ways to remedy that.

• (1930)

The third element that I think is very important is positive measures. As I explained earlier, Justice Clément Gascon said that these measures really need to be defined.

Bill C-13 does an exceptional job. In fact, I would like to congratulate the team that has done the work to give it some teeth. This means we can ensure that there will be major changes on the ground.

Allow me to provide some examples.

We could be a little more specific and say “required positive measures”. However, that can change, depending on the situation. Positive measures does not mean after-work drinks. In fact, it is something that has to happen on the ground.

Here is an example. British Columbia was trying to find some land for 20, 25 years. There was no land to build a francophone school.

Now, thanks to the federal government selling off a piece of land, the school board will be able to build a francophone school because it is important for official languages.

Halifax just went through the same thing. The Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, for which I once served as director general, was also looking for land. The Government of Nova Scotia was able to purchase land for the school board when Canada sold some real estate.

As members can see, everything works well when the rules are clear and when they promote substantive equality between French and English in Canada.

I want to conclude with some important points.

First, the Government of Canada is a leader. It has to be one. Otherwise, who will?

Second, we must resist ongoing assimilation and find ways to quash it. That is very important, but no one is even asking the question.

Third, I am very proud of the changes that have been made in terms of education. When I was director general, it was said that public school was only meant for kids aged five to 18. People did not think we had to worry about them.

Our government made a change by adding students in junior kindergarten and post-secondary school. I wonder why they were not included from birth until death. I do not like the word “death”, so I will replace it with “adult maturity”.

I would like to close with a little quote whose author's name escapes me: The history of French in Canada is still being written.

This bill will take us a long way. I know my grandchildren and my colleagues' grandchildren will benefit from it for a very long time.

• (1935)

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague across the way for that very energetic and impassioned speech. I certainly grasped what he was saying about the importance of the Francophonie.

One of my children lives in Moncton, New Brunswick. He also spent 14 years in Edmonton, Alberta. I also have two grandsons who went to university in Edmonton and are currently studying at the Université de Moncton.

The first thing I want to say to my colleague is that we have been eagerly looking forward to this bill for six years. The member seems to be in a hurry to pass it, but we have been waiting for no less than six years. They have had time to think about it.

Why is the government in such a hurry? I think we could make some major improvements to the bill.

I recently became a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, and I would like the bill to come to us as fast as possible so we can improve it.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on support for the Francophonie outside Quebec. I think there are some very big issues there too.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, it is extremely important. I too studied at the Université de Moncton. I had done all of my schooling in English because there was no French school. I did not have a choice. That was the turning point in my French-language academic career.

Earlier, I talked about bilingual Supreme Court justices. This is very important. Court challenges are very important. Real estate and land sales are very important. These are investments that we are making in communities and community centres. This is the core and the anchor of the community. We need to continue investing in these regions and in these communities to ensure the advancement of French.

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Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate my colleague's passionate speeches. I know that in Acadia, people were forced to defend French, sometimes even with fists. It is one of the biggest pockets of resistance outside Quebec.

I do not think that the bill is going to reverse the decline among francophones outside Quebec or in Quebec. This trend is accelerating. We in Quebec support francophone and Acadian communities, we always have, and we will continue to do so more and more.

To go back to the positive measures that my colleague was talking about, what would he say if, all of a sudden, English was supported by positive measures? I think that he knows that.

All Acadian organizations are supported. It is essential to keep them operating. In Quebec, even before the Official Languages Act, francophone institutions were underfunded. Basically, anglophones in Quebec were the dominant majority.

The Official Languages Act came along and funded English in Quebec because it was the minority language. However, this is in no way comparable to the situation of francophone minorities outside Quebec.

• (1940)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I always like it when I am asked good questions.

I will start by saying that immigration is very important for Quebec and for francophone minorities outside Quebec. Bill C-13 addresses that and will greatly improve the situation.

There are investments. Our government is the only one to recognize that Quebec is a minority in North America and that a lot more needs to be done to protect French in Canada and Quebec. Federally regulated businesses can provide additional support.

It took six or seven years to come up with this bill, but we did not wait to do everything at once. We have been doing things all along. This bill will fill in the gaps.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member is always interesting to listen to; I like his style.

The member mentioned the 4.4% target, and I know in my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam there is a strong francophone community, but a lot of the older generation are moving away and moving out. The young people, the kids, are the ones who want to learn French, and their parents want them to learn French. We had difficulty finding a school like *École des Pionniers*. We actually had to move outside of the community, because we could not get support for the French school in our community.

How does the federal government propose to support young immigrant children who are coming and would like to take up French in provinces outside of Quebec?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, that is an important question, because immigration is essential, as I explained, and I think that we have to ensure that. It is one thing to bring an immigrant to the country, but how do we bring them to communities and how do

we support them in those communities? That is crucial on that front.

[*Translation*]

With regard to schools, as I said earlier, it is very important for school boards to have access to property. Under the Official Languages Act, they can buy a piece of land from the federal government's real estate holdings. That is one way.

The second way is by showing all of Canada that the federal government is there to support the provincial governments. Often, when a school is built, Canadian Heritage can help with the community aspect. Those are all possible ways of dealing with the situation.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my friend and colleague for the excellent work he does as chair of the official languages caucus and for his leadership throughout his career.

During his speech earlier, my friend mentioned the court challenges program, which has been very important to the Acadian community in Atlantic Canada.

I was wondering if my colleague could explain the importance of the court challenges program. What benefits does this program bring to official language minority communities? Can he also explain why this program needs to be included in the legislation?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her hard work and the fact that she is open to collaborating. As soon as she was appointed, she held further consultations with all stakeholders to accommodate them to the greatest extent possible.

The court challenges program is extremely important. What can people do when their rights are not respected?

Think of the people who went to court in *Mahe v. Alberta*. If there had not been money to help them, they would not have the schools they have today and be able to run them.

Think of the people who went to court in *Arseneault-Cameron v. Prince Edward Island*. They wanted schools that were closer to the francophone community.

Then there is *Doucet-Boudreau v. Nova Scotia*. They were calling for schools and the province said that it would build them eventually. The judge ordered the province to build the schools and come back six months later to explain to the court what had been done.

The court challenges program is the key to ensuring that rights are respected.

• (1945)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, what meaningful protection does this bill offer to fight the assimilation of francophones across Canada?

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Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question.

I thank the member for speaking French. I thank him for his service. I know that he spent part of his working life supporting and protecting Canada. That is definitely very important.

I think I would like to talk about positive measures. Provinces and territories have responsibilities with respect to French and English. If we do not institute positive measures, if we do not set out the steps to be followed, sometimes the steps will not be followed.

That is why it is so important to support requests for things like community centres. These are opportunities for people to learn the language, whether they are francophone, anglophone or francophile. Ultimately, a bilingual Canada is a strong Canada.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see that there is a crowd here this evening, just as there has been at the other late debates we have been having over the past few weeks. As I have told the House before, I am an actor. I used to act in movies, plays and television shows. I did a lot of theatre work, and the theatre works well when there is a full house. However, sometimes things do not go as well and no one shows up.

As I rise this evening, it feels like I am doing the fifth showing of a play that got really bad reviews because there are hardly any people here.

Those who know me know that I often rise in the House to speak and that I sometimes speak loudly. I get all worked up. This evening, I am in a different kind of mood.

The main reason I am here is to talk about language. I have been fighting for the French language for the past 20 years. It is one of the main reasons why the members of the Bloc Québécois are here. We could resolve one issue right away, I think. If we want to permanently resolve the issue of the French language in Quebec, there is only one solution and that is independence. There is no other way.

The Bloc Québécois got elected. We are here and we will debate to try to improve the bill, but, in the end, there is only one solution.

I was saying earlier that I was not in the mood to celebrate because, sometimes, I feel a little bit as if I were suffering from a broken heart. Before I begin, I would like to recognize someone who is here with us tonight and who has been a great fighter for the French language. I have been fighting for the last 20 years, but he is perhaps the foremost expert on the French language at this time. I am talking about Mario Beaulieu, the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île, who is here tonight.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I remind the member that he is not to use the names of other members in the House.

The member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I have been working tirelessly for the past 20 years to achieve one reality: to make sure French survives in Quebec, to make sure it thrives.

The member for La Pointe-de-l'Île has been part of every struggle. I have been at his side for some of them, but he has been doing it a lot longer than I have. He was also far more engaged when he was president of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal. We held countless demonstrations and organized countless shows, all with the goal of keeping French alive.

It is worth noting that there are a few experts who really know the issue, and the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île is certainly one of them. We French speakers make up 3% of the population on this American continent. Right next to us is the United States of America, the most powerful hegemonic culture in human history. We are bombarded with their films, music and culture, and we have to block it out. Unfortunately, Bill C-13 really does not get the job done.

I say that I am in a strange mood because the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île and I have fought and have attended many protests. I remember protesting against English signage on Sainte-Catherine Street. I even brought my kids with me. My daughter, who is now 18 years old, was three at the time. I have pictures of her in front of the Best Buy on Sainte-Catherine Street. I was dragging her along. I am surprised no one called child protective services. I have pictures that were taken in front of Payless ShoeSource and other stores that did not provide French versions of their names.

Today, when I talk to my 13-year-old son and 18-year-old daughter about fighting for our language, they look at me like I am fighting for a lost cause, as though the fight were already over, as though everyone has already moved on to something else. They watch YouTube, TikTok and that sort of thing. We were saying yesterday how critical Bill C-11 is to support our creators. My kids watch videos and consume American culture. My son learned English from TikTok. Being able to speak three, four, five or eight languages is a great thing. That is wonderful. However, in the context in which we live, bilingualism is dangerous.

I was saying that because Mario and I were spokespeople for Mouvement Montréal Français—

• (1950)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am going to have to interrupt the member's rhapsodizing. I must again remind him that he cannot refer to another member by name.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Yes, all right, Madam Speaker.

Along with the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île, I was the spokesperson for Mouvement Montréal Français. That was quite a long time ago.

I organized a protest called *J'aime ma langue dans ta bouche*, or "I like my tongue in your mouth".

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The point of keeping French alive is to make the French language the place where everyone comes together in Quebec, the place where people meet, the crossroads for all the people who live in Quebec. People come here from all over the world. They come to our province. They adopt our country. They come to Quebec. They come to Montreal. They come to Quebec City. They come to Matane. They come to Rimouski. They come to Sept-Îles. We must therefore ensure that the French language becomes the meeting place *par excellence* for all the people who live in our province.

When we put on that show, I remember, we had no fear. We put on a 12-hour show. I went a bit overboard. It started at noon and ended at midnight. It seemed interminable, but we were sending a strong message. I invited people from all over to that show, artists who had been in Quebec for two years, six months, 12 years, 20 years. I invited them to come celebrate Quebec culture, celebrate this language that we all share. It was amazing. It is still available on social media.

I remember very well that there was a Tamil music group called Ananda Prasad. It was at the Lion d'Or, on Papineau, in Montreal. These musicians came in traditional costume. It was beautiful. They were also on stage at Lion d'Or. Behind them, I had put up a photo of Serge Fiori. They had instruments from southeast Asia. It was beautiful. They sang *Comme un sage* by Harmonium. It was so beautiful with the accents of that music. On that stage at Lion d'Or, it was like a meeting between us and them, between the language and the people from around the world. It was magnificent. It was extraordinary.

We organized this event for a year or two, and then I loosened up. The event was cut from 12 hours to two hours. Afterwards, we realized that there was no point holding this event at the Lion d'Or because this venue is located in the Plateau Mont-Royal neighbourhood. We wanted to convince people of this idea of making French the place where everyone comes together, but everyone in Plateau Mont-Royal already believes it. At least, everyone believed it 10 years ago. Today, perhaps not quite as many do.

We then moved the event to Côte-des-Neiges, where 91 different languages are spoken. We held the event in a park. We set up a stage. I remember it. Yann Perreau was there, as well as Catherine Major and other artists from all over. It was really incredible. We tried to entice people, to get people to say that our language is magnificent and our culture is extraordinary. We wanted them to adopt it, to join this adventure that was important to us, the adventure of making this little corner of America a francophone land.

Today, we realize that it did not quite work. We see it. Language is not just a string of useful phonemes. It is not just “pass me the butter”, “are we going to the movies tonight” or “I am taking my car to the garage”. It is not just about utilitarian things. A language conveys more than that. It tells about who we are, our values and our history.

I want to say this. As members know, Serge Bouchard is an anthropologist who wrote books. He died a year or two ago. He wrote extraordinary things. He had a radio show on Radio-Canada where he talked about language, culture and all sorts of other subjects. He talked about something absolutely fascinating in one of his books. It shows how a language or even a word can say so much about

who we are. That is what is at stake here. That is what we could lose.

• (1955)

In Quebec, when you say “original”, the French word for moose, it brings to mind all sorts of images. It says something.

We all have uncles, fathers, grandfathers or brothers who went hunting in the fall. They came back with moose antlers. They put them on the hood of their car and drove around town. Everyone in Quebec who is over the age of 40 remembers that. The word “original” is therefore part of Quebec culture. It is a Basque word. It is so extraordinary to think about. The French word for moose comes from the word *oreinak*, which means deer. How did we come to be using it? The story is fascinating. The Basques came to fish in the St. Lawrence River before the arrival of Jacques Cartier, Champlain and the French. They met the Innu from the Lower North Shore. They came to fish, stopped on the beach and spent time with the Innu. They talked and traded. Just imagine.

Imagine them sitting and eating on the beach, somewhere around Blanc-Sablon or further north. My colleague from Manicouagan would know more about that. Imagine that one day a moose walked out of the forest. The Innu surely had a word for moose. They have been here for 20,000 years, so they certainly had a word for moose. There was probably a Basque man who called it an *oreinak*, or something like that. I can imagine it. This story comes from Serge Bouchard, but it is really interesting to think about. The Innu adopted the word *oreinak*, which transformed into *original*, the French word for “moose”. When Champlain arrived 200 or 300 years later, he had never seen a moose before. The Innu he met told him that it was called an *original*, a moose. It is fascinating. History is so rich and incredible. Who wants that to disappear? Who wants to lose that? Who wants to lose this rich history?

The word *bécosses* is part of our history. I do not know if anglophones will get the reference. The word *bécosses*, which means “outhouse”, is part of the vernacular in Quebec. It comes from the English word “back-house”. Way back when, people did their business in a small shed behind the house. This is important stuff. It is part of Quebec's history.

There are so many fascinating elements to that story. A carpenter once told me that when toilets started to be installed indoors, they were elevated. That is why they were called “the throne”. There was a time when people were proud to show that they had a toilet inside their home instead of in a shed out back. It was important to them. It was social progress of a sort to go from the “back-house” to “inside the house”, so to speak. In effect, it was like a throne.

We chuckle at the word *bécosses*, but it tells a story. We use it because of anglophones. The anglophones came along 200 years ago, conquered us, won on the Plains of Abraham, and we have been stuck with them ever since. It is what it is.

In short, culture speaks. We share it and we want that to continue. What peoples of the world would want to see their culture disappear? Who would want to lose that? Who does not want their children to speak their language? Who does not want their children to remember where they come from, where their ancestors come from, what their history is and what I just described? That is a part of who we are. It is extremely important. It defines us. We cannot unravel that.

● (2000)

These meetings occurred with the Innu and with the people who were here when we arrived, and when the anglophones arrived. Now, there is immigration from everywhere in the world and each new arrival enriches us. However, in Quebec, we must succeed in making the French language the meeting place *par excellence* and the place where we all connect. It is really extraordinary when we think about it.

I do not have much time left. I am going to treat myself. I brought a copy of the book *L'homme rapaillé* by Gaston Miron. The last time I spoke—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to inform the member that his book is considered a prop. The member may read an excerpt.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Okay, Madam Speaker.

Gaston Miron is an incredibly talented poet. He only wrote one book, a collection of poems called *L'homme rapaillé*. He was a great wordsmith of the French language. His poetry was about survival. He fought for the survival of our culture.

The blessed my mother is our life of life
blessèd with a rip-roar proud heart
blessèd with the everlasting hand
blessèd with the poaching head in our mountains
blessèd of my grandfather in the black illiteracy
blessèd of my father gnawed sleepless
blessèd in my child-like eyes

The blisters of delirium the disarrayed colors
the muteness of animals in knots of wood
the snag of history for two centuries
and here I am
coming out from cracks of cellar windows
my shrouded face deserts its inert traits
I rear up in the call of a bony memory
I have a memory ache for I do not have memory
in the pallor of life and the moire of snow
I ramble on inside out I tremble in doorways
I frighten myself with my voice the stumps of my voice

Damn canuck of damn canuck of pea soup
holy blessèd water of blessèd blessing
holy blessèd water of blessèd ruined life
gorgeous girl of blessèd old buggy

That poem was written by Gaston Miron.

I treated myself tonight. In his day, Gaston Miron fought for the French language. Today, the Bloc Québécois and all those who love French in Quebec are also fighting for the survival of our language and our culture. It is a fundamental battle. The Official Languages Act makes no headway in this battle. It does not help us in this battle. It does not advance our quest to make this small corner of America a francophone land. We will work on it. We will do every-

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thing we can to improve it because for the sake of our children, we cannot lose this battle.

● (2005)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank Denis—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order.

I would like to remind the member not to refer to another member by name.

The member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard: Excuse me, Madam Speaker.

I listened to the member's speech. He has the same name as some of my relatives who live near Montreal: my uncle Gaston, who recently passed away, my aunt Cédia and my cousins Diane and Francine.

The member spoke about the need to offer support to the francophone community in Quebec. For me, it is very important to do so across the country. There is a francophone community in my riding of Barrie—Innisfil. When I speak to students, I talk to them about the importance of French. There are many opportunities in French, not just in Canada and Ontario, but around the world.

Could the member speak about the importance of French for the youth of our country?

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague. My struggle was for the survival of French in Quebec, but I also want French to thrive everywhere, not just in Canada.

I think the latest figures show that there are 500 million French speakers around the world, a number that is growing because many countries in Africa still speak French, which is thriving in that part of the world.

The struggle is here in North America. I therefore share my colleague's concerns. While I am fighting for French in Quebec, I am fighting for French everywhere.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my Bloc Québécois colleague gave a very spirited speech. I appreciate his fight to preserve the French language in Quebec. I also thank him for understanding that a large percentage of francophones are in Africa.

However, I have the impression that my colleague across the aisle does not understand that francophones outside of Quebec are also a minority. Does he understand that Bill C-13 is not just about French in Quebec, but about French everywhere in Canada? There are francophones in my riding, London West.

Can he comment on francophone minority communities?

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I agree 100%, and what I would say to them is that we have to work to help francophone communities thrive.

Government Orders

That is not the problem with Bill C-13. The problem is that it does not take an asymmetrical approach and once again puts both languages on equal footing even though there is no such thing as minority anglophones in Canada. They do not exist, and people need to stop thinking that way.

The federal government's Bill C-13 puts up hundreds of thousands of dollars, millions even, to support anglophones in Quebec who are supposedly in a minority situation. My colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île knows more about that than I do. There is no such thing though. Anglophones in Quebec get better treatment than any other minority in the known universe. Francophones are the ones who need protection both in Quebec and across the country.

• (2010)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I would like to thank the member for his passionate speech. I was doing a lot of historical research while he was sharing his great stories. I checked to see when the Official Languages Act was first enacted. It was in 1969. It only took Canada 102 years to have an official languages act for the French language. If we compare that with the Indigenous Languages Act, which was not enacted until 2019, it took 152 years for indigenous languages to be protected.

I wonder if the member could share his views on, in addition to the French language protections, how important he feels indigenous language protections are, as they are also mentioned in this bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I think that no one is in a better position than Quebeckers are to understand people who are fighting for their language and their culture. We Quebeckers know all about it. That is what we have been doing for 200 years: fighting for the survival of the language and culture. No one is in a better position than we are to recognize the importance of saving one's language and culture.

I completely agree with my colleague from Nunavut that it makes no sense that it took 102 years before there was an Official Languages Act, and 152 years for legislation protecting indigenous languages. It is high time that we have a major discussion on everything to do with truth and reconciliation in Canada, but that has yet to start.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for his passionate plea, from the bottom of his heart, in favour of our magnificent language.

The previous question was about whether the Bloc was aware of the existence of francophone minorities in Canada. Yes, we are aware, but I would like to give my colleague the opportunity to explain to our colleagues across the way how easy it would be to specify either that Bill C-13 does not promote bilingualism in Quebec, or that it applies in Quebec on condition that it does not contravene Quebec's Charter of the French Language, Bill 101. That would solve the problem.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, that is what this debate is all about.

What we want is for Bill 101 to apply to federally regulated businesses, as we asked for in our bill. It would be so much simpler. Even the minister responsible for Canadian relations and the Canadian Francophonie, Sonia LeBel, has said so. When the bill was introduced in February, she said, "When it comes to Quebec, hands off."

In Quebec, we want to legislate on language ourselves. We have Bill 96, a strong piece of legislation that will soon be amended. We will see whether that is enough. This is our home, and we will take care of it. We can do it. The less the federal government gets involved, the better it will be for French in Quebec.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a simple comment. I would like to thank the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for the *bécosses* story, because I have a "back-house" at home.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, I am sorry, but I did not understand the question. Do I need to repeat the story behind *bécosses*?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound was just thanking the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things that I note in the bill is the section on francophone immigration. It talks about the minister creating a policy on francophone immigration, but without really any specifics.

We have had a target on francophone immigration that we failed to meet, and part of the problem is there have been very high refusal rates, particularly for applicants from francophone Africa. I believe there is an opportunity for Canada to strengthen our engagement with Africa, yet we are failing that opportunity because of big backlogs, high refusal rates and really a lack of engagement through the immigration system.

I wonder if the member has a comment specifically on how we can strengthen our francophone presence in Canada through better engagement with francophone Africa.

• (2015)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right, and I agree.

There is a pool of people there. For unknown reasons—well, it depends on one's perspective—the federal government is not promoting francophone immigration to Quebec. This is a big problem. There is a huge backlog of applications from francophone immigrants from Africa who want to come to Quebec. We could not ask for better. Of course it helps the cause of French in Quebec if we make sure that the people arriving here already speak French. In fact, in the bill that we introduced, whose number I forget, we asked for Quebec to have sole authority over immigration so that newcomers would learn French as quickly as possible.

Government Orders

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

As the resident of a rather remote area, I think it is important to talk about the situation in Yukon.

Yukon has a population of 40,000. Fourteen percent speak French and English and about 5%, or 1,600 people, speak French as their first language. Yukon has Canada's third-largest per capita population of francophones. It is a dynamic, spirited, and engaged community that has made a lot of progress in the past decades.

The francophone renaissance in Yukon started in the 1970s after the passage of the Official Languages Act. Strengthened by the federal government's engagement, Yukon's francophone community has grown in every way ever since.

Culturally speaking, Yukon's francophone community is strong. It has an influence on all of Yukon's communities. The progress continues. In fact, Yukon will soon be opening a bilingual health centre. Recently, we learned that a third French-language school will open in Dawson City for the next school year. Dawson City is located in northern Yukon. It is a small city with a big spirit and a great history.

The number of students in French immersion classes in Yukon has skyrocketed. Now, you can hear people speaking French all over Yukon.

As a francophile, I am proud to see the progress made since the implementation of Canada's Official Languages Act.

Personally, I pretty much grew up with the advancement of French as an official language in Canada. In the 1970s, I found the idea of a bilingual Canada inspiring. I was inspired by none other than Pierre Elliott Trudeau to try to bring the two solitudes together through a better mutual understanding and through the use of the other language.

I went into a French immersion program in Alberta. I travelled. I studied in France. Later on, I lived in Montreal for a few months. I lived and worked in a francophone environment abroad. I did my best to improve my French through the years. Obviously, it is far from perfect, but the basics are there. It is enough to allow me to participate, at least to some extent, in the francophone community, a community that is very open to francophiles.

Now, my wife speaks French as a second language. Both of my children, who grew up in Yukon, went to French institutions for the majority of their preschool and school years and are perfectly bilingual.

Yukon has such a strong francophone population that it attracts people from Canada, Acadia, Quebec, France and other francophone countries who are looking for a life of adventure in a northern community while keeping their ability to speak French.

With Bill C-13, we can go even further by supporting our official language minority communities and contribute to the richness of everyone's life.

• (2020)

When I was campaigning as a first-time candidate, I learned about the former Bill C-32 and about how important it was to the francophone community that the bill be improved. The need for swifter, stronger action to amend the Official Languages Act was one of the key measures I had in mind when I arrived as a new member of Parliament.

I am therefore pleased to talk about the successful and hard work of the Minister of Official Languages, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Official Languages and their team, as well as the consultations and analyses that went into the development of Bill C-13.

This bill is important for all Canadians, including those who live far from the centre and those of us who live in the north. A strong Official Languages Act is important for all languages, including indigenous languages. I know that people in Yukon are familiar with this cross-fertilization, with the active preservation and promotion of language rights, whether they be for official languages or indigenous languages. They each help the other.

It is in this context that I speak not only of the significant progress we have made with Bill C-13, but also of the improvements that give this new bill more teeth. I am talking about positive measures, a central agency and a scope that will benefit us all.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my friend for his excellent French. In Yukon, if I am not mistaken, francophones represent about 2% of the population.

There is something mind-boggling in the Official Languages Act, namely the “where the numbers warrant” principle, which is even found in section 23 of the Constitution. It was improved somewhat with the concept of “linguistic vitality”. Under this principle, if there are fewer francophones in Yukon, because of migratory factors for instance, the federal government will reduce services in French.

Usually, laws are there to support something. For example, when employment goes down, the unemployment rate goes up. The government then brings in measures to support employment. In contrast, with the Official Languages Act, when French declines and has less vitality, support for French is reduced.

What does my colleague think about that?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his interesting question.

I will add that with a strong core, it becomes a positive measure that draws more and more interest from immigrants and people who are on the move.

The growth of the community has always been supported by the federal government, who acted as a catalyst. There is a positive return that makes the francophone community stronger.

• (2025)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. I am very pleased to sit with him on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Government Orders

In Nanaimo-Ladysmith, it is very important to francophone Canadians that francophone language, traditions and culture is flourishing.

Under Bill C-13, the Department of Canadian Heritage retains a role in coordinating and implementing the Act, even though it has no authority over other federal institutions. Why not make the Treasury Board the one and only central agency responsible for implementing it?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and commend her on her French. We work together on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

In answer to her question, I would say that our government recognizes that we can always do more to protect the official language rights of all Canadians. We are also strengthening the powers of the Commissioner of Official Languages to ensure that he has the tools he needs to enforce the act. That is why we are centralizing the coordination of the act under a single department, which will have access to the resources of a central agency.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would also like to take a moment to thank my colleague from Yukon for his outstanding work. As a member of the official languages caucus, I always enjoy his speeches. I sincerely thank him.

As an Acadian who lives in an official language minority community in New Brunswick, if I was able to attend elementary and secondary school in French and go to the Université de Moncton, it is due in part to the Official Languages Act.

I am wondering if the member for Yukon could talk a little more about the importance of implementing this bill. What will that change for Yukon's francophone community?

Mr. Brendan Hanley: Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for her question, her support and her encouragement.

As we have seen, for the past 40 years, the francophone community has been growing, and every bit of federal support enhances the vitality of the francophone community. The ripple effect of this support for first-language education lasts for generations; it attracts more people and that gives—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. I am sorry, but I have already extended the time for the answers a little, and now we have to resume the debate.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-13 this evening. However, I am going to spoil the general mood of happiness and joy.

I will begin by pointing out that this is the second time that we are dealing with a bill like this one in a very short period of time. We had made a lot of progress the last time, but the bill died on the Order Paper because our fine government decided that it was high time we had an election. Here we are again, then.

This bill sets out some fundamental principles, including the right to communicate with federal institutions, to work in the lan-

guage of one's choice, and to have equal opportunities for employment. It makes general commitments, such as promoting French and enhancing opportunities for apprenticeships. This is all very good, and we see that there are even some gains for francophone communities outside Quebec. We appreciate that.

The big problem I see tonight is that Bill C-13 creates a new law. It creates a new law that imposes bilingualism on Quebec. Furthermore, this law has a major flaw. It would allow private companies to voluntarily comply with this law. They would be entitled to either comply with this law or comply with Quebec's Charter of the French Language. Understandably, our choice is quite obvious. What we want to see apply is the Charter of the French Language.

In addition, this law provides for financial penalties for the first time. This was pointed out, I think, by my colleagues in the Conservative Party earlier. We are talking about an horrendous \$25,000 fine that can be imposed no more than once for the same violation. Tell that to Air Canada, which, year after year, tops the list in all categories of complaints to the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. Air Canada is laughing its head off. All it has to do is pay \$25,000 once and be done with it.

There are a lot of things in this bill. I would like to be happy and rejoice with everyone. I must say that I appreciate these debates when we discuss language, because it is a chance to appreciate the quality of the French spoken by members, such as the member for Yukon or the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, among others. It is wonderful. However, in effect, there is nothing rosy about the bill. There is nothing rosy about it at all.

I just spoke about the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. I will take this opportunity, while we are talking about language, to revisit the Switch Health scandal. Let us remember that last spring, we asked the House a series of questions. We were outraged because our farmers had to spend countless hours on the telephone to register their temporary foreign workers and have them take COVID-19 tests. They had the option of spending 15, 20, 25 hours on hold to obtain service in French—service that cuts off at 6:30 p.m.—or waiting two and a half hours to speak with an anglophone nurse. That is the real Canada.

I am still angry about it. I have no choice. I warned my colleagues that I was going to explode, and here we are. I have nevertheless noticed the advances for people outside Quebec. The most frustrating part of all this for us is that no one is responding to any of Quebec's demands. They try to placate us by saying that it is important, that everyone speaks French, that they are generous and good and kind. Quebec has made demands. For one, defending French in Quebec should be considered a provincial responsibility.

There are two ways to protect languages. The whole scientific community agrees on the geographical aspect. We can try to protect two languages at the same time, everywhere. It is unfortunate that I don't have two hours to speak; I have about 15 pages of statistics here that I could show you. They demonstrate that the percentage of francophones in Quebec and people speaking French at home is dropping in Quebec and in Montreal. It is on the decline everywhere in Canada. I think it is dropping even faster since the Official Languages Act was passed more than 50 years ago. It does not matter how much rhetoric I hear about the Official Languages Act, I do not believe it.

● (2030)

Why do I seem so skeptical? Because I taught Quebec and Canadian history.

Someone talked to me about the two founding peoples earlier. I would like him to talk to me about that again when we are discussing Quebec's political weight in the House of Commons and people do not want to guarantee the Quebec nation 25% of the seats even though this is supposedly its Parliament.

People are pretending that guaranteeing our 78 seats means our political weight will not change, but the plan is to add seats everywhere else. That is the same thing, and anyone who believes otherwise is a sucker.

There were two founding peoples in 1867. In 1871, New Brunswick's Commons Schools Act removed public funding from separate Acadian schools, putting an end to French-language instruction in New Brunswick. I am sorry that happened to New Brunswickers, but it is part of history.

In 1877, Prince Edward Island's Public Schools Act shuttered French schools. In 1890, it was decided that Manitoba had just one official language, English, even though Manitoba was created in 1870 following the rebellion of the Métis, a francophone Catholic people whose rights had been guaranteed only to be wiped out a mere 20 years later.

In 1892, English was the only language of Parliament and education in the Northwest Territories until 1901. In 1905, following massive immigration from Europe, Alberta and Saskatchewan were created as unilingual anglophone provinces, even though they had been developed by francophones.

I hope Ontarians remember that in 1912, Regulation 17 prohibiting French-language education in Ontario came into effect and remained in effect for 32 years. I spoke with some lovely Franco-Ontarians this week from Prescott-Russell. Imagine how much stronger and vibrant Franco-Ontarians would be if they had not been stifled for 32 years.

● (2035)

In 1916, the Thornton Act in Manitoba eliminates bilingual schools and therefore French-language instruction. In 1931, no more class time would be devoted to French in Saskatchewan. If you wanted to teach your children French, you did so in the evening and on weekends. This makes for a beautiful bilingual country.

Government Orders

It goes on. In 2018, the Ford government in Ontario decided to attack the Université de l'Ontario français and the Office of the French Language Services Commissioner. Meanwhile, the percentage of French speakers and users is declining everywhere outside of Quebec.

Earlier someone mentioned British Columbia. I recognize that British Columbia is an exception, that French has some vitality there. Unfortunately, elsewhere, including the magnificent Yukon, which I have visited, the numbers are low, even in Montreal.

Now, the federal government is telling us we need to protect the poor minority anglophones in Quebec, that poor 9% of the population that receives 40% of the post-secondary education funding in Quebec. We are supposed to feel sorry for them.

Let us be serious. In Quebec, Bill 101 was passed in 1977. In the meantime, there have been five rulings, eight changes, and 250 amendments brought about by the court of the neighbouring country. That is what this is about. After that, why are people surprised that I talk about independence in this Parliament? I could talk all night.

Let us talk about veterans. My colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles found out that an application from an anglophone is processed in roughly 20 weeks, but it takes 60 to 70 weeks for a francophone. It is normal, unless the evil Bloc Québécois makes a fuss about it.

It would be easy to allow Quebec to manage the situation by applying Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. I am pleased to see that the minister is here while I speak and I am telling her that it would be easy to include a small exemption. I mentioned it earlier.

● (2040)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

I would like to know whether this bill needs to be scrapped altogether or whether it can be amended. I would also like to know whether it is the department that should be responsible for implementing the bill, as the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith said.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for this very important question and for the opportunity he has given me. It is indeed a very good question.

Yes, I recognize the importance of this legislation in Canada and why it is needed. No, we do not need to scrap the bill. We are not here to create obstacles. We just want to protect our people.

If the bill stated that the law would apply in Quebec as long as it did not interfere with the Charter of the French Language, that would solve the problem. It is easy. There would be no problem.

Let the Quebec government promote the French language within its territory. It is an area where the language is very dynamic. We can do it. This could even help revitalize French everywhere in Canada.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my Bloc Québécois colleague for his speech this evening.

Government Orders

We do agree on one thing: French is in decline in Canada, including in Québec. The federal government and all the provinces and territories have to help tackle this demographic decline. Bill C-13 is how we are going to solve this problem. We are making sure we have the tools to support official language minority communities.

Does the member see that this bill will change a lot for francophones outside Quebec, francophones in Quebec and all official language minority communities?

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for the question.

I acknowledged at the beginning of my speech that there had been some gains for francophones outside Quebec. However, for Quebec, I am sorry to disappoint the minister, but this bill is harmful for French. It is harmful because it will allow businesses to take the easy road. They can decide to follow the letter of the law without needing to worry about Bill 101. When there is no legislative uniformity in a jurisdiction, that has adverse effects. This bill gives people the right to work in French, but it does not make French the common, everyday language. It would take me more than 30 seconds to explain, but there is a big difference. French is not a secondary language that has to be translated to please a worker who complained. It has to be natural. It must be the natural way of communicating for everyone. It is our wealth.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

[*English*]

I know he wanted me to speak French for a bit.

I very much understand how language is so intertwined with identity. It happens in variations of English as well. My wife is an Australian citizen, and I know from living down there for a year that the ways they spoke English were very much not the same as I spoke English. There is the Australian identity and the Canadian identity in the way we fell in love with our own versions of English.

In my own riding, the indigenous people, the first nations, are revitalizing the way they are speaking Halkomelem. It is very much intertwined with the Coast Salish identity. There is also a huge demand among residents in my riding to get their children to learn French. There is more demand than there is availability.

I truly believe in the bottom of my heart that the way to bring Canada and Quebec together is to make sure the French-speaking minorities all across Canada are built up to show solidarity with the francophone population in Quebec. I am just wondering if my colleague has some ideas on how we can build that solidarity in the rest of Canada, so that francophones in Quebec have that partnership right across the land.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my valued colleague from the agriculture committee for his question and for his nice introduction in French. He put in a great effort.

I also recognize that British Columbia is an exception, in that there is more demand for French. He asked about how we can develop a partnership. It is simple and I mentioned this earlier. The

feds need to stop acting as though they know all. We are not here to prevent Canada from enacting legislation. What we want is to protect Quebec's jurisdictions in the legislation and to protect the French language on Quebec land. If the government leaves us alone then we will leave it alone, and our interactions will be very interesting because our French will be stronger—

● (2045)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this evening's debate. My French is a bit rusty so I will begin by summarizing what I want to say. After that I will give more details in English.

First, the French language is very important to me. In my family, my wife and I speak a little French, but my children do not speak it at all, so it is very important for us to be able to use French in certain situations. I will not get into the details, but I have the opportunity to practise my French at home from time to time.

There is a strong francophone community in my riding. There are also a lot of francophiles, people who love French, anglophones who put their children in French immersion.

This evening, we are debating Bill C-13. In my opinion, this bill is a weak legislative response to the urgent problem of the decline in French. We needed a reform, not amendments. It took six years for the Liberals to introduce a bill that is not the reform they promised. The Liberals could have acted sooner to protect and promote French.

The bill will not do anything to stop the decline of French. It lacks teeth and contains no binding obligations. The lack of strong measures is particularly evident when it comes to immigration. I will talk about immigration measures in general and how they affect our place in the world.

[*English*]

I am speaking to Bill C-13, which, in the opinion of the Conservative Party, is a rather weak response to the urgent problem of the decline of the French language, and we want to see more.

We will be supporting this bill through to the second reading, but we will certainly be active at the committee stage and try to propose amendments that respond to the concerns that linguistic minorities in Canada have and that will further strengthen the legislation.

I wanted to speak specifically tonight on the immigration section of the bill. It is a short section. It is an important section, but I think it is also emblematic of some of the broader weaknesses within the legislation.

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For context, on the immigration section and its implications, let me say that I think, in terms of our engagement with other countries and our positioning in the world, that Canada's status as a bilingual nation is an incredible strategic opportunity.

The fact that we have anglophones and francophones and they have the opportunity to learn the other official language, and that many Canadians have an opportunity to become bilingual, presents a significant strategic advantage for Canada's engagement in the world. It allows people to travel to more places easily and to converse in the local language. It facilitates people-to-people exchanges. It facilitates opportunities for trade. It also means we can play a greater role in geopolitics. We can be involved in negotiation and mediation, and it is simply easier to have conversations with people when one is able to actually speak directly to them without relying on the services of translation.

Canada's status as a bilingual nation really does give us an opportunity. English and French, if one thinks globally, are very common languages around the world, so the fact that these are the two predominant languages here in Canada provides us with that much more of an opportunity for engagement.

I will say, in particular, that the French language in Canada provides us with a great opportunity for engagement with Africa. I do not think we talk enough in the House about the values and the benefits that come from increased engagement with Africa. I think we need to do better at thinking strategically in Canada about the opportunities that can come from strengthening our ties with African nations.

● (2050)

Africa has recently established a free trade area. Many African nations have very young populations, so we are going to see significant demographic growth continuing in Africa. In the decades ahead, that demographic growth, and the significant economic growth we are seeing in many countries in Africa, will mean that decisions that are made in Africa are going to shape global affairs to a greater and greater extent in the decades to come. We can be ahead of the curve by recognizing how free trade, economic growth and demographic growth, as well as incredible innovation, are happening in Africa and various sectors right now. Canada can be ahead of the curve if we start to think more about the opportunities that come with engaging with Africa.

It has been a problem in the past that, when we talk about Africa, it has often been only in the context of international development. That is a part of the picture. However, there is so much opportunity for trade, for strategic engagement and for other kinds of opportunities to emerge through greater partnership in and with countries in Africa. We need to recognize that, and recognize the opportunities for partnership that Canada has as a result of being a bilingual nation and the opportunities, in particular, for more engagement with francophone nations in Africa. We need to recognize the existence of competition for that at present.

We spoke during the day, prior to getting to the debate on this bill, about some of the issues and challenges in the Canada-China relationship. We know that the Government of China has a very aggressive strategy for strategic engagement in Africa, getting access to natural resources and some of the opportunities that come with

that. Much of the democratic world has not done enough to be present in Africa to engage there, and I believe there are problems with aspects of the Government of China's engagement in Africa in terms of it not always involving respect for the people of those countries. We can engage, as an English-French bilingual nation. We can build those ties and connections and we can strengthen our presence in the process. It will provide economic advantages for Canada. It will provide greater cultural richness, in terms of the exchanges and interactions that can take place. That is part of setting the stage of recognizing the opportunities, in terms of foreign affairs and engagement in trade, that come with a relationship with nations in Africa.

I had a real aha moment recently, when I was talking to some ambassadors from African nations about the connection between immigration measures and other aspects of our engagement with other countries. When we have an immigration system that is operating below its capacity, and when there are significant backlogs, high refusal rates and delays, it makes it very difficult to have other forms of engagement.

If people want to come to Canada on a trade mission but they have an impossible time getting access to a visa, they are significantly delayed, they do not feel that they are treated with respect or simply feel that logistically it is too complicated, then there is less opportunity to have the people-to-people interaction that comes through trade. If people are coming diplomatically to discuss potential partnerships in trade or academic partnerships, or they are coming simply for travel or to build relationships that might have economic and other opportunities flow out of that, but their ability to travel is constrained by an immigration system that is not working to grant visitor visas in a timely way, and that is having disproportionate refusal rates associated with certain parts of the world, it holds back our engagement.

We need to engage more with countries in Africa. There are perhaps a variety of reasons why we have not done a good enough job of that in the past, as a country. One reason comes down to the immigration system. There is a much higher refusal rate for many countries in Africa, in terms of people being able to come to Canada. There are challenges for people getting visitor visas. We have recently done a study at the immigration committee about some of the challenges for people being able to access student visas. People are making applications to come as students to Canada, and there are very high refusal rates for African nations, in particular for francophone African nations.

● (2055)

If we are talking about the need to have more francophone immigration and to have policies around that to set targets, yet we are having very high refusal rates for those who apply, we are going to lose out on this competition for talent, and we are going to lose out on the opportunities for engagement that come from it.

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The connection I have been able to make recently is to understand how those failures in our immigration system affect so many other areas of engagement. If a young person wants to come here to study in Canada, they might stay afterward or they might go back while preserving those ties and connections they have with Canada. They could go back to their country of origin and start a business there. They see, because they spent time in Canada, the opportunities that can come from expanding those connections. However, if we cut short that possibility of connection between our country and emerging leaders in various francophone African countries, in particular, then we are going to miss out on trade, economic and cultural sharing opportunities that could come further down the line.

In particular, the legislation we have before us, Bill C-13, the section on immigration reads:

“The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration shall adopt a policy on francophone immigration to enhance the vitality of French linguistic minority communities in Canada.” It then continues:

The policy shall include, among other things,

(a) objectives, targets and indicators; and

(b) a statement that the Government of Canada recognizes that immigration is one of the factors that contributes to maintaining or increasing the demographic weight of French linguistic minority communities in Canada.

Substantively, what does that actually do with respect to francophone immigration? It says the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has to come up with some kind of policy, and that policy needs objectives, targets and indicators, and there needs to be a statement about the importance of this area. That does not have any teeth at all. That simply requires the expression of an aspiration. There is no indication in the act about what that policy should be, what the particular targets should be or how we might ensure the government meets those targets.

From what I understand, we have already had a target for francophone immigration for a very long time. Under the Liberal government, we have consistently failed to meet that target. We already have a target. We are not meeting it, and now we are putting in legislation and a statement saying that yes, we really need to have a policy and need to have targets.

The government needs to actually look at some of the fundamental problems that are holding us back. Yes, it is good to have a target, but we have to take that target seriously and we have to, as part of setting those goals, identify where have we failed up until now and why.

We know that there have been high refusal rates for many countries in Africa, particularly francophone countries in Africa. We actually have people who speak French who want to come here, who want to study, and maybe live and work here in Canada, and they are experiencing a very high level of refusal.

We have also been able to identify, through the work at the immigration committee, and much has been said and written on this elsewhere, problems of racism at IRCC and racism in those determinations. We also have massive immigration backlogs. People make applications wanting to come to Canada and are significantly delayed in doing so. That includes people who are coming as stu-

dents. That includes people who are coming for work. That includes people who want to come for temporary visits.

We have people getting refused without a clear explanation as to why, or we have reasons that do not really make sense or fit the context. People are being told they do not have enough travel history, but there has to be a first time. If someone is a young person, and they have the skills and the abilities, and they have been accepted to come and study in Canada, but then someone will point out their travel history, that gets in the way.

Some of these reasons do not really seem to make sense and are really frustrating to potential applicants. It is unfair to these people who are making these applications, but it also a big loss for Canada. We are talking tonight about the benefits of our bilingualism and how we can reverse the decline of the use of the French language in Canada.

A big part of that response can be through immigration. If we are saying in legislation that we need to have a policy and a statement, and that we need to recognize how important this is, but then in practice, when people are making applications, they are experiencing a high refusal rate, we are missing a critical piece.

● (2100)

Over time, the implication of this is that people, the best and the brightest from around the world, will choose to apply somewhere else. There is a competition for talent that is part of our immigration system, and part of the way we compete is by making the immigration system effective, smooth and, as much as possible, a positive experience for the user of that system. On so many issues the government really wants to signal its aspirations, but we are not seeing the results.

This is on a different issue, but I was struck in question period today when members of my caucus were asking questions about setting up the three-digit suicide prevention line. It is such a very important issue, and the government is saying it is working as hard as it can to get it done as fast as possible. I am wondering how long it takes to set up a phone number.

The immigration minister said they would not remove the visa requirement for people applying from Ukraine because it would take them 12 weeks to remove the requirement. How does it take 12 weeks to remove a requirement? We are not talking about adding a requirement; we are talking about removing a requirement. The government is so slow to move on things that should not be that complex to get done. Again, with this legislation, Liberals are saying francophone immigration is great, they want francophone immigration and they want to have a policy on francophone immigration, but they are failing to meet the targets that currently exist.

As I emphasized, we have to understand the connections that exist between an immigration system that works and other forms of co-operation. If people are looking to do business and looking to build relationships, where maybe the first trip is purely a vacation, but then they meet other people and things come out of that, and our immigration system is not providing the level of service that people expect, then we are going to miss opportunities to build those connections and relationships.

I believe strongly that we need to strengthen our engagement with the francophone and other countries in Africa. There are immense opportunities for Canada that come out of the strengthening of that connection, but that requires us to have an immigration system that works well, that is fair to people in all regions of the world and does not have bias in it. Of course, applications will have to be refused some of the time, but applications should only be refused when there is good reason to do so.

That was what I wanted to focus on, for the most part, in my remarks. I do want to say that the failures in providing a clear road map on francophone immigration that we see in Bill C-13 are actually emblematic of larger issues in the bill. There is a lot of vagueness in the bill and a lot of desire to signal a commitment, broadly speaking, to good ideas and aspirations, but there is a failure to understand the mechanics of how those things could be delivered on. Some of the structural issues around the giving of many powers under this bill to the Department of Canadian Heritage as opposed to Treasury Board will lead to certain administrative problems and challenges. This is part of a larger issue around the effectiveness of some of these provisions in the bill.

Conservatives are very supportive of official languages. We are very supportive of having a strong linguistic duality in this country that benefits our country domestically, but, as I have also argued, presents us with significant strategic advantages and opportunities in our engagement with the world. However, it has to be real. It has to be substantive. It cannot just be about vaguely signalling commitments to things. We have to see the results.

I would like to move an amendment to the amendment. I move:

That the amendment be amended by adding the following: "and that the committee report back no later than 10 sitting days following the adoption of this motion."

• (2105)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The amendment to the amendment is in order.

[*Translation*]

The hon. Minister of Official Languages.

[*English*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am a bit confused. This evening I have been hearing many Conservative members talking about how we have not done much when it comes to official languages since 2015. Let me do a bit of recap. I am very proud of the work that has been done since we formed government.

We have put in place an action plan, which we have backed up with investments of \$2.7 billion, when it comes to official languages. We have made historic investments in post-secondary education in minority communities. We also moved forward with Bill C-32, and now we have Bill C-13. After the consultation I have been doing since I became Minister of Official Languages, we have put in place a bill that has even more teeth and more strength.

Through all of the activities we have done over the past four years, our objective has always been to have substantive equality when it comes to French and English within this country. I have

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many Conservatives over the past few months who have told me this is great work, that they support the work that is being done and that they support this bill. This evening, I am a bit surprised that we are seeing amendments and amendments.

Which is it? Are the Conservatives supporting our legislation, to move forward with strengthening our official languages for all Canadians, or are we going to be playing games and seeing this being slowed down?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, there was something very odd in the member's question, so I was just quickly researching this. The member cited Bill C-32 from the last Parliament as an achievement of the government. That bill did not pass. The bill was tabled for first reading on June 15, 2021. What happened to that bill? The government decided to call a premature election, which dissolved Parliament and, therefore, the bill. Only a Liberal would present a bill that was not debated and did not pass as a demonstration of their great accomplishments on this issue.

The minister then also spoke about money spent, instead of results. How do the Liberals measure their achievements? They talk about the money they spend instead of the results they achieve, and they talk about a bill they tabled at the 11th hour before they dissolved Parliament with a needless summer election. I suggest we need a better way of measuring accomplishment than that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I find it rather unfortunate to see the minister being partisan by criticizing the Conservatives for not having done better. I believe that we must move forward and propose amendments.

I would like to ask my colleague a question about francophone immigration. Francophone immigration is a good thing for francophone and Acadian communities. It is essential for Quebec as well. The federal immigration department never meets its targets for francophone immigration. We gave the example of temporary study permits for African francophones, which have an incredibly high refusal rate. Bill C-13 does not seem to resolve this problem.

What does my colleague believe should be done? Should there be binding targets? I believe that is the only way to solve the problem. Could my colleague comment on that?

• (2110)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his good question.

It is obvious that this bill does not have enough teeth to solve the problem. I spoke about some measures that I believe we should implement.

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I think we need to address the problems of significant backlogs. I think people need to have clarity around the reasons refusals are given. I think we need to take the targets we have more seriously. I also think, at the very least, this act should require more, in terms of what the strategy looks like, and require the minister to be accountable when we fail to meet those targets. I do not think we can be too prescriptive on things that do naturally require the management of government, as opposed to the direct prescriptive action of the House of Commons, but we can expect more accountability when the government fails to meet targets.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have heard a couple of times tonight in the debate the mention of the 4.4% target for immigration, but I have also heard a couple of times tonight about the importance of children who are immigrating here to learn French, and actually the demand for it. When parents come, they want their children, outside of Quebec and all across Canada, to be able to learn French.

Does the member have any ideas about how the federal government could support immigrant children coming to Canada to learn French in provinces outside of Quebec?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, speaking from the perspective of an Alberta MP, there is great demand for people to be able to learn French. I see that in my community, and much of that is a question of what is within our education system. In my riding, we have a number of francophone schools for the francophone community. We have a very large and very successful French immersion program as well for people of all backgrounds, whether recent immigrants or people whose families have been in Canada for generations, who see the benefit and opportunities that are associated with being able to learn and study in French.

There is so much opportunity for French immersion, but I think one of the challenges is that sometimes there is less opportunity to actually use that French as people get older. People who have studied in French as students end up using the language less. I am not going to say anything that will surprise anyone, but generally the language of commerce and conversation where I live is English.

I think we need to think strategically about making those opportunities available to young people to study and having the federal government work collaboratively with provinces in terms of their areas of jurisdiction, and then also thinking about how we can create more opportunities for people to use French more as they get older.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's focus on what we could do to enhance francophone immigration. It is referenced, of course, in Bill C-13, but to ask the Minister of Immigration to develop a strategy for francophone immigration, given his catalogue of existing failures to seize this opportunity, does the member think that we have scope in amending Bill C-13 to jump-start strategies with specific measures that will improve and enhance francophone immigration to various parts of this country?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the bill, I gather, will go to the official languages committee when it is adopted at second reading, and I think it has support across the House to pass second

reading. However, concurrent with that, the immigration committee, which I sit on, is doing a study of many of these issues and I believe will bring recommendations to the House for specific points of action. I think part of the deliberation and the feedback the official languages committee will want to hear is what kinds of amendments could really strengthen that section.

What we are hearing at the immigration committee as well is that there needs to be a broader strengthening of our immigration system. There are many systemic issues in our immigration system. We need to address the problems of why we are seeing those disparities in refusal rates from country to country, why we still have issues of racism at IRCC, which need to be addressed, and why we have these problems with backlogs. Part of addressing the issues around francophone immigration is also addressing the challenges with the immigration system that have crept in under this government writ large.

• (2115)

[Translation]

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, to begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

It is a great pleasure for me, as a multilingual member of Parliament and someone who grew up speaking French and Arabic at home, to rise today to discuss Bill C-13.

I think everyone can agree that it is time to modernize the Official Languages Act. I also believe that we can acknowledge that the federal government must do more to establish and maintain substantive equality between our two official languages.

[English]

Our government's modernization of the Official Languages Act is a big step in the right direction. It demonstrates our commitment to protecting and promoting French everywhere in Canada, including in Quebec, while also supporting official-language minority communities from coast to coast to coast. These goals are not mutually exclusive. We can and must do both proudly. This bill will move us forward to what I believe we all wish to see: substantive equality between Canada's official languages.

[Translation]

It is one of my personal priorities, and I am proud that it is also a government priority.

[English]

As my colleagues know, this legislation builds on the bill introduced during the previous Parliament. I want to acknowledge and thank my friend, the Minister of Official Languages, for her work and attention to this, and for the choice of historic Grand-Pré in my beautiful province of Nouvelle-Écosse as the site of this new bill's announcement. The symbolism of that choice did not go unnoticed.

[*Translation*]

I would also like to recognize the work done on this file by the former official languages minister, who is now the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I had the privilege of attending the 2021 federal, provincial and territorial meetings of ministers responsible for the Canadian Francophonie with her. While there, we discussed the modernization of this act, as well as the provision of services in French and the shortage of bilingual workers.

[*English*]

This improved bill adds important provisions that strengthen compliance with the Official Languages Act across government, enhance the powers of the official languages commissioner, and encourage the use of French in federally regulated businesses in Quebec and other regions with a strong francophone presence.

[*Translation*]

As several of my colleagues have noted, this is the first major reform of the act in over 30 years.

[*English*]

We have more experience today of how the act has worked over the years and where it has fallen short. We have the benefit of a great deal of input and feedback from stakeholders and official-language minority community groups to draw upon in our modernization, including what we heard in response to the bill introduced last year.

[*Translation*]

I have personally had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada and the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones. I appreciated their feedback on Bill C-13. With this bill, we are demonstrating our commitment to listening to community organizations, keeping one of the main promises in our campaign platform and introducing a balanced bill that reflects the linguistic realities of francophone and anglophone Canadians.

• (2120)

[*English*]

What would the amendments presented in this bill accomplish? The answer is, many things, but I will highlight a few. The bill would specify that all legal obligations related to the official languages apply at all times, including during emergencies. It would provide that section 16 of the act applies to the Supreme Court of Canada. It would clarify the nature of the duty of federal institutions to take positive measures to implement certain Government of Canada commitments and the manner in which the duty is to be carried out. It would require the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to adopt a policy on francophone immigration. It would centralize the coordination of the act under a single minister, who would have access to the resources of a central agency, the Treasury Board.

The Treasury Board would be required to establish policies to give effect to certain parts of the act; monitor and audit federal institutions for their compliance with policies, directives and regulations relating to the official languages; and evaluate the effective-

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ness and efficiency of policies and programs of federal institutions relating to the official languages.

[*Translation*]

I think these changes make sense. Canadians need clear accountability so they can make sure their government is delivering concrete results.

[*English*]

Strengthening the Treasury Board's role and removing discretion would help us achieve the vision of a public service where everyone works in the official language of their choice.

Bill C-13 would also strengthen the powers of the official languages commissioners to make sure they have the tools they need to enforce the act, essentially ensuring that the Official Languages Act has teeth. This includes giving them the ability to impose monetary penalties on companies that work with the travelling public and to enter into compliance agreements.

It would provide for Government of Canada commitments to protect and promote French, ensure education rights are being met, and advance opportunities for linguistic minority community members to pursue quality learning in their own language throughout their lives.

It would provide for certain positive measures that federal institutions may take to implement our commitments, including to promote and support the learning of English and French in Canada and support sectors that are essential to enhancing the vitality of English and French linguistic minority communities and protecting their institutions.

It would empower the Minister of Canadian Heritage to promote the rights Canadians hold with regard to language of work, and advance equality of status and use of English and French in Canadian society.

The bill would enact the use of French in federally regulated private businesses act, which would provide for rights and duties respecting the use of French as a language of service and a language of work in relation to federally regulated private businesses in Quebec, and later in regions with a strong francophone presence.

As I mentioned, our bill would give the Commissioner of Official Languages more enforcement tools, which had already been envisioned, to tackle the ongoing problem of non-compliance.

Bill C-13 also addresses worrisome trends, such as the decline in the demographic weight of Canada's francophone population, including in Quebec, and the stagnating overall rate of bilingualism among Canadians. The bill recognizes two important truths. One, the private sector must play a role in promoting our official languages and enhancing the vitality of official-language minority communities. Two, French is in significant decline in our country and we must make a concerted effort to reverse the trend.

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[Translation]

I would also like to use my time to share why I feel it is my responsibility to support this bill.

[English]

Fostering bilingualism is a personal priority for me, as is growing our francophone population. I, too, am concerned by the decline of the demographic weight of francophones in Canada.

[Translation]

I think we can make inroads on this problem by working hard to increase francophone immigration and by making significant investments in French-language education. My province is in dire need of francophone early childhood educators. We have to do more to ensure that families can see their children grow up in French.

• (2125)

[English]

As someone who spoke French before I spoke English, and who returned to my home province as a child without speaking English, I have a deep appreciation for the importance of government taking action to ensure the continued vitality and use of French.

As the former minister of immigration and the former minister of Acadian affairs and francophonie, I launched Nova Scotia's francophone immigration action plan in 2019. I advocated for the introduction of French stop signs in the Acadian regions of Nova Scotia. I worked closely with the French school board le Conseil scolaire acadien provincial—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the member since we are moving on to questions and comments.

The hon. Minister of Official Languages.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Halifax West for her speech and her support for Bill C-13. I would also like to congratulate her for her work as a member of the official languages caucus and for what she achieved while she was the minister responsible for immigration and other portfolios in Nova Scotia.

She is very familiar with the bill and understands full well the importance of modernizing the Official Languages Act. I would like to know if she can describe how this bill will benefit her province.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Speaker, the modernization of the Official Languages Act shows our commitment to protecting and promoting French across the country, including in Quebec, while supporting official language minority communities from coast to coast. I believe that this is extremely important and necessary.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, people in Quebec and across the country are con-

cerned about the decline of French. We know that this is a true systemic crisis.

Unfortunately, after seven years of the Liberals in power, the failures are mounting: a unilingual Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; failures on francophone immigration; a CEO of Air Canada who has contempt for French; the news that there are no francophones on the board of Montreal-based CN; and finally the Commissioner of Official Languages saying that the government is responsible for a systemic crisis that francophone workers are paying for.

It is clear that we need a very strong Official Languages Act. As we know, several members have made it clear that amendments are needed to improve Bill C-13.

Does the government support these calls for improvements? Is it willing to accept amendments so that we can strengthen this legislation now?

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I listened to her speech on Bill C-13, and I was very interested in her comments.

I agree with her. We must act to ensure the vitality of all official language minority communities. We do not want any of them to see their institutions, services, or protections diminish, and it is very important that corporate CEOs learn or understand at least basic French, because it is necessary.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, anywhere in the world, it is normal for newcomers to want to join the majority.

If we simply allow free choice, there is no question that newcomers, even in Quebec, will tend to go towards English.

Why does Bill C-13 stubbornly continue to impose free choice of languages in Quebec?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Halifax West has one minute to respond.

• (2130)

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I very much appreciate his question.

I love Quebec, the province of Quebec and all the people of Quebec. I agree that we must protect the French language, in Quebec and across Canada. I hope that all my colleagues can work together to ensure that Bill C-13 evolves into the best legislation that it can be.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am extremely honoured and happy to participate in tonight's debate on a subject that is particularly close to my heart, namely the vitality and future of the French language, whether in Quebec or anywhere in the federation's francophone minority communities.

That is why I would like to raise some points for consideration in tonight's discussion. The first thing to do is to provide an overview of the current situation.

How is it that we have reached a point where it is absolutely necessary to modernize the Official Languages Act? I remember one date: 1988. That is the year the last major reform of the Official Languages Act was carried out. I remember I was 15 years old and in ninth grade at Beaulieu school in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. It was a very long time ago, so I think it is high time to modernize the act. In fact, this modernization is several years overdue.

The situation has changed a great deal since 1988, and it has not improved for francophones in Quebec or in certain communities elsewhere in Canada. I will provide a few figures to start. In 1971, the demographic weight of francophones in the federation was 27.5%. In 2016, it was only 22.8%, which represents a considerable decrease over those 45 years.

Admissions of francophone immigrants outside Quebec between 2008 and 2020 totalled approximately 50,000, well below the 125,000 expected and required to keep the demographic weight of their population outside Quebec at 4.4%. This shortfall of 75,000 francophone immigrants outside Quebec is equivalent to the entire francophone community of British Columbia. That says a lot.

The 4.4% target for francophone immigrants outside Quebec established in 2003 was supposed to be met in 2008. It was pushed back 15 years because, over 20 years, the federal government never managed to promote the French-speaking minority in Canada outside Quebec. It never met that target. On the contrary, the percentage of francophones among immigrants who settled outside Quebec stagnated at around 2%, with a historic low of 1.5% recorded in 2015. That is a far cry from the target of 4.4% for francophone immigration set by the previous government.

We have more recent figures on the systematic rejection of work permits for francophone students from Africa. They are extremely worrisome and show that there is a systemic problem at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. The refusal rate is much higher in Quebec than in the rest of Canada for these African countries. In Canada, the refusal rate was 29% in 2015 and it increased slightly to 33% in 2021. In Quebec, the refusal rate for francophone immigrants from Africa was 29% in 2015 and 52% in 2021, which is a significant increase.

These numbers are staggering, and then, on top of that, the French fact in Quebec and the rest of Canada has been declining for years. That is worrisome and the Commissioner of Official Languages has drawn attention to it. He said that, in 2021, he received approximately 1,000 complaints about non-compliance with the Official Languages Act and disregard for French in federally regulated businesses or federal departments. However, this year, he has already received 5,500 complaints, and the year is not over yet. That is five times more than last year. People see that there is a problem. The NDP noticed there was a problem over the years, but particularly in the past few years.

• (2135)

Some recent events in connection with the Official Languages Act were very upsetting for many people. The President of the Treasury Board said that he had not made any compromises and that no compromises would be made on official languages.

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However, if we take a good look at internal federal government communications during the pandemic, we find communications that are in English only; meetings without interpretation services, or in which people were embarrassed or afraid to speak in French; and the approval of a unilingual English product label. In some cases, someone's health and safety could have been in danger because they did not have a French version of the label.

How could Health Canada authorize such a thing? It is mind-boggling. It is really shocking.

I will highlight some recent current events that really drive home what I have been talking about. The Liberals appointed a unilingual anglophone Lieutenant Governor in New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province in Canada. Incidentally, they were chastised for that. Another issue that has attracted a lot of attention is that the CEO of Air Canada does not speak French and is quite happy to say that he has been living in Montreal for years, that he does not need to speak French and that he sees no problem with this. More recently, we learned that the board of directors of Canadian National is composed solely of unilingual anglophones who do not understand French and who do not see the necessity of having someone on the board who does.

We must take action. We should have taken action long ago. I must point out, as some of my colleagues did earlier, that it was somewhat cynical of the Liberal government to say that it had taken action by introducing Bill C-32 when it dragged its feet for six years and did nothing to modernize the Official Languages Act despite the glaring issues. Then there is the fact that there was nothing about access to child care, education, high schools; being able to live in French; having cultural activities in French. The government said that at least it had introduced a bill.

A bill was introduced two weeks before the end of the parliamentary session, when the government knew very well that it was going to call an election. That was last year, in 2021. It introduced a bill, a white paper, that was useless. We had to start all over again in the new Parliament. When the government says that it is concerned, that it cares, and that it is in a hurry to take action, pay it no mind because it has done nothing for years. How pathetic.

It is clear that the pressure exerted by the NDP, stakeholders and members of francophone and Acadian communities across the country has paid off. The government came back with a new bill that brings in substantial changes. That is good. We should not dismiss or downplay these changes.

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The preamble of the amended Official Languages Act recognizes that French is in a minority situation in Canada and is the official language of Quebec. Also, while acknowledging linguistic regimes put in place in other provinces like New Brunswick, the amended act underscores the importance of maintaining and promoting indigenous languages. For the first time, there is a recognition that French is in a minority situation in Canada and that it is the official language of Quebec. That is not insignificant. That did not exist previously. It really is a step in the right direction. Let us not be willfully blind or stick our heads in the sand for ideological or vote-seeking reasons. It is very important. There had never been an affirmation of the asymmetrical linguistic situation in any federal law before. It is enshrined in this bill, and we in the NDP are very happy about it because it will give more tools to francophone communities in Quebec and, more importantly, outside Quebec. That is unprecedented. It has to be said.

The bill also clarifies which positive measures the government must take to support francophone minority communities outside Quebec. There have been cases before the courts where that was not clear. There is now greater clarity in that regard.

• (2140)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech this evening and for his comments.

I was wondering if my hon. colleague could comment on the importance of including the court challenges program in the new Bill C-13, since that program was abolished by the previous government. We recognized the importance of ensuring access to this program, especially for official language minority communities, which is why we included it in our bill.

Does he think this program will make a difference to official language minority communities?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, the NDP has always been a strong advocate for that program, which aims to support court challenges brought forward by minority communities. Obviously, this affects many francophone minorities and has been very useful in the past.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that we are very pleased that the Commissioner of Official Languages has new powers to issue orders. I hope the minister will be open to amendments so that these order-making powers also apply to part VII of the Official Languages Act, which is not included in Bill C-13 at this time, but which we in the NDP want to put forward. The commissioner should be given the powers to issue orders for part VII of the act.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague.

I am surprised by the decision to choose for New Brunswick, an officially bilingual province, a lieutenant governor who does not speak French, when the court already ruled that it is against the law to have a lieutenant governor who cannot speak French. That decision was made and it was final.

Is there anything in Bill C-13 that will change this example?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her good question.

I do not think that the bill can change the prerogatives of the Prime Minister to choose the governor general or lieutenant governors. However, I think they need to set a very clear framework: The official languages are important. We have to give the act more teeth. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister did not listen and did not follow the philosophy of the act over the past few years. Specifically in the case of New Brunswick, it was truly insulting to the public, the Acadian nation there. We think that is extremely unfortunate.

However, I am not sure that Bill C-13 is the best way to legislate this.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Does he agree that Bill 101 should also apply to federally regulated sectors in Quebec?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Joliette for his question.

I completely agree with him on that. That has always been part of the NDP platform. The majority of federally regulated business have already voluntarily become subject to Bill 101. That said, I find that what is in Bill C-13 is also very interesting in terms of the right of consumers to be served in French and the right of workers to work in French.

I believe that this is an excellent step forward, and I think that the Bloc Québécois should consider it to be major progress.

• (2145)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his lively speech.

I would like to know if he believes that it is important to improve this bill by moving amendments that are supported by stakeholders across the country. Do we need a better law?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, there is absolutely something we can work on. There are many aspects of this bill that can be improved.

I look forward to working on this bill in committee and making amendments. I hope that the government will be open to that and will listen to people from francophone communities in Quebec and outside of Quebec.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I believe we have fallen below the requirements of quorum.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We cannot call quorum.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I rise on another point of order.

On page 295 of the second edition of Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, Maingot lists constitutional requirements regarding parliamentary procedure that must be obeyed and includes in that list section 48, which deals with the quorum of the House. Page 186 states the courts have the legal power to inquire into the procedural history of a bill that has been assented to.

Since Bill C-13 is currently being considered without quorum, I trust the courts will take note of my point of order today in the event that Bill C-13 is challenged in court. I note that if the government continues to sit late with this special order in place, every bill considered under this order could be struck down by the courts.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The Speaker has already ruled on this matter and said that the motion was in order.

We cannot call quorum.

[English]

Does hon. parliamentary secretary want to add to the decision that I have just given?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, no, I have another point of order. This is the second time in the last 24 hours that this particular issue has been raised by Conservative members. They had a similar ruling on this last night, and now the member is basically bringing up the same ruling.

If he wants to challenge the Chair's decision, I am sure there is a course of action for him to do that, but simply standing up and calling a point of order on something that has already been dealt with by the Chair is inappropriate. I think he should know better than that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the additional information but I had already ruled on it.

I want to remind the hon. member that it has been ruled on and quorum cannot be called.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I just want to be clear that I respect the authority of the Chair. We are debating a different bill tonight, and the implications for how courts might rule on what has taken place are important to put on the record in the context of a different piece of legislation that we are debating. I also want to emphasize—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the attempt by the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. I have double-checked with our clerks as to the decisions that have been rendered, and I have been advised that the Speaker has ruled on this and quorum cannot be called, based on the motion that was put before the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Madam Speaker, prior to entering politics, I had the privilege of spending 34 years working in the public service with Parks Canada moving around the country. I saw at that time how important the Official Languages Act was to the provision of services to the public and tourists who require French services in Canada.

I also saw how important it was to the official language minority communities that I encountered in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Northwest Territories. I saw that these communities had the desire to thrive and really celebrate their culture. However, they also experienced a lot of struggles in this pursuit. That is why it is my pleasure this evening to speak to the importance of Bill C-13, which is our government's proposed modernization of the Official Languages Act.

I was delighted, first of all, to see the Minister of Official Languages table a bill so quickly in the 44th Parliament. This was one of our platform promises during the last election and it was in her mandate letter. She not only delivered on this commitment, but tabled a bill that is even stronger than the bill that was tabled during the previous Parliament. I want to thank and congratulate the minister for her efforts on this.

All along, ever since the Prime Minister first promised to modernize the Official Languages Act, our goal has been to put forward a bill that reflected the linguistic realities of all Canadians. We wanted a bill that protected and promoted French for everyone in the country, including in Quebec. We wanted a bill that defended our official language minority communities from coast to coast to coast.

With Bill C-13, we have delivered on that. In fact, we have delivered a bill with teeth that responds to what we heard from the Commissioner of Official Languages, from parliamentarians here and in the other place and from stakeholders all across the country. Let me illustrate this point by highlighting a very specific example: the powers granted to the Commissioner of Official Languages and the compliance of federal institutions covered by the official languages regime.

In recent years, Canadians have lodged an increasing number of complaints with the commissioner. Over the past decade, that number has gone from a few hundred complaints every year to more than a thousand complaints annually. Last year, the Commissioner of Official Languages received a record number of complaints. While this reflects a more widespread understanding among Canadians of linguistic rights, it also shows that Canadians expect us to do more. They expect our institutions to do better when it comes to respecting official language obligations.

Government Orders

These complaints go to the Commissioner of Official Languages because he has the power to investigate these complaints and publish his findings. However, we heard from the commissioner himself that this was not enough. The commissioner wanted more powers in order to fulfill his mandate and to make sure that the official language rights of Canadians were being respected. As an officer of Parliament, the commissioner felt that he needed to have the same powers as other officers of Parliament, particularly the Information Commissioner. We heard this request, and with Bill C-13 we acted.

From day one after our bill receives royal assent, the commissioner will have a wider range of powers that will allow him to do his job and make sure federal institutions live up to their obligations under the Official Languages Act. We are giving the commissioner a continuum of enhanced powers, widening the scope of what he will be allowed to do.

To begin with, the commissioner will have the power to establish compliance agreements with federal institutions. These agreements would be entered into between the commissioner and federal institutions and would detail the specific terms with which the federal institutions would have to comply in order to fix their non-compliance. The commissioner would then be able to oversee the implementation of the agreement to ensure federal institutions are fully complying with the terms.

If non-compliance persists, the commissioner would have the power to issue an order requiring the federal institution to change its course immediately. If this order did not yield the expected results, citizens and the commissioner would be allowed to elevate the matter. The bill also specifies the commissioner would be allowed to use other methods of dispute resolution, such as mediation, to try to diffuse a situation.

In some situations, for companies that deal with the travelling public, such as Air Canada, Via Rail, Marine Atlantic and airport authorities, the commissioner would even have the power to impose administrative monetary penalties. The commissioner would be able to impose penalties for individual complaints, giving him more power to ensure that these companies, which are routinely the subjects of the most complaints, live up to their obligations. While such penalties would only be used as part of a continuum of powers, in cases where companies refuse to comply with the Official Languages Act, they represent a major win for the Canadian travelling public in an industry where non-compliance issues have been known for a long time.

● (2150)

Under this bill, the commissioner would be given the power to publish the findings and recommendations of his investigations. This would strengthen institutional compliance by establishing public precedence on a large body of linguistic issues.

To be sure, the commissioner's day-to-day functions would remain largely unchanged. The commissioner's office would still be responsible for handling complaints from citizens and federal public servants who have difficulty working in the public service, being served or communicating with federal institutions in the official language of their choice.

The commissioner would also be allowed to continue to produce reports, investigate on his own initiative and educate federal institutions by sharing his recommendations and corrective measures. Again, these changes come at the request of the Official Languages Commissioner. We heard these changes were necessary to ensure Canadians could speak in either official language when dealing with federal institutions, as well as businesses in federal jurisdictions, and our government has acted.

These changes will ensure that Canadians see their linguistic realities reflected in their institutions, and they ensure that in cases where Canadians are not able to get the services they need in the official language of their choice, they would be able to file a complaint with the Official Languages Commissioner, who would be able to respond with enhanced powers.

I recently met with La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique. This organization believes we can do more, as well. Since the enactment of the Official Languages Act, it has enhanced the use of French and English in Canada, but it has consistently lacked precision, as well as the means to ensure its full implementation. Living daily life in French remains difficult in various places throughout the country, including in my province of British Columbia. La Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique has advocated for various enhancements, including a greater overarching authority over federal institutions that are responsible for implementing different parts of the act. There also needs to be greater clarity on what federal institutions need to do concretely to promote French and English, and support official language minority communities. Our legislation would also modernize the Official Languages Act.

Bill C-13 represents a major improvement over our previous legislation, which was already a very ambitious modernization of Canada's official languages regime. We are doing this because we understand that if we want an Official Languages Act that responds to the needs of Canadians, we need a bill that is bold and that speaks to the realities of minority official language communities in Canada, whether they are francophone or anglophone.

That is why I am so proud to stand and speak in support of Bill C-13, which is the modernization of the Official Languages Act.

● (2155)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about non-compliance in the travel industry, and he talked about the appropriate responses.

Now, I wonder if the member could speak to the maximum fine that could be levied, and whether he thinks that maximum fine is sufficient, given the size and scale of the companies we are often speaking about in the case of that sector.

Could he also speak to the failures of his government to meet current targets around francophone immigration, and the fact that this bill asks the minister to put in place a policy? Frankly, the government is failing to meet its existing targets, so passing legislation telling it to have a plan and targets, when it is not meeting its existing targets, seems to really miss the need for action that is already lacking.

Government Orders

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, on the member's first point about fines, the enhanced authorities that we are talking about for the Official Languages Commissioner are needed. They are needed to go after companies, as we said, that often find themselves in non-compliance. Fines are one tool, but I spoke of some of the other instruments that would be available, as far as investigating complaints and enforcing corrective measures for that.

I would also say that our government has taken official language rights forward through this legislation. We are committed to increasing immigration, and to helping maintain and support a flourishing official language community both in Quebec for English minority communities, and throughout the rest of the country for francophones.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, for 52 years, all federal subsidies under the Official Languages Act have gone almost exclusively toward strengthening the anglophone community in Quebec. The reason given was that this community is a minority, even though it is part of the English Canadian majority.

In the throne speech and in the preamble of Bill C-13, the government appears to recognize that francophones in Quebec are part of the francophone minority in Canada and in North America. Why not amend these positive measures to support the francophone community, to support French Quebec?

[*English*]

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, I will speak as a British Columbian member of Parliament. I know how important the federal government's support is to the francophone community within British Columbia. I would like to see these measures continue to support the minority official language communities across the country.

I know we have heard throughout the debate this evening that Quebec is this island of French within a monolithic anglophone culture surrounding it in the rest of Canada and the United States. I think any supports we can have, as our government has done with the francophone population in Quebec, help to strengthen the culture, the survivability and hopefully the thriving of French language and culture within our country.

• (2200)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, through the course of the past six months, I have had the privilege and the opportunity to meet with many stakeholders who work in the field of official languages. They provided us with some feedback, so we made some improvements with Bill C-13.

Would the member be able to speak about the difference that Bill C-13 would make, in the communities that he represents, for the official minority communities within British Columbia?

Mr. John Aldag: Madam Speaker, I worked on the Official Languages Act in my first term in Parliament, in the 42nd Parliament. I know there were a lot of consultations happening. The federation of British Columbia francophones was very involved in those inputs. I

know there were some concerns raised. Then, with the next iteration in the last Parliament, it had some concerns, but those, in many ways, have been addressed in this one.

I would like to see this get to committee, to hear the committee's input and perhaps hear from organizations such as the francophone federation in British Columbia. This is excellent legislation to move forward the Official Languages Act in 2022.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-13, an act for the substantive equality of Canada's official languages. I am happy to be speaking in the House at 10 p.m., even though this is usually when I go to bed.

We are here to talk about Bill C-13, bilingualism and Canada's two official languages.

First of all, I want to provide an overview of the situation. I believe that all members of the House recognize that French is in decline and, in some ways, threatened. This is the case in Quebec and in minority communities across Canada.

Quebec's National Assembly has demonstrated, almost mathematically, that the use of French has been declining for more than a decade. It is fully documented as well. The Quebec government has tabled legislation that is being debated in the National Assembly. Let the debate take place where it belongs, in the National Assembly, in Quebec.

Here, we are debating Bill C-13, which addresses the issue of bilingualism and the decline of French in this country. I will have the opportunity to come back to this in more detail, but, in our opinion, this is a minor reform, when a serious reform was needed. It proposes minor changes when what we need are big ones.

As it stands, we do not believe that the bill will stop the decline of French. This is essentially because the bill lacks teeth. We will describe it later, but what we need are concrete enforcement measures. The fines must be significant and not symbolic. This bill does not contain the measures needed. It also ignores the demands made by nearly all French-language advocacy groups.

The Treasury Board is where the final decision has to be made and where the action will have to be taken. That is where everything happens. I say this with all due respect to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Official Languages. The Treasury Board needs the tools to enforce bilingualism and the French language in certain areas where it is in decline. Unfortunately, the bill does not go quite that far.

How has it gotten to this point?

I remind members that it was back in the 1960s that the debate started over whether Canada should be a bilingual country and whether, its two languages, French and English, should have equal status in its institutions.

Government Orders

There was the creation of the Laurendeau-Dunton commission, or the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. That commission was established in the 1960s, under the leadership of the prime minister, the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson, as the member for Hull—Aylmer mentioned.

In 1969, the prime minister of Canada, the Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, passed in the House of Commons the first legislation on both official languages, which put French and English on exactly the same footing, the same level, with the same responsibilities and the same privileges.

Across Canada, in the federal government, in the public service and elsewhere in its territories, this meant having the same services from coast to coast to coast in both official languages. Of course at first, there was some gnashing of teeth, which is entirely predictable and legitimate, for those who grew up in a country where official bilingualism did not exist. When we have to learn a second language overnight, that can seem like a huge challenge.

Now, almost 53 years later, anyone pursuing a career in the federal public service can expect to have to speak both official languages at some point. Anyone with their sights set on a senior position needs to expect that, and that is as it should be.

The first Official Languages Act was passed in 1969. The Right Hon. Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government gave it a major refresh and upgrade in 1988. After that, nothing was done right away to completely overhaul bilingualism. As everyone knows, the Harper government took steps to really protect French in some areas where it is not the majority language.

● (2205)

Then came the 2015 election, and members will recall that the current governing party promised, with hand over heart, to review the Official Languages Act.

From 2015 to 2019, no progress was made in this regard. There was an election and then, in 2021, lo and behold, the government began to take action. However, since the Prime Minister decided to call a second election in the midst of a pandemic, against all scientific advice, the government's initiative did not go any further.

That is why we have Bill C-13 before us today, when my government friends promised such a bill in 2015. It took them six years.

We have concerns about this bill. We believe that, when the government talks about official languages, there is all too often a lot of lip service. No one can be against apple pie, as the saying goes, and we all want to protect minority languages and French, but is the government really taking the strong, serious, meaningful and appropriate measures needed to fully achieve that? Unfortunately, that is where the problem lies.

That is why, as I mentioned earlier, we would have liked the Treasury Board to have the final say on the application of the Official Languages Act, to show that there is muscle and that it is serious and rigorous. When it comes to government services to the public, it is the Treasury Board that has the greatest authority, since it is the body within the federal administration that says yes or no to tax expenditures.

I am not going to pass judgment on how enthusiastically successive Treasury Board presidents since 2015 have accepted endless spending. The authority to approve or refuse expenditures lies with the President of the Treasury Board. Several groups had asked for the Treasury Board to be given the responsibility in this instance, but unfortunately that did not happen.

The government also wants to make sure there is successful and acceptable francophone immigration in all communities from coast to coast, but, once again, there is no clear and specific objective.

There is also no power to issue orders or deterrent fines to businesses that fail to respect official languages. Earlier, someone mentioned the example of a \$25,000 fine for a national organization whose president is not bilingual. That amount is a drop in the bucket for an organization of that size.

The bill also gives federally regulated organizations in Quebec the option of being subject to either Bill 101 or the federal legislation, but that is no way to handle this file. A person cannot be half pregnant. We are either for Bill 101 or against it. In this case, we are letting businesses choose, but that is not the way it should be.

That is why many minority rights advocacy groups have come forward to say that Bill C-13 might be well intentioned, with laudable objectives, but, basically, it fails to meet the needs of minorities.

Liane Roy, president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne, put it so well when she said that the biggest disappointment is that there needs to be someone in charge who can look at the other departments and give orders and be proactive instead of reactive all the time. Responsibility for the new act is still split between Canadian Heritage and the Treasury Board, which may delegate powers to other departments.

As the FCFA said on March 2, the bilingualism policy lacks a clear objective. Will it be about maintaining or increasing our demographic weight? This does not accomplish what the government says it wants to do in immigration, if we refer to the February 2021 document from the former official languages minister.

As a final point, the Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Communities said on March 1 that in Manitoba's experience, what is needed is an approach to francophone immigration that goes beyond federal targets and objectives, that involves all those working on the ground, even municipal authorities, similar to what was done with the welcoming communities project.

From the Conservatives' perspective, Bill C-13 does not go far enough and should go back to the drawing board.

● (2210)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, whom I very much like, for his speech this evening.

Government Orders

Over the past few months, I had the privilege of meeting many stakeholders who told me what they wanted to see in the new version of Bill C-13.

One suggestion I heard many times was to create a central agency. I believe my colleague mentioned exactly that tonight. I do have to say, however, that I am a bit lost, because I keep hearing the Conservatives talk about that. However, we did actually formalize the role of the Treasury Board as a central agency. Going forward, it will be in charge of implementing the act, and it will also have a coordination and evaluation role. Moreover, in the fall economic statement, we gave the Treasury Board more resources to make sure it has everything it needs.

I wonder if my colleague knows about these changes, which are exactly what stakeholders asked for. That change was made in the new version of the bill.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I would like to echo my colleague's comments. I really enjoy the minister's company. I knew her in another life. She was a parliamentary secretary to the finance minister when I was the finance critic, as members will recall.

If the minister thinks that we, the Conservatives, are harsh, I would simply like her to be aware of the fact that someone who she certainly knows very well, Liane Roy, the president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, commented on the subject the minister just brought up and expressed her great disappointment. She said, and I quote:

There needs to be someone in charge who can look at the other departments and give orders and be proactive instead of reactive all the time....That is the difference between Canadian Heritage and the Treasury Board, which can delegate powers to other departments.

In short, we are not the only ones who are being a bit tough on the minister's bill. It is the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada, which she is very familiar with.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague said that the bill does not go far enough. I agree.

I think that it needs to undergo a major reform, particularly based on the requests of the Government of Quebec, which asked that Quebec be given sole authority over linguistic development and management within its borders. I know that my colleague agrees that Bill 101 should apply to federally regulated businesses. There are also positive measures that must be taken with Quebec's consent. Right now, 100% of the positive measures in Quebec seek to strengthen the anglophone community.

I want to know what he thinks about that.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, my colleague is well aware that, in our last two campaign platforms, Conservatives said that Bill 101 could apply to businesses in Quebec. Over three-quarters of a million Quebecers voted for us and that approach.

I also want to make it clear that we Conservatives seize every opportunity to demonstrate our tremendous respect for jurisdiction. One thing federal Conservatives will not do is tell the provinces how to do certain things. That is reciprocal, actually.

To us, protecting the French language is essentially in Quebec's bailiwick. Quebec started working on it in the 1960s with Bill 63, which was not exactly the greatest invention of the century. In 1974, there was Bill 22, which had more teeth but did more harm than good, some say. Then Bill 101 was passed in 1977, and the debate on Bill 96 is under way as we speak.

• (2215)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

I just want to come back to the powers of the Commissioner of Official Languages to issue orders. In the bill, those powers apply only to parts IV and V of the act, but part VII is the part that promotes the equality of official languages and supports the development of official language minority communities.

Does my colleague not think the commissioner should also have the power to issue orders for part VII of the act?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, from our perspective, in order to be taken seriously, one must grant the necessary powers.

As far as we are concerned, what matters most is Treasury Board authority, but yes, the Commissioner of Official Languages must have some real muscle. That said, should we be surprised to see this government introduce a bill that is weak with respect to certain demands?

After all, this is the Prime Minister who, when looking to appoint someone to the position of governor general, the highest position in the land, when he had 38 million Canadians to choose from, selected someone who does not speak French.

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about our official languages and Bill C-13, which proposes a long-awaited reform of our language framework.

As a francophone from southwestern Ontario, I am proud to be able to rise in the House of Commons to speak to this bill, which would support the modernization of the Official Languages Act in Canada.

We need to talk about the compliance of federal institutions that drive our language framework. Many Canadians complained to the Commissioner of Official Languages over the past few years. They asked that we ensure that the necessary work is done to support the institutions so that they can do a better job on official languages. It is time for the Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada to have a level of authority comparable to that of his counterparts, including the Information Commissioner.

If the bill passes, the daily work of the official languages commissioner will not change drastically. However, he will still be responsible for processing complaints from citizens and federal officials who are having difficulty working in the public service, getting services from a department or communicating with federal institutions in the official language of their choice.

Government Orders

Right from the start, the commissioner will have a wide range of powers, including more enforcement powers for dealing with federal institutions that already fall under the Official Languages Act. The commissioner will be able to enter into compliance agreements with federal institutions, detailing the exact conditions they have to comply with to rectify the contravention. The commissioner will also have the authority to oversee the implementation of the compliance agreement and to assist federal institutions in honouring it. In short, the bill provides for a continuum of powers to reinforce the authority of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

My second point is based on francophone immigration to Canada, which can undoubtedly respond to the concerns expressed earlier by our friends from the Bloc Québécois. The new version of the bill includes more support for francophone immigration outside Quebec.

Before I get into that, I want to say that francophone communities outside Quebec are at the core of what we are doing. This vast enterprise started in 2019 with a large-scale review process aimed at modernizing the Official Languages Act. During that review, the government of Canada consulted Canadians through events organized in every province and territory. Afterwards, we published a white paper that clearly showed Canadians what the intentions behind the reform were.

In June 2021, we introduced the first version of this bill, which described in detail the proposed changes to the Official Languages Act. I understand that francophone minority communities have concerns about wanting to see an increase in francophone immigration to their communities. This bill will make that possible. We will be able to respond to the concerns of francophones in minority communities. We know that waves of immigration have continued to enrich Canada throughout our history.

Immigration is a major tool for economic, social and cultural development, and we are at a point in our history where we are relying more than ever on immigration, even though the pandemic has complicated matters.

We heard those Canadians calling for more francophone immigration outside Quebec. We have a duty to support the demographic weight of these communities.

I want to make a clarification. Francophone immigration has the potential to support the demographic weight of these minority communities, but francophone immigration alone cannot protect the demographic weight of these communities. There are other factors that come into play here, such as interprovincial and intraprovincial movements, births and many other factors. Furthermore, the provinces and territories also have a role to play in ensuring that these communities continue to grow and flourish in the future.

● (2220)

In short, support for immigration outside Quebec is an incredible boost for the vitality of francophone minority communities like mine, which is located in London, Ontario. That is why we are proposing targeted measures when it comes to francophone immigration.

We are proposing a reform of the provisions relating to francophone immigration outside Quebec. The bill proposes changing the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship's obligation to adopt a policy on francophone immigration, which my colleague on the other side of the House criticized earlier. I know that is something we all care about. From now on the Official Languages Act will be clear in that regard. This policy will contain specific elements and have clearer objectives. It will set out more specific targets.

What is more, the legislation will recognize that immigration is one factor that can help maintain or increase the demographic weight of francophone minorities in Canada. We are talking here about a policy directed solely at francophone minority communities, because Quebec already has a special agreement with Canada with regard to the selection of immigrants. We will have other opportunities to talk about our commitment to supporting the francophone throughout Canada, including Quebec.

However, amending the Official Languages Act will probably not suffice. That is why we have made a commitment to introduce administrative measures to support francophone immigration in communities outside Quebec. I invite members of the House to follow the work we are doing in advance of the next action plan for official languages. This strategic document will contain the government's priorities and the means to achieve them. We plan on including the issue of francophone immigration.

All these initiatives will converge on a shared ideal, that of fostering the substantive equality of French and English in Canada. Federal institutions will be better equipped to take into consideration the needs of our official language minority communities. They will have better guidance for developing positive measures in the interest of these communities. The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship will be required to use this policy on francophone immigration as a tool for demographic development in support of minority communities.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure working with the member on the immigration committee. I note that she focused a substantial portion of her remarks on this bill, as did I, on the issue of francophone immigration.

This bill includes another aspirational statement. It asks the minister to put forward a policy. Of course, there is nothing preventing the minister from putting forward a policy as it is on francophone immigration. Effectively, we have the government, through this legislation, asking itself to put in place a policy, and there is nothing wrong with that as such.

Government Orders

We have a bit of a sense already of what the challenges are with respect to francophone immigration. The member knows, from having listened to the witnesses, issues around backlogs, concerns about racism and high refusal rates, especially from francophone Africa.

How is the government going to tackle those issues that, up until now, have not been tackled? We have not met our target. Does she think the statement in this bill is actually going to change what the government does in this respect?

• (2225)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, I sincerely thank my colleague, who sits with me on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

I know he was there during today's committee meeting when the minister announced that we would be opening two more visa offices in Africa. My colleague knows that we are making a lot of progress.

Unfortunately, I have to contradict him when he says that we are not doing much. Francophone immigration keeps increasing in places like Moncton. I know that it is easier to complain from the other side of the House.

Since he was at today's committee meeting, my colleague heard that we continue to increase francophone immigration and to open visa offices throughout Africa to help manage applications from francophone immigrants.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to come back to francophone immigration and temporary permits for African students, who face an incredibly high rejection rate when we have missed our francophone immigration targets for the last 20 years or so.

Does the member not think that it would be a good idea to amend Bill C-13 to include binding targets and an obligation to produce results?

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate that question from my colleague, who is also a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

As I just said in my speech on Bill C-13, we want this policy to help the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship build on efforts to increase francophone immigration to Canada.

Today he announced that we will continue to work on this. Let us not forget that, when the Conservatives were in power, they closed many of our diplomatic missions in Africa. We cannot do more if we have fewer missions and fewer visa offices. Right now, we are trying to make up for the work they did not do so we can continue to grow francophone immigration.

I deeply appreciate your work on francophone immigration, specifically francophone immigration in Africa.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have to remind the member that she must address her questions and comments directly to the Chair, not directly to members.

The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am sorry to sound like a broken record, but this is on the same subject. This section of Bill C-13 reminds me of the government's Bill C-5, where it used a declaration of principles rather than doing the heavy lifting of amending the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

This talks about setting objectives, targets and indicators. There is no catch-up target and no clearly stated objective. Francophone communities outside of Quebec have been let down for a couple of decades.

Would my hon. colleague not agree with me that having some specificity in this bill would give those communities some certainty and hold the minister to account, rather than giving a wide swath of interpretation as the bill is currently written?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga: Madam Speaker, I think the bill is pretty specific.

We are talking about francophone immigration outside Quebec and asking the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to work with everybody to make sure that francophone immigration continues to increase in Canada and Quebec.

I do not think it is true that we have no targets and no specific measures. I just mentioned some of them. I would encourage my colleague opposite to read the bill.

• (2230)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, even though we are discussing a government bill to amend the Official Languages Act, I do not think my colleagues, or the interpreters for that matter, would like to hear me using this time to practice my French, so forgive me if I spend the entire 10 minutes here with members today speaking in English. I will save that for another day.

When discussing our two official languages in Canada, it is important to first acknowledge the role each of them has had to play in our history, and they continue to actively shape our national culture. This is not only true for Quebec in the past, the present or, quite frankly, the future, as we go forward from here tonight.

There is a lot of French heritage across the entire country. To this day, we will find francophone communities in the Atlantic provinces, in Ontario, in Manitoba and even across western Canada. In fact, right in my riding of Cypress Hills—Grasslands, we have several distinctly francophone communities, and I am going to spend a few minutes tonight talking about those communities, if members will indulge me.

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I will start with the great community of Gravelbourg in my riding. It has a great Catholic heritage with the Church of St. Philomena, which became the Cathedral of St. Philomena on July 27, 1930. It was later renamed Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral in 1965. The construction began in 1918, and the Most Reverend O.E. Mathieu, Archbishop of Regina, presided at the blessing ceremony on November 5, 1919. The architect, however, and this is important to know for the context of the speech here tonight, was the one and only J.E. Fortin of Montreal.

On December 14, 1918, le Collège catholique de Gravelbourg opened its doors to its first students. This college is the oldest institution that still operates in Gravelbourg. In 1976, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate handed over the direction of the college to the francophonie of Saskatchewan.

This college has been a very important piece in my life. I played many volleyball matches at Collège Mathieu when I was growing up in the great community of Frontier. We travelled there multiple times to play. It is a great, beautiful school right in the middle of the Prairies, and pays a great homage to the French heritage that belongs to the community of Gravelbourg. The people are very proud of that community, and as a representative for the area, I, for one, am very proud of the great heritage that is represented there.

I also want to point out the great community of Lafleche, Saskatchewan. Lafleche is named after Louis-François Richer Lafleche, a Roman Catholic missionary to Rupert's Land from 1844 to 1856, who also happened to be the bishop of Trois-Rivières, Quebec, from 1867 to 1898.

Members may be starting to sense a theme here of the great French heritage imported through the Catholic church from Quebec into Saskatchewan. However, there is one more community I want to talk about here tonight. There are more than three great communities, but I am going to focus on these three here tonight, because we have a limited amount of time in this debate.

The third one is the great community of Ponteix, Saskatchewan, and I just want to go over the history of it. The Paroisse Notre Dame D'Auvergne Parish was born of Father Albert-Marie Royer's dream of founding a parish that he would dedicate to the Virgin Mary. In 1907, after having studied the nature of the soil on several occasions, Father Royer made his choice on the land that runs along the Notukeu Creek in Saskatchewan, which seemed promising to him. It was a land without wood, but very fertile and easy to cultivate.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that this land also happens to fall within the Palliser Triangle, which was deemed not to be suitable for mankind to live within, yet here we are today. We have many great communities that live in within the Palliser Triangle. They happen to be feeding the world, not just Canada, and doing a great job of it.

It is also important to keep in mind something that I am sure most parties will agree with in this place. The French language, with its history and future in Canada, is much bigger than the Liberal Party, or any other political party for that matter, including the Bloc Québécois. There have already been, and there still are, Con-

servatives and members of many other parties who have participated in its history and supported its growth.

• (2235)

Besides transcending political parties and partisan interests, French Canada is also something that is much bigger than what governments try to do. That is why we have to make sure that the issue of official languages is handled in a careful way that gets the right balance, which is also why a member from Saskatchewan would be willing to speak to this important bill here tonight.

I will turn now to a general concern, which has already been raised by other members, including the great member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier in Quebec, who also serves as our Conservative shadow minister of official languages. It has to do with the minister and the department of heritage. There are some technical questions with how they should be involved with the implementation of these proposed changes. Along with those points, I want to bring up some broader context. There has been some confusion expressed and feedback, not only from the opposition, but also from other parts of society as well. The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada was quoted on Radio Canada saying that they also have to wonder about the fact that the Department of Canadian Heritage retains a coordinating role in the implementation of the law when it has no authority over other federal institutions.

Ultimately, this minority Parliament needs to hold the federal government accountable. We need to make sure that any power we give to them is used responsibly for the good of Canadian francophones and that it will not somehow be used by the Liberals to promote their own partisan interests and political gain.

As always, I also want to make sure that we never miss the rural perspective on this issue. Our policy for official languages does not just impact a single region in the country, and I hope the experience of francophones who live outside of Quebec's biggest cities is considered.

Here is something that I came across in the summary of Bill C-13, which reads:

(l) enable the Commissioner of Official Languages to enter into compliance agreements and, in certain cases, to make orders; and

(m) enable the Commissioner of Official Languages to impose administrative monetary penalties on certain entities for non-compliance with certain provisions of Part IV of that Act.

It also makes a related amendment to the Department of Canadian Heritage Act.

Part 2 enacts the Use of French in Federally Regulated Private Businesses Act, which, among other things, provides for rights and duties respecting the use of French as a language of service and a language of work in relation to federally regulated private businesses in Quebec and then, at a later date, in regions with a strong francophone presence. That Act also allows employees of federally regulated private businesses to make a complaint to the Commissioner of Official Languages with respect to rights and duties in relation to language of work and allows the Commissioner to refer the complaint to the Canada Industrial Relations Board in certain circumstances. It also provides that the Minister of Canadian Heritage is responsible for promoting those rights. Finally, Part 2 makes related amendments to the Canada Labour Code.

I find it interesting that this bill would allow for fines to be levied against a private business or a Crown corporation for not adhering to the act, up to a maximum of \$25,000. I know that this is all in response to the pressure that the government is facing for Air Canada hiring an anglophone executive, and that would be a \$25,000 fine for a corporation that is responsible for bringing in millions and millions of dollars of profit, but I wonder about the far-reaching consequences of having a knee-jerk reaction to this decision.

For example, I wonder if we were to go back through history, does that mean that, when it was still a federal program, it would have excluded or fined a PFRA pasture rider for simply not being bilingual. I also wonder about other federally regulated businesses in my riding.

What about, for example, Farm Credit Canada, which provides crucial financial services to farmers and ranchers? Over the last two years, we have heard many, many people talk about the impacts Farm Credit Canada has had on their farms. What is this act going to mean for people who do business in a very important industry such as agriculture? What is this legislation going to mean for a business like Farm Credit Canada? What about grain elevators and inland terminals, which happen to be federally regulated, that are responsible for the contracting and shipping of commodities to the coasts for processing or export to the world markets?

• (2240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We are out of time.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can only agree with my colleague, who stated that all members of the House are entitled to be proud of our French language. I hope that he will try to say a few words in French the next time he gives a speech.

I would like to know what the Conservatives are actually proposing as an amendment. It is almost 11 p.m. on a Thursday evening. I was in the House when the Conservatives proposed referring the bill to a committee, but so far I have not heard any concrete proposals for improving this bill.

Can the member talk about his party's concrete suggestions so we can learn how to improve this bill, if he wishes?

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, in my riding of Cypress Hills—Grasslands, we have three very distinct francophone communities. In my speech, I was talking about the fact that there is the possibility that businesses beyond Air Canada or Canadian National might be fined based on the wording within this bill. That is something I find concerning because there are many federally regulated industries in my riding.

My hope is that we can send this bill to committee, where hopefully, because the bill is very broad, we can find a very refined approach to make sure that shoreline railways, for example, will not

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be unfairly punished by this bill because they are federally regulated. We are clearly trying to target specific companies, such as Air Canada and CN, for having anglophone executives or boards, as we have heard in the House previously before this debate tonight.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He spoke about his riding and a town called Gravelbourg. My butcher told me that members of his family established that town a long time ago. He remains in contact with his family who lives there. It is a small world.

French is declining, especially in Quebec. To better protect French, Quebec is asking that Bill 101 apply to federally regulated businesses in Quebec. Does my colleague agree with that?

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, being a member from Saskatchewan, I do not think it would be appropriate for me to comment on things that are happening in the province of Quebec. I do not think we want people from Saskatchewan telling Quebec what it should be doing within its own jurisdiction, so I will leave making comments about Quebec to the members from Quebec because I think that is more appropriate.

In the community of Gravelbourg, we have many great francophone businesses. For example, there is a bookstore there that is distinctly francophone. If people want to purchase a great piece of French literature, they can go there and purchase it. I have gone through that business myself. It is a great business. It has a lot of great literature that promotes the French language in Saskatchewan.

In Saskatchewan, there are many communities and businesses where the French language is not just surviving but thriving. They are doing a great job of promoting the culture that has enabled communities to be tied to Quebec. They are not just purely of Catholic heritage; they are part of the grand scheme of things. Gravelbourg, Lafleche, Ponteix and many of the other communities in my riding are doing a great job of preserving the French language and French heritage—

• (2245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but I have to allow for one more brief question.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was listening to the debate and thinking about the difference the bill could make for the small but mighty francophone community in northwest British Columbia. I appreciated the stories the member shared about the francophone communities in the riding he represents. I wonder if he could share with the House which provision in the bill he feels would make the biggest positive difference for those communities he represents.

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Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for the great service he provides to his communities. I am sure in his riding there are many small pockets of francophone communities, as there in the communities in my riding and all across this great country.

The bill would provide the opportunities for people to be able to learn French. There are many great communities that have French immersion programs. I did mention in my speech Collège Mathieu in Gravelbourg, which provides a French education for people who are trying to learn French. People from all across this great country take their high school education in Gravelbourg, for example, because they care so much about the language. We have lots of great things happening in Saskatchewan.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to say from the outset that French in Quebec and outside Quebec is alive and well.

In the House, I sometimes get the impression from some speeches that French is being dismissed as a dying language. People have brought up certain monuments from the past. I agree that we can be proud, but French is not a thing of the past and the Bloc Québécois can attest that it has a future. However, I think Bill C-13 is a step backward.

I will explain what I mean, as some of my colleagues have, but perhaps on a bit more of a personal level. We all have a very close and personal connection to our mother tongue, and even to what I did outside the House. In my professional life, this was always very important.

I mentioned a step backward.

First there was Bill C-32, and today we are debating Bill C-13. We can all agree that sometimes bills are two sides of the same coin. They do look somewhat similar. There is talk of urgency and improvements, but urgency is relative given that the Liberals decided in 2021 to shut down Parliament and call an election just after the Minister of Official Languages had introduced Bill C-32. Some changes were made. I remember hearing a colleague say earlier that the previous bill was really quite extraordinary, so much so that they decided to rewrite it in the next Parliament.

We keep hearing about equality. To me, “equality” is a pretty strong term. It is not “equity” or “the possibility of equity”. I do not think Bill C-13 is about equality. Even in terms of institutional bilingualism or individual bilingualism, I think it is a denial of the truth to say that bilingualism truly exists in Canada.

I could talk about my personal experience as a private citizen, and not just with the Air Canada example. Even though Bill C-13 supposedly sets out to achieve “substantive equality”, this is still just a bill. As with any rights issue, there can still be a right, and the idea with that right can be equality, but in actual fact and in practice in real life, there has to be a lot more than that. A colleague talked about “teeth”, but I think that overstates what is in the bill. I talked about a step backward, so “teeth” is not really what we have here.

One thing the Bloc Québécois feels is important is the acknowledgement of a fact. I am not sure this particular fact is worth getting

excited about, but the bill does acknowledge the fact that French is in a minority situation in Canada and in North America. We agree on that. These are just numbers, but at least there is that acknowledgement, and that is one step in the right direction, albeit a small one.

The Bloc Québécois often comes back to the issue of minority status. Quebec's French is the language of the minority in Canada and we stand by that. It is not the language of the majority. It is in Quebec, but it is still surrounded by English. I will come back to that later with personal examples. I believe it is important to talk about the minority status of French.

The Bloc Québécois naturally stands with francophones outside Quebec. Bill C-13 does not have the same impact on communities outside Quebec as it does on those in Quebec. That could sometimes be a good thing for certain communities. I was thinking about what the Minister of Official Languages was saying earlier concerning the court challenges program. For francophone groups outside Quebec, it may be useful. However, in Quebec, it is the complete opposite. It is destructive.

With regard to Bill C-13, the best approach would have been to respect Quebec and its choices. Only a nation can properly defend its own language. Language is the main vehicle for culture. It is a means of expression that is replete with history and meaning.

● (2250)

It is up to Quebec to protect it. Quebec knows best how to do that, such as with the Charter of the French Language. Here the feds are imposing a bill that conflicts with our existing mechanisms to protect and promote the language. They are forcing us to do all kinds of things. I have emphasized that repeatedly this week. The feds force a lot of things on us.

Earlier, I talked about denial. I could talk about something that rings totally false. The government's proposal will be harmful. We really want something asymmetrical, but that is not at all what this is.

I wish I could have talked about a lot of other things. I really could have used 20 minutes, but I will move on to something more personal. Anyway I think we all agree, and we have said it over and over: there is no way we can accept this.

I would have liked to talk about the differences between a right and a responsibility. In the case of Quebec, this bill enables federally regulated businesses to choose the language, whereas the charter says that employees must speak French at work. That is a big difference. It is night and day. Protection needs to take precedence over choice. If the choice exists, we will not be able to defend our language. Sometimes, people choose the easy way out, and the easy way out is Bill C-13.

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That being said, I would like to talk about my own personal experience. My colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île specializes in languages, my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé is a historian and my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert is an actor. My background is in the humanities. I enjoy literature. I am a literature professor. I worked in writing and publishing. My house is full of books. Of course, they are books of French literature, even though I also worked on British literature. The fact remains that, even though this was not a family trend, I somehow stumbled into the humanities and the language field. Every day, my thoughts turn to issues related to language, literature, culture and identity. Language is part of our identity.

I also have children. When one has children, they have a mother tongue. Of course I taught them French, but our children are not our children. That is the way it is; it is part of our existence. I have three children, one of whom is very small. He does not talk yet. I also have older children. Despite my efforts, all I see in their lives—this is a debate about territory, so I hope my colleagues will allow me this more or less accurate analogy—is like what the Romans did, but with English, which seeks to extinguish the French language right in our own homes. I am not against all these digital tools, but when I look at my children, I can see that, language-wise, it is no longer like it was in 1950, when people had to cross the border to swim in an anglophone sea. Now it is in our very own homes, so we really have to come up with some very strong measures.

I think of my son who is a gamer. He is bilingual, and I am glad he is. I speak several languages too. I speak a little German and Spanish. I studied Latin and Greek, and I speak French and English. I love languages. I see that he has become bilingual, but at the same time, I see how much languages change. I am talking about the written language, the spoken language and our relationship to language. Even though my kids are young, certain languages still dominate. In the concept itself, the idea of cultural domination means that one will assimilate the other.

The same is true of my daughter, through the use of social media, and I mean that in the pejorative sense. Sometimes she has no choice regarding what information she can access, even though the amount of information is astronomical. We have a huge encyclopaedia at our fingertips. She will end up becoming anglicized, too.

This will also be true for my little boy, with platforms like Netflix and everything he will have access to. Most of it is in English.

Everything I just described is really happening, and legislation like this is truly a complete setback. When we want to strengthen a language, and I am still talking about Quebec, we do not introduce legislation that goes against the will of a nation and against the will of a government. This would only weaken the language.

In my opinion, and my words will be harsh, this bill is an indirect linguistic assimilation policy for Quebec. When something cannot be done directly, it is done indirectly. I think Bill C-13 is smoke and mirrors.

• (2255)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been interesting to hear the government try to trumpet its work on this. Of course, members remember that it put forward a bill in June of last year, at the very tail end of the last Parliament, but instead of ever bringing that bill forward for debate, the government called an early election in the middle of the summer. That was on the same day that Kabul fell and various other events were going on.

In spite of always complaining about its legislative agenda, the fact is that it has on multiple occasions, through prorogation or calling an early election, torpedoed its own legislative agenda.

I wonder if the member wants to comment a bit on the context of that and how long it has taken the government, and the efforts to manipulate Parliament now in spite of its failures to move things forward in the last Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I could not agree more with my colleague. In all the notes I prepare for my speeches, I am always tempted to remind members of that early and absolutely useless election that cost all Quebecers and Canadians time.

We are now starting over again, discussing bills that we could have tackled back then. Furthermore, the government is constantly telling us that it is urgent. I would submit to my colleagues that we are sitting until midnight tonight. There could have been other ways of doing this.

I would like the government to take responsibility for its own bills and its own legislative agenda so we can get things done. There is no point in simply talking without there being any concrete action. We see it even with tonight's bill: There is a great deal of goodwill, but, when it comes to concrete measures, that is a different story.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have heard my colleague's speech. The NDP agrees that the French language is in decline in Quebec and Canada. In fact, the government adopted a motion to that effect during the last Parliament, which I remember quite well because I was the one to move the motion.

This bill, which needs much improvement, still achieves something fundamental because, for the first time, it affirms that there is an asymmetry between the status of French and that of English, since French is a minority in Quebec, but also in Canada and across North America. Does the member not think that this recognition of the fact that French is in a minority constitutes progress for the protection of the French language?

• (2300)

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I could also say that I have good intentions while introducing a bill, for example, to lower gas prices.

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There is nothing in Bill C-13. The government sees, accepts, says and commits to saying that there is asymmetry. However, the text does not reflect that, since it does not contain asymmetrical measures. It is a problem and that is the problem.

For its part, the anglophone community in Quebec is doing very well. Hundreds of millions of dollars are sent to Quebec. Let us look at this honestly, and look at the data, not just the good intentions. The bill contains words, but words are worthless without action.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, this bill is most likely going to end up in committee, so I would like the member to elaborate on what she would like to see happen to the bill in committee. What impact is it going to have on the French language for Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, we simply want this bill not to apply to Quebec. That would be the best thing to do.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging that I am on the traditional territory of the WSANEC nation in my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Since we are talking about languages this evening, I want to point out that the word “saanich” comes from an indigenous language called Sencoten. The word was mispronounced by the Europeans, which resulted in the change that explains the name of my riding today.

We are here this evening to debate Bill C-13. It has been a long, hard-fought journey to get protections for both official languages here in Canada. As we have heard, the French language is obviously threatened because it is the minority language in Canada and in North America. Quebec culture represents the largest francophone community in our country, but it is not the only one. There are the Acadians in the Atlantic provinces and there are other francophone communities all across Canada, such as the Franco-Manitoban and Franco-Albertan communities. There is also a francophone community in British Columbia. It is not big, but it is important.

The Official Languages Act was adopted in 1969. That was a long time ago. It declared that French and English were the two official languages of Parliament and the Government of Canada. The next step came in 1982, with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which reaffirmed French and English as the official languages of Canada. It has been 30 years since the last major reform to this legislation.

The government introduced Bill C-32 during the previous Parliament, in 2021, but it died on the Order Paper when the election was called last August. We now have Bill C-13, which was introduced in March 2022. This is my first opportunity to speak to this bill. We clearly need to address the decline of French in this country because French is still threatened, in spite of all of the work that has been done on official languages in Canada.

This bill has been well received. The Commissioner of Official Languages said, “I have read the proposed measures and believe

that they will breathe new life into efforts to protect and promote both of our official languages”. That notion of protecting and promoting French and of promoting and supporting the learning of English and French is a difference between Bill C-32 from the previous Parliament and the current Bill C-13. It is nevertheless clear that it is primarily the French language that needs to be protected. The bill also talks about promoting the French language, supporting francophone communities and, for the first time, protecting the right to work and receive services in French.

• (2305)

Bill C-13 is really two bills in one. It amends the Official Languages Act and enacts the use of French in federally regulated private businesses act, while making related amendments to other acts. This is an important effort for the protection and use of French in private companies.

As we have seen in tonight's debate, the Bloc Québécois will not be supporting this effort concerning Quebec. It is right to ask that French be protected in private businesses in Quebec. It is clear that the French language must be used in francophone majority regions. The bill does raise some issues, but I think we will be able to improve it in committee.

Bill C-13 expands and strengthens the powers of the Commissioner of Official Languages. It is a good idea to give him more powers and to strengthen his role by giving him the right to present and find solutions to violations related to the use of the French language in Canada.

This legislation also includes an effort to recognize indigenous languages. It is not much. It does not introduce new powers or new rights. However, the preamble of the amended act now includes these words in the way of recognition: “of maintaining and enhancing the use of languages other than English and French and reclaiming, revitalizing and strengthening Indigenous languages”.

I think that is a step in the right direction. We need to look to other legislation and other reconciliation programs to protect the most at-risk languages, our country's indigenous languages.

• (2310)

[*English*]

For unilingual anglophones who are following this debate, I cannot say how important it is for all of us who do not have French as a first language to keep trying to learn. I know that a lot of the members here tonight have tried, as I have, too. I love speaking French and I love improving my French. Late at night it gets a little more difficult, but it certainly improves and enriches our society.

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It is not for nothing that French is known as the language of Molière. It is a beautiful language, and we need to make sure that Canada's identity on this continent, which is really one of the things that distinguishes us in an important way from, I do not know if we can call it American culture, but what passes for culture, not to be too self-satisfied about the richness of Canadian society in entertainment and music. We are, as anglophone Canadians, enormously enriched by the existence of the Quebec fact of the francophone reality that we are not a unilingual country. The more we protect and raise up indigenous languages and hang on to them, that will also improve who we are as a people and enrich us all.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the past few months, I have had the privilege of meeting with a number of stakeholders who have shared the improvements they want to see in this bill compared to the old Bill C-32. I believe we have incorporated those improvements in Bill C-13.

I really appreciated the comments by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, and I would like to know what recommendations she would make and what amendments she would like to see to Bill C-13.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister of Official Languages for her question. I know that she is from a francophone region in Acadia.

Some recommendations were made by community groups in Quebec to strengthen complaint mechanisms and the commissioner's powers. I am eager to study these issues in committee in order to improve Bill C-13.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, on another note, I encourage the member to take a look at the article I just tweeted from The Globe and Mail about indigenous women and violence, and the energy sector.

Back to the main topic, I wonder if the member could just comment on some of the provisions in the bill around francophone immigration, the failure of the government to meet its target on that, the high refusal rates we have seen in francophone Africa, and the impact that has had on our ability to strengthen our engagement with countries in Africa and actually grow towards the target the government says it has.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has made many excellent points in the debate tonight.

In Bill C-13, it says the minister would develop a strategy to increase immigration from nations that are essentially francophone and are likely to have those who speak French as their first language. We do not have a good record in terms of the approval of immigrants from francophone Africa. We need to do much better. I think we could improve this bill, and this is actually an answer to the minister's earlier question, by not just asking for a strategy for what we are going to do, or asking the minister to develop a strategy, but for some pointed changes in the way Bill C-13 is written, to

actually suggest that some of the problems we are facing are deliberately addressed with targets.

I know the member is also on the immigration committee. We have a crisis right now in the backlog for immigration, which also may explain a good deal of this, but not the refusal rates being disproportionately from Africa.

• (2315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Official Languages Act is founded on the principle that Quebec anglophones are a minority. However, they are part of the anglophone majority in Canada. Based on their supposed minority status, 100% of federal funding provided under the Official Languages Act serves to strengthen the anglophone community in Quebec, which had already received more than its share of funding from the outset.

That is one of the reasons for the decline of French in Quebec. Does my colleague not think that we should change the very principle of positive measures in Quebec?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I know that my colleague will not like my answer, but there really is an anglophone minority in Quebec. That is the truth.

[*English*]

I remember well when a member of Bourassa's cabinet left. It was Clifford Lincoln. He stood in the National Assembly in Quebec when the rights of anglophone Quebecers were reduced, and he said that “rights are rights are rights”. It was a brave statement from a courageous man of real integrity, and it spoke to the reality of a minority in Quebec that speaks English.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to respond to my friend, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

When we look at the statistics, French is in decline in Quebec. What we see is reflected in the bill. Some \$100 million annually is given to the anglophone community, while that community is growing. What is in jeopardy in Quebec is French, which is in decline.

In fact, when we talk about languages in Canada, there are three major problems. First, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands said, there are indigenous languages. We have to tackle the problems in order to properly support them. Then there is French outside Quebec and, finally, French in Quebec. English in Quebec is not at risk, it is growing.

When we look at the past few years and the past few decades, we see that the share of French outside Quebec is in decline. Have the policies and support in place been enough? The numbers speak for themselves: French is in decline. When we look at what is happening in Quebec, the statistics show that French is declining there too. Are the policies in place enough to protect French in Quebec and outside Quebec? The answer we are getting from the statistics is no.

Government Orders

Bill C-13 is nothing special. There will be no revolution. Things will continue as they are. We understand that the aim of the government, regardless of its political stripes, is assimilation, the gradual disappearance of the French language. That is what is happening. French is in decline outside Quebec and in Quebec. It is working, so well done. That is the goal. If that is not the goal, we are dealing with incompetents who have no common sense. I think the government is incompetent in many areas, but not in this area.

In Quebec, francophones thought that their province was the only place where francophones were still in the majority. The only solution that can stop this decline in our nation is independence. I want to reiterate a message of unwavering solidarity to all francophones outside Quebec and reassure them that Quebec will always stand with them. They are all our brothers, our sisters, our cousins. The same goes for all the indigenous peoples throughout Quebec and Canada. They are our brothers and sisters.

My colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île, who is by far the greatest expert on the matter in the House, Quebec and Canada, mentioned frogs. People often call francophones frogs. If you put a frog in a pot of boiling water, it will jump out right away. It will not allow that to happen. However, if you put a frog in a pot of cold water and turn on the heat, the water will slowly heat up. The frog will not realize that the water is too hot until it is too late. I get the impression that that is what is happening to francophones in Canada, both inside and outside Quebec. At first everything is okay. Then they are not so bad. Then they get worse, and when things get really bad and we finally realize it, it is too late. It is not too late for Quebec yet, but we see that the proposed bill will not change anything.

The only solution is independence. I work in economics. If we were masters of our own house, we could have leverage, tools and all the rest. It is important to remember the basic principle of two peoples and two cultures. The only way to protect French and to keep it alive in North America is to declare our independence. If we look at what the government is doing, we see that things are regressing in Quebec and outside Quebec. The numbers prove it. I can only conclude that the goal is assimilation.

I want to quote something that was said by the great Guy Rocher, a key player in the Quiet Revolution and co-author of Bill 101. His remarks were published in *Le Devoir* five years ago and reprinted in other newspapers for the 40th anniversary of Bill 101. This summer, the bill will be 45 years old and nothing has changed.

• (2320)

Here is the text:

Bill 101 is a national law. It is linked to the identity of the Quebec nation because it addresses the heart of that identity—the French language. Bill 101 has contributed to this identity, and continues to do so, but in a socio-political context that has evolved, one that is no longer that of 1977 and now requires us to rethink our language policy in Quebec.

The Charter of the French Language did not magically appear on the Quebec political scene. It came into being over several years; it has a history. Without invoking a distant past, don't forget that the Bill 101 of 1977 is intertwined with the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. Indeed, Bill 101 is a direct result of the "*Maitre chez nous*", masters in our own house, which meant so many things. This phrase was intended, above all, to express the idea that the state and the community would take charge of our Quebec economy, regain control of our natural resources and keep the revenues for ourselves.

But, more deeply, "*Maitre chez nous*" implied the affirmation of a Quebec identity that would replace the French Canadian identity. It was at the height of the Quiet Revolution that this transformation took place. French Canadians became Quebecers, which at the same time lent an inclusive connotation to our name, so that every citizen of Quebec would feel like a Quebecer.

This transition to the Quebec identity was a prelude to Bill 101. It was certainly an essential condition. It would give Bill 101 its national meaning. The identity function borne by this law originated in that fundamental dimension of the Quiet Revolution.

The other change brought about by the Quiet Revolution, which is also part of the context of Bill 101, is the transformation of the Quebec government. From 1960 on, it became more interventionist in economic, social and cultural matters. It contributed directly to promoting the economic interests of Quebecers and Quebec society. It took charge of the entire educational system, financially and pedagogically, and created a ministry of culture. It was in this same vein that Quebec lawmakers began to legislate language policy.

From 1967 to 1977, Quebec went through a major language crisis, the most significant in its history. Ten pivotal years in the modern history of Quebec, when Quebecers were searching for what they were, for what they are. The catalyst for that crisis appeared in early 1968 as a threat to the francophone community: the almost systematic anglicization of children of immigrants, through their large-scale enrolment in English schools rather than French ones. One might say that this choice could easily be interpreted as a rejection of French schools and, as a result, of the French-speaking community in Quebec and its culture.

The freedom to choose a school became a major issue. The question was simple: Should Quebec parents of all origins, whether old-stock or immigrants, be given a free choice between English and French schools? Or should access to English schools be restricted to the English-speaking minority in Quebec? This dilemma inflamed minds and divided public opinion, leading to major street demonstrations and confrontations.

In this climate of turmoil, the Quebec legislator twice tried to calm the situation, but without success. In 1969, Bill 63 entrenched the freedom to choose a school, which outraged the francophone majority. In 1974, Bill 22, which required language tests for immigrant children to attend English schools, outraged the English-speaking minority and ethnic communities. To understand Bill 101, its spirit and its substance, we must place it in the context of the language crisis of 1967 to 1977. The surprise election of the Parti Québécois to power on November 15, 1976, was part of this crisis: it was largely opposition to Bill 22 that brought the Parti Québécois to power.

I just read the first part of the piece. Guy Rocher goes on to say that, 40 years later, many things have changed and we need to think about that.

First, we must design language policy today "for a Quebec that has experienced globalization in all its forms, especially culturally".

Second, "in 1977, the English language was dominant by virtue of history, the history of colonization by Great Britain", but, today, "American English has spread as the language of communication well beyond the borders of the Commonwealth and is [very] attractive to Quebecers".

Third, "information and communications technologies have exploded, mainly benefiting English over all other languages".

Fourth, "the status of French no longer strikes a chord with enough Quebecers to worry political leaders, despite all the signs of the growing fragility of French".

I will continue to talk about Guy Rocher's words during questions and comments.

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● (2325)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to know if he has any suggestions for us. Instead of talking about the stick, could we talk about carrots? What can he suggest to the House to promote the use of French on social media, as well the arts and the theatre in French?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her intervention.

Obviously, there is an entire framework with the digital technologies that can be put in place to promote our francophone culture.

With regard to Bill C-13 and the entire policy that does not apply to Quebec, I propose that Bill 101 be the legislation to apply to federally regulated businesses, and that the \$100 million sent annually to the anglophone minority in Quebec be paid instead to francophones in the rest of Canada, because we can see that the share of French is in decline in Quebec and in the rest of Canada.

The money needs to be better allocated, that might help.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about expressing solidarity with francophones outside of Quebec. He would have to acknowledge how devastating it would be, particularly for francophones outside of Quebec, if his preferred scenario of separation were to proceed. It would really undermine the presence of French and its size and impact in what would remain of the country.

I believe the ideal, though certainly imperfectly realized, of having a genuinely bilingual union in a country of shared values is an ideal worth striving for. It is one in which English and French together in the same country allow us to be stronger and project a stronger image on the world stage. Every time Quebecers have been consulted on this question, they have chosen to remain with the rest of Canada.

Would it not be more productive for the member to devote his attentions to working on strengthening our country and strengthening the French fact within Canada, rather than pursuing a policy that, at the end of the day, would weaken substantially the French fact within Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, the statistics show that French has been declining in Canada both outside and inside Quebec for years and decades. Since Quebec is the only place where French is still the majority language, the only logical solution to stop this decline and this assimilation is independence. Independence would allow us to be masters in our own house and to promote the French language in America in a state that allows the French language to flourish. Francophones outside Quebec would have a better ally than they have now, because the frogs are dying off as the water gets hotter.

French is in decline. No language policy, inside or outside Quebec, has changed anything. This is the only logical solution.

● (2330)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague mention that one of the solutions would be to close Quebec's borders in Canada.

I would like to know how we can prevent English-language video games, music and films from entering Quebec.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, as Guy Rocher said, in order to protect the French language these days, we need to pay close attention to these technological changes and legislate accordingly. We see the government trying to do this for new media, and so on. The work is moving very slowly, since there is a lot of opposition.

I think that an independent Quebec could make much stronger legislation to better protect the French language. I keep coming back to the numbers. French is declining in Quebec. French is declining outside Quebec. This government, regardless of its political stripes, is setting French back.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to contribute to the debate on Bill C-13, an act to amend the Official Languages Act, so that I can express how the Liberals are disappointing everyone who is concerned about the decline of French across Canada and how the current government does not seem to be taking this seriously.

The evidence shows that we have been asking for weeks to move this bill forward so that we could discuss it more in depth in committee. What did the Liberals do? They put it on the agenda late tonight, on a Thursday or a Friday when no one was listening and no one knew what was going on. That is exactly what the Liberals have always done.

I was a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages for many years, from 2015 to 2021. The reform of the Official Languages Act is something we have been talking about since the beginning of the 42nd Parliament. It is now the 44th Parliament. In the meantime, there have been two elections, and the last one was completely unnecessary. Each time, it was as though all of the committee's work was set aside and we had to start fresh.

Certain groups of witnesses appeared before the committee at least three times to share their recommendations. Once the pandemic began, many presentations were done virtually, but, before that, the committee regularly welcomed stakeholders from New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan and even Yukon to Ottawa. I commend those witnesses, who came to speak to the progress of the bill or bills that have been introduced over the years.

Countless reports have been produced, each dealing with the concerns of official language minority communities across Canada and proposing recommendations formulated by a committee whose work is generally non-partisan and very collaborative. I saw this for many years, and I commend the colleagues with whom I had the pleasure of sitting on this committee.

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The government had several chances over the last few years to introduce a bill that would have addressed the stakeholders' concerns and implemented all of the recommendations. That is not what we have before us. Bill C-13 seems more like a rough draft than a modernized act that was last updated over half a century ago.

The Liberals want us to pass Bill C-13 to make themselves look good and to make it appear as though they are concerned about the French language in Canada. However, the final version before us has perplexed many people. The Fédération canadienne des communautés francophones et acadienne wondered why the Department of Canadian Heritage retains a coordinating role in the implementation of the act when it has no authority over other federal institutions.

The FCFA's president, Liane Roy, stated that she wanted to see a more specific objective for restoring and increasing the demographic weight of the francophone minority community.

Bill C-13 is chock full of contradictions. The government wants French to be strengthened at Canadian departments and federal institutions, but the task has been assigned to a minister without any authority to do so.

The government wants to increase francophone immigration to maintain the demographic weight of official language minority communities, but no mechanisms are included to reach existing targets, or the targets are just not mentioned.

I will cite a few examples. On page 9, Bill C-13 proposes that the government ensure that “managers and supervisors are able to communicate in both official languages with employees of the institution in carrying out their managerial or supervisory responsibilities”.

Does the government intend to change the working conditions of existing executives? Will it commit to making this a condition of employment, for example? If so, one would expect the President of the Treasury Board to have a role to play, not the Department of Canadian Heritage, which has no authority over the public service. This is a very concrete example.

On page 15, with respect to francophone immigration, the bill mentions that the policy includes objectives, targets and indicators. Will the targets be binding? Will there be consequences for the relevant departments or officials if they are not met? The government cannot tell us.

The government makes some reference to penalties on page 25, stating that on the recommendation of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Governor in Council may make regulations to apply these penalties or to address non-compliance.

To translate that for the reader, the governor in council is really the cabinet. In other words, we are being asked as parliamentarians to vote on a bill whose consequences for non-compliance will be determined later, and only by the Prime Minister and his entourage.

• (2335)

Once passed, the bill gives all its powers to an executive branch, and we in the legislative branch will have no say, except during a comment period before the regulations come into force.

Let me give another example of the government being vague and failing to meet its commitment to introduce a tangible amendment to the Official Languages Act: the use of French in federally regulated private businesses. Pages 57 to 59 make reference to businesses located in Quebec and regions with a strong francophone presence. My goodness. I do not know how they define that, but it is not written anywhere in the bill. Bill C-13 does not define “regions with a strong francophone presence”. Who will decide that? How will it be decided? Again, there are many questions, and no answers.

Once again, Bill C-13 gives cabinet all the power by stipulating that, when making regulations to define “regions with a strong francophone presence”, the governor in council may take into account any criterion it considers appropriate, including the number of francophones in a region in relation to the total population of the region. What is that number? Is it 50%, 20%, 5% or 1%? No one knows.

Without ever specifying thresholds for Bill C-13, the government is basically telling us to vote in favour, and it will tell us later. The Liberals have been doing this for seven and a half years, and now we are seeing the outcome. Credibility is lacking, which is why we want Bill C-13 to go to committee as soon as possible so all those details can be incorporated.

To sum up, Bill C-13 is a feeble legislative response to the urgent problem of the decline of French. What we need is reform, not mere adjustments. It took the Liberals over six years to introduce a bill that does not deliver the reform they promised. The Liberals could have acted sooner to protect and promote French. Bill C-13 as written will not halt the decline of French. It lacks teeth and accountability. The Liberals have ignored many demands put forward by national organizations, such as eliminating the division of power between Treasury Board and Canadian Heritage.

Conservatives recognize the decline of French in Quebec and across Canada, and we will always support both official languages and language rights.

The official languages are appreciated by the vast majority of Canadians and are a major asset to our country. Some of my colleagues talked about it earlier: because the official languages allow all of our communities to flourish, things are certainly not going to improve with Quebec's independence.

We are calling on the Liberals to commit to working with the opposition parties to allow the Standing Committee on Official Languages to continue to work on improving Bill C-13, in order to meet the expectations of Canadians and the stakeholders who contributed so much time and effort throughout the entire consultation process to modernize the Official Languages Act.

This has been going on since 2015. I was there and we were talking about this in 2009 as well. It has been 12 years. It is a matter of respect, a matter of recognizing our identity and the uniqueness of our great country. We should be proud to have two official languages, English and French, or French and English, that allow us to access, exchange and share our culture with the 50 other member countries of the Commonwealth and the 54 member countries of la Francophonie.

I have one minute left. I would like to respond to my colleague from Joliette's comments, and I should invite him to ask me questions. Twenty-five years ago, Lucien Bouchard said that if the Bloc Québécois got more than one term, it had failed. The Bloc Québécois has been in Ottawa for 25 years now, and the Parti Québécois is melting away in Quebec along with its option, so that is certainly not how we are going to protect the French language in Canada, nor will we succeed by trying to separate this francophone group, which is significant in Canada and North America, from the rest of Canada, where there are millions of Canadian francophones, francophiles and allies. I think it is important for us to remain the big country we are now and always have been.

• (2340)

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will use this opportunity to speak in English because it is getting late. The government has failed with immigration targets for francophone communities. It continues to put bills forward that really have no substance to them at all.

Why should we trust anything the government has written and refer this on to committee? Is it that important of a bill?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

The government has never met its own targets for francophone immigration, particularly outside Quebec. We have not even reached 2%, when we should be around 4.4%. The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, or FCFA, has proposed increasing the target for francophone immigration to 12%, 15%, or even 20% in Canada's francophone minority communities.

I would be willing to play the game and say that we want more francophone immigration in Canada, but we cannot trust this government. It has never met its targets.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, ultimately, there are two main approaches to language planning around the world. One is based on territoriality, and it is seen as the only effective approach for protecting minority languages. The other is based on the personality principle, which is Canada's model to some extent. Bill 101 is based more on the territoriality approach.

I believe that the only way to ensure the substantive equality of languages in Canada would be to let Quebec take charge of its language policy and establish a system based on territoriality. That is what Quebec is asking for. This does not prevent those in other parts of Canada from using the system of their choice.

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Could my colleague comment on that?

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, I am not entirely against this idea, but respect for both official languages in Canada must fundamentally be achieved with the collaboration of all of Canada's provinces and Quebec, which could most certainly take charge, to some extent, of efforts to increase the number of francophones throughout Quebec and Canada.

We agree. I am currently replacing my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska on the Standing Committee on Official Languages, on which my colleague from La Pointe-de-l'Île also sits. Witnesses who appeared before the committee told us that the Francophonie is declining across the country. That is very unfortunate.

We are seeing this because for seven and a half years, the government has done absolutely nothing to improve the situation and has only sprinkled money here and there. It is not just a question of money. It is a question of true political will, but unfortunately, this government has none.

• (2345)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member said that we cannot protect the French language.

[*English*]

Could the member comment on how we could introduce a rebirth of French across Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux: Madam Speaker, it could be done by simply adopting a law that really meets the needs of francophone communities across the country, including in Quebec.

The problem with this government is that it has dragged its feet for seven years now. It has not taken any of the measures necessary to protect the French language in Canada. These are actual facts. I did not make them up. The numbers speak for themselves. We need to make genuine improvements to Bill C-13. We cannot simply take this bill, swallow it whole and say that everything will take care of itself. Every time the committee meets, people come to tell us how the government has dragged its feet and has not moved the francophone cause in Canada forward by so much as an inch.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be here tonight. I would like to recognize that we are all gathered here tonight on the traditional unceded territories of the Anishinabe Algonquin nation.

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Before I officially begin my speech, I want to once again mention that I am an Acadian from New Brunswick. What I did not mention earlier is that I am the youngest of a family of 10 children. I was able to attend elementary and secondary school and complete my post-secondary studies in French thanks, in part, to the Official Languages Act. Many of my older brothers and sisters did not have that right. They had to go to an English high school. The modernization of the Official Languages Act is therefore something very personal for me. As I said, it is my experience. It is part of my daily life. If I had the right to work in French in Moncton over the course of my career, it is once again thanks to the Official Languages Act. I think that all members of the House really want to put forward a bill that has more teeth to protect and promote our beautiful languages.

Since 2019, our government has given itself a mandate to update Canada's linguistic situation and take stock of the evolution of official languages since the passage of the first Official Languages Act more than 50 years ago. The linguistic situation is constantly changing. The world we are living in has also changed since 1969. The time had come to focus on the good things about this legislation and on the challenges in order to offer a new, modernized vision of our linguistic duality and our bilingualism. We are modernizing the Official Languages Act at an unusual time. While the planet is grappling with the COVID-19 health crisis, in Canada, we have seen how the pressure and urgency to act can have repercussions on the obligation to communicate with and provide service to the public. We have a duty to act, and we did that in order to take this into account in our modernization plans.

It is clear that the Official Languages Act has shaped this country's linguistic landscape for more than 50 years. Not only did it establish institutional bilingualism and enable francophones to pursue careers in the federal public service, but it also ensured that francophones could receive services and education in their language. In addition to promoting our two official languages for over 50 years, the act protected the rights of our official language minority communities, both francophone communities across Canada and anglophone communities in Quebec. The act ensured their vitality.

This is an undeniable Canadian reality and a uniquely Canadian distinction, but it also presents a challenge. This situation calls for a Canadian response. We have a duty and an obligation to support the vitality of these communities from coast to coast to coast for generations to come. Our rich history recognizes the presence, perseverance and resilience of francophone minority communities across the country and anglophone communities in Quebec.

However, the figures can be worrisome as maintaining the demographic weight of these communities is important to us. The numbers speak for themselves. We heard this many times this evening. The demographic weight of the francophone population is plummeting. The proportion of people whose first language is French outside Quebec was 6.6% in 1971 and will fall to 3.9% by 2036. Once again, these are frightening statistics.

Despite efforts in the area of francophone immigration and the protection of the right to access federal services in the language of one's choice, our government needs to do more to fulfill its responsibilities and its commitment to enhancing the vitality of official language minority communities. We need strong institutions that

serve as a beacon in their communities. We also need better data so we can fine-tune our interventions in these communities. In order to achieve that, federal institutions also need to listen to their communities. We know that minority communities, whether francophone or anglophone, need institutions and services in their own language.

• (2350)

These institutions are part of the public space needed in order to live and grow in their language. When we talk about services, we are talking about those offered by large public institutions, such as provincial and municipal governments and community organizations. That includes school boards, day cares, community health clinics and cultural organizations. Our government's bill seeks, among other things, to help these communities reach their full potential by supporting the vitality of institutions in key sectors.

To do that, we want to amend part VII of the Official Languages Act by including practical examples of positive measures. These include providing support for key sectors of the official language minority community, such as education, employment, health, immigration, culture and justice; including an obligation for the Government of Canada to contribute to an estimate of the number of children who are entitled to an education in the language of the official minority; and affirming the Government of Canada's commitment to strengthening the education continuum from early childhood to post-secondary studies in the minority language.

These amendments will require the government to take more positive measures to support official language minority communities and will clarify the obligations of federal institutions, particularly when it comes to consulting these communities and protecting their key programs and services.

The bill we introduced presents solid and lasting solutions to protect the future of our official language minority communities and their institutions. The bill also proposes some innovative improvements. One example is the creation of the new rights to be served and to work in French in federally regulated private businesses. Our government is deeply committed to both our official languages and to these communities across Canada.

The introduction of the bill to modernize the Official Languages Act is a milestone for our identity as Canadians and for the defence of our language rights today and for generations to come. We have known for a long time that our main official language objectives can only make a real difference in the lives of Canadians if they are implemented in collaboration with the affected communities. This bill sets the stage for closer collaboration between federal institutions and official language minority communities.

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In recent months, I have had the privilege of meeting with many stakeholders across the country who have commented on the new version of the bill. Once again, by actively listening, we were able to adjust the new bill to include several of the recommendations made by a number of provincial and national groups, to ensure that the bill has more teeth.

I look forward to answering questions.

• (2355)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is five minutes to midnight. I wonder why, after a debate on the importance of French in Canada, the minister responsible for this file is giving a speech at 11:55 p.m.

I honestly think I know the answer: “on s'en sacre comme de l'an quarante”. That is a French saying from Quebec that basically means that they could not care less. I cannot believe it.

Why did the minister not give her speech at the start of tonight's debate? We could have asked her a series of questions throughout the evening.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to answer the member's question.

First, my speech at second reading has already been delivered. This evening I was here to listen to all the comments from all my colleagues because this bill is very important to the entire population. I am not afraid to stay here until midnight since I wanted to hear everyone's points of view.

Again, to me, protecting and promoting French is a priority. I want to work with all my colleagues in the House.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-13 seems to recognize that French is in a minority and that French Quebec is part of the francophone minority. At the same time, it continues to use the concept of anglophones as a minority community. With respect to positive measures, will all the money keep going to the anglophone side? How are things going to be balanced out? What does this mean to the minister? Does she think the anglophone minority is a minority to the same degree as the francophone and Acadian communities?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Today, I was very pleased to welcome him to the reception with the secretary general of the Observatoire de l'éthique publique. I am very pleased that the member participated in that event with me today. I thank him for that.

Once again, I think that we recognize that French is in decline in Quebec and across Canada. When we look at the numbers, we can see that there has really been a demographic loss, and we need to invest to fix that.

Once again, as the Minister of Official Languages, I look forward to working with the Bloc and all members of the House so that I can ensure that this bill moves forward and that I am able to address this problematic situation.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I note that there were some comments today, and also from the minister, around protecting the French language.

Is there space in this bill to build on a new generation of French-speaking Canadians, and what in the bill would address that?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, congratulations to my hon. colleague for her unanimous consent motion this week in the House. That was well done.

With respect to the issue of increasing our level of people who want to speak and learn French, what is very clear is that over the past number of years we have seen a real increase in Canadians who want to learn a second language. If we look at the investments that have been made in our action plan for the past five years, significant investments have been made in order to ensure that Canadians will be able to learn a second language. French is the language where we see that investments are being made, because it is absolutely a priority.

I know that in my part of the country, some parents get up at midnight to stand in line to register their children for day care, because they so want to make sure they are able to access those services. We want to really increase those services all across the country, specifically where we see there is a contingent of francophones there, because we want to make sure that people will be able to thrive in the French language as well.

[Translation]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the minister for her excellent speech, for the important work she does and for proudly representing New Brunswick and Acadians in the House.

My question is as follows. How is our government working to protect indigenous languages while protecting French in Canada?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I would also like to thank my colleague from New Brunswick for her hard work and her support for our bill.

We have been very clear in Bill C-13 and in many other instances. Through this legislation, we want to do everything we can to ensure that indigenous languages are promoted and protected. We recognize that in addition to our two official languages, Canada also has 70 indigenous languages. We introduced a bill on indigenous languages in 2019, and it passed.

Once again, we want to be engaged and make sure that we promote and protect these two beautiful languages. I also had the privilege of meeting with the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, Mr. Ignace, to discuss this situation because, again, it is very important to us.

Government Orders

• (2400)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. members for Langley—Aldergrove and Regina—Lewvan not being present in the House to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, their notice is deemed to have been withdrawn.

[*English*]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:01 a.m.)

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