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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 6, 2023

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)  
[*English*]

### PANDEMIC PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS ACT

The House resumed from November 15, 2022, consideration of the motion that Bill C-293, An Act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to join in the debate to discuss Bill C-293, an act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness.

I do not think we would find anyone in the House who would be against being prepared for when the next pandemic comes to our country. However, we would have a different way of going about it.

Looking through the bill brought forward by the member from the government's side, there are a few questions that come to my mind right away.

One of its sections talks about agriculture and industrial agriculture. It states:

(l) after consultation with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Minister of Industry and provincial governments, provide for measures to:

- (i) reduce the risks posed by antimicrobial resistance,
- (ii) regulate commercial activities that can contribute to pandemic risk, including industrial animal agriculture,
- (iii) promote commercial activities that can help reduce pandemic risk, including the production of alternative proteins, and
- (iv) phase out commercial activities that disproportionately contribute to pandemic risk, including activities that involve high-risk species;

I do not see a definition of what those high-risk species. We have a question about that.

The section continues:

(m) include the following information, to be provided by the Minister of the Environment:

after consultation with relevant provincial ministers, a summary of changes in land use in Canada, including in relation to disturbed habitats, that could contribute to pandemic risk, such as deforestation, encroachment on wildlife habi-

tats and urbanization and that were made, in the case of the first plan, since the last report on changes in land use published under the Federal Sustainable Development Act or, in the case of the updated plans, during the reporting period for the updated plan,

There are issues that will need discussion.

First, I would ask the member who brought the bill forward if he had discussions with the provincial and territorial health ministers already. When I read the bill, there is a lot of encroachment on provincial jurisdiction. I think some of the Bloc members would have concerns about that as well, moving to take over some of the things that should be in the province's jurisdiction.

I have another issue with respect to the agriculture file. I am on the agriculture standing committee and a few things in the bill could limit the use of agricultural land. That concerns me and the people who I represent across western Canada and in Saskatchewan. Our producers do a fantastic job with managing their land use. Part of this preparedness plan has some land use issues in it.

Talking about deforestation, one of the biggest countries that is in competition for agriculture, one that our producers compete against, is Brazil. Brazil is doing a lot of deforestation right now, putting more and more land into agriculture use. If we could use our land and produce more, we would be helping the environment on a larger scale by ensuring that other countries would not have to use deforestation. They would have to put that use of land into agriculture, which would be great for our environment.

More concerns around the pandemic preparedness act are some of the encroachments on our civil liberties. One thing that is mentioned a few times in the bill is the "one health approach". Like many people, I did not know what one health meant, but I did get a definition from its website. It states:

One Health' is an integrated, unifying approach to balance and optimize the health of people, animals and the environment. It is particularly important to prevent, predict, detect, and respond to global health threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together. This way, new and better ideas are developed that address root causes and create long-term, sustainable solutions.

• (1105)

One Health involves the public health, veterinary, public health and environmental sectors. The One Health approach is particularly relevant for food and water safety, nutrition, the control of zoonoses (diseases that can spread between animals and humans, such as flu, rabies and Rift Valley fever), pollution management, and combatting antimicrobial resistance (the emergence of microbes that are resistant to antibiotic therapy).

*Private Members' Business*

On the surface, it sounds like it is a pretty good approach, but one of the concerns I would have is the loss of our own ability to get ready for the next pandemic. The problem is that the one health initiative to integrate work on human, animal and environmental issues limits our ability to look after our own Canadians citizens. This, from the WHO, is more of an overarching approach to health care and that still should be central to governments in their own countries not to have that loss of control. We need to dive into this and look a lot closer at the one-health approach.

I hear my colleague from Winnipeg North speaking. I hope he gets up on his feet today.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives are concerned with most bills the Liberals bring forward. They take a decent idea in theory, but then they over-complicate it. That is what this legislation would do and that is one of the reasons we will be unable to support it.

Also, when it comes to the Liberals' approach to the pandemic, all we have seen throughout the pandemic is a lot of money being thrown at some of the issues when it comes to programming. We have found out now from PBO that 40% of that money was not even used for pandemic services. That is a big concern for us and we believe it is one of the major factors that has been hitting inflation so hard for Canadians across the country.

The approach the Conservatives are taking is that we would like to see a little more control and a lot more consultation. I asked about the dental program that my friends across the way hail so largely. I asked the Minister of Health if he consulted with the health ministers of the provinces and territories before the Liberals brought forward the dental program. To this date, he has never answered me. I would really like to see some follow up on the consultations the member did on his private member's bill with the other jurisdictions, the municipal and provincial leaders. I would also like to know if they had any input into bill before it was tabled.

I would like to see some follow up on the consultations that were had with the appropriate health ministers and also with the agriculture ministers. The Liberals talk about agriculture, land use within agriculture and animal health, so I also wonder if the member, before putting his private member's bill forward, had discussions with all the agriculture ministers across the country as well since they are talking about changes to land use in agriculture land.

I have not heard whether the member spoke to the Saskatchewan agriculture minister. I wonder if there were any conversations with those ministers. When we talk about consultation, we talk about working together in other governmental jurisdictions, with provincial, territorial and municipal leaders. I believe the government has failed on those consultations many times. I wonder if this is another stack of failed consultations that should have been done before the bill was brought forward.

I look forward to hearing other speeches and whether other members will or will not support the bill. I am happy to stand and lay out some of the reasons why I feel the government does not have the capacity to be prepared for the next pandemic. I hope that we can work together with our provincial and municipal leaders to ensure we have things in place. The Conservatives believe that we

have to be ready for the next pandemic, but we do not think this bill would get the job done.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Madam Speaker, for most of us, March 12, 2020, marked the official start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a major impact on the life of our communities and the organization of our societies and our work. It had an especially big impact on our social interactions.

Three years later, we have the right, as citizens, to know what really happened so that we can learn from this unprecedented public health crisis, even though we hope such a crisis never happens again.

Bill C-293, an act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness, seeks to require the Minister of Health to establish an advisory committee to review the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. Obviously, we are not against doing the right thing. If, of course, the intention of the bill is laudable, then, as the Bloc Québécois has said, and as I will say again today, an independent public inquiry is the only acceptable way to judge the government's actions. In order to shed light on the complete chain of events, we need to calmly hold an independent, transparent national inquiry, without partisanship, by opening a constructive dialogue with the various stakeholders.

We have heard the horror stories from the book entitled *Le printemps le plus long*, or the longest spring, a journalistic account written by Alec Castonguay. I encourage my colleagues to read it, as it is full of examples of the Liberal government's chronic lack of preparation. The threat level moved from high to critical, but the Liberal ministers' typical inaction—even though the alarm had been sounded—had serious and catastrophic repercussions on everything, including our health care systems in Quebec and in all the provinces.

I would like to highlight the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, or GPHIN. Essentially, it is the Public Health Agency of Canada's version of CSIS. It is an invaluable governmental tool, and it is a reference in the prevention field.

Canadian scientists are the go-to source for health alerts for 85 countries. They are able to detect chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear public health threats while constantly scanning public open-source news in real time.

In his investigative work, Alec Castonguay wrote that the GPHIN, a victim of PHAC leadership's changing priorities, was unable to sound the alarm earlier. That is the first thing we need to get to the bottom of, and that is why we need an independent public inquiry.

The Liberals changed the GPHIN's mandate because they wanted to control the message. This is the same government that, in 2015, said it would no longer muzzle scientists. The Liberals are doing the same thing as the previous government. That is unacceptable. Our people deserve so much better than what they have gotten over the last few years.

It was not until July 2020, after journalists once again uncovered the truth, that the then-health minister was forced to launch an internal inquiry to find out why officials did not sound the alarm earlier. Will we ever find out why? Honestly, I doubt it.

• (1115)

There are other examples. In the 1950s, during the Cold War, the Canadian government created the national emergency strategic stockpile. Essentially, its purpose is to store pharmaceuticals and supplies used by social services. It is a stockpile of medical assets, equipment and supplies. This strategic stockpile is intended to be used specifically during a pandemic or health disaster. When the Liberals came to power, they neglected this strategic resource, which is why thousands of items of personal protective equipment, including the well-known N95 masks, had to be destroyed.

If we look back, members will recall that the U.S. President at the time decided to invoke the Defense Production Act to stop the shipment of materials to fight COVID-19 to other countries, including Canada. More than 500,000 N95 masks were stuck in the United States. Thousands of health care workers were put at high risk because of this government, which might lead one to question whether it is running the country in a serious and thoughtful way.

It was Quebec that had to charter the biggest plane in the world, have it travel from Ukraine to China to fill up with protection equipment, pay the people on the tarmac at the Shanghai airport in cash and have the plane land in Mirabel, because the federal government is unable to properly manage its supply of masks. Seriously, it is a nightmare.

A contract to produce ventilators was hastily awarded to Frank Baylis, a former Liberal MP who was a friend of the government. I met him at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. According to the worst-case estimates, we needed 13,500 ventilators, but 27,148 were ordered. That is twice as many, but, after all, "a friend is a friend".

There was chaos at the border as well. Valérie Plante, the Montreal mayor, and François Legault, the Quebec premier, had to coordinate to send public health officers from Montreal to the Trudeau airport to enforce quarantines. I saw it with my own two eyes. In the meantime, the Trudeau government, which is often more concerned with its image than with results—

• (1120)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I want to remind the hon. member that we do not use the names of members in the House.

The hon. member for Laurentides-Labelle.

**Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau:** Thank you for the reminder, Madam Speaker. We will have to make changes in 2023. I will resume my speech.

### *Private Members' Business*

I have to say that in Laurentides-Labelle my team and I worked tirelessly to bring home our constituents. More than 50 families were stranded abroad and abandoned by the government. It was an urgent situation. I remember that it happened during the school break, a time when thousands of Quebecers go abroad every year. We wondered if we needed to do something. That is pretty much the only responsibility the government has in health and it was still unable to carry it out. I cannot imagine what would happen if there were national standards, but that is another debate.

There have been more than 6.5 million deaths from COVID-19 around the world. In Canada, 45,000 people died. Those 45,000 families are owed answers. The role of MPs in this place is to monitor government action. We cannot shed light on a critical and tragic period by meeting behind closed doors. What we went through is not insignificant, and we all know it. People have died.

Of course, it was urgent to take action then, but we must investigate what was done so that we can do better. Our style of government is based on ministerial responsibility, and the government is responsible to the House. We, MPs, are the representatives of Canadians in 338 ridings, the people across the country who were strong and worked together during that time.

As a G7 nation, we owe it to our citizens. A national independent public inquiry is the only way forward, and that is why we will vote against the bill.

[English]

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the pandemic has been difficult for Canadians, and it has been especially difficult for frontline workers: nurses, physicians, long-term care workers, cleaners, retail staff, transit workers and others. They have been there for us throughout this pandemic, but the government has not been there for them. For three years, they have been on the front lines with no relief in sight.

The government called them heroes, but this accolade has not been backed up with tangible investments in their pay, working conditions or mental health supports. It is absolutely unacceptable that investments in mental health have not come to frontline workers while the Liberal government sits on \$4.5 billion of unspent mental health funding. That needs to change.

As the premiers arrive this week for health care negotiations, I think about the workers who are part of the growing care economy. This includes nurses, who are disproportionately women, especially immigrant women. They have been underpaid and undervalued for decades because of gender discrimination.

*Private Members' Business*

Now is the time for the federal government to step up and end that discrimination and to do the work required to improve the working conditions of nurses across this country. As Linda Silas of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions has long said, it is past time to address, with actions, the dire shortage of nurses in this country.

With that in mind, I highlight for the Liberal government a study that has been going on in the HUMA committee for nearly a year on labour shortages. Its imminent report will hold critical testimony that outlines solutions to improve working conditions for health care workers and to attract and retain more nurses. It was informed by unions across the country that understand first-hand this critical problem. The government must listen to them and act with urgency.

Action is not something we see much of from the Liberal government, and it is one of the shortcomings of Bill C-293. Bill C-293 represents an unacceptable attempt to provide the illusion of action, accountability and oversight with respect to Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will not actually achieve it. What is really needed is what the NDP and the member for Vancouver Kingsway have called for throughout this pandemic: "a root-to-branch, independent, penetrating and comprehensive review of Canada's COVID-19 preparedness and response."

An advisory committee approach, as proposed in Bill C-293, has not shown great results. The proof is in the fact that even after the SARS advisory committee recommendations, Canada was ill-prepared for COVID-19.

Some good things did come out of the National Advisory Committee on SARS, like the initial emergency stockpile of PPE. However, as mentioned today, it was proven to be not properly maintained, given the millions of N95 masks that had expired and needed to be destroyed when the pandemic began. As COVID-19 hit, workers did not have the PPE supplies they needed in order to stay safe.

A May 2021 report from the AG confirmed that negligent management of Canada's emergency stockpile resulted in shortages of PPE for essential workers. Serious issues with the stockpile had been raised for more than a decade, and the Public Health Agency of Canada, with its specific mandate to plan and coordinate a national response to infectious diseases, was reported to have limited public health and emergency response management expertise in its own agency. How is it that PHAC did not have the required expertise to manage PPE stocks?

This lack of internal expertise played out in other ways too. When the pandemic hit in early 2020, the supply of essential medicines became a critical need, but Canada had walked away from investing in biomanufacturing capacity in this country decades earlier.

Fast-forward to March 2021, when the lack of domestic production capacity of vaccines was a problem for the Canadian government. In response to the insecurity of adequate supply for Canadians, a federal COVID-19 vaccine task force was formed to seek out high-potential Canadian candidates for the manufacturing of vaccines.

Of course, the first thing the Liberals did was outsource because the knowledge of Canadian companies with capabilities did not already exist within Health Canada. Deloitte was contracted, and at least one potential candidate was identified, Biolyse Pharma, which, as per John Fulton's testimony at INDU committee, was "several years into the construction of a biologics manufacturing centre".

● (1125)

Biolyse could repurpose its facility for vaccine production with an investment from the federal government for as little as \$4 million, yet the lack of government expertise, response and political will did not make this happen. I will mention at this point that this is the same for the TRIPS waiver.

I want to take a moment to recognize the hon. member for Oakville, the Minister of National Defence. Her skill and determination in securing life-saving vaccines for Canadians after initial government missteps should never be forgotten.

Going back to PPE, at the beginning of the pandemic, Canadian manufacturers stepped up with production. Companies like Novo Textiles in my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam invested quickly to retool their facilities and take up the government's request for critical PPE. However, even though Novo Textiles and other members of CAPPEM made investments to ramp up production, the government did not come through with timely certifications or purchase orders to support these heroic initiatives.

To add insult to injury, it took a motion from an opposition party in this House two years into the pandemic to get the federal government to even purchase Canadian PPE for the Hill and federal staff. In this very place, there were no Canadian-made masks until 2022.

It seems that it is not a lack of government-created and government-chosen advisory board members, consultants and plans that is missing. It is the ramping up of internal expertise and the political will to act that is needed. That is why the New Democrats call on the federal government and cabinet to launch an independent public inquiry into Canada's COVID-19 response under the Inquiries Act without delay. As I mentioned earlier, my colleague from Vancouver—Kingsway has been calling for a comprehensive review of Canada's COVID-19 preparedness and response throughout this pandemic. It is the only way to have accountability and adequate preparedness and prevention management going forward.

Canadians want and deserve that too. According to an April 2022 poll from Research Co., 66% of Canadians support holding a public inquiry into the way the COVID-19 pandemic was managed by the federal government.

Last week, the director general of the World Health Organization noted the third anniversary of the declaration of the COVID pandemic and said that it continues to constitute a public health emergency of international concern. This pandemic is not over, and the Liberals can no longer hold off on an independent inquiry into their handling of it. They must act now.

Although we are in a better position now than we were during the peak of the omicron transmission one year ago, this pandemic is not over. We cannot get complacent. Surveillance and genetic sequencing have declined globally, making it more difficult to track known variants and detect new ones.

At the same time, Canadian health systems are on the verge of collapse. Frontline workers have been heroic, yet it has resulted in burnout, fatigue and early retirements. As we work through this reality, more federal investments are needed in health care and nurses. There needs to be respect for women in the care economy, because they have always been the true backbone of the economy.

The current nursing shortage has certainly proved that the Liberals need to take the work of solving the nursing shortage seriously and take action. The Prime Minister must not let down nurses as the premiers arrive this week. The Liberal government has a responsibility to be part of the solution and to act on the health care crisis, which has been exasperated by COVID-19.

• (1130)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak today to a bill put forward by my friend from Beaches—East York. I want to wish him well with his explorations regarding the provincial Liberal leadership here in Ontario. It will be interesting to see how he does with the caucus management side given his independent streak. The good news for him is that the Liberal Party caucus in Ontario is such a small caucus to manage that it should be a bit easier. I do wish him well—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would remind the member that this is not the business of the House, so let us please stick to the point.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I had a slogan suggestion for his leadership campaign as well. It was “Get high in the polls”, but anyway, I will carry on with my remarks here. I wish my friend well, but I will not be supporting his bill.

This bill is about a review of our pandemic preparedness and comes out of the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, which, it is sort of cliché to say but it is obvious, is the seminal event in all of our lives that has had so many dramatic consequences. There are the health consequences for so many people, but also the social and cultural consequences of the pandemic that have deeply shaped us and will continue to shape us. Most of those consequences, quite frankly, are negative and require a reaction to the social and cultural damage that has been wrought as a result of the divisions that have

### *Private Members' Business*

been created through this pandemic, some of them maybe just incidental or unintended, but some of them very much intentionally sown.

It is right that we, as politicians, as leaders but also as a society in general, should be evaluating and reviewing the effects of the pandemic and asking what happened here, how we got some things so badly wrong, what were the things that we got right, and how we could approach future pandemics in a better way. In principle, I agree with the idea of having a postpandemic review and having in place provisions to ensure that there is a plan for future pandemics. I do not regard this bill, sadly, as a serious approach to those things.

I will just mention some aspects of this. One is that Liberals love to put forward new advisory councils appointed by government ministers. We saw this with their child care bill, Bill C-35. We are seeing this again with Bill C-293, where they are saying they have this issue they have to think about and therefore they are going to have an advisory council that is going to be responsible for advising the government about it. The minister responsible for that area is going to appoint the advisory council. By the way, the advisory council should be, in certain respects, diverse, reflective of different kinds of backgrounds, experiences and so forth.

However, what guarantees diversity of thought in an advisory mechanism is diversity in the appointment process, that is, bringing in multiple voices in determining who are the right people to sit on this advisory council. If a minister chooses who sits on the advisory council, then obviously they are going to be tempted to appoint people who share their pre-existing philosophy and who are not necessarily going to dig into providing the kind of criticism that is required of the government's approach.

Various members have put forward proposals in terms of the kind of broad-based, genuinely democratic postpandemic review that we would need to have. Many of those conversations are already going on. There should be a mechanism within the government to have this kind of review. I know various provinces are looking at this already. There should be international mechanisms around pandemic review. All these things are important, but those review processes should not be a top-down, controlled whitewash. They should be authentically empowered to hold governments accountable, to ask whether we got some big things wrong in the context of the pandemic, why we got them wrong, and how we could ensure we fix those issues.

In the time I have left, let me highlight some of the things I think we got badly wrong about the pandemic, and some of the ways we need to think about how we go forward.

*Private Members' Business*

There were a lot of things that we did not know about COVID-19 when it started. Let us acknowledge that it was probably inevitable that we were going to get some things wrong, but at a basic level we should have had the stockpile of PPE that was required. This was coming out of past pandemics, so that people could eventually come to conclusions such as to what degree certain kinds of masks limit, or not, the spread of the virus. At the very beginning, before we knew anything, it would have been a good kind of default to say, let us make sure that we have protective equipment in place and that we have that stockpile available so that it could be available to people.

It was out of the discussion after the SARS pandemic a couple of decades ago that we created the Public Health Agency, which was supposed to help us be prepared for these things. We were not prepared. We did not have the stockpiles of PPE. In fact, we sent away PPE at a critical juncture early in the pandemic. There was a lack of preparedness, particularly around having the equipment that was required.

• (1135)

Members will recall, and it is important to recall, that the leading public health authorities in this country and in the U.S. said not to use masks and that masks are ineffective or even counterproductive. That was the message at the beginning. Likely, part of the reason that message was pushed, in a context where doctors and nurses were using that equipment but the general public was told not to use these things because they are counterproductive, was that there was a shortage of supply. The government could have been more honest about acknowledging the fact that there was a shortage of supply and that it had failed to plan and prepare for that reality.

This speaks to another point. There is the lack of preparedness in terms of having the PPE available, but also we would have been much better off if governments and public health authorities had been more willing to openly acknowledge the things they did not know. I think early discussions around masking were a good example of the tone we had. People were told that if they were for masking when they were supposed to be against masking, they were anti-science and they were pushing an anti-science message. Later, there was the revision, in terms of the government's messaging.

Our public health authorities and governments could have shown a greater degree of humility right at the beginning of the pandemic and said that there were just things they did not know and that masking was a reasonable precautionary measure. However, it was a very assertive approach that carried itself throughout the pandemic with respect to any diversity of opinion in terms of pandemic strategy. If people were disagreeing with the prevailing consensus, then they were supposedly anti-science. As members have pointed out, the way science progresses is through some degree of open debate and challenging presumptions. The reality is that public health bodies and governments were expressing certainty about things that they were less than certain about.

Let us acknowledge that throughout the pandemic there were various revisions. I recall, for example, that when vaccines first came out the government's message was to take the first available vaccine. Then the government said not to take AstraZeneca and recommended Pfizer or Moderna but not AstraZeneca. At the same

time as the government was not recommending AstraZeneca for Canadians, I had constituents who did what the government told them to do with the first shot, and now it was telling them that they were supposed to have a second shot of a different kind, which was apparently totally fine in Canada, whereas other countries were saying that people needed to have two doses of the same kind. I understand that as the science is unfolding there are going to be things we do not know, but if the government had been willing to acknowledge in a more honest, transparent way throughout that process that there were some things we did not know, we would have been much better off.

I want to conclude by saying that I am very concerned about some of the social and cultural impacts of this pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, we were already seeing trends where there was sort of a breaking down of traditional community and a greater political polarization. People were less likely to be involved in neighbourhood and community organizations, community leagues, faith organizations and these kinds of things and were becoming more polarized along political lines. Those existing trends were dramatically accelerated through the pandemic, where the restrictions made it difficult for people to gather together in the kind of traditional community structures that had existed previously, and we have seen a heightened political polarization, with people being divided on the basis of their views on masks and their vaccination status.

As we evaluate what happened in the pandemic, and this is more of a cultural work than a political work, we need to think about how we can bring our communities back together, reconcile people across these kinds of divides and try to rebuild the kinds of communities we had previously, where people put politics aside and were willing to get together and focus on what united them.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ):** Madam Speaker, 35 months ago, almost to the day, everything came to a halt in Canada and around the world. It was a stressful time that I sincerely hope we will never experience again. That said, it makes sense to be rational without being alarmist: Epidemics and pandemics are bound to happen more frequently, for a variety of reasons.

Today we are considering Bill C-293, which seeks to help the country prevent and prepare for future pandemics. When I saw it appear on the Order Paper, I must admit that, for a moment, I was dismayed.

I would like to take my colleagues back to 2020 to explain why I was dismayed. In 2020, when the pandemic hit, I reassured myself and my family by saying that epidemiologists had been warning governments everywhere that the next big post-SARS pandemic was bound to be a coronavirus pandemic.



*Private Members' Business*

I want to take a small detour for a moment. Epidemiologists suspected a coronavirus pandemic because, thanks to SARS, they realized that we did not know much about these viruses. They knew that we were not necessarily prepared to deal with coronaviruses, since we knew so little about them. This is not a conspiracy, just a simple logical analysis. That is all I am going to say about that.

Given that we had been on alert since the SARS crisis and given that we had a bit of a trial run with H1N1 in 2007-08, I figured that we were ready to handle the pandemic and that Canada and the provinces were properly equipped.

That was not the case, though. Masks were expired. There were no respirators. Investments were made in test cubes that cost \$8,000 apiece but never amounted to anything. The government had trouble finding reliable suppliers. They had to play catch-up and on and on. I will not go over everything that happened over the past three years.

To err is human. Everyone is allowed to make mistakes. Planning something and making a mistake is one thing. Not planning, flying blind, awarding contracts that turn out to be overpriced to unknown parties that subcontract the work to a Liberal member who very recently gave up his seat? That is not human error. That is a boondoggle.

Whenever I think about all that, it reminds me of a scene in a movie where a guy is trying to make a hasty exit while getting dressed because his lover's husband has just come home. He would never have found himself in such an awkward position had he had the sense not to pursue another man's wife in the first place.

There is a reason I am reminding my colleagues how surprised I am to see the lack of preparation in Canada and around the world, despite more than 15 years of warnings. This is directly related to Bill C-293, which shows that the government was not adequately prepared. If the mechanisms had already been in place—and they actually were in place, but I will come back to that—would new legislation have been needed? The answer is no. We would have simply needed to adapt existing legislation, policies, regulations and working methods.

Once the shock of all this passes, we still need to read the bill. The preamble sets the stage. As the first paragraph indicates, it costs a lot less to prevent than to cure. I will not dwell on that.

The second paragraph states that “Parliament is committed to making efforts to prevent the risk of and prepare for future pandemics”. Should this not have been started back in 2003 or 2004, by any chance, after SARS? Why did Jean Chrétien, then Paul Martin and then Stephen Harper do nothing when they were in power?

Prevention involves a lot of measures, particularly environmental and health measures. The more money is invested in forms of energy that produce greenhouse gases, the more temperatures rise. This causes icebergs and the permafrost to melt, releasing viruses and bacteria. Work on pandemic prevention should have started a long time ago, but it is never too late to do the right thing.

In health, the individual behind the cuts in transfers to Quebec, the provinces and the territories was Jean Chrétien. If, starting in 2003-04, health transfers had been restored to the levels intended

by the Constitution, the pandemic's impact on our health networks would have been far less severe.

Once again, it is never too late to do the right thing. There is a meeting coming up. I hope the outcome will be that the federal government is forced to abide by its own Constitution.

• (1145)

Let us come back to the bill's preamble. The third paragraph sets out a list of viruses and diseases that have affected the world, though they may not necessarily have hit Canada that hard.

The fourth and fifth paragraphs state that a multisectoral and multidisciplinary collaborative approach is central to taking preventive action. I agree with that. With regard to collaboration, we need only think of the constitutional agreements on health transfers. Had those agreements been respected starting in 2003-04, then the federal government would not have had to give Quebec and the provinces and territories so much money during the pandemic to support their respective health care systems, because they would have been resilient enough to deal with the situation. When a person, business, non-profit organization or government has to do without up to 32% of their budget for 30 years, it leaves a mark. It makes it more difficult to act in a time of crisis.

Before my colleagues tell me off by talking about how much money the government gave the provinces and territories during the pandemic, I would like to remind them that it is part of the federal government's constitutional role to provide help when a major crisis occurs. Canada does not have a constitutional agreement with the other countries in the world, but it gives them money, as well as help and services on the ground. We do have constitutional agreements, so it is not fair to tell us off when we are pointing out needs that are there.

To sum up, Canada is responsible for its own lack of pandemic preparedness. The Global Public Health Intelligence Network alert system was deactivated in 2019. The national emergency strategic stockpile was so grossly mismanaged that millions of masks that hospitals desperately needed had to be thrown out because they were expired. I could also cite the chaotic management of the borders and quarantines and our pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity, which has been put in jeopardy over the past few decades.

Some may be wondering if I can think of anything good the government has done. Once it had made up for earlier mistakes and its lack of planning and prevention, the situation did end up improving. I commend the unparalleled work done by the then minister of public services and procurement and her team, who worked around the clock.

The way the pandemic was managed needs to be analyzed honestly and calmly. Complete neutrality is absolutely necessary to shed light on what the public and the health care system went through. Let us take this out of the hands of the politicians who were at the centre of the storm.

*Private Members' Business*

The bill is certainly interesting. It calls for an advisory committee to study the “before” and “during” and make recommendations, yet the bill already includes a whole list of things that a plan must include. What is the point of recommendations if the plan's contents have already been decided? We need to take the politics out of it.

I applaud the goodwill of my colleague from Beaches—East York. I consider prevention to be a much easier remedy to swallow than treatment. However, in order to ensure that this remedy is non-partisan, it is imperative that it be created outside this political arena. That is why we need an independent public inquiry. Only an independent public inquiry can ensure an unbiased, non-partisan analysis. Complete neutrality is absolutely necessary to shed light on what the public and the health care system went through. Let us take this out of the hands of the politicians who were at the centre of the storm.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Beaches—East York has the floor for his right of reply.

• (1150)

[English]

**Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I ask everyone to consider what the role of a member of Parliament is with respect to private members' business. I am not a member of the government. This is a private member's bill. For all of us across party lines who have introduced private members' bills, we know how much work goes in to them, the guidance we receive as a parliamentarians and the convention, as it were, if we respect it.

I heard my colleague for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan say that, in principle, he agrees. I heard the Bloc say that the intent is laudable. I heard NDP colleagues say that they agree with the general purpose of a pandemic prevention and preparedness strategy, but that it needs to be an independent review.

If one agrees in principle with a bill, and if one takes one's role seriously, not as a cabinet minister who is seized with government legislation but as a member of Parliament considering backbencher and private members' business, one should send to committee the legislation we agree with in principle and we could work out the details.

I am certainly open to amending the legislation based on the details, but surely we should not kill a bill at second reading that has merit in principle. We have just lived through our most serious health crisis ever, and here is a bill to make sure we are more prepared next time.

The conversation for today is that it sounds great, but we are going to kill it right now before we have experts, provincial ministers and PHAC attend committee. We do not actually want to think about this issue again. We just want to rail in a political way about an independent review.

Therefore, let me turn to the need for an independent review. Of course there should be an independent review. The NDP referenced SARS, and good on its members for referencing the independent SARS Commission led by then Justice Campbell. There was also a

national advisory committee, which was a separate dual-track process under Health Canada, led by David Naylor. There were recommendations from that national advisory committee that were implemented ultimately by the government. That is why we have the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Forgive me if I am astounded at the lack of history from my colleagues who say we need some independent review, and therefore we need to kill this piece of legislation. No, we need both. In this particular instance, the core accountability to a law like this is not in the review function. That is laughable. The core accountability in this bill, Bill C-293, is parliamentary accountability. The government should be accountable to us as Parliament with respect to its pandemic prevention and preparedness efforts.

The member for Port Moody—Coquitlam said that we need more emphasis on nurses. Guess what. This bill would require that the government table, every three years, to us in Parliament, a pandemic prevention preparedness plan that speaks to supporting local public health and primary care capacity building. Yes, it speaks to nurses. It also speaks to the working conditions of essential workers across all sectors.

The government should be creating these pandemic prevention preparedness strategies and then tabling those strategies to us in Parliament. If we kill this bill, yes, it means we could rail about an independent review. However, it functionally means that it would be this government and future governments that would create those strategies, and they would not be accountable to Parliament for those strategies.

For the same reason, we need climate accountability legislation. It does not mean some independent review of how climate change is occurring. It means that the government is accountable to Parliament for its climate action plan. Similarly, for the accountability mechanism in this bill, the government is accountable to us for its prevention and preparedness strategies.

I heard my colleague from Regina—Lewvan read out the “one health” approach and say that maybe it was a good idea but it sounded too international for him. We literally have a one health approach in Health Canada to prevent antimicrobial resistance.

If people are going to vote against this bill, please, just read it first. Do not read it for the first time in Parliament, while railing against it. We need a pandemic prevention preparedness plan, full stop. We need accountability to Parliament, full stop. All members know I have supported not only Conservative bills but also NDP bills to get to committee. My instinct and my role in this place, and I hope members see their role in the same way, is to get bills that we agree with in principle to committee so we can improve them.

*Government Orders*

Thanks for the time. I hope we all change our minds.

• (1155)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 8, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*Translation*]

SITTING SUSPENDED

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Is there unanimous consent to suspend the sitting until 12:01 p.m. and reconvene at that time?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:56 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12:01 p.m.)

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[*English*]

### NATIONAL SECURITY REVIEW OF INVESTMENTS MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed from February 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-34, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-34, an act to amend the Investment Canada Act.

Bill C-34 implements a set of amendments to improve the national security review process of foreign investments and modernize the Investment Canada Act. Collectively, these amendments represent the most significant legislative update of the ICA since 2009.

These amendments would also ensure that Canada's review process is consistent with those of our allies. This consistency is something that business owners and stakeholders within the riding of Waterloo have also spoken to me about. It is something that is important to them, as Canada is a trading nation and being aligned with our allies is something of importance.

Canada has a long-standing reputation for welcoming foreign investments and a strong framework to promote trade, while advancing Canadian interests. In fact, Canada has one of the earliest and most robust screening processes for foreign investments in the world.

For some history, the Investment Canada Act was enacted 38 years ago in 1985, to encourage investment in Canada that contributes to economic growth and employment opportunities. The act allows the government to review significant foreign investments to ensure that these benefits exist. The act was updated in 2009 to include a framework for a national security review of foreign direct investments. Since then, and for the longest time, the ICA has been one of the only pieces of legislation in the world that provides a reviewing mechanism for the net benefit and national security threats of foreign direct investments.

It is clear that the federal government has long played a leadership role in setting a framework for investment review that attracts needed positive foreign direct investments without compromising on national security. However, the world looks a lot different now than it did in 2009. The global market has rapidly changed along with shifting geopolitical threats. Canada is growing and our interactions with the rest of the world are changing.

The government has seen a rise in state-sponsored threat activities from hostile state and non-state actors. They are attracted by Canada's technologically advanced open economy and world-class research community. This is something we know very well in the riding and region of Waterloo.

The level of sophistication of these threats has also increased. Hostile state and non-state actors are deliberately pursuing strategies to acquire goods, technologies and intellectual property through foreign investments that could damage Canada's economy and undermine national security while possibly controlling the supply chains of critical goods. These concerns are real and are why debating and advancing legislation is necessary.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created additional vulnerabilities that could lead to opportunistic and potentially harmful investment behaviour by foreign investors. In response, the government has taken swift, concrete action to enhance scrutiny on inbound investments related to public health and critical goods and services. The government has again taken action recently by enhancing scrutiny on investments involved in sensitive goods and technology, such as critical minerals, critical infrastructure and sensitive personal data.

Through these investments, the government is prepared to once again take action to strengthen the national security review, while allowing for positive foreign investments. Canada is a trading nation and we work with international allies. The reality is that economic-based threats to national security are an area of increasing concern, not just for Canada but for our allies as well.

### *Government Orders*

Other jurisdictions internationally are moving in response to the shifting geopolitical threats either by amending or by putting in place new investment screening regimes. Our action is needed to bring Canada into greater alignment with our international partners and allies. For example, I understand that Australia has updated its laws on foreign direct investment. It made a prominent change by introducing authorities to protect national security in January 2021. These include fresh powers for the Australian government to require mandatory notification for transactions involving a national security business before the transactions are closed.

Additionally, the United Kingdom introduced a new stand-alone regime on national security and investment in January 2021. The act creates, for the first time in the U.K., a mandatory obligation to secure clearance for transactions that acquire control of a business in around 17 specified and sensitive sectors before they are completed.

• (1205)

The U.K. has also introduced legislation that allows the government to impose interim orders while the review is being conducted, preventing foreign investors from obtaining confidential information or accessing sensitive sites or assets until the review is complete.

Our cousin to the south, the United States of America, overhauled its foreign direct investment laws in 2018. The amendments added new types of transactions subject to government review and, for the first time ever, mandated notification of transactions involved in critical technologies, certain critical infrastructures or sensitive personal data of American citizens. New regulations fully implementing the act took effect in February 2020.

The proposed amendments in Bill C-34 would address the concerns we have heard from Canadians and which have been echoed by our allies. The proposed amendments in Bill C-34 would address these concerns by introducing new preimplementation filing requirements for specified investments, as well as the power to implement interim conditions during national security review of the investment.

This would provide Canada with the new governance capacity to address the increasingly complex threat landscape. Bill C-34 would also ensure that Canada's foreign direct investments screening regime remains world-leading.

As I have shared, Canada and our allies share similar national and economic security concerns. They are concerned with threat actors acting and operating in multiple jurisdictions to secure a monopoly in critical assets and technology.

It is becoming increasingly important to share information with allies and support national security assessments to prevent these threats from happening.

Previously, the minister had limited capacity to share case-specific information with international allies. Bill C-34 would introduce the authority for more threat information sharing by the minister with international counterparts for national security reviews.

This could help both Canada and our partners defend against an investor who may be active simultaneously in several jurisdictions and be seeking same sensitive technology or critical assets.

For example, the amendment would allow the minister to reach out to a foreign partner and disclose information about the investor to gain additional information and to support Canada's own national security assessment. That said, Canada would not be obligated to share such information where there are confidentiality or other concerns.

There is never a shortage of critics, but this legislation is about making sure that Canada welcomes foreign investment and trade that encourages economic growth, innovation and employment opportunities in Canada for Canadians.

I believe that this approach is pragmatic and principled, and provides a coherent and solid framework to address evolving geopolitical threats while allowing Canada's review regime to be more aligned with our international allies. If there are ways to make this legislation better, I believe we have the opportunity now to work together to make that happen.

We are currently at second reading. This legislation is being debated in the House. To see it go to committee where it can be further scrutinized, where witnesses can attend and appear and amendments can be made, would really allow for this legislation to work for more of the Canadian economy.

With Bill C-34, Canada would continue to encourage positive investments without compromising national security. I think it is really good that this legislation is being debated as a stand-alone piece of legislation, where we actually can get into the details of what would work better, because it is important we have legislation that promotes and supports foreign investment but also makes sure we do not compromise national security.

• (1210)

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I know that the hon. member has been a cabinet minister, so I would like to ask her this question in the context of her time in cabinet.

This bill would remove the minister's responsibility to go to cabinet to actually seek agreement to do a national security review and would remove them from having to report back to cabinet on that, unless they deem it to be a national security review.

Do you think that removing cabinet from the process of determining that will help, because in the past, this government, which I think you were in the cabinet for—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I was not anywhere. I thank the member for correcting himself. That is just a reminder.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Rick Perkins:** Madam Speaker, the government for which the member was in cabinet actually approved two acquisitions. One was Hytera acquiring Norsat, and the other was a Chinese state-owned enterprise acquiring a mining entity that has 65% of Canada's lithium production. The government approved those without a national security review. There is nothing in this bill that would change that, especially if the minister does not have to go to cabinet.

I would like the member's views on that.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Madam Speaker, I think in my comments that I shared today I did state there will never be a shortage of critics, and it is important that we debate and that we make sure this legislation right. This is about the economic and national security of Canada. Foreign investments and trade are necessary for Canada's economic growth and employment opportunities, but need to be done while protecting Canada's national interests. I think that is why looking at this legislation is really about making sure the way we move forward is better for Canadians, for Canada's economy and for ensuring our national security. I think the member knows very well that we do have a process, and that this is the time for providing feedback that is going to improve this legislation. That is why the member was elected. He was not elected only to oppose, but also to debate how we make legislation work better for his constituents, my constituents, our constituents and our country, and this is the time to do it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to commend the speech given by the member opposite in support of Bill C-34, which gives the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry a little bit more power to review foreign investments. That in itself will be good for national security. However, I do not think we should limit ourselves to national security, but rather, I think other criteria should be added for reviewing an investment.

On the subject of investment review, my colleague across the aisle used to be a cabinet minister in this government, and I remember one particular case at that time, the sale of Rona, that required a government review. Before authorizing the sale, the net benefit had to be reviewed. It was not a matter of national security, but the net benefit still had to be reviewed.

We submitted an access to information request to find out the contents of that mysterious net benefit review. The response that came back was that there was no documentation that corresponded to our request.

I cannot help but wonder whether this government's reviews really are all that rigorous, or are they done based on the weather forecast or a coin toss.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Madam Speaker, I think it is time that we actually debated this bill. We need to make sure that there are solutions and processes in place that will work for more Canadians.

• (1215)

[*English*]

I would say that, yes, we can always look at what has taken place in the past. We can also ask how we go about it to make sure we

have systems in place so these concerns the member is raising are addressed and to make sure information is available, and then that we move forward in that way. I think that is why this legislation today is a stand-alone piece of legislation. It is not within a budget bill. It is not within something else. It is one piece of legislation we are debating because of the importance of the topic. I think everything the member has to contribute is important, and I think that once this legislation gets to committee, we can ensure that any of the concerns he is raising are addressed. I am sure the government looks forward to working with him.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to get a perception of where the Liberals might be open for amendments on this. I remember coming to this place and watching Paul Martin sell off Petro-Canada, an example of foreign investment and not having any types of concerns. In fact, this issue was first raised with China Minmetals. We brought that to committee, because it was actually buying up part of the Canadian oil sands. Subsequently, we watched iconic companies like Nortel disappear. We have watched Future Shop, Zellers and Rona, for example.

I would like to ask the member whether or not the government now has at least a perception or thought that consumer, and also market, issues in Canada are part of national security when we actually block Canadians from having competition and also subsequently lose products because we allow these takeovers to take into the market of consumerism.

**Hon. Bardish Chagger:** Madam Speaker, I would have to say that I am elected to represent the riding of Waterloo, and Waterloo is world-renowned for innovations and technologies. The member mentioned Nortel, and I remember very well the impact that had within my community. It is 2023, and I am still carrying a BlackBerry to support my local economy and that brainpower. I would like to assure the member that I am confident that this government is always open to amendments. I think we have demonstrated many times that we can work together in the best interest of Canadians. I would like to encourage him to, as he has done in the past, continue working together to find the best way forward, because when our constituents and our country benefit, we all win.

**Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

To understand the significance of our debate on Canada's future prosperity and security, we only needed to look up over the weekend as the Chinese spy balloon floated at 60,000 feet from Alaska over to Canada and into Montana. It was shot down by a few F-22s and plummeted into the Atlantic Ocean by South Carolina, carrying its cameras and equipment. China wants what the West has, and it will go to new heights to get it. It is a sign of the new world.

### Government Orders

Just as it is for America and our major trading partners, the future of our country, Canada, is in protecting our sovereignty, our land, farms, natural resources and technological assets in IP while simultaneously attracting foreign investment that benefits Canadians into the country. The Investment Canada Act continues the government's trend of coming late to the party with changes that try to catch Canada up without a serious strategy to advance Canada into the modern era. The result is not just a balloon's bubble bursting over the weekend but the threat of Canada's bubble bursting too if we do not do this the right way.

Conservatives believe that the right way to create paycheques for Canadians is a strategy that encourages made-in-Canada and grown-in-Canada products. This strategy would ensure that our companies, resources and IP stay in Canada, as well as that any investments in Canada benefit Canadians and our people, companies and resources across all our ridings and our regions.

I am sure we are all familiar with the story of *The Giving Tree*. A boy and a tree were friends, and as he grew up, he would eat the apples and climb on the tree. When he was older, he would ask the tree for its apples to sell for money, and he would take all the fruit away. He would use the branches to build a house and take all the branches away. He would come back later in life to ask for the trunk because the man wanted to build a boat, and the tree gave all that. At the end, the man came back and all that was left was the stump.

Canada has given away large swaths of land and agriculture, fisheries and infrastructure. We have given away a lot of our IP without investing in ourselves. What Canadians are left with is the stump. We have IP leaving the country. Our colleague from Waterloo just spoke about IP. It is missing from this bill. There are alarming statistics about how much of our intellectual property leaves. The University of Waterloo says that 75% of its software engineering grads get pilfered and leave Canada to go to the U.S.

The U.S. has 169 times the IP production of Canada. Canada produces \$39 billion of IP, but the U.S. produces \$6.6 trillion. We are not developing, protecting or commercializing our IP. We are about to do a study in science and research. We have what is called "the valley of death". Our intellectual property gets pilfered and comes to belong to someone else, not Canadians.

We have the largest gaps in the world. The OECD has forecasted that Canada will have one of the worst-performing economies in the developed world in the next century. Canada has not been able to keep up with the world when it comes to IP and a knowledge-based economy. Canadian policy is still firmly grounded in industrial-era concepts, and it is failing to develop national strategies for IP and data. China developed 30,000 patents in AI last year alone. Canada has developed fewer than 30,000 patents in all its advancements.

The future of Canada needs to be protected in the airwaves, blockchain, AI, quantum computing, the sky overhead and the Arctic. It needs to be protected in our farms, food-processing plants, genomics, oceans and fisheries, as well as in developing Canadian LNG, which the world wants. Going back to *The Giving Tree* story, unlike the government, figuratively and literally, the Conservatives would just plant more trees, especially the trees they said they

would. The world wants what Canada makes, and we have what the world needs. When we give the world what Canada makes, Canadians make paycheques and Canadians benefit.

This bill has a long way to go. Is it flawed? Yes, it is. Can Conservatives agree to do something with it? Sure we can. Can we create a new pre-closing filing agreement? Sure, that makes sense. Can we have increased penalties for non-compliance? Yes we can, as long as we are calling these companies out. Can we have improved information sharing? Sure we can, as long as we are acting on it. Closed-court proceedings are a red flag. Why do we need to have secretive closed-court proceedings?

● (1220)

One alarming sentence in this bill includes the words secret "evidence". That is really concerning. New ministerial powers are also a red flag; we have concerns about that. There is no mention of protection for intangible assets, such as intellectual property, which is the backbone of our knowledge-based economy.

This bill does not address or lower the thresholds for national security reviews of state-owned enterprises. This will allow for even further control of our economy by Communist China. This bill does not address dropping the threshold for state-owned or state-controlled enterprises to zero, nor does it address automatic national security reviews of companies based in nations that threaten Canada.

If a company is based in, controlled by or owned by a country that has a heightened need for a national security review, we should review all proposed activity in Canada. We cannot allow control of any critical or strategic sectors to fall into these nations' hands.

The main threat of state-owned industries is from Communist China, which will ruthlessly use its companies to advance its long-term national interests. This was stated at INDU; Professor Balding testified at committee that every year, the Chinese government makes a list of assets for Chinese companies to acquire. If that is not an alarming statement, I am not sure what is.

For example, let us take our critical minerals. China is eating the world's lunch when it comes to critical minerals. China controls 80% of lithium and 66% of cobalt, yet the government is pushing for electric vehicles. It is even mandating that only electric vehicles are to be sold in Canada by 2035. However, it is allowing the sale of critical minerals that are central to those EVs to Chinese state-owned companies.

Last spring, the sale of Neo Lithium was allowed without a security review. This was a Canadian-owned company, and it was sold to China. Many Canadians would be alarmed to know that Canada only has one functioning lithium mine, and it is owned by China. Fossil fuels will be weaponized next along with critical minerals, and members can bet on that.

The member for South Shore—St. Margarets highlighted how state-owned companies are controlling parts of our infrastructure and our critical fisheries industry, including controlling or owning the majority of the Halifax airport.

It does not stop at corporate takeovers. Huawei created 17 research partnerships with Canadian universities. This week it was revealed that taxpayer-funded universities have been partnering with the Chinese National University of Defense Technology for the past five years. That included quantum cryptography, photonics and space science. IP that we were funding with taxpayer dollars went to Chinese military scientists.

Huawei, the Chinese company that makes the tower technology, was banned by U.S. carriers in 2018. It took us until 2022 to follow suit. Why? In 2018, the heads of major U.S. intelligence agencies warned Americans against Huawei. In the U.S., some of the things the FBI uncovered pertained to Chinese-made Huawei equipment atop cellphone towers near U.S. military bases and close to critical infrastructure.

Beijing has been leaning on expatriate Chinese scientists. Lately, we have heard reports of Chinese police stations here in Canada.

This bill would remove oversight and proper security from national security review processes under the Investment Canada Act. We need to look at this open versus closed court process. Why the secrecy? Why do we need to tuck this away? Why can we not have these proceedings in the open?

The bill would give the minister the sole power to create a list of industries which will be subject to automatic national security reviews. We all know what sectors should be protected: health, pharmaceuticals, agrifood and agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing, natural resources, IP, innovation, AI and data. The government should commit to protecting those vital sectors.

However, we have no idea what will be on that list with all the power being in the minister's office and having that taken away from cabinet. We saw what happened with Rogers-Shaw and Globalive, and we have certainly seen what has happened with McKinsey.

The future of this country depends on a made-in-Canada strategy that, in some ways, mirrors the Chinese spy balloon that flew over Canada last week, which looked at Canada with bold strategies from a 60,000-foot view.

### *Government Orders*

A Conservative government would focus on growing the economy that provides paycheques to Canadians by focusing on products that are made in Canada and grown in Canada, as well as strategies to ensure our resources, IP, people and talent stay in Canada and are protected.

There is investment and there is theft, and there is no room for theft. We want to encourage investment that brings real benefit to Canadians, including in their paycheques, their savings and their lives. We want to ensure that we have greater prosperity for our region and that this is for Canadians, not just for China.

● (1225)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, when I look at the legislation, I see the modernization of an act that would provide better transparency.

We have seen a great deal of investment over the years. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry talked about some significant investments in just the last number of weeks. The member referred to the battery industry and its potential growth, as well as how Canada is actually leading many other countries. I believe it is somewhere around number two or three in the world.

There are many investors who want to continue to come to Canada. Could the member reflect on the potential of some of those industries and why it is so important that we modernize the legislation to provide more clarity?

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Madam Speaker, certainly we want Canada to lead the world not only in battery production but also in battery manufacturing. The problem with Canada, over so many years, is that Canada has become a branch-plant factory. We bring multinational corporations in, and this provides jobs. However, we are certainly not helping Canadian companies develop critical minerals and then manufacture those minerals in Canada.

As I mentioned, Canada has one lithium mine, and it is owned by China. Canada is certainly working on having Volkswagen and other great companies come in here to manufacture, but where are the Canadian companies? How are we helping Canadian companies grow?

The result is that we want GDP per capita, which means paycheques for Canadians, to go up. That means growing Canadian companies, investing in Canadian critical minerals and ensuring that Canada benefits, not solely the rest of the world.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's speech. He had a lot to say about China, and rightly so, in my opinion. I think we should all be concerned about China's actions and its investments, which do not always comply with our laws.

However, not all investment is from China. Many other countries invest. Under the Investment Canada Act, which is what we are debating today, when a major investment is made in Canada, the minister has to review it and determine whether it is of net benefit to Canada. There are both national security and net benefit to Canada considerations.

In 2021-22, over 1,200 notifications of investment were received, which is a lot. Only eight of those—less than 1%—were reviewed. The government has a rose-coloured view of the situation and is not doing its job.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

• (1230)

[English]

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Madam Speaker, I agree 100%. In my speech, I mentioned lowering the thresholds, and we should probably be looking at most investments.

Most importantly, Canada needs to be proactive. We need to look at acquiring and attracting investments. We want investment in Canada. My speech focused on wanting Canadians and Canadian companies to benefit, and they do benefit from international investment. They benefit as long as there is investment in Canadian companies that will grow and stay in Canada and we protect the IP that is here.

Certainly, I agree with the member on lowering thresholds. We should look at almost all investments that come to Canada because we should be in control of those investments. If Canada is going to grow and prosper, we are also attracting investment in Canada. This means that we know where the investments need to go. It means making sure that those Canadian companies, that IP, stays in Canada and that Canadian companies are growing here in Canada.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, listening to the Conservatives talk about jobs, trade and supporting Canada is like looking into the distortions of a funhouse mirror.

I remember when Stephen Harper sold off \$15 billion of the oil sands to a Chinese state company and when he signed a secretive free trade agreement with China that allowed Chinese state companies to sue any level of government in Canada. The Conservatives stood up and told us this was a great thing. Can members imagine the Americans ever allowing Chinese state companies to sue their states or their municipalities? However, that is what the Conservatives did.

When they talk about supporting Canadian mining, it was Tony Clement who allowed two of Canada's greatest companies, Inco and Falconbridge, to be taken over by corporate raiders. The Conservatives would not stand up for Canadian jobs then. It is a little

rich to hear the Conservatives suddenly saying that they are going to stand up to China and they are going to stand up for jobs when Stephen Harper sold us down the river every step of the way in order to favour his friends in the Chinese state companies.

**Mr. Ryan Williams:** Madam Speaker, Stephen Harper left us with one of the best economies this country has ever had. At the end of the day, I will look to the government's success, if we want to compare across the aisle.

The world has changed; 100% the world has changed. When was the last time we saw a balloon flying over the Earth? We want to—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We will continue with debate.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to see you back in the chair as well.

I want to start by thanking my constituents for giving me the great privilege of being able to rise in the House to speak on their behalf to the issues they are concerned with these days. To the constituents back home, the debate today is on Bill C-34, which is amendments to, although the government calls it the modernization of, the Investment Canada Act. The specific name given in the bill is the national security review of investments modernization act. For everything that is wonderful, it seems the government will always call it “modernization”.

Maybe I will take a different tack than other members have taken. I find that for every piece of legislation, whether it is Liberal, Conservative or a private member's bill, it is the moment it is tabled and the events that lead up to it that are important. This particular piece of legislation, let us to be serious, is about the People's Republic of China and state-owned investments being made in Canada, whether those are investments that contravene our national security interests or investments that, in the long term, are not in the interest of the Canadian economy or the Canadian worker.

We have seen the experience of other countries all across the world over the last two decades, since the People's Republic of China was allowed to enter the WTO, and that relationship has changed the world economy. I believe this is a response to the behaviours of the government of Beijing over the last two decades.

Madam Speaker, we were in the United Kingdom, in London recently, and we met with individuals who spoke about the general relationships the United Kingdom has. I had the great honour to return to the Palace of Westminster to hear from Alicia Kearns, chair of the foreign affairs committee in the United Kingdom. There was a long meeting held about the British business relationship with the People's Republic of China.



It was fascinating to hear experts in the field describe not only the pros, the cons, and the pitfalls for British businesses having to share their IP and technology, but also the footprint of their businesses and the exchange of workers that go and back. Some of these workers from the different provinces in China would eventually want to stay in the United Kingdom. They would be applying with and leaving to go to competitors. They talked about the long term, and the three stools of relationships, which are government to government, business to business, and people to people, and how all three are incredibly important.

In describing Canada's relationship, as the Canadian government, businesses in Canada and the people of Canada, I think our relationship with Beijing could be defined as broken at the government level, the business level and the people-to-people level.

I have a Yiddish proverb. Members know I really like them.

*[Member spoke in Yiddish]*

*[English]*

The proverb means, “The match was a success; they were broke inside of six months.”

Although the timeline is different in this particular situation, over the last six, seven, eight years, we have seen a broken relationship. There was an attempt by the Liberal government to negotiate a memorandum of understanding for a free trade deal with Beijing. That fell apart completely.

We basically had a freezing of the relationship while Canada dealt with the Meng Wanzhou case in Canada, and the Government of China held two of our citizens for no good cause. It was hostage diplomacy. One thing I heard repeatedly when I was in the United Kingdom, shared to me by both lords and ladies, and by members of their Parliament, was that it is also incumbent upon Beijing to watch the language that they use in international diplomacy.

It is not just incumbent upon us to raise issues of human rights, which are incredibly important to the people of Canada, and people in my riding as well, to that business relationship. There is an effect when politicians raise issues of human rights and that has a direct impact on business interest in China. I know in the case of Alberta, we export a lot of agricultural goods. Chinese companies are amazing purchasers of things such as canola, pork, lentils and other products that western farmers love to produce, and it is a great market for agricultural products. I do not represent an agricultural riding, but it has an impact on my riding as well, because many people who live in my riding have family members who continue to farm on their operations.

The events that have led to this today go beyond just the balloon drama that we have had over the last few days, and I know we all like to make jokes about it. We have all had enough puns.

● (1235)

I think the last review for the Investment Canada Act was around 2009, but let us look at the behaviour of the Government of Beijing. Right now, 47 of the most prominent pro-democracy activists, legislators and people who are interested in protecting the civic institutions of the city of Hong Kong, are on trial. The largest trial of

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democracy activists in Hong Kong's history is being held right now, and it does not look very positive for them. I hope the trial will go their way, but I am not very confident.

We have an amazing relationship with the people and the Government of Taiwan. The senior Taiwanese opposition leader, the vice-chairman of the Kuomintang, or the KMT, Andrew Hsia, is right now leading a delegation to Beijing's office dealing with Taiwan relations. That is happening as we speak.

In the United Kingdom, there is a semiconductor company called IQE, which is the acronym for its name. It happens to be in Wales, and as the Speaker would know, we were in Cardiff as well. The company is informing the government that, because of the delays in reaching a strategy on semiconductors in the United Kingdom, it might move out.

That is not unheard of. It is something that is happening across all western economies right now as businesses are seeking opportunities from foreign investors to help build a plant, finance their operations and manufacture goods. They are having to review where the funding is coming from and what kinds of strings are attached to it. That is what I see in this piece of legislation.

Although different members have mentioned that there are shortcomings, and the member for South Shore—St. Margarets itemized a list of concerns that Conservatives have with this particular piece of legislation, I think there are opportunities. Reuters very recently noted the fact that this Parliament has now called for the resettlement of Uighurs, particularly those who are facing a genocide in China, perpetrated by the Government of Beijing in the Xinjiang region, which will now be resettling them.

That will also have an impact on the business-to-business relationships, because the government in Beijing considers any mention of it, by any parliament or government, as worthy of retribution. Typically, it is business retribution. I am sure that, if I applied today for a business or tourist visa to go to mainland China, I would very likely have it refused, and I accept that.

Bloomberg recently reported that aluminum products that are entering the United States are being detained at the border because they are suspected of being connected to forced labour in the Xinjiang province.

Just last week, the member for Dufferin—Caledon had an Order Paper question come back to him from the Government of Canada saying that it has seized zero products in Canada related to forced labour in one particular province in the People's Republic of China, while the United States' government has been seizing hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of goods because it has evidence they were produced illegally using forced labour.

Another recent event I will bring up is that President Xi has called for more efforts to accelerate the establishment of a new pattern of development. This has been reported by the Xinhua state news agency. Its focus is on dual circulation, security and self-reliance.

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With respect to the piece of legislation we are considering here, and I support sending it to committee to do further reviews, I do not think we should kid ourselves. This is indeed about the People's Republic of China. It is about the Government of Beijing, its behaviour in other countries, and what it might intend to do in Canada or has done in the past.

In the last election, at a minimum, we called for the automatic review of transactions that involved sensitive security sectors, such as defence, artificial intelligence and rare earth minerals. That is what a committee of Parliament should do, review what other sectors or economies should be reviewed. I think that, with respect to all state-owned entities that come from mainland China, we should set the bar at zero. They should automatically be reviewed. I am not worried about state-owned companies from the Republic of France or the Republic of Poland, but I am concerned about the People's Republic of China and its direct control of state-owned companies.

While we have a broken relationship, as I referred to in my Yiddish proverb, there is a relationship that we have brought to this point. That is not entirely the fault of the Canadian government. The Government of Beijing held two of our citizens hostage, and there are consequences to every action. I consider Bill C-34 part of the consequences that must be put on that government for the genocide of the Uighurs; the bad relationship it has developed with our people, our government and our businesses; and lastly, for engaging in hostile diplomacy and holding the two Michaels hostage.

● (1240)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could reflect on the idea and the principle of the importance of having regulations in place to protect the national security of our different industries out there, which is not quite as simple as it was 100 years ago. Today, with technology and everything from microchips to what is grown in the Prairies, there is a need to ensure that we have legislation to provide assurances to investors, and at the same time, protect Canada's economy and well-being.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Speaker, the member talked about how businesses differed 100 years ago. Although he is correct on that point, more broadly we have itemized the list on this legislation. The member for South Shore—St. Margarets itemized a few concerns he has with this particular piece of legislation, including things such as automatic reviews of proposed acquisition of company's assets, plants, mines, land, IP and data for the state-owned company involved. Also, what happens if it purchases it, and then breaks up the company to parcel out different components of it. There needs to be that secondary step being taken.

This legislation is on the right path, but it is the details that really matter when reviewing investments that come from overseas, especially when they are from state-owned companies. It may not be in the interest of Canada for a foreign company to come in and purchase one of ours. Even though it may be good for shareholders, at the end of the day, we agree that the national security interests of Canada should predominate when state-owned companies are involved.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Conservative member for his speech evoking his concerns about China. I have to say that I found it very interesting.

I also found his colleagues' speeches interesting. They were somewhat similar. They, too, spoke about China's investments and the fact that we must ensure that we are not indirectly controlled by the Chinese state.

I do have some questions. In his speech and those of his colleagues, I did not hear any mention or concerns about matters of national interest or strategic industries. They did not present a vision for protecting key sectors of the economy, and there was no mention of the need for reviews or monitoring.

It seems to me that China is the Conservatives' only concern. That worries me a little and makes me wonder. Any country in the world could decide to purchase Petro-Canada, Canadian National or Canadian Pacific. Any country might also decide to buy an oil sands company, which might interest my colleague. If that were to happen, would my colleague have concerns? Does he believe that it is not serious unless it is China? Is that it?

● (1245)

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Speaker, the member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères is right in saying that I am concerned about the investments that are being made by big public corporations that are owned and operated by Beijing.

For the past two decades, the People's Republic of China has used businesses that it runs to make investments in other countries, without necessarily caring about the workers in those countries or those countries' future interests.

As I explained in my speech, this bill is a response to Beijing in light of the events that have occurred over the past eight years and the past two decades. I think it is completely acceptable. That is the goal and benefit of the bill.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague, but I have deep concerns when I hear Conservatives talking about human rights in China. The Conservatives signed the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, which locked us into an agreement for 31 years, to 2045. In fact, the Hupacasath people in my riding had to go to court to defend their section 35 rights against that very treaty. The Conservatives were not there respecting indigenous rights or protecting their rights, which were under threat when it comes to the environment and the concerns they have around food security and land security, so enough of the past.

With respect to this bill, does my colleague share the concern that this bill would still not provide assurances to indigenous people or consultation to indigenous people? Does he share concerns of how important and significant those are, and how they need to be respected and ensured in this legislation? Enough of just counting on the minister to do the right thing. This needs to be dealt with in the legislation.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Speaker, indigenous people in Canada have the highest law on their side. Section 35 of the Constitution of Canada, duly passed in this country, forms the very foundation of our state. It gives them the rights that were guaranteed to them by the Crown. They do not need this inserted into this law. They have it directly in the Constitution of Canada.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to talk about investments in Canada and the way this government, from day one, has looked at how we can increase Canada's GDP, support Canada's middle class and build a healthier and stronger economy, whether that is by investing in things such as infrastructure, which is something the former prime minister failed at doing, or by taking a look at how we can increase investments coming into Canada, something we have been very successful at doing in the last number of years.

Of course there are the types of opportunities that have been created by a government that has a very proactive approach at dealing with trade in general. Trade also supports the encouragement of additional foreign investment. This government signed off on more free trade agreements than in the history of any other government in the House of Commons. That, in itself, has played a significant role in how Canada is perceived around the world, whether it is Europe, the States, Mexico, Asia or south Asia, wherever it might be.

We have recognized that one way we can elevate the lifestyle and the way we live in Canada is to look at ways to create the types of middle-class jobs that Canadians want. We have been very aggressive in pursuing that along with a number of other things that I will save for another debate on another day.

However, there is misinformation consistently coming from the Conservative Party. I was listening to a previous speaker who was talking down Canada's battery industry. He was saying that we were supporting China and that we could not achieve the production of electric vehicles in Canada. He was literally, and this is no surprise, talking down what was happening in Canada. The problem is that it was not factually correct, and it seems this is an inherent problem that the Conservatives have. They look for things they can say for the spin even if it is true or not.

The member talked about batteries. Does the member realize that when it comes to the battery supply chain, Canada is second in the world? There are a lot of countries throughout the world and we are number two. We should be talking that up, not talking it down as the Conservative member was doing.

In fact, there is a multi-billion dollar investment coming in just outside of Kingston. I know my colleague from Kingston puts a lot of work into expanding that whole region in many different ways, and no doubt he might have even played a role in this. The billions

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of dollars that are being invested is going to help secure Canada's second place in the world when it comes to batteries.

It is recognizing foreign investment is not a bad thing. Foreign investment is going to help our economy grow. It is going to assist us in creating the types of jobs that Canadians want not only for today but into the future. It is important that the Government of Canada recognizes this by investing in it, not just acknowledging it. We have consistently done that over the years.

● (1250)

On the battery industry, the Kingston-area plant, the billions of dollars of investment, will create 1,000-plus jobs. A global corporation, Umicore, will be working with the Province of Ontario and the federal government. As a direct result, not only will it secure a long-term commitment in an area that will grow over the next many years but it will also create jobs and a cleaner economy, which will have other types of spinoff benefits. In part, it is possible because we recognize there are those who are abroad who look at Canada as a safe place to invest.

Contrary to what my Conservative friends might try to say, relatively speaking and compared to the world, Canada is doing exceptionally well on the investment front. We need to recognize that Canada remains an open economy and, in fact, is the envy of many countries around the world.

One could stick with the automobile industry and the transitions that are taking place. I believe there is somewhere in the neighbourhood of half a million jobs in that industry. In recent years, we have heard about investments from abroad coming to Canada to build upon those jobs, to support that industry, and understandably so, because of the resources we have to offer, because of an amazing workforce and even because of things such as our universal health care system. Companies take those types of things into consideration.

It is not just the bottom line over the next year or two for those many companies. Investors think long term. A greener economy does matter.

That is why investments in green technology by this government, are at historic levels. Stephen Harper never invested a fraction of the types of monies we are investing in a greener economy. As a result of some of those investments, I suspect we will be seeing more international players looking at Canada as a strong, healthy economy that is worth the billions of dollars of investments we will see over the coming years.

Let us think about those industries. My home province of Manitoba is rich in minerals and resources. We require foreign investment in order to maximize the potential that is there.

We have great investors in Canada and we continue to lead in many areas, especially in the agricultural industries and our manufacturing industries. One of the most high-tech airplanes out there, the ones we just purchased, is the F-35. The wings for those are actually manufactured in the city of Winnipeg.

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• (1255)

We have industries that we have seen substantial growth. I am always amazed when I take a drive in rural Manitoba during harvest season and see canola being harvested. That comes from the Prairies. It is technology and science at work. At the end of the day, the world is better off as a direct result of Manitoba producing the type of canola it does today.

There was a time when the Prairies was seen as more of a hinterland. We could draw out resources, be paid for them at a reduced price, I would suggest, and forget about the processing. The Prairies wants, demands and has been seeing a diversification of our economies. Never before have we seen as much economic activity in a wide spectrum of areas.

I often talk about how wonderful the hog plant, HyLife, in Neepawa, Manitoba has been to the community because of everything that goes into that plant. Hundreds of employees work there. The life that it has brought to the community of Neepawa is in good part because of that plant and the hundreds of jobs it has generated. Everything that comes out of that plant is exported to Asia.

Investments within Canada as well as external investments are coming into the province of Manitoba, just as I suspect they are into all regions of the country.

From my perspective, the modernization of the Investment Canada Act provides assurances, transparency and a higher sense of accountability. It ensures that the minister is able to protect certain industries, because there is a great deal of concern out there. Two examples come to mind. One is the war taking place in Ukraine and Russia. We have seen the impact that Russia has had on the marketplace, particularly in Europe. It reinforces what the Prime Minister has indicated with respect to looking at our allied countries, countries that share the same values we have, and how we can invest more in that relationship. It becomes more of a two-way street in that sense. Not all foreign investment is good. This is why we need to have this act.

When people think about security and safety, they do not necessarily think of the economy. They might think about the Canadian Forces or our military hardware when it comes to the security of the nation, but what is equally important is the security of our economy. In essence, the Investment Canada Act is there for that. There are players in the world who invest for alternative motives. It is not just about money. We need to give additional attention to some of those players. We often hear about relationships between the different nations. I like to think that if we have learned something from some of the things we have experienced in the past, we could greatly benefit by it.

• (1300)

When I think of our market and our economy, most people want an open market and a free economy where businesses can thrive. Consumers would benefit and we would have a growing and healthy middle class. However, there are some things that really frustrate us as consumers, such as the lack of competition in certain areas of the economy. That has a significant impact.

I think the member for Windsor West from the NDP made reference to Target stores. I remember when Target, a big American

company, wanted to invest in Canada. It was going to replace Zellers stores and close some Zellers stores in Winnipeg. It had the big store opening on Saint James Street. Then, after all was said and done, Target pulled out and there was a sense of disappointment. At one point there was a sense of excitement that we were getting this big Target store, and it was fairly well known for its pricing. Consumers felt it would be a good thing, but then Zellers disappeared and Target disappeared. That creates suspicion in the minds of many.

We have, as has been pointed out about grocery stores, some large corporate giants out there, and people are concerned about the price they pay for their food. It is not like there is an option. That is why it is reassuring to Canadians when we have a Minister of Industry who has been very proactive in communicating with these grocery giants and ensuring there is competition.

It is one of the reasons that I and many others will often go to some of the smaller family-owned grocery stores. When Sobeys bought Safeway out west, there was a great deal of concern. In my riding, we had a Sobeys on one side of Keewatin Street and a Safeway on the other side. One store ended up closing, and it is still closed today. Nothing has filled it on the east side of Keewatin Street, but the Safeway has kept that particular name because it had a history in the Tyndall Park area. If we check with the people, we will hear them provide comment that the lack of competition between those two stores might have caused prices to go up.

We could talk about gas prices. We could talk about cellphone prices too. One of the disadvantages that Canada has is the fact that we do not have the same size consumer economy as others do since we are a population of 38 million people. The U.S. has 10 times that and Europe has a multitude of different countries, so as elected officials, we need to be a little more aware of the importance of healthy competition. That is why we talk about what the Minister of Industry has been able to accomplish, whether it is attracting foreign investment or keeping companies that are here more accountable in terms of the pricing put out there. We want Canadians to understand and know that we are here to protect their interests.

That is what this legislation is all about. We recognize the value of foreign investment, and by making it more efficient by allowing ministers to extend deadlines, for example, we are in a better position to protect our marketplace security and work with countries such as the Five Eyes nations.

I will leave it at that, and maybe there will be a question or two.

• (1305)

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will let the member opposite continue on this line with my question, which has to do with our Five Eyes partners. They clearly said they did not want Huawei to have any access to the 5G networks in Canada, but it took the government two years before it came to that decision. Meanwhile, Bell and Telus implemented Huawei's 4G across the nation.

What mechanisms are present in the bill that the member believes will help us stand better with our Five Eyes partners?

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**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the most important thing within this legislation, from my perspective, is that it would enable more discretion for ministers, whomever they might be. I see that as a positive thing.

The Conservatives seem to believe there should be a listing of industries to which this would be applied. I tend to disagree. I believe that is one of the reasons we have opposition parties. Opposition parties are well positioned to be critical of government if they have a different opinion on investments they believe should have been better tracked, for example. That is why I encourage members to take into consideration that the principles of this legislation and its modernization will ultimately provide a higher sense of national security for Canadians.

With regard to the specific question, I really cannot provide more of a detailed answer than the minister has provided in the past.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, we are used to hearing from the member opposite, but it is nice to know that he is capable of talking about different subjects. We see more and more of that every day.

I listened to his speech and I felt like it was missing a vital component, something that seems to be missing from most of the speeches given by most of the parties here in the House. I am talking about national considerations and the importance that we should be placing on our flagship companies, our local businesses. A company that is established in Quebec or even elsewhere in Canada comes with a head office, decision-makers, and specialized and well-paying jobs. A Canadian- or Quebec-owned business also comes with shareholders who benefit from it. That way, the profits stay here and the strategic elements are there. It is also important that a certain amount of our locally owned companies remain here.

I would like to know whether the member opposite thinks that head offices and locally owned businesses are important. I would like to hear his thoughts on that, because that aspect seemed to be missing from his speech.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, the member brings up an excellent point, and I will use the specific example of New Flyer Industries, which is now one of the world's best bus manufacturers existing today. I know that Quebec also manufactures buses. New Flyer Industries likely would not be in Manitoba today if not for government getting directly involved.

I think of Dominion Tanners, which has a branch that supplies certain materials to the head office. When that head office goes bankrupt or closes, the subsidiary ends up shutting down. There may be more opportunities to support those types of subsidiaries and companies that are in fact ultimately profitable, but we lose those jobs in part because of what is taking place in another region, whether in Canada or, often, outside of Canada, and because of a decision that has been made that might be evaluated on a different metric than what we would like to see.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his speech. I have certainly been in the House to hear a lot of them, and I appreciate the effort he takes to make sure that his voice is heard. As always, I encourage him to allow some of the backbenchers to also have a voice.

Getting to the point, one of the challenges, which the member mentioned in his speech, is that Canadians are feeling less and less trustful. They are very concerned about how assets are moved in this country and how foreign entities are participating.

One thing I have a concern with is a loophole around postclosure notification requirements. We know that things go through a process, but if something happens afterwards, a certain amount of time is given that often allows foreign investors to move sensitive assets out of Canadian businesses before the federal government even becomes aware of them. That really concerns me and the NDP because we want to make sure that the process is clean. If we are going to have foreign investment in this country, there should be accountability at a much higher level, because that is what Canadians need to hear.

I am wondering if the member could speak to that loophole and if there is going to be any effort to support amendments that will fix it.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I have had the opportunity to get to know the minister over the last number of years, and I know the NDP's critic referred to the NDP having a series of amendments. My suggestion to the member and the NDP would be that they sit down with the minister or the minister's staff and share with them what their concerns are to see if in fact some of those perceived or real loopholes can be addressed.

At the end of the day, I like to think that the people coming from abroad to invest in Canada are being watched over, at least in good part, so that Canada is a net beneficiary of that investment.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, this is important legislation. It gives us a chance to talk about the way in which so-called investors in Canada have an impact on our economy.

We saw foreign direct investment take off back in 2006, believe it or not. It was 2006 when Stephen Harper broke his promise that there would never be taxes on investor trusts. That ended up having the effect of causing a lot of foreign takeovers of Canadian companies. Then investment trusts got taxed and a lot of Canadian investors lost out. A lot of them still remember that change in election promise.

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I mention that because when we speak of investors, quite often they are mercenary. They are coming in and buying up Canadian companies when they get the chance, and what they increasingly bring to Canada are security threats. That is in relation to the takeover of many Canadian enterprises by companies controlled by the People's Republic of China. They are protected by another move in the Harper era: the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement with the People's Republic of China. It did not expand to trade for Canada into China. It just protected Chinese investors in Canada from regulations they would not like.

All of that is to say that this is important legislation, but does the parliamentary secretary not think it is time to think about more investment by Canadians in Canadian enterprises and not being so very welcoming to foreign investors?

• (1315)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, Canada has billions of dollars' worth of foreign investment coming into the country, and the member would know full well that billions of dollars leave Canada to be invested around the world. I would like to think that given the billions of dollars leaving the country, maybe we could revisit the issue and look at investing here in Canada.

At the end of the day, I truly believe that we need to modernize legislation, which the minister proposed in Bill C-34. It should allow for not only more investment but a healthier system. A healthier system that provides more stability not only would attract more foreign investment, but would, I would like to think, keep a lot of the dollars already in Canada.

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I noted that during his speech, the member talked about the security of our economy. Right now, under the legislation, foreign investment review is triggered only when the assets of a Canadian corporation are at least \$454 million.

I wonder if the member would agree that, given the nature of security threats and foreign acquisitions by hostile governments, it would be better to have that threshold at zero dollars.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, again, if there are ideas from members of the opposition, or even from government members, to improve the legislation, I would really encourage them not to sit on them but let the ministry know about it. This always helps us out, even prior to going to committee. Most importantly, hopefully the legislation will pass relatively quickly so that we can at least get it into law before the end of the year.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*English*]

I rise today to address Bill C-34, an act to amend the Investment Canada Act. Bill C-34 is an attempt to update and strengthen the Investment Canada Act through seven significant amendments. Mainly, these changes to the act aim to protect Canada's national security with stricter regulations and higher penalties.

The main tenets of the bill attempt to introduce a pre-implementation filing requirement for specified investments. It would streamline the minister's ability to investigate national security reviews of investments and strengthen penalties for offenders. It would create regulatory power to generate a list of national security industries where automatic proposed acquisitions would be reviewed for national security harm, and it would provide ministerial authority to impose interim conditions and accept mitigation undertakings.

The bill would remove the Governor in Council, replacing it with the minister in making an order for further national security review, and involve the Governor in Council in the results of the national security review only if the investment is found, after investigation, to be injurious to national security. It supposedly would improve coordination with international partners and strengthen rules for the protection of information in judicial review proceedings.

In essence, this bill would give the Minister of Industry more time and authority to assess foreign transactions that might compromise national security, by removing the Governor in Council from the initial process while also making more severe the penalties for violating the Investment Canada Act. This, on its face, is beneficial and necessary, but there are several gaps that need to be addressed, which I will outline later.

Threats to our national security and sovereignty come in a dizzying array with regard to scope and creativity. Today, I want to focus on threats to our national security via our economy by investment from actors with malicious intent. There is just cause to update and strengthen the Investment Canada Act to prevent such threats or, at the very least, reduce the number of threatening actions made to Canada's economy and national security via investment. There exists a scary number of examples wherein Canada's national security was jeopardized due to a lack of due diligence on behalf of the industry minister with regard to foreign direct investment.

The industry minister's 2021 mandate letter directed the minister to do the following:

Contribute to broader efforts to promote economic security and combat foreign interference by reviewing and modernizing the Investment Canada Act to strengthen the national security review process and better identify and mitigate...security threats from foreign investment.

The keywords here are "better identify and mitigate...security threats". There is ample evidence to show why the Prime Minister so directed the industry minister, as the Liberal record on allowing bad actors to invest in Canadian companies, and therefore our intellectual property and data, is rather horrifying.

In 2017, the Minister of Industry failed to request a full national security review of the acquisition of a B.C.-based telecommunications company, Norsat International, and its subsidiary, Sinclair Technologies, by China-based Hytera Communications, which is partially owned by the People's Republic of China. The Chinese government owns about 10% of Hytera Communications through an investment fund.

The United States, our largest and most important trading partner, blacklisted Hytera in 2021. Its Federal Communications Commission stated that the company “pose[s] an unacceptable risk to the national security of the United States or the security and safety of United States persons”. Sales and import of Hytera equipment are banned in the U.S. as a result, and our industry minister let this company, with its ties to the Chinese ruling Communist Party, buy a Canadian company.

It gets better, or should I say, it gets worse. Hytera Communications is also facing 21 charges in an American espionage case. The United States Department of Justice is accusing the firm of conspiring to steal trade secrets from Motorola. We know this tactic has been used before by the Chinese government, and yet our industry minister okayed a sale of a Canadian company right to it.

● (1320)

In 2019, Manitoba-based Tantalum Mining Corp. of Canada Limited, also known as Tanco, was purchased by the Chinese company Sinomine Resources. The purchase was approved by the Liberals with no national security review. The mine produces lithium and more than 65% of the world's cesium, which is used in drilling applications, as well as Canada's largest deposit of tantalum, which is used in electronics.

Sinomine was recently ordered by the government, in November, to divest itself of its investment in Power Metals Corp, a different mining exploration firm in Vancouver, but the government was apparently totally fine with its continued ownership of the Tanco mine and its critical minerals operations, as its divestment order said nothing about it.

In 2020, our Department of Global Affairs awarded a \$6.8-million contract to state-owned, China-based Nucotech, which was founded by the son of the former Chinese Communist Party secretary general. That is \$6.8 million of Canadian taxpayer money basically going directly into the Chinese Communist Party's pockets, along with precious data.

As John Ivison wrote for the National Post in 2020, “Nucotech is known as the 'Huawei of airport security’”. The contract was to supply security equipment for 170 Canadian embassies, consulates and high commissions around the globe. A security industry source told Ivison for the story that he was concerned there were now “significant pieces of Chinese technology sitting in every embassy” and that the contract included delivery, installation, operator training and software.

For the same article, Guy Saint-Jacques, a former Canadian ambassador in Beijing, explained that the Chinese business strategy overseas is to win market share and, once dominant, dictate prices, illustrating that not only are there security concerns with these problematic investments, but there are also long-term economic im-

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plications. We cannot continue to let China and other actors with malicious intent interfere with Canada's economy and national security, even if they do offer the lowest prices for the service.

That said, the pattern of allowing risky investments without full security reviews continues. It was apparently briefly acknowledged in 2021, with the industry minister updating and enhancing guidelines for national security reviews of transactions involving critical minerals and state-owned enterprises in March of that year. However, 2022 saw a number of lapses, even with this enhanced protocol.

In January 2022, the minister failed to follow his own updated guidelines when he fast-tracked the takeover of the Canadian lithium company Neo Lithium Corp. by Chinese state-owned Zijin Mining, again, without a national security review.

Wesley Wark, a visiting professor at the University of Ottawa who specializes in international affairs and intelligence gathering, told the industry and technology committee, while studying the takeover after the fact, that it was a mistake. The value of the transaction was close to a billion dollars.

Then, in November 2022, the minister ordered three Chinese companies to divest their ownership of three critical minerals firms, but Neo Lithium was not included.

In December 2022, possibly the worst offence, the RCMP awarded a contract to supply sensitive hardware for its communications systems to Sinclair Technologies, which, members will recall, was sold to Hytera Communications, the Chinese company partially owned by the Communist Party and blacklisted in the U.S.

It was also revealed in December of that year that the Canada Border Services Agency has been using communications equipment and technology from Hytera. A CBC story says that Public Services and Procurement Canada did not take into consideration the security concerns about Sinclair and its ownership during the bidding process. The difference between that and Quebec-based Comprod's offer was \$60,000. The Liberals love to hand out money left and right, but they could not spend \$60,000 to keep our security hardware domestically sourced and provide Canadians with jobs while we are at it.

As we can see, the bill is sorely needed, but there are a few areas for improvement within the bill itself.

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I do not like the part that gets rid of the Governor in Council approval and gives power just to the minister. I think that should be fixed. The legislation should also consider updating the act's definition of a state-owned enterprise, which is now too vague. There is no provision to block any subsequent takeover by a state-owned enterprise of a previous Investment Canada Act-approved acquisition.

It is my hope that the government learns from its mistakes, listens to the opposition parties and experts, and gets this legislation right. We cannot keep selling off parts of our economy, national security and precious resources to bad actors.

• (1325)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I loved the last line about learning from mistakes. This is the same Conservative Party that, when there was warning after warning about Chinese state companies stealing IP from Canadian companies, Stephen Harper was selling off key assets, like \$15 billion for Nexen to a state-owned company.

When HD Mining in British Columbia, a Chinese company, announced it could not hire Canadian workers, Stephen Harper gave it 14 years to bring in Chinese workers to exploit Canadian assets. Stephen Harper thought that was so good that he signed a secret free trade deal that allowed Chinese state companies to sue any level of government. Imagine the United States letting Montana or Miami be sued.

Stephen Harper was more than willing to sell us down the river, sell out our assets and sell out our resources, while we warned them about the theft of IP and resources by Chinese state companies.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, I see the outrage in the member opposite, but perhaps he could apply that to the party that he is supporting, the party that sold out health care in B.C. to Anbang. Does the member remember that? It was a total disaster. We had to come in and rescue them in the pandemic.

Huawei is another example, where the government sat on its decision for two years and let Huawei build all the 4G networks under Bell and Telus in this country.

Why does the member not take his outrage and apply it to the government that he is propping up?

• (1330)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member has identified some areas that she suddenly feels need to be addressed. I am curious if she could tell the House how many times, because we are in fact only amending a piece of legislation here, she has raised her concerns with the minister before today, specifically about how the legislation should be changed.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, that is a great question, actually. Members may recall I was on my feet in this House criticizing Navdeep Bains when he was the industry minister who did Anbang. I have been on my feet in this House criticizing every time one of these things has come along and calling it out, because of the danger and the breach of our privacy and the fact that they are allowing the Chinese Communist government to put security sys-

tems, information systems and software into Parliament, embassies, etc.

It is outrageous. It needs to get fixed. I have been calling for this now for eight long years.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I share the concerns of my Conservative colleague about Chinese investments, which are not always wise, and about the lax approach and lack of verification by this government.

I want to take this opportunity to mention that a Chinese spy was recently arrested at Hydro-Québec facilities. We often hear the Liberals brag about the fact that they are working hard for the electrification of transportation. We are not seeing many results, but they love to talk about it. In fact, this Chinese expert was in the offices of IREQ, Hydro-Québec's research institute, which is in my riding. He took photos and gathered information on our research into the electrification of transportation to send to the Chinese government. It takes some nerve.

All of that leads me to my question about Bill C-34. At the time, in 2015, when I was elected for the first time, foreign investment notifications would have been sent to the government. According to government data, 10% of foreign investments were analyzed by the government in 2015.

The most recent data indicates that only 1% of investments are being analyzed. What does my colleague think of that?

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc for the question.

There are indeed many examples of security problems where we can see that organizations have harmed Canada.

I think that the government is not paying close attention to agreements. We are going to fix that through Bill C-34, however.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate, and especially pleased to speak after my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton.

We are here to discuss a bill that relates to national security, the trade relations Canada must engage in with other countries and the possibility of investors from other countries buying Canadian companies.



Let me make one thing clear right off the bat. China is going to come up a lot during this debate and in my speech. However, there is a big difference between the people who live in China, Canadians of Chinese origin and China's Communist government. These are completely different things, and anything negative we say about China's outsized ambitions relates to Communist China, not to individuals and certainly not to Canadians of Chinese origin.

This is about international trade. We welcome everyone who wants to invest here because we also want Canadians to be welcome in other countries. We are a free trade nation. Canada has more free trade agreements than any other country—over 40 in total.

Following an election in 1988, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was mandated by the people to sign the free trade agreement with the United States. The famous agreement between “the three amigos”, the United States, Canada and Mexico, followed a few years later.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my colleague from Abbotsford, who has been the architect of literally dozens and dozens of our free trade agreements with other countries. The member for Abbotsford was the minister of international trade for over six years. He was the longest-serving minister of international trade in the history of this country, and thank goodness for that, because we have great relationships with Asia, Europe and the Americas. That is the legacy of the member for Abbotsford.

As members will recall, when this government was elected in 2015, it shelved a few agreements, only to eventually renew them on the cheap, which is too bad. Still, Canada today is the land of free trade.

No one can claim to support free trade and say that Canada should go abroad but that our doors here in Canada should be closed. The doors must be closed in an intelligent way. That is why we have a number of concerns about this bill, which is essentially about tightening up security measures when it comes to national security reviews of foreign investments.

This bill basically provides for seven important changes to improve the national security review process for foreign investments. It also seeks to give the minister a lot more authority in certain circumstances.

The Conservatives do not disagree with the principle. However, as with anything, the devil is in the details, and that is where we need to do our job as parliamentarians. In principle, we agree that we need to revise the national security review process for foreign investments, but Bill C-34 is seriously flawed, and we are going to talk about those flaws.

First, let us remember that the government's track record on foreign investments from China over the past seven or eight years is poor and fails to live up to expectations. In the early 21st century, China was not under the harmful influence and control of the current Chinese government. However, the situation has deteriorated since then and we are now paying the price.

In 2017, the industry minister did not ask for a full national security review prior to the acquisition of Norsat International, a com-

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munications company based in British Columbia, and its subsidiary, Sinclair Technologies, by Hytera Communications, a Chinese company belonging in part to the People's Republic of China.

In 2020, the Minister of Foreign Affairs awarded a contract to a Chinese firm, Nucotech, which was founded by the son of a former general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, to supply X-ray equipment to 170 Canadian embassies. In a national security review, that checks off all the boxes. We are talking about X-ray equipment in our embassies and a contract was given to a company founded by the son of a former general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party.

In January 2022, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry did not follow his own guidelines when he expedited the purchase of the Canadian company Neo Lithium Corporation by the Chinese state-owned company Zijin Mining without a national security review.

• (1335)

Much of the automotive industry is going electric. Private companies around the world, manufacturers, are investing \$500 billion in this shift. Electric cars require lithium. Canada has lithium. Now, however, the government has decided to let a Chinese company take over this natural resource that is essential for economic development in the 21st century. That is a huge loss.

I want to talk about another company that was mentioned earlier: Hytera Communications. In December 2022, the RCMP awarded a sensitive contract for communications systems hardware to Sinclair Technologies, which used to be a Canadian company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Norsat International. Norsat International was founded and based in Richmond but was acquired by Hytera Communications.

That is where things stand today after all these years of Liberal governance. Whether it is lithium, X-ray machines in our embassies, or security equipment for the RCMP, critical items are being funded by investors from China, a Communist country, need I remind the House.

There is a big difference between Communist China, Chinese people and Chinese Canadians. Shame on anyone who makes a connection between those elements; there is none. It is the Chinese government that is to blame.

Let us talk about Hytera Communications, which belongs to the People's Republic of China and is a major supplier to China's national security department. In December 2022, we learned that the Canada Border Services Agency used Hytera's communications technology equipment in 2017. Let us remember that Hytera is facing 21 espionage-related charges in the United States and was banned by President Biden himself. With friends like that, who needs enemies?

Pressure has mounted in recent years as companies tied to the Chinese communist regime have strengthened their positions here in Canada. The government has been slow to act on that, which is why it introduced Bill C-34.

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Essentially, Bill C-34 gives the minister more powers, but the minister needs more still. Here are some ideas we are going to put forward during the committee's clause-by-clause study to improve this bill. First, all acquisitions subject to a net benefit review or a national security review must get cabinet approval regardless of the outcome of the investigation.

The bill also does not provide for the preparation of a list of autocratic countries that are banned from having Canadian companies or assets. I am talking here about China and Russia. The bill also does not include a net benefit test, or a measure of attempts to take control of key industries through acquisitions under the investment thresholds. Finally, the bill does not make any changes to the legal definition of a state-owned enterprise, which some consider to be too vague.

Let me be clear. We are in favour of free trade. Free trade means trade with other countries. That means that we can invest in other countries and other countries can invest here. Let me be clear, when it comes to China and the Communist Party that is currently in power there, we need to be incredibly vigilant. We need to recognize that they are not our natural friends.

We therefore need to enhance security measures to prevent mistakes, such as a lithium company ending up in the hands of the Chinese government, Chinese-controlled X-ray equipment in our embassies, and RCMP communications ending up in the hands of the Chinese government, from ever happening again.

Limits must be set, and that is what we want to do by improving this bill.

● (1340)

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent on his excellent speech. It was quite interesting and very intellectually stimulating. It is a pleasure to listen to that kind of speech.

I would like to go back to the issue of the net benefit analysis. I think my colleague mentioned this in his speech. In the Investment Canada Act, there is a review threshold that seems to go up almost like clockwork each year, sometimes even faster than inflation.

For example, in 2015, the review threshold was \$369 million. If we look at this year's figures, we see that the review threshold for countries with which we do not have an economic agreement, to use the lowest figure, hit \$1.3 billion. This means that the government does not even look at the file when a company is purchased for less than \$1.3 billion. These transactions are just rubber-stamped.

Let me name a few companies that are in this situation. Héroux-Devtek has a market value of \$560 million. Lassonde Industries has a market value of \$800 million, which means it still passes under the radar. Cascades has a market value of \$909 million, and TC Transcontinental has a market value of \$1.3 billion, which puts it right on the edge of passing under the radar. No one knows for sure. Resolute Forest Products, which has a market value of \$1.6 billion, would fall below the second threshold, which is \$1.9 billion for countries with which there is a trade agreement.

I would like to know if my colleague from Louis-Hébert thinks it is acceptable that the thresholds are so high, and that companies that are so important to our economy are not even subject to a review in the event of an acquisition.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the question from my colleague. However, he made a little mistake in his question: I am the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, not for Louis-Hébert. The member for Louis-Hébert is seated over there. We know that because over the weekend he said on Quebec television that he was in the corner over there with the leader of the Green Party. I will leave it at that.

I thank my colleague for very clearly demonstrating that we must always be vigilant and that when we increase the threshold for review so much, we are exposing ourselves to risk. That is where we need to pay attention. I completely understand.

I will play fair. The situation changed dramatically from 2015 to 2023. Oversight of China in 2015 may not have been very strong and that was understandable. These days that is no longer possible. We need to be vigilant and take this seriously.

As my colleague from the Bloc Québécois demonstrated so well, the bar is currently set too low. We have to set it higher. I also want to thank my colleague for highlighting the problem that came up at Hydro-Québec.

● (1345)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his speech. Let us remember constituency names. It is important.

My colleague made some good points, but he did not talk about the major changes that Bill C-34 will make, including the new definitions involving businesses.

Does my colleague think this bill contains improvements or not?

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, yes, of course. The mere fact that legislation is being introduced to address this issue is a step forward. Increasing oversight of foreign investments with respect to national security, specifically those from communist China, is a good thing.

However, this step forward does not go far enough. We need to make our experts even more effective. Cabinet and the minister responsible will indeed have a little more power. However, we have sadly been able to demonstrate, as have several colleagues, that over the past four or five years, there have been shortcomings in this regard. We must therefore better equip our intelligence services and our police services, those who ensure our security on a national and international level.

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In our view, this bill does not go far enough. Fortunately, we will be able to improve it when it is studied in parliamentary committee.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today. With whom, I am not exactly sure yet, but it will happen after QP that somebody will come in and take the other half of my speaking time.

I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-34. This is an important piece of legislation to ensure we continue to keep up with the evolving global economy. We know there are a lot of great opportunities that Canada has been able to seize over the last number of years, and I will speak to one in particular in my riding in a few moments.

This legislation is there to enable the minister, whomever that may be, to ensure they can put the proper measures in place and take the proper approaches to not only maintain Canada's national security, but also enhance our economic security. The two absolutely need to go hand in hand.

A piece of this legislation I was particularly interested in was giving the minister the ability to improve information sharing with international allies. Having the ability to share information back and forth with our allies, with regard to various economic opportunities and various international companies, certainly will give us some ability to protect that security. We know economic security and national security go hand in hand, and they absolutely need to.

This particular piece of legislation, the Investment Canada Act, was established to provide investor certainty while reserving Canada's ability to block individual investments under specific circumstances. It is key to mention that, because it is not just about the security of our own nation or the security of Canada. When we talk about investing, we also want to make sure the rules are absolutely clear so that those who seek to invest in Canada know exactly what to expect. That is why this legislation is so important and why it is important to continually update it. The last time it was done, I believe, was in 2009. Now we are seeing it happen again as a result of changes in the global economy.

One investment opportunity coming to just outside my riding in Hastings—Lennox and Addington, which a Conservative member represents and I know she is very excited about, is a new opportunity that was announced last summer. It is with respect to a German-based company with ties throughout Europe, not just Germany, that invests in battery manufacturing. This company has chosen just outside of my riding, in her riding, a particular location in Ontario to establish what will become the largest battery manufacturing plant for electric vehicles in North America.

It is amazing because this company has chosen Ontario. I will tell the House why it chose Ontario. When it was looking at the various options, it basically shortlisted them down to three cities. I will not name the two other cities, but they were both in the United States. The reason Ontario was chosen was because of the company's ability to access clean energy. When the company is producing electric vehicle batteries, it takes a lot of electricity to run that process.

That company made it very clear in its press announcement that it wanted to know, when it is making a sustainable product, which is electric vehicle batteries, that the inputs into that product are sustainable themselves. The company knew Ontario, because of a former Liberal government, no longer burns coal. Ontario has one of the cleanest electric grids. I know the Speaker is from Quebec, and we can have a debate about this later on, but as a result that company chose Ontario because of access to clean energy.

• (1350)

I think it is very telling that the move toward sustainability is no longer just a movement that is driven by individuals and political leaders with these aspirations and ideas. We are now starting to see it built into corporate decisions. We are seeing these large multi-billion dollar companies, seeking to invest in other parts of the world, making the decisions and saying they want to know that they are using sustainable products to create their end product.

Umicore chose to set up in Hastings—Lennox and Addington just outside of Kingston. It will be investing, I believe, around \$5 billion. The Government of Canada is also adding to that investment to establish this battery manufacturing plant. It will take the raw materials right to the end product that will be delivered to the car manufacturers.

There is a lot to be said about these types of deals, especially as we have been moving and transitioning into this new green, sustainable economy over the past number of years. It is critically important that, as we look for other countries and companies in other countries to do business with, the rules about investing in Canada are very clear. Companies like Umicore that want to invest billions of dollars in Canada want to know what the rules are and what they should expect from the government. I think that is fair, but we also have to have the ability to control our own national security by making sure that we make the right moves at the right time when it might not be in the best interest of Canada.

Ultimately, that is what Bill C-34 does. It puts us in a position where the minister, whomever that might be, whether it is the current minister or a future minister under a different government, is given the tools that are needed to make those decisions on behalf of Canadians.

There have been some comments in the House today about extending too much responsibility or giving too much power, perhaps, to a minister to make those decisions. However, it is important to remember that we elect people and put them in positions so they are able to make those decisions on behalf of Canadians. Sometimes those decisions have to be made relatively quickly. Therefore, empowering them with the tools to do this, so that they can continue to work on deals and make deals with companies like Umicore, which will be coming to my region, is incredibly important.

*Statements by Members*

It goes without saying that I support this legislation. Every member in the House should support this legislation. I recognize, as the member for Louis-Hébert said before me, that he does have some concerns that he wants to raise at committee during the clause-by-clause process. That is important. It is part of the democratic process. Perhaps our bill could even be improved further by his contribution and the contribution of all members. I genuinely hope that all members will come to it with that understanding.

• (1355)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I want to interrupt the hon. member to ask everybody to please calm down.

[*Translation*]

We are trying to listen to a speech, but the noise level is becoming increasingly disruptive.

[*English*]

The hon. member has one minute and a half left.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I was just wrapping up. I am happy to take some questions now before question period.

However, I am pleased to support this legislation. I hope that all parties can work constructively together at committee to improve the legislation so that we can offer the best, on behalf of Canada, to other international companies seeking to invest here.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the member for Kingston and the Islands' speech. In my opening speech on this I said that these micro-administrative changes are much needed, but they are likely not to do what is claimed. The government has had the opportunity, over the last eight years, in the existing act, to reject takeovers by Chinese state-owned enterprises of Canadian assets. These include the Tanco mine in Manitoba where the government actually said no to a national security review, and Hytera, which took over telecommunications businesses. The then minister of industry said no to a national security review.

Can this member please tell me what in this bill will ensure that those types of acquisitions by state-owned enterprises are reviewed in the future?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I can appreciate the question. The premise of the question, when we start off by saying that there are micro pieces of amendments to the legislation that will not do what they are intended to do, perhaps does not start us off on the right foot of the collaborative approach of trying to make the bill better.

The member specifically raised a point about state-owned purchases like the ones he is referencing, and I have heard a couple of other members raise this too. I think there is an opportunity to discuss that in committee. The member for Louis-Hébert raised the exact same point in his speech, prior to me speaking, that the Conservatives would like to dig into it a little deeper and to find out if there is a way the legislation can be improved even more to address that concern.

I hope the member brings it forward and the committee is able to satisfy the concerns of the Conservatives as it relates to that particular issue.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech given by my Liberal colleague. He said that it was important to give the minister more powers to review foreign investments. I concur. More powers and further review are necessary, but I wonder what the government is doing with this power once acquired.

I clearly remember a case, in 2016, because it happened in my riding. Rona, a very important Quebec-based chain, was sold for \$3.2 billion. We filed an access to information request to determine the rationale for the government's review under the Investment Canada Act. There were no documents, no studies, nothing.

Can the member opposite explain why the government, which wants new powers, is not using the powers it has and is not fulfilling its role when it reviews potential investments?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, again, if we start off by assuming that the minister is looking for more powers, only to be extremely critical as to how those were used previously, we might not be starting off on the right foot, if we are genuinely interested in amending this legislation in the better interest of Canadians.

Similar to my comment to the Conservative member who asked me a question, I would say to the member from the Bloc that if he is concerned about what exactly the minister will be able to accomplish with these legislative changes, then he should bring that up in committee so it can be discussed. At the end of the day, let us remember that we will all be better off by having a better ability to negotiate and a better ability to scrutinize the various corporations, stakeholders and entities that are seeking to invest in Canada, if we work together to create the best legislation.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

### FREEDOM OF RELIGION

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is deeply disturbing to hear about the growing persecutions of the Ahmadi Muslim community around the world.

In recent weeks, the media burst with the news about the unlawful raids, detentions and killings of Ahmadi Muslims in Burkina Faso and Pakistan. The safety of the community in Afghanistan, Algeria and Sri Lanka is also deeply concerning. No individual should be persecuted for one's right to freedom of religion. Everyone, alone or in a community, publicly or privately, has a universal right to practice and manifest his or her religion.

*Statements by Members*

Here in Canada, we are proudly enjoying the ability to freely practise our faith. Ahmadi Muslims in Canada take this freedom and give back generously by consistently helping those in need and raising funds for local hospitals and other charities. By standing here today with my colleagues, I hope to bring the world's attention to the serious human rights violations against the Ahmadiyya Muslim community around the globe.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**QUEBEC WINTER CARNIVAL**

**Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, until February 12, all Canadians can shake their pompom at the 69th Quebec Winter Carnival. Carnival-goers are invited to experience a range of new unconventional activities, including an urban slide from the top of the ramparts, a silent disco, and electro, francophone, hip-hop and new country music nights at Bonhomme's ice palace. They can even take a tour of this grandiose palace with its 45-foot high tower.

The classics remain: The night parades, the sculptures snow route, the famed canoe racing and the snow bath are all back. The *Today Show* even came to film two live shows.

I invite everyone to come discover or rediscover the Quebec Winter Carnival, which remains the biggest winter carnival in the world. It promotes our country and our traditions around the world. I would also like to warmly thank my friend Florent Tanlet and his entire team.

Bonhomme Carnaval says he cannot wait to see everyone and give them a big hug.

\* \* \*

[English]

**YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES UNLIMITED**

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to highlight the outstanding work of an incredible organization in London, Ontario, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, or YOU. Founded in 1982, its centre has continuously focused on the well-being of youth finding themselves in a variety of challenges.

The organization focuses on mid-teens and late 20s, kids experiencing challenges in search of a better future in a way that affirms their dignity. The help takes different forms. Sometimes it is as simple as providing a hot meal, and other times it is more complex. Most times, in fact, it is more complex. It runs a state-of-the-art youth shelter that makes sure young people have second chances when needed. It provides skills and employment training. It also makes available affordable housing spaces. Over the years, I have had the privilege of working with the organization and seeing the results first-hand.

This Friday marks the 17th annual YOU breakfast, its signature fundraiser. The youth speaker is Cheyenne Vanderwoude. I thank Cheyenne for having the courage to share her story. I thank also Steve Cordes, the board, the staff and all the supporters.

YOU has done and will continue to do extraordinary things in our community.

[Translation]

**VALCOURT SKI-DOO GRAND PRIX**

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, from February 10 to 12, we will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Ski-doo grand prix in Valcourt.

The snowmobile, a bona fide Quebec invention, is a strong symbol of pride and ingenuity for our entire region. It has contributed to Quebec's small business-driven business model, which has flourished over the years. Given that it has long been a part of our history, the vintage version of this invention will be showcased this year, allowing us to see its evolution.

For 40 years, this event has been a flagship moment for tourism in the region and even internationally. In the depths of winter, it is an important economic driver that makes the entire Valcourt region vibrate and hum. It represents 40 years of history where different categories of racers fly around the oval, much to the delight of spectators, young and old.

That is why this year the organization is encouraging families to come out and enjoy the show. They are hoping to open the doors to the next generation of competitors. In Quebec, Ski-doo is how we roll.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[English]

**COMMUNITY SERVICE**

**Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a long-standing volunteer in my community of Kanata—Carleton, Cheryl Gingras.

Cheryl has volunteered in dozens of roles in multiple organizations and communities her entire adult life. She is a devoted community organizer, communicator and contributor in helping shape women's policies. Her leadership through our local Liberal women's clubs has been nothing short of inspiring.

Cheryl has had a long and courageous battle with cancer, yet she has remained steadfast in her leadership. Cheryl is now in the loving care of the amazing team at the Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice in Kanata.

I am reminded of a quote, "The purpose of life is not to be happy—but to matter, to be productive, to be useful, to have it make some difference that you lived at all."

Cheryl has made such a tremendous impact. Her life and dedication for those around her and the causes that matter most have impacted so many.

God bless. I am thinking of Cheryl, Sebastien, and her family.

*Statements by Members***BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS**

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this week, I have a very special member of my community, Cris Morant, who has celebrated his 100th birthday.

Cris is a World War II veteran who joined the British Air Force at the age of 18. Training as an electrical technician, Cris served in the 182nd Squadron of the Royal Armed Forces Servicing Commandos and repaired planes and equipment near the front line. After landing in France, he supported the front line as it proceeded to liberate France, Belgium, Netherlands and Denmark. After the war, he stayed in the Netherlands for two years to help rebuild the country.

As a descendent of Dutch immigrants, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for Cris's service. If it were not for the bravery and heroism of men like Cris, I would not be here today.

Cris and his family have since moved to Canada and have been calling Strathroy home for the last 30 years.

Happy 100th birthday to Cris. I thank him for his service.

\* \* \*

**SRI LANKA**

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to mark the 75th anniversary of the independence of Sri Lanka, a country that is both morally and economically bankrupt today.

Since independence, Sri Lanka has gone to the IMF for bailouts 17 times, which is more than once every five years. Its leaders stand accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. On January 10, Canada imposed sanctions on two former presidents of the island: Mahinda Rajapaksa and Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

If Sri Lanka is to reach its true potential, it must deal with its demons. It must reduce its political and military spending, address accountability for atrocities committed, recognize the Tamils' right to self-determination and be a country governed by the rule of law. Continued failure by its leaders will further drive what many have called the "pearl of the Indian Ocean" into the ground and risk repeating the mistakes of the past.

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**HEALTH CARE**

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I recently met with Anna from my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, who highlighted the need to expand the eligibility of the Canada caregiver credit. Like thousands of other Canadians, Anna has provided countless hours of care to a loved one at home, which is much-needed support that has allowed her husband to age in place.

As Canadians age, they need our support. One of the most impactful ways we can do this is by supporting those who care for them. The Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence states that Canadians spend 5.7 billion unpaid hours each year on caregiving.

That is hundreds of thousands of spouses, parents and children taking care of the ones they love at home.

At a time when our long-term care and health care systems are overwhelmed, we must do more for Canadians who care for their loved ones. More caregivers would benefit by expanding the scope of the Canada caregiver credit into a refundable tax credit and by increasing the income cap for claiming the same.

I thank Anna and all caregivers across Canada for the valuable support they provide.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, Canadians are out of money. They cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves. Recently, I received an email from a constituent, a 49-year-old disabled man who lives on \$1,100 per month. He states that things have never been easy for him, but have gotten much worse lately. Price gouging, he says, has left him no option but to go without food several days per month. He emphasizes that he must choose between food and shelter, and says that, as a Canadian, he has to choose shelter.

Canada is a G7 country, but now Canadians are forced to choose between eating or having roofs over their heads.

Canadians are hurting. Everything feels broken. The next Conservative government will clean up this mess and scrap the punitive carbon tax. Groceries, home heating and everything else will become affordable for my constituents and all Canadians. Conservatives will keep the heat on and remove the tax.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**MÉTIS NATION BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to welcome and acknowledge an impactful and important organization within my constituency of Surrey Centre. The Métis Nation British Columbia has travelled to Ottawa to continue its work and valiant advocacy in pursuing the realization of its self-governance agreement with Canada.

Representing 39 Métis communities and over 98,000 people in British Columbia, the organization strives to develop and enhance opportunities for Métis communities by implementing culturally relevant social and economic programs and services. Its vision is to build a self-governing, sustainable nation in recognition of inherent rights for our Métis citizens.

I welcome them to Ottawa.

### CARBON TAX

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a national survey on mental health showed the stark reality facing Canadian farmers.

When asked about the biggest source of stress and anxiety, for the first time it was not commodity prices, and it was not the weather. The biggest threat to the family farm operations of Canadian farmers is Liberal government policy. More than eight years of Liberal tax hikes and cumbersome red tape has meant family farms are struggling with their mental and financial health, and when the NDP-Liberal coalition triples its carbon tax, the average 5,000-acre farm will spend more than \$150,000 a year on the carbon tax alone. After eight years of Liberal overspending and interest rate hikes, food inflation is at a 40-year high, families are struggling to manage their debt and family farms are no longer economically viable.

Losing family farms hurts every Canadian family. After eight years of Liberal attacks, Canadian farmers deserve a break from the carbon tax coalition. Canadian farmers should know that Conservatives would keep the heat on and take the tax off.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to describe the situation in Canada after eight years under the Liberals. Things are not looking so good, even though the Prime Minister says that everything is fine.

Inflation is at a 40-year high, houses are unaffordable and food banks cannot keep up with the demand. Full-time workers can no longer make ends meet. Those who were donating food are now the ones using food banks. That is the situation after eight years of this Prime Minister. In Quebec, one-third of requests for food assistance are for children. Yes, it has come to that. Canada, a G7 country, has working poor and children who are going hungry.

The Liberals have been hurting the Canadian economy for the past eight years. The least they could do would be to cancel the carbon tax, but instead they want to triple it.

There is a ray of hope. Once the leader of the Conservative Party takes office, he will straighten out our country's finances, do away with the carbon tax and give control back to Canadians so that they no longer have to choose between putting clothes on their backs, food on their tables or a roof over their heads.

\* \* \*

### SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week I join my fellow Quebecers in marking Quebec's 33rd Suicide Prevention Week.

This year's theme is "Prevention is Better Than Death". Each and every one of us is invited to break the stigma around mental health, start a conversation and support one another.

### Statements by Members

That is why we are working on a national suicide prevention action plan, which will set out concrete actions and performance indicators to improve crisis support and suicide prevention.

Our government continues to work with its partners to improve the mental well-being of Canadians and take action to help prevent suicide. Nevertheless, every one of us has a responsibility to act. Talking about our mental health and our challenges can make all the difference.

I urge everyone to dare to talk about it.

\* \* \*

[English]

### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as provincial premiers descend upon Ottawa to discuss health care funding, debate about health care privatization is raging. There are people who say that because there is already some private delivery in the system, we should not be concerned about there being more, but this misses the point.

We know there is for-profit delivery, like in long-term care. We saw during the pandemic that these facilities had worse health outcomes and higher death rates. The question is whether we want more of that or less of it.

Canadians should not trust the advice of Conservative governments, like the one in Manitoba, that plead poverty and call for privatization while closing emergency rooms and giving giant tax rebates. We need provinces to help develop a coordinated strategy to train enough health care providers across the entire country. Private centres hire from the same pool. We need a plan to expand that pool of workers, not a plan for discriminatory access based on ability to pay.

I exhort the Prime Minister and the premiers to pay heed as they sit down to chart a course for the next generation of Canadian health care.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

[Translation]

### YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Yannick Nézet-Séguin won two Grammys last night. When Yannick Nézet-Séguin wins a Grammy, all of Quebec is filled with pride.

Orchestra conductors are impressive characters. They are larger-than-life artists, with personalities to match.

Yannick Nézet-Séguin is different, though. He has all the talent and stature of the great conductors, but he is so down-to-earth that we sometimes forget that he is one of the giants of his era.

### Oral Questions

After winning the first Grammy of his career last year, he won two more last night. I would wager that these three Grammys in two years are just the start of a series of accolades this young maestro will earn from the elite of the music world.

Quebeckers will never tire of highlighting these achievements.

As the music director of Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain, New York's Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, Yannick Nézet-Séguin has breathed new life into classical music. He has definitely earned his place on the podium.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to congratulate the maestro.

\* \* \*

[English]

### CARBON TAX

**Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is one of the toughest Canadian winters ever, not because of the extreme cold, Canadians can handle the cold, but because of the Liberal government's carbon tax.

It is -30°C and freezing in many parts of the country and, after eight years, the Liberals have made it unaffordable for Canadians to heat their homes. After eight years of the Liberal carbon tax, home heating bills have risen out of control. After eight years, Canadians are going to bed cold and hungry, while the Liberals are warm and comfortable, telling us all that we have never had it so good. After eight years, the Liberals do not care that Canadians cannot afford to keep out the cold or buy gas and groceries. A shop vac would suck less money out of their pockets than those Liberals.

After eight years there is no relief. The Liberals think the quickest way to get Canadians back on their feet is to make them miss three car payments.

The Conservatives will fight to keep the heat on and take the tax off. We will make life more affordable and warmer for all Canadians.

\* \* \*

### THEODOROS TRAKAS

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the importance of the contributions made by someone in my community, Theodoros Trakas. We lost him in December, just shy of his 100th birthday, but boy did he do so much in those 100 years.

He moved to Canada from Greece. He had served in the Greek military. In fact, when we celebrated the Oxi Day parade along the Danforth, he was there showing his proud contributions and saying *oxi* to fascism.

Even more than that, he helped build our city. He literally helped build Ontario Place with his hands and important places all across our city. He was also a founding member of Maple Leaf Taxi, which helped to get us all around the town while making sure we were connected.

I am so proud to stand and say that we had a wonderful community member in Theodoros Trakas. I thank his family for highlighting all his contributions, and I thank him for everything he did.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### DISASTER ASSISTANCE

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians awoke to devastating images from a massive earthquake in Turkey and Syria this morning. It is painful to see the lives lost and the damage done. We send condolences to the families of the victims, and pray for a speedy recovery of those injured.

Will the Prime Minister update the House on the Government of Canada's response to the tragedy?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that all Canadians, indeed all parliamentarians, stand together in mourning the loss of so many lives in the devastating earthquakes in Syria and in Turkey.

I can assure her that we are working with partners in the region and around the world to see how we can best help in the short term, knowing that there will also be a need for support in the long term as communities rebuild from this terrible event.

\* \* \*

● (1420)

### FINANCE

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been eight years of the Prime Minister's out-of-control spending that even Liberals are starting to notice, Liberals like Bill Morneau, who said that the federal government "lost the agenda"; and Mark Carney, who called inflation homegrown. These are not just random Liberals, as the Prime Minister says. They were some of the Prime Minister's biggest defenders.

They want to know, and Canadians want to know, when will the Prime Minister show some humility, admit responsibility and end his reckless inflationary spending?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians remember well, in the depths of the pandemic, when people pulled together.

We stepped up to support people. We stepped up to support our neighbours. Frontline health workers stepped up to support people. These are the things that got Canada through this pandemic with a better record and fewer deaths than just about any of our peer countries.



There is a lot of work to continue to do to support Canadians, and this government is unequivocally standing with Canadians to support people who need that help, to create better opportunities as we grow the economy for the future.

\* \* \*

### HOUSING

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals can talk about the billions they spent all they want, but never in our country has so much money brought so few results.

After eight years, the facts speak for themselves: the highest inflation in 40 years, the highest interest rates in a generation, the highest home prices ever. New polls suggest that 45% of Canadians with variable mortgage rates will have to sell their homes in under nine months.

The Liberals can say it, but Canadians know that everything is not okay. Again, will the Prime Minister show some humility and admit responsibility?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are facing difficult times right now, which is why the government stepped up in the fall with direct support by doubling the GST credit for about 11 million Canadians, by moving forward with dental supports and rental supports for Canadians who needed it, two initiatives that the Conservatives actually voted against.

While the Conservatives are abandoning the middle class, we are going to continue investing and being there for Canadians, not just because it is the right thing to do to support people who need it but because it is also the smart thing to do to keep our economy growing strongly into the future.

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[Translation]

### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight long years under this Prime Minister, taxpayers are coming to the realization that this country is being mismanaged. Across the country, families are suffering because everything is more expensive. Part of the reason everything is more expensive is that this government is spending money like crazy. For example, consulting firm McKinsey got \$120 million in government contracts, but nobody—not the Prime Minister, not ministers, not public servants—can tell us what for.

In what universe does a government increase the national debt by spending \$120 million on contracts without knowing exactly why?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians remember well that, during the pandemic, when uncertainty reigned, the federal government was there for them. We invested \$8 out of every \$10 to support Canadians during the pandemic. The federal government invested that money because we knew being there for people was not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. What we saw was record jobs growth and very strong economic growth.

The fact is that some Canadians are suffering right now, and we are still here to help them.

### Oral Questions

#### HEALTH

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the pandemic.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that \$200 billion of the additional \$500 billion spent during the two years of the pandemic had nothing to do with the pandemic.

Another expenditure was a \$173-million investment in a company called Medicago. On Friday we learned that Japan's Mitsubishi Chemical Group was closing Medicago completely. The federal government put in \$173 million without first checking whether the vaccines developed by this company could be used.

Why is the Prime Minister spending Canadians' money recklessly, without checking things first?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no one is surprised to see the Conservatives once again attacking our vaccination policy and suggesting that we were wrong to try to get all the different types of vaccines possible, to ensure that Canadians could have access to something that would save lives. That is exactly what we did. We were very fortunate to have all the vaccines we did, because we were able to get through this pandemic better and healthier than many other countries.

We will continue to be there to support Canadians during this difficult time. That is what our government is doing. The opposition party is preaching austerity instead.

• (1425)

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it took almost two years for the Prime Minister to meet with the Quebec and provincial premiers. The meeting will be held tomorrow and will address the issue of health transfers, which we have been talking about since my first day in this Parliament.

This is an urgent matter. People are suffering, people are worried, people are afraid and people are waiting.

Does the Prime Minister agree that people would get treatment faster if the federal government were to write a quick cheque rather than imposing conditions?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to correct my hon. colleague and say that no prime minister has had more meetings with the provincial and territorial premiers on the subject of health than I have over the past two years.

At the beginning of the pandemic, we were there almost every week to talk to them, to provide assistance and to invest an additional \$72 billion, on top of the \$40 billion a year the federal government hands out for health care.

*Oral Questions*

I look forward to sitting down with the premiers tomorrow to talk about the future of the health care system.

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see that the Prime Minister thinks it convenient that there was a pandemic to make phone calls. The reality is that, if there were any discussions, they did not go well because there is nothing to show for them so far.

It better not be the same thing tomorrow. Emergency rooms are packed, people are waiting for surgeries, there are mental health problems and the number of cases of respiratory illness is high at this time of year.

Is the Prime Minister trying to provide a service to people who are suffering through the provinces, or to centralize health care under his control in Ottawa?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that my hon. colleague will be very pleased to know that we all agree on the need for results in our health care systems across the country, results for families who cannot find a family doctor, results for people who need urgent mental health care but have to wait months and months to get an appointment, and results by supporting our packed emergency rooms.

We are here to help the provinces. We will invest and ensure that there are results across the country. That is what the premiers want and that is what we all want. Tomorrow, we will be taking an important step.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, our health care system is in crisis as result of cuts by the Conservatives and Liberals.

Although the Prime Minister promised to strengthen our public system, he is confusing innovation and privatization. He is more than a little off the mark. Profit has no place in any discussion about people's health. We need to invest in our universal public health care system now more than ever. More money in the private sector means more health care workers not working in the public sector.

When will the Prime Minister understand that privatizing health care is not innovation, but rather a step backwards?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House will always defend the public health care system. That is why I am eager to sit down tomorrow with the premiers of the provinces and territories to discuss how we can continue to defend the Canada Health Act and our public systems, but still continue to produce concrete results for Canadians, be it with regard to family doctors, support for mental health or help investing in urgent care centres. This is work we will do in partnership with the provinces.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that answer may be good enough for wealthy investors, but it is not good enough for those waiting in line at Alberta's ERs.

Tomorrow, the Prime Minister is sitting down with the premiers, and that includes Alberta premier Danielle Smith, an advocate for

slashing the public health care system, while this winter Edmonton's children's hospital was being overwhelmed.

The solutions are clear: hire more health care workers and rebuild public health care. Will the Prime Minister, yes or no, ensure every single dollar that goes into the provinces' hands is going to the public coffers for health care?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very much looking forward to sitting down with the premiers tomorrow to discuss the future of health care in this country and the future of public health care in this country. We will ensure that we are standing up unequivocally for the Canada Health Act by ensuring that all Canadians have access to timely and necessary procedures. We know that is what Canadians expect. Whether it is more family doctors, ending the backlogs in mental health services or stopping the overwhelming of our ERs, we will be there to invest with the provinces and ensure results for Canadians.

\* \* \*

● (1430)

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last weekend, Canadians watched as Beijing's spy balloon drifted over North America. For years, the government has supported research with China's military, despite the advice of CSIS against doing so since 2018. It admitted Beijing's military scientists into the Winnipeg lab. It is also funding research with Beijing's military university in areas like quantum cryptography, photonics and space science.

Does the government now understand the threat this presents to Canada? Will it now issue a ministerial policy directive to ban research funding with China's military?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have established research security guidelines and are very clear with universities: If they partner with the federal government on research, their projects will be reviewed on national security grounds. Once again, the Conservatives are just waking up to national security issues.

We are working with universities to fill gaps where they exist. We take the national security issues of this country very seriously. We continue to work with universities, but we did establish a process with universities for research under security guidelines.

## JUSTICE

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of soft-on-crime Liberals, Canada is seeing a 32% rise in violent crime. Gang murders have doubled in this country. Repeat violent offenders are getting bail over and over again. Once safe neighbourhoods have become havens for crime and violence, and in response, premiers, police and Toronto are demanding bail reform from the Prime Minister.

Today, the Liberal government can finally take action by voting for the Conservative motion calling for tough-on-crime bail reform. Will the Liberals be voting yes?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to feel safe and they deserve to be safe. Bail reform has been on our radar screen since, at the very least, the meeting with provincial ministers of justice in late October. We committed at that point to looking at what we could do at the federal level to reform our bail laws, but also to looking at how we could better support the provinces in the administration of the bail regime that currently exists. We are committed to that and will continue to work in that direction.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** I just want to remind certain members that while they have beautiful, strong voices, this is not the place to let them loose. I am sure they do not want to be identified; they are very modest. They do not want us to see who they are.

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, that answer does not give a lot of comfort that the Liberals are interested in fixing the bail system they broke. Last week, the Kelowna RCMP issued a public warning about a violent, high-risk repeat offender who escaped from a recovery home. He was granted bail in December despite a revolving door of criminal convictions and a history of disobeying court orders.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility, reverse course and fix the bail system he broke?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our bail system creates a number of different balances based on charter rights that individuals have and based on the presumption of innocence until being found guilty, and it primarily makes sure that Canadians are safe.

Nobody out on bail should pose a threat to the security of Canadians. That is, in fact, what the law is. There are a number of reverse onuses in effect already in that law.

We are willing to look at other measures within the law, and we are working with the provinces and territories in that regard. We will continue to make sure that we keep Canadians safe.

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a typical Liberal response where they deflect and blame. There is nothing worth applauding about the Liberals' record on public safety or their record on protecting victims of crime. After eight years of the Prime Minister, violent crime has increased 32%, gang-related homicides have increased 92%, and ev-

## Oral Questions

ery province, territory and premier agrees that the bail system is broken.

Will the Prime Minister fix the bail system he broke or get out of the way so the Conservatives can?

● (1435)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I assure my colleague and all members in this chamber that we are introducing common-sense policies, like Bill C-75, that allow us to concentrate on the most serious offenders so we can protect our communities.

I would also point out to my Conservative colleagues that this government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to support law enforcement and to address the root causes of crime so that we can stop it before it starts. What have the Conservatives done? In each of those instances, they have voted against.

If they are serious about taking crime seriously, they should get serious about supporting this government's policies.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Prime Minister, the numbers are worrisome.

Violent crimes are up 32% and gang-related murders are up 92%. That is where things stand under the Liberals. Why? It is because they have introduced policies that benefit criminals rather than victims.

Could the minister protect victims and leave rapists and thieves in prison where they belong?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have invested more than any other government in Canadian history to protect victims and ensure that they are heard by our justice system.

As for the bail system, no one should be released if they pose a threat to Canadian society. That is what we are working on. We are open to working with the provinces and territories to fine-tune the system and to support them in the administration of the system.

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the minister is still trying to protect the legislation flowing from Bill C-5. There is clearly a problem with the word "justice" in the office of the Minister of Justice.

### Oral Questions

Under this new legislation, a crook caught in possession of a fully loaded illegal firearm and a rapist will serve their sentence at home. That is the Liberal record after eight years. We are living in a country that does not prioritize victims' rights.

Could the minister admit that the Bill C-5 legislation is a failure and send criminals back “inside” so that there may be justice for the victims?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, serious crimes deserve serious consequences. That is the reason why we are scrapping the Harper government's “tough on crime” agenda, which was an utter failure.

What we are doing is properly allocating resources to serious crimes and not wasting judicial and police resources on less serious crimes. We are improving the justice system and we will continue to do so.

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### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the West Island Liberals are attacking the Charter of the French Language in committee on Bill C-13.

Everyone should listen to their scare tactics. On Friday, the member for St. Lawrence took a turn being the voice of doom. She claims that thousands of English-speaking seniors will lose access to health care. That is absolutely ridiculous. She claims that health care personnel are afraid to offer care in English, when, in reality, English services must be provided upon request throughout Quebec, as per Bill 96.

Will the minister order her colleagues to stop spreading misinformation when debating her bill?

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question.

We are the first government to recognize the decline of French across the country and we are the first government to recognize that, yes, French is under threat across Canada. That is why we are continuing to move forward with a bill that is ambitious, a bill that will give us more tools to address the decline of French across the country.

Once again, I hope we will have my colleagues' co-operation, as we want to pass this bill that will make a real difference in the lives of Canadians.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first we have the member for Saint-Laurent claiming that seniors will no longer receive care if we protect the French language. Then there is the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, who lobbied against Bill C-13 recognizing French as the common language in Quebec. Naturally, the member for Mount Royal did his part too.

The West Island Liberals are banding together to attack the Charter of the French Language and promote the anglicization of Quebec.

Meanwhile, where is the Liberals' Quebec lieutenant? Why is he giving free rein to those who want to undermine efforts to protect French?

• (1440)

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the lieutenant is here, and he is in fine form. Bill C-13 is the first piece of legislation to recognize that French in Quebec must be strengthened and protected. It gives francophones outside Quebec a helping hand. It gives the Commissioner of Official Languages more powers. Despite all that, the Bloc is against it because it does not want things to work, it wants to pick a fight and it does not want Parliament to work. We will succeed regardless.

**Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, every additional step to protect French in Quebec is one step too many for the West Island Liberals. Requiring French in the workplace is too much. Recognizing French as the common language is too much. If they are asked to name one positive step to protect French that they agree with, they are unable to do so because they do not even recognize the decline of the French language.

These are the same Liberals who, in 2021, refused to vote to recognize that Quebecers form a nation. Does the Quebec lieutenant agree with that?

**Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's comments are not true. We are the first government to recognize the decline of French across the country, including in Quebec. Yes, the language at risk in Canada is French. That is why we need to do our part to remedy this situation.

I would hope that the Bloc Québécois would like to see the federal government take responsibility, and that is exactly what we are going to do. We are putting forward an ambitious bill to ensure that the commissioner has more tools to do his job. With this legislation, we will also ensure that francophones inside and outside Quebec can work and be served in French.

\* \* \*

[English]

### CARBON PRICING

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, Canadians can no longer afford to eat or heat their homes, let alone afford a home, and the Liberals plan to triple the carbon tax, which is going to cost our farmers more to grow our food and get it to the grocery store shelves. It is no wonder that food banks in my communities are seeing record-high demand with no end in sight.

When will the Prime Minister finally stop blaming everybody else for the pain he is causing, take responsibility and axe his destructive carbon tax?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as many people know, including a number of Conservatives on the other side of the aisle, carbon pricing is one of the most effective ways to fight against climate change. Starting April 1, a family of four will get \$386 in Alberta, \$340 in Saskatchewan, \$264 in Manitoba and \$244 in Ontario, four times a year.

We can fight climate change and support Canadians. That is exactly what we are doing on this side of the aisle.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, a record number of Canadian families cannot even afford to buy basic groceries. Rent has gone through the roof, and the dream of home ownership has vanished for millions. Millions more are struggling just to keep the heat on this winter, and the Prime Minister's solution is to triple the carbon tax on home heating.

The Prime Minister needs to take responsibility for his actions. He needs to recognize the pain he is causing. Why does he not do the right thing and just axe this destructive carbon tax?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one thing is clear: Over the last seven years, this government has been there for Canadians. In fact, from 2015 to 2020, poverty in Canada was reduced by 2.7 million Canadians. That is 782,000 children and 178,000 seniors.

What happened in 2015? The government changed. The Liberals were elected and the Conservatives were out. It seems like something happened.

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC):** I will tell members what has happened, Mr. Speaker. Millions of Canadians are using food banks every month, and the Liberal government brags about its record. People can barely afford to keep a roof over their heads and put food on their tables, and now the Prime Minister's solution to 40-year highs in inflation is to triple the carbon tax and raise prices even more on things as basic as their home heating.

Why will the Prime Minister not finally take responsibility for his actions, stop blaming everyone else, do the right thing, stop making things worse and axe this carbon tax?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years in opposition, the Conservatives seem to have not figured out that catchphrases and buzzwords do not actually improve the lives of Canadians. Even worse, their ideology forces them to vote against things that improve the lives of Canadians. They voted against reducing taxes on Canadians. They voted against child care. They voted against supports for businesses. They vote against just about everything.

While they oppose, we deliver. That is our job.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

## HOUSING

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, the cost of rent for Canadians has gone up 60%. Liberals are letting corporate landlords rip off Canadian fami-

## Oral Questions

lies by jacking up rent when they bring in a new tenant. To let corporations and speculators turn our housing market into a casino for the ultrawealthy is wrong. The Liberals have turned their backs on renters.

When are the Liberals going to crack down on the profiteering of corporate landlords, which is keeping families from finding a home they can afford?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the member opposite claims, we have made sure that we take care of Canadian renters. We are the government that introduced the Canada housing benefit, which is now real in every province and territory in Canada. It is delivering an average of \$2,500 to vulnerable renters across the country.

In addition to that, we introduced the \$500 one-time top-up to the existing Canada housing benefit and nearly two million Canadian renters are now benefiting from that payment.

\* \* \*

## CHILD CARE

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Liberals announced a deal with Alberta to fund the creation of 20,000 private, for-profit child care spaces, even though the Alberta government has not made clear progress on creating the 42,000 non-profit spaces it committed to build in its agreement with the federal government. In fact, the government's own child care legislation says that public and non-profit providers should be prioritized.

Why are the Liberals turning their backs on Alberta families who need high-quality non-profit child care spaces?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was really delighted to be in Edmonton last week to make that important announcement of an additional 20,000 child care spaces, which are going to be created in Alberta. That is in addition to the 42,500 that were already announced when we signed the agreement. This means that we are delivering more affordable child care for families in Alberta and right across the country. This is good news for Alberta families and the Alberta economy.

I am so thrilled that we can move forward with this, just like we are moving forward with Bill C-35, which would protect child care for generations to come.

*Oral Questions***REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister for PrairiesCan announced a massive investment in Alberta with nearly \$50 million in federal funds and the opening of a local PrairiesCan office in Lethbridge. This dynamic hub will offer a direct link for local entrepreneurs and residents, advance new opportunities, drive economic expansion and help hard-working Canadians create dependable jobs.

Could the minister update the House on the work he is doing in local communities across the Prairies?

**Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Member for Calgary Skyview for all his hard work. The Prairies have unique needs and priorities, and only local communities know how to best address them. That is why our government is investing across the Prairies by opening seven new PrairiesCan offices across the Prairies.

Last week, I opened a brand new service location in Fort McMurray that will support the residents of northeastern Alberta in building a strong, competitive Prairie economy that benefits everyone. Over the last three weeks, I have also announced more than \$46 million in federal investments creating—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Lakeland.

\* \* \*

**CARBON PRICING**

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Prime Minister, Canadians can barely afford food, fuel, heat or homes. Nicole from Vegreville is struggling because the Liberal carbon tax doubled her gas bill. She said, “I don't have an extra \$400 to pay. How are Canadians supposed to live?” It is about to get worse when the NDP-Liberal costly coalition triples its carbon tax.

When will the Prime Minister stop blaming everyone else, take responsibility and axe his destructive carbon tax?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke about families in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba that are going to start to receive the climate action incentive rebate as of April 1. However, as of July 1, families in Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and Newfoundland will also be receiving the climate action incentive rebate four times a year so that we can together tackle climate change, which is costing billions of dollars to Canadians. That is going to go up to \$25 billion by 2025.

The Conservatives have nothing to say. They have no plan. They have nothing to say about climate change.

On this side of the House, we will fight climate change, and we will do it by supporting Canadians.

● (1450)

**Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' carbon tax has driven up the cost of everything, as the PM

said it is designed to do, while they have missed every single emissions target, because it is a tax grab and not an environmental plan.

It is hitting non-profits hard too. The Lloydminster Agricultural Exhibition faces “crippling” payments, which already cost 30 grand a year in carbon tax alone. The building got major energy upgrades, but the carbon tax still hiked bills 30% and taxed away any savings.

Conservatives will keep the heat on and take the tax off, but when will the Liberals take responsibility and axe their cruel carbon tax?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I trust everyone in the House wants to tackle the challenges Canadian families are facing when it comes to affordability. What confuses me is the Conservatives seem to not understand that the plan to put a price on pollution is going to put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families. The reality is that they would take that money from families so they could make it free to pollute, and the cost of pollution is extraordinary—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** When one's whip or deputy whip is waving their arms, they are not trying to fly. They are trying to keep it quiet.

I will ask the hon. Minister for Immigration to please start again.

**Hon. Sean Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand that every member of the House wants to tackle the challenges families are facing when it comes to affordability. That is why we put a plan in place to put a price on pollution that will put more money in the pockets of nine out of 10 Canadian families.

Their strategy is to take money from those families so they can make it free to pollute, and there is an enormous cost to pollution. I invite any member of the House to visit my community, see the silos hurricane Fiona tore apart and talk to the farmers who lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in their crops. It is hard to understand an argument that is going to do less for the environment and take money from families. I cannot understand why the Conservatives have doubled down on that strategy.

## AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is challenging for Canadians, and especially Canadian farmers, is the Liberals tripling their crippling carbon tax, which is fuelling the food affordability crisis in Canada. Now the Liberal-NDP carbon tax coalition wants to triple that tax. The result of that is that a typical Canadian farmer will pay \$150,000 a year in carbon taxes alone. What Canadian farmer can absorb those taxes? I will tell members that none can. We are losing farms now due to bankruptcy and insolvency.

When will the Prime Minister of misery understand that his tax has to go so farmers can grow?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it seems like the party opposite is worried about costs, but never talks about the costs we are passing on to our kids and grandkids through the impacts of climate change, which is billions of dollars accumulating year after year.

We have an emergency here, and the party opposite is simply not telling the truth to Canadians. We are already paying for the cost of climate change, and we need to find solutions. They have no solutions to offer, none whatsoever.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal government members are misleading Canadians when they say eight out of 10 Canadians are going to get more in the carbon tax rebate than they get back. The reality is that Canadian farmers get pennies on the dollar in return for the Liberals' farcical carbon tax rebate program. Canadian farmers cannot afford fuel, fertilizer or feed, and when we lose Canadian farms, that impacts every Canadian family struggling to put food on the table.

Is the Prime Minister prepared? The Conservatives will keep the heat on and take the tax off.

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, some Conservative voices who have historically supported a carbon price include Preston Manning and Stephen Harper. Doug Ford's chief budget adviser testified before the Senate in 2016, saying that this was the most effective thing we could do to reduce emissions. We have discovered a way to put more money in the pockets of Canadians. At the same time, we have an effective policy to reduce emissions.

If the Conservatives are concerned about the impact on farmers, they can come to my community to talk to the farmers who lost silos, and about the crops they lost. The Haveracres Maple Farm has lost so many of its maple trees, it will take half a century for it to become profitable again under current conditions. We will be there for families. We will protect the environment no matter—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean has the floor.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

## IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, just listen to what we learned from the CBC. I could not make this up. Imagine. New York is paying for bus tickets to send

## Oral Questions

asylum seekers to Roxham Road. It is the U.S. National Guard itself that is giving out the tickets.

The Americans must be laughing it up when they hear Canada saying that it is negotiating to modernize the safe third country agreement. They must laugh even harder when we wonder why the negotiations have been dragging on for six years. The Americans are making a mockery of the federal government. Enough is enough. The Minister of Public Safety can suspend the safe third country agreement without the Americans.

When will he stop being a laughingstock?

• (1455)

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the solution the member is proposing is not a good one. It would just move the problem elsewhere. I met with my counterpart from Quebec last week to come up with solutions to support Quebec's efforts.

[*English*]

It was also to continue to follow the domestic and international legal obligations we are bound by. We will do right by vulnerable people who seek asylum in Canada, and we will work with our provincial counterparts to make sure we are there for them, so they do not face undue pressures as a result of trying to do the right thing for asylum seekers.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, did I miss a cabinet shuffle?

The Americans do not want to fix Roxham Road. They are sending people by bus. They are using Roxham Road to shirk their own responsibilities towards asylum seekers. Now schools in Quebec are bearing the brunt of those responsibilities. Quebec community organizations are stretched to the limit. Quebec does not have the resources to deal with asylum seekers from all over Canada, never mind asylum seekers from New York, too.

When will the minister suspend the safe third country agreement, shut down Roxham Road and ensure migrants can cross the border at different places across Canada, as the Quebec government is calling for?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, has already said, we have an agreement and we have principles to protect the rights of refugees. This is a core Canadian value. We often collaborate with the province of Quebec to welcome refugees. It is a good system.

However, we must continue to strengthen our borders to protect the integrity of our immigration system. We will continue to work with the province of Quebec.

*Oral Questions**[English]***CARBON PRICING**

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government's mismanagement, Nova Scotians have to choose each month which bill not to pay. Maynard, a senior on a modest fixed income, is using every free community resource to help pay for his heating, eating and telephone. The plan to introduce and triple the carbon tax will only make things worse for Nova Scotians.

To keep Maynard from starving and going homeless, will the Liberals axe their planned carbon tax for Nova Scotians?

**Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize the challenges seniors are facing, and that is precisely why we have been there for them, unlike the party opposite, which has opposed every single measure we have put forward to support seniors, and unlike its leader, who gave reckless advice to seniors to invest in crypto. We have been there supporting seniors by doubling the GST credit; increasing the guaranteed income supplement, which has helped over 900,000 seniors; and increasing the old age security.

We will continue to have the backs of all Canadians, including seniors.

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Liberals clearly do not know how to fix what they have caused. Maynard made \$21,000 last year. That is \$1,000 over the allowable limit for the Liberals' one-off programs, but if he did qualify, the one-time payment would do nothing for him for the next 11 months. The carbon tax, by design, is inflationary.

An easy cure to help make eating and heating more affordable for Maynard would be to cancel the Liberal plan to impose a cruel carbon tax on Nova Scotians.

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I empathize with any member of the House who wants to do more to support vulnerable seniors from a low-income background in my home province of Nova Scotia. The reality is that the programs we have been putting in place since 2015 have been designed specifically to help people such as Maynard.

We can look at the increase to old age security. We can look at the increase to the guaranteed income supplement. We can look at putting a price on pollution, which is going to put more money in the pockets of people such as Maynard. I hope that member is not spreading misinformation.

Every time we have tried to do something to support low-income people or to fight climate change, the hon. member and his colleagues oppose it. I note in particular the plan we put in place to cover the cost of heat pumps to reduce the monthly cost of bills, which that member opposed.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, it has come down to this. While I was at community events this weekend, several people I spoke to were telling me how hard it is to pay their bills. I heard stories of seniors living in the cold because home heating costs have doubled.

The carbon tax is not helping. Community fridges are being emptied as quickly as they are being filled. Working families are using food banks, and moms are struggling to pay to keep the rooves over their heads.

When will the Prime Minister realize the pain he is causing, quit blaming everyone else for the problems he has created and do something about it? He can start by scrapping the costly carbon tax.

• (1500)

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservatives, we are actually doing something about it. In fact, since 2015 we have brought in a number of measures to make sure that life is more affordable for the lowest-income Canadians. Whether that is the Canada child benefit, which is helping nine out of 10 families, whether it is decreasing the eligible age for old age security from 67, which Conservatives tried to raise, back down to 65, or whether it is increasing old age security for those over 75 by 10%, we have been there. We will continue to be there. I just hope that if the Conservatives were sincere in their care for those who are vulnerable they would support us.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]*

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, food is wasted every day, whether it is at the production, processing, distribution and retail stages, in restaurants or at home. In fact, more than half of the nation's food supply goes to waste.

To address this issue, our government launched the \$20-million food waste reduction challenge.

Can the minister update the House on the status of this program?

**Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to reducing food waste because of its impacts on the environment, on social causes, and also on our economy.

A few days ago, I announced the six finalists for the novel technologies stream. They will each receive up to \$450,000 to develop their technologies that will extend the shelf life of perishable foods, transform food waste into new products or value-added products, and more.

I look forward to finding out who the winners are and seeing their technologies scaled up nationwide.



## HEALTH

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for the past eight years, the Liberal government has been spending recklessly and blindly.

The Liberal government gave \$173 million to a pharmaceutical company that had Philip Morris as a shareholder. Since 2003, the World Health Organization, or WHO, has refused to recognize research funded by any tobacco companies. What is more, Canada has been a signatory to that declaration since 2003.

Unfortunately, what happened could have easily been predicted. The WHO would not recognize the research. The minister said he was surprised. The company is now shutting down.

Why did the government not do the most obvious thing, which would have been to tell Medicago to drop Philip Morris as a shareholder so that Canada could help it?

[English]

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is disappointed to learn of Mitsubishi's decision. Recognizing the impacts that this decision will have on its employees, we continue to be in discussion and we want to work with the Government of Quebec to assess next steps.

Medicago is still an important player in Canada's biomanufacturing and life sciences ecosystem. We expect collaboration from all parties involved to ensure Canadian interests are protected. We are going to continue to work hard to ensure employees are protected. Our vaccine procurement is incredibly important in this country.

\* \* \*

## PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is astonishing to think that we are going to lose \$750 million and we should be accomplices to that. It is shocking.

Clearly, the government has become dependent on outside spin doctors for new ideas because, guess what, it does not have any of its own. It is exhausted and hopefully it has given up. Who is paying the price for all the Liberals' foolishness? Canadians are. There has been \$104.7 million spent on contracts gifted to McKinsey, all because the Liberal government cannot be bothered to do its own work. When can Canadian people expect a full accounting for this ridiculous spending?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all week long, and no doubt all session long, we are going to hear ideological talking points, buzzwords and the latest catchphrases from the leader of the Conservative opposition's Twitter. However, what we will not hear from the Conservatives is any plan: no plan on climate change, no plan to help unaffordability, no plan to actually build the economy and get to prosperity for all Canadians. They can keep tweeting; we will keep delivering. That is our job.

## Oral Questions

• (1505)

**Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very thankful for that response, because we do have an ideology on this side. That is to stand up for Canadians.

After eight years of spending, the Liberal government is out of money and Canadians are out of patience. Let me cite a few examples of the Liberals' crazy spending: \$2 billion to a company that does not even exist, \$100 million to the Liberal friends and of course to the Liberals' buddies at McKinsey, and also up to \$750 million to a company that is now going out of business and shutting its doors. When will the government stop spending and give Canadians a chance to thrive?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I see, once again, that we have to set the record straight. When it comes to standing on the side of Canadians and knowing who has invested, through the pandemic and after, in the lives of Canadians, it is this Liberal government that has done it.

What did the Conservatives do when we put in child care? How did they vote? They voted against. What happened when we tried to increase the workers benefit? They voted against. What happened when we improved supports for seniors? They voted against.

We vote for. They vote against. We are here for Canadians.

**The Speaker:** It is nice to see people talking to each other, but shouting across the floor is not the way to do that. I would ask members to just keep it down so we can hear the question and then we can hear the response.

The hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

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## IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the ties between Canada and Hong Kong are strong and deep. We share common values, and among them are respect for the rule of law, human rights and individual freedom.

Our government has launched several initiatives to help Hong Kong residents and their families work and live in Canada. Could the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship inform the House about what more we are doing to support the people of Hong Kong?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada stands resolutely alongside the people of Hong Kong.

*Business of Supply*

In 2021, my predecessor introduced new pathways that would allow Hong Kongers to come to Canada, including an open work permit program for recent graduates. That program was set to expire this week. I am pleased to share with this House that I had the pleasure of being in Scarborough earlier today to announce that we would be extending the application period by a further two years and expanding the eligibility of the program to any Hong Kong resident who has graduated within the last 10 years, as opposed to five years under the previous program design.

This program will bring more talented, young Hong Kong residents to Canada, which is good for our communities and good for those seeking to come here.

\* \* \*

**LABOUR**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Alberta energy workers are calling on the government to step up with a major financial commitment to meet the challenge of Joe Biden's massive investments in clean tech. In Alberta, that would be 200,000 jobs alone. It is no wonder the Alberta Federation of Labour is calling this the biggest economic shift since the Industrial Revolution.

We know Conservatives do not believe in a clean energy future, but New Democrats do because clean tech would mean good-paying union jobs in Alberta, northern Ontario and across Canada. When will the government end its do-nothing approach and commit to major investments in this budget to ensure a clean-tech revolution for Canadians?

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, far from a do-nothing approach, let me assure this House and all members that we stand firmly on the side of workers in this country, and the workers who have built our energy industry in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador, those who have proudly built our oil industry and energy industry, are exactly the people we need to lower emissions, create jobs and ensure the future competitiveness of one of our absolutely most important industries.

We have stood with workers every step of the way. More to the point, we have made sure that they lead this. They are the ones who built it, and they will continue to lead it.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, today, February 6, finds us 18 days away from a horrific anniversary. I do not know how the rest of my colleagues in this place feel, but on February 24, 2022, who could have believed that in this day and age there would be a land war in Europe and that Vladimir Putin would do the unthinkable, threaten nuclear arms and attack Ukraine?

My question for the Prime Minister is this: What is Canada doing to press for peace talks and to press for a negotiated solution? Arms will not end the war.

**Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the very beginning, Canada has stood shoulder to

shoulder with Ukraine. Since 2015, Canada has trained over 34,000 Ukrainian armed forces members. We have put on the table over \$5 billion of military aid. We will stand with Ukraine in its fight for security, solidarity and sovereignty. The decision relating to peace and Ukraine's future will come from Ukraine itself. Canada will be there all along the way.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1510)

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—BAIL REFORM

The House resumed from February 2 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:10 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Kildonan—St. Paul relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

[English]

**The Speaker:** The question is on the motion. May I dispense?

**Some hon. members:** No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

● (1525)

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

*(Division No. 251)***YEAS**

## Members

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Abouttaif                                | Aitchison                       |
| Albas                                    | Allison                         |
| Arnold                                   | Baldinelli                      |
| Barlow                                   | Barrett                         |
| Berthold                                 | Bezan                           |
| Block                                    | Bragdon                         |
| Brassard                                 | Brock                           |
| Calkins                                  | Caputo                          |
| Carrie                                   | Chambers                        |
| Chong                                    | Cooper                          |
| Dalton                                   | Dancho                          |
| Davidson                                 | Deltell                         |
| d'Entremont                              | Doherty                         |
| Dowdall                                  | Dreeshen                        |
| Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry) | Ellis                           |
| Epp                                      | Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) |
| Falk (Provencher)                        | Fast                            |
| Ferreri                                  | Findlay                         |
| Gallant                                  | Généreux                        |
| Genuis                                   | Gladu                           |
| Godin                                    | Goodridge                       |
| Gourde                                   | Gray                            |

*Business of Supply*

|                           |                          |                                     |                             |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hallan                    | Hoback                   | Fisher                              | Fonseca                     |
| Jeneroux                  | Kelly                    | Fortier                             | Fortin                      |
| Kitchen                   | Kram                     | Fragiskatos                         | Fraser                      |
| Kramp-Neuman              | Kurek                    | Freeland                            | Fry                         |
| Kusie                     | Lake                     | Gaheer                              | Garneau                     |
| Lantsman                  | Lawrence                 | Garon                               | Garrison                    |
| Lehoux                    | Lewis (Essex)            | Gaudreau                            | Gazan                       |
| Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Liepert                  | Gerretsen                           | Gill                        |
| Lloyd                     | Lobb                     | Gould                               | Green                       |
| Maguire                   | Martel                   | Guilbeault                          | Hajdu                       |
| Mazier                    | McCauley (Edmonton West) | Hanley                              | Hardie                      |
| McLean                    | Melillo                  | Hepfner                             | Holland                     |
| Moore                     | Morantz                  | Hughes                              | Hussen                      |
| Morrison                  | Motz                     | Hutchings                           | Iacono                      |
| Muys                      | Nater                    | Idlout                              | Ien                         |
| O'Toole                   | Patzer                   | Jaczek                              | Johns                       |
| Paul-Hus                  | Perkins                  | Jowhari                             | Julian                      |
| Poilievre                 | Rayes                    | Kayabaga                            | Kelloway                    |
| Redekopp                  | Reid                     | Khalid                              | Khera                       |
| Rempel Garner             | Richards                 | Koutrakis                           | Kusmierczyk                 |
| Roberts                   | Rood                     | Kwan                                | Lalonde                     |
| Ruff                      | Scheer                   | Lambropoulos                        | Lametti                     |
| Schmale                   | Seeback                  | Lamoureux                           | Lapointe                    |
| Shields                   | Shipley                  | Larouche                            | Lattanzio                   |
| Small                     | Soroka                   | Lauson                              | LeBlanc                     |
| Steinley                  | Stewart                  | Lebouthillier                       | Lemire                      |
| Strahl                    | Stubbs                   | Lightbound                          | Long                        |
| Thomas                    | Tochor                   | Longfield                           | Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga) |
| Tolmie                    | Uppal                    | MacAulay (Cardigan)                 | MacDonald (Malpeque)        |
| Van Popta                 | Vecchio                  | MacGregor                           | MacKinnon (Gatineau)        |
| Vidal                     | Vien                     | Maloney                             | Martinez Ferrada            |
| Viersen                   | Vis                      | Masse                               | Mathysen                    |
| Vuong                     | Wagantall                | May (Cambridge)                     | May (Saanieh—Gulf Islands)  |
| Warkentin                 | Waugh                    | McDonald (Avalon)                   | McGuinty                    |
| Webber                    | Williams                 | McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam) | McLeod                      |
| Williamson                | Zimmer— 116              | McPherson                           | Mendès                      |

## NAYS

## Members

|                    |                                      |                        |                       |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Aldag              | Alghabra                             | Morrice                | Miao                  |
| Ali                | Anand                                | Murray                 | Miller                |
| Anandasangaree     | Angus                                | Ng                     | Morrissey             |
| Arseneault         | Arya                                 | Normandin              | Naqvi                 |
| Ashton             | Atwin                                | O'Regan                | Noormohamed           |
| Badawey            | Bains                                | Perron                 | O'Connell             |
| Baker              | Barron                               | Plamondon              | Pauzé                 |
| Barsalou-Duval     | Battiste                             | Qualtrough             | Petitpas Taylor       |
| Beaulieu           | Bendayan                             | Rodriguez              | Powlowski             |
| Bennett            | Bérubé                               | Romanado               | Robillard             |
| Bibeau             | Bittle                               | Sajjan                 | Rogers                |
| Blaikie            | Blair                                | Samson                 | Sahota                |
| Blanchet           | Blanchette-Joncas                    | Savard-Tremblay        | Saks                  |
| Blaney             | Blois                                | Schiefke               | Sarai                 |
| Boissonnault       | Boulerice                            | Sgro                   | Scarpaleggia          |
| Bradford           | Brière                               | Sheehan                | Serré                 |
| Brunelle-Duceppe   | Cannings                             | Sidhu (Brampton South) | Shanahan              |
| Casey              | Chabot                               | Sinclair-Desgagné      | Sidhu (Brampton East) |
| Chagger            | Chahal                               | Sorbara                | Simard                |
| Champagne          | Champoux                             | Ste-Marie              | Singh                 |
| Chatel             | Chen                                 | Sudds                  | Sousa                 |
| Chiang             | Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek) | Taylor Roy             | St-Onge               |
| Collins (Victoria) | Cormier                              | Therrien               | Tassi                 |
| Coteau             | Dabrusin                             | Trudeau                | Thériault             |
| Damoff             | Desbiens                             | Turnbull               | Thompson              |
| Desilets           | Desjarlais                           | Van Bynen              | Trudel                |
| Dhaliwal           | Dhillon                              | Vandal                 | Valdez                |
| Diab               | Dong                                 | Vignola                | van Koeverden         |
| Drouin             | Dubourg                              | Virani                 | Vandenbeld            |
| Duclos             | Duguid                               | Wilkinson              | Villemure             |
| Dzerowicz          | Ehsassi                              | Zahid                  | Weiler                |
| El-Khoury          | Erskine-Smith                        | Zuberi— 205            | Yip                   |
| Fergus             | Fillmore                             |                        | Zarrillo              |

*Routine Proceedings*

## PAIRED

Members

Kmiec

McKay— 2

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion defeated.

[*Translation*]

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 14 minutes.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. Marc Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the “Report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas: 9th Summit of the Americas” held in Los Angeles, United States, from June 6 to 8, 2022.

\* \* \*

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

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

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Labour Shortages, Working Conditions and the Care Economy”.

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

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I move that the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, presented on Tuesday, January 31, be concurred in.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague and friend, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

● (1530)

I rise today to speak to the House about the ongoing Liberal-McKinsey scandal. This is the affair through which the government gave over \$100 million in contracts to its friends at McKinsey & Company.

The Liberals' response to this scandal has been to say not to worry, that they will have the ministers responsible for the Treasury Board and procurement investigate what happened in the context of Treasury Board and procurement. In other words, they are not only having Liberals investigate Liberals, but precisely having the Liberal cabinet ministers responsible for this issue in the first place investigating themselves.

The Prime Minister thinks that an appropriate response to waste and corruption within his own government is to have the ministers responsible for that waste and corruption investigating themselves. The Conservatives do not think that is an appropriate response to scandal, and that is why we are moving this motion today to call for an independent investigation by Canada's non-partisan Auditor General.

Of course, we have seen in the House the Auditor General attacked by the Minister of National Revenue. The Conservatives have faith in our independent officers of Parliament, and that is why we want to bring in the Auditor General and ask her to investigate the waste and corruption we are seeing under the Liberal government.

The Liberal-McKinsey affair has three main elements to it. We can speak about corruption, about control and about character.

The Liberals have given over \$100 million that we know of so far in contracts to McKinsey & Company. At the same time as McKinsey was selling its services to the Liberal government, Dominic Barton, who was the managing partner of McKinsey, was leading the Prime Minister's own growth council. Although Dominic Barton has said that he is not friends with the Prime Minister, that he barely knows these people and that he did not recognize the Prime Minister in an elevator the first time he saw him, we have the Deputy Prime Minister talking about how close Dominic Barton was to the Prime Minister, how accessible he was and how they had a relationship of being able to contact each other any time, which was build up over time.

On the word of the Deputy Prime Minister, there is a close relationship between the managing director of McKinsey at the time and the Prime Minister. Analysts at McKinsey are doing analytical work for the Prime Minister's growth council at the same time as McKinsey is selling its consulting services to the government. It is no surprise under those circumstances, when we have these clear conflicts of interest and close relationships, that there was a significant spike with respect to the volume of contracts McKinsey was getting from the government. We have conflicts of interest driven by these relationships.

Let us talk as well about control, because Canadians are asking who is pulling the strings, who is making the decisions and who is really deciding the direction of the government. What has been happening with the government is that it has been bringing in high-priced outside consultants, who have been both selling to the government and also making very significant policy decisions. They have been doing work that the public service has said it could be doing itself. We do not know what these consultants are doing, but the consultants are playing a very significant role in setting policy and direction, and they are not subject to the same kinds of transparency requirements as the public service.

*Routine Proceedings*

If Canadians want to know what discussions were happening within the public service, they can use the transparency and accountability tools that are available to them. However, if Canadians want to know about decisions that are made at McKinsey that are in fact shaping what happens in government, they are not able to access that information. In fact, up until now, McKinsey has not even been willing to provide its client list and that is a huge problem, because McKinsey has a history of working on both sides of the same issue.

In the United States, we had instances where McKinsey was working for the FDA, which is responsible for approving drugs, and it was working for pharmaceutical companies at the same time. It is working for the approval body as well as for the companies that are seeking that approval. In fact, the New York Times revealed instances where the same individual was working for both the FDA and those making the applications.

Is that same thing happening in Canada? Do we have decisions being made by McKinsey while it is also working for clients who benefit from those decisions? The reality is that we do not know, because McKinsey will not disclose its client list. Therefore, there is a lack of transparency and there is influence and control coming from these high-priced consultants who are being hired by the government.

• (1535)

Therefore, there are issues of corruption and control. However, there are also issues of character.

Who is this company? Who is McKinsey, and what has it done around the world? Most notably for the impact it is having here in Canada, McKinsey worked for Purdue Pharma. This is the company that invented OxyContin and was responsible for driving the opioid crisis that has devastated our communities.

In 2007, Purdue pleaded guilty to criminal misbranding of its products and downplaying the addiction risk to market these opioids to people. It did this so that it could make money with total disregard for the suffering caused. After 2007, McKinsey continued to work for Purdue Pharma even though it had pleaded guilty. McKinsey put together proposals with a number of recommendations aimed at helping Purdue Pharma supercharge its opioid sales.

Those recommendations included, incredibly, paying bonuses to pharmacists in instances of overdose deaths. In cases where traditional pharmacies were trying to put in place mechanisms to prevent over-prescription, McKinsey proposed that one could have a mail-in process for people to order opioids without needing to go to traditional pharmacies, allowing them to circumvent the checks that existed.

McKinsey was doing this kind of work for Purdue with no regard for basic ethical or moral norms. That was when Dominic Barton was leading McKinsey. I asked him about this at committee last week, and Mr. Barton said he had no idea that McKinsey was doing this work for Purdue. It was a client for 10 years, and the managing director claimed he had no idea.

McKinsey has done other work around the world. It has worked with Russian state-owned and affiliated companies. It has worked

with a Chinese state-affiliated company that is building militarized islands in the South China Sea.

These points speak to the character of this company. If we want to talk about conflict of interest, we have a company that is doing work for the Department of National Defence here in Canada while working with Russian and Chinese state-owned and state-affiliated companies.

McKinsey did a report for the Saudi government in which it identified influential dissidents who were driving criticism of Saudi economic policy. Not surprisingly, after those accounts were identified, these dissidents were subject to various forms of harassment. One of them actually lives in Canada and was subject to harassment on Canadian soil.

We have corruption. We have conflict of interest. We have control. We have a lack of character from this company. This is the company that the Prime Minister keeps. This is the company that has gotten over \$100 million in contracts.

While Canadians are suffering, well-connected Liberal insiders have never had it so good, especially the well-connected Liberal insiders at McKinsey.

In the context of this scandal, the government's response is that it is going to have the cabinet ministers responsible for procurement and for the Treasury Board do their own investigation. That is clearly not good enough.

The Liberals have made a complete mess of governance. They are wasting taxpayers' dollars and giving money to their friends. The public service is growing, and they are giving more and more money to outside consultants. We cannot trust the Liberals, who are responsible for these scandals, to then come in and say that they are going to investigate themselves.

That is why, as an urgent matter, it is time to ask the Auditor General to come in and get to the bottom of what happened here. We need the resources and the ingenuity of the Auditor General to find out what is happening and assess value for money.

There are many different aspects to this scandal. Canadians need to decide, at a basic character level, if this is the kind of company that they want to see their prime minister doing business with. The Auditor General is well positioned to assess value for money, to say, "What did we actually get for this \$100 million-plus?"

How much money was actually spent, by the way? We cannot get a straight answer from the government on this. Moreover, was there value for money? Many public servants have told the media that they do not know what work was done. They brought in PowerPoint slides and said that they were going to change everything, but nothing got done.

*Routine Proceedings*

• (1540)

It is time to bring in the Auditor General. Conservatives want this motion adopted so that the Auditor General will help all of us get to the bottom of what happened between the Liberals and McKinsey.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will take the opportunity to explain why the Conservatives might be bringing forward this motion when I address it on the floor. However, did Stephen Harper or his government ever issue a contract to either Dominic Barton or McKinsey?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, in fact the motion that is before the House asks for those records from 2011, so we are quite open to the Auditor General's doing that work as well. My understanding of the record is that there were very small volumes in that earlier period and that there has been dramatic, 50-fold growth under the current government.

I would just say that some of the ethical scandals I have mentioned, including the collaboration with state-owned and affiliated companies around the world, the work with the Government of Saudi Arabia and the work with Purdue Pharma, have come out subsequently.

The government has been in power for eight years. We have seen what the Liberals have done, including dramatically increasing spending on outside consultants and McKinsey in particular. The government has to be accountable for its record.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, this motion does raise an issue that is of concern to Greens. Contracting out is always a subject of concern. The federal civil service needs to have a robust capacity for non-partisan policy advice. Contracting out so very much to one specific consulting firm raises concerns for us as well. As noted by the hon. parliamentary secretary, this is not the first time. The Conservatives also contracted out to McKinsey.

There are a lot of issues, and we want to continue to seek out why certain firms have special access. I just want to ensure that the Conservatives know that Greens will continue to press for a full investigation of the SNC-Lavalin affair, which was dropped without answers.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, certainly on this side of the House, we are prepared to work with any individuals and any parties that want to help us get to the bottom of these scandals that we have seen under the current government. There has been a ceding of control by Liberals to outside consultants. There has been a waste of money in duplication of efforts. There have been conflicts of interest.

There are significant concerns about what McKinsey is up to around the world and the conflicts of interest that exist where they are working for both sides of the same issue. For instance, they are working for the Canadian Department of National Defence while working for hostile interests around the world. These are all issues that we need to get to the bottom of. I hope that this House will support the value-for-money audit that we need to see happen from the Auditor General, as well as some of the other ongoing work that is required to get to the bottom of this Liberal-McKinsey scandal.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his speech, which was just as spirited as ever.

I really like the motion before us. I think that we need to shed some light on the relationship the government has maintained with McKinsey since 2011. I think that the Conservatives did a good job on this motion because it also covers the period when they were in power.

The situation with McKinsey raises a lot of questions. We know that Dominic Barton was one of the co-founders of Century Initiative, which sought to triple Canada's population by 2100. Century Initiative is supported by former prime minister Brian Mulroney.

Since Brian Mulroney supports Century Initiative, I am wondering whether he is the voice of the Conservative Party and whether he is sharing the party's vision.

[*English*]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, today we are discussing McKinsey. I spoke in my remarks about the issue of control. We can have debates in this House about how we approach immigration policy and various aspects of it. What we ought to agree on is that those decisions should be made by people's representatives and that they should be made in a transparent way. If there are conversations happening within the bureaucracy, those should be subject to the same kind of transparency and accountability mechanisms that we have come to expect from our government.

However, we would not want to see decisions being made outside of the public service by consultants to direct the country on very fundamental issues of values, character, immigration policies and other such things. We would want to see them being made by the people's representatives.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for sharing his time with me.

Today we are debating concurrence in the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The motion asks that the Auditor General be called upon to conduct, as soon as possible, a performance and value-for-money audit of the contracts awarded to McKinsey & Company since January 1, 2011, by any department, agency or Crown corporation.

How did it come to this? Right now, millions of Canadians are struggling financially. The cost of living has gone up. Everything is expensive. People do not have enough money. Meanwhile, contracts are going to multinational corporations like McKinsey.

*Routine Proceedings*

Since 2016, McKinsey has been awarded over \$120 million worth of contracts for studies and proposals on matters relating to immigration, national defence, the Canada Border Services Agency and public services. It has received millions of dollars to make recommendations. However, we cannot get any information about the real purpose of the studies that were commissioned.

The Prime Minister is not saying a word. We are being told that two ministers, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, are going to get answers. The members opposite must think we are not very bright.

We all know nobody wants to say it even though everybody knows it. That is the crux of the problem with the McKinsey file right now. There is deep secrecy around what the firm has done for Canada.

Our motion asks for an audit dating back to 2011, when we were in power, because we know that we have nothing to hide. The contracts awarded back then were for consulting services on very specific topics. The value of the contracts was not exorbitant. In 2014 and 2015, no contracts were awarded. All of a sudden, in 2016, the contracts ballooned. It was as though, suddenly, no one in the departments knew what to do. Suddenly, no one knew what to do about national defence, immigration and border services, so contracts worth tens of millions of dollars had to be awarded to McKinsey to get the answers. I will repeat once again that we have not been able to determine what was proposed.

This is the eighth year of a government that has been implicated in a number of conflicts of interest. We went through the SNC-Lavalin affair. On several separate occasions, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner prepared reports on the Prime Minister. Today, we are again in a situation where it is abundantly clear that there is some type of conflict of interest.

Dominic Barton was the global managing director at McKinsey when the Liberal government took power in 2015. He defended himself in committee by saying that he had not done anything, that he was not aware of anything and that he did not know anything.

In one of the questions that I asked him before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, I told him that he was fascinating. In looking at him, I realized that he has a real talent for not answering questions and for pretending that this is not happening and that it is all made up. However, the facts speak for themselves. As soon as the government took power, it started following Mr. Barton's advice. He told the government to hire his firm so that it could give the government the tools it needed to know what to do, because the government did not know what to do.

That is where we are at now. There is even an ethical issue here. That being said, our motion has one main objective. We want the Auditor General, an independent officer of Parliament, to conduct an audit and report to Parliament on what happened with the various contracts that have been awarded to McKinsey since 2011. Taxpayers are the ones footing the bill, so they have the right to know.

As I said, over the past eight years, the government has completely lost control of public finances. Everyone knows that Canada's debt has doubled. We are going to have to pay interest on the debt, which will cost \$40 billion a year. We are going to have to

take money that was allocated for operating expenditures and use it to pay the interest to the banks because of the \$15 billion in contracts awarded to subcontractors, including McKinsey. This raises questions, and that is why the Auditor General must investigate to tell us what we got for \$120 million.

Were the contracts awarded properly? Was the information necessary? Were public servants capable of answering these questions?

● (1550)

There are so many unanswered questions.

The Business Development Bank of Canada is another example. The government appointed a new president. The first thing she did was take \$4.9 million and give it to McKinsey so they could tell her what the strategic direction of the Bank of Canada is. Internally, people saw a president come in who, instead of consulting them to develop the long-term strategic plan for the Bank of Canada, brought in McKinsey. Why?

These are the kinds of questions that need to be answered. At some point, there is a reason that it is in the news and everyone is asking questions. We know there is something wrong.

One of the problems with McKinsey is the company's history. McKinsey has been involved in a number of activities involving questionable countries, secret contracts, previous involvement with opioids, influencing pharmaceutical companies. On the one hand, McKinsey was telling pharmaceutical companies how to keep selling products and, on the other hand, advising governments to try and solve the problem. That makes no sense. This company certainly raises a lot of ethical issues.

McKinsey is also known to have worked with Chinese state-owned enterprises, including one that builds militarized islands in the South China Sea. It hosted a corporate retreat on the road to a concentration camp in China's Uighur region. It has worked with companies affiliated with the Russian state, long after the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

*Routine Proceedings*

This is public, known information; however, eventually, a decision has to be made. Once the government has that information, what does it do with it? Will contracts continue to be awarded to conduct studies, provide information and tell our public service how to handle various strategic issues, such as defence or immigration? The influence of the McKinsey reports was clear, in relation to the Century Initiative, when the Minister of Immigration announced Canada's new immigration targets before Christmas, in November. The plan is to bring in 500,000 people per year starting in 2025, to increase Canada's population to 100 million by 2100. However, whenever we ask questions, the answers come from elsewhere, because the minister never even bothered to absorb the information himself. People come and give numbers, without considering the francophonie, for example, or our accommodation capacity. We are talking about 12 million people in greater Montreal; I will give the leader of the Bloc Québécois credit for talking about this. As a result, eventually, people start to wonder where this information is coming from and how we got to the point where our own government essentially has no idea what to do and turns to McKinsey for answers. It simply executes the plan only to realize later that it does not work.

Our motion is simple. We hope the government will support it and understand that we need the Auditor General of Canada to get to the bottom of all this so we can find out what really happened, especially considering the tough economic times we are in. Canadian taxpayers want the government to manage their money properly. All we have been seeing for the past eight years is waste.

Once again, we are seeing the government award contracts to its friends for advice about things that should cost a lot less; I could call them something other than contracts, but I will refrain. We need to know what the offer was, the bid, so we can see if it makes sense and move forward. That is the point of consultants. If they have good ideas, we use those ideas. However, when we do not know what the idea is and then the government comes out with some kind of vague policy, obviously there is something fishy going on.

• (1555)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, can the member be very clear and indicate whether Dominic Barton has ever sat down with Stephen Harper?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure he did. The Conservative government at the time, with former finance minister Jim Flaherty, also worked with Dominic Barton. We have never tried to hide that.

The Liberals can say whatever they want, but we were clear. We know contracts were awarded. We know Mr. Barton talked with Mr. Flaherty, but we also know that, in 2014, McKinsey got no more contracts while the Conservatives were in power. There were also no contracts during the 2015 transition. It started up again in 2016, and we want to know why.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for

his speech. He spoke about the ethical issue, and that is a huge problem with McKinsey.

The government hired a private company, which was not a duly elected entity, and it made recommendations, in place of the public service, that catered to private interests. This is clearly a serious and blatant case of conflict of interest. My colleague spoke about the Century Initiative, which does not at all consider how these people could be welcomed with dignity or the resources required to receive them. Its recommendations are based only on the interests of a private firm.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the importance of the ethics behind the whole McKinsey situation.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Shefford for her question.

That is the crux of the matter. As long as there is secrecy surrounding all the studies commissioned and paid for by a firm that provides strategic plans and advice on how to direct Canada's destiny, I think we have a right to know what is going on.

This is all shrouded in secrecy, but there is still a way to do it right. For example, when, on one hand, the Department of National Defence, a strategic department, receives strategic advice from McKinsey, and, on the other hand, McKinsey gives strategic advice to defence companies, such as Lockheed Martin or others, there is clearly a conflict of interest.

When I asked Mr. Barton about that in committee, he said that McKinsey puts up a wall between the two. The fact is, we are the ones facing that wall. Right now, the department has information and private companies have information, but the only party that knows all of that information is McKinsey. We, as parliamentarians, are in the dark.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment. We know that Canadians are really struggling right now because of inflation and the cost of living. Day after day, life is becoming increasingly difficult. Meanwhile, they are once again seeing the Liberal government lining the pockets of its friends and contacts with taxpayers' money.

What does my colleague think about this injustice when many Canadians are facing hard times?

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. That is exactly what I said at the beginning of my speech. These are hard times. People are working hard for their money, and many of them do not have enough to live on because inflation is making everything more expensive.

We have here a government that is freely squandering taxpayers' money. These questions deserve answers. That is why, today, we are asking that the Auditor General of Canada investigate the contracts awarded to McKinsey.



*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very intently to my colleague, and I have to say that as a taxpayer and as a shareholder of this country, I think it is our responsibility to explain to taxpayers why and when this money was spent, and how it was spent. After all, there is only one taxpayer in this country. We deserve to give taxpayers that answer. That is why we were sent to this House: to be honest and loyal.

I would like a comment from my colleague on how we can encourage the Liberals to provide us with that information.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

That is the basis of our commitment. That is the reason why we were elected to the House. When a person runs for federal office, it is to work in the interest of Canadians. Each and every one of us represents about 100,000 people. These people trust us to represent them and to work in their best interests.

However, what we have been seeing for the past eight years, particularly in the file we are talking about today, is a government that does not work in the best interests of citizens. That is why we, the opposition parties, are calling on the government to do its job and be accountable to Canadians.

• (1600)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting process that we are going through today. I plan to speak on the issue, but we need to have a sense of why we are debating it today.

I would say I am surprised, but I am not. It is more a sense of disappointment. One would think that the Conservative Party, at some point, would recognize that what Canadians are looking for is leadership. Today is an amplification of what the Conservative agenda is all about. It is not to talk about its own plans or policy ideas, with cryptocurrency being the exception. At the end of the day, Conservatives are more focused on character assassination.

This is the reason I posed the questions earlier to the opposition, both members. The image they try to portray is one of corruption, yet in the answers they gave one would then have to try to make the connection to Stephen Harper. After all, Stephen Harper and his government were probably closer to the company and individual in question. I would say there is a very good chance, just based on the answers that were provided.

The Conservatives are very good at stating something inside and even outside the chamber that is factually incorrect. I suspect what we are seeing today is another attempt by the Conservative Party to look under all the different rocks to try to find something with which they can attack individuals on the government side, to give a false impression that the government is corrupt. That is the type of thing we have witnessed for eight years from the Conservative Party.

Today we are supposed to be talking about Bill C-34. Bill C-34 is about investing in Canada and protecting Canadians from a security point of view. Tomorrow is an opposition day. Why is that important? I believe that the Conservatives are once again discussing a motion that was passed in a committee.

I would like to look at how the motion passed in committee. I was not even in the committee, so I will have to speculate. I had to look at the report. It is not a very complicated report. I would summarize it by saying a majority of individuals on the committee got together and passed the motion so that the Conservative Party could debate a concurrence motion in the House. Conservatives across the way heckled, “Hear, hear.” That is what took place, as confirmed by the Conservative opposition.

In essence, they are hijacking another day of debate, when we are supposed to be talking about Bill C-34, so they can talk about this issue. They will say they should be able to talk about this issue. The rules do allow for that. We have opposition days. We have an opposition day tomorrow. One would think the Conservatives, if they were genuine in wanting to deal with this, would not need to coerce the Bloc, the New Democrats and I am not too sure about the Greens in bringing forward this detailed report. I say detailed report, but I could read it in a minute. That is how detailed the entire report is.

• (1605)

I have sat on standing committees, not too many, and they do some fantastic work. However, at times they get a little too political. When one does not even have any sort of background, details or real explanation and when all one has is a statement, which is the report, I need to question what the actual motivation was.

I believe the Conservatives have conned the other opposition parties. They have come up with a way that they can get a bonus opposition day. The ironic thing is they are going to be criticizing the government in the future for not calling Bill C-34. They are going to cry and say that they want more debate time on Bill C-34 or other government legislation and will ask why the government will not allow for it, yet they are wasting government time on this end.

It is truly amazing how the Conservative Party is so focused on the issue of corruption and does not care about the average Canadian and what Canadians are going through.

Let me read the report. This is the entire report:

That the Auditor General be called upon to conduct, as soon as possible, a performance and value for money audit of the contracts awarded to McKinsey & Company since January 1, 2011, by any department, agency or Crown corporation.

That is the entire report. I figure the 2011 was probably a compromise. The Bloc probably said that they needed to go beyond just the Liberal years to include some of the Conservative years. Maybe they had to compromise a little in order to get the agreement to ultimately get it to pass so the Conservative Party could have another bonus opposition day at the expense of debating government legislation. That is what I suspect.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** We are not nervous.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the member across the way says they are not nervous. He did not hear the answers from his colleagues.

We know the current Prime Minister does not have a relationship with Dominic Barton. Dominic Barton has said that.

The previous Conservative member who just spoke gave me an answer that Dominic had a relationship with Jim Flaherty. Who was Jim Flaherty? He was the minister of finance under Stephen Harper. I thought this was all about Liberal friends. Mr. Flaherty was not a Liberal.

**Mr. Randy Hoback:** Oh, that is true.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, that is true, and Dominic and Flaherty met, but that does not fit the agenda the Conservatives have.

I asked if there were contracts under Stephen Harper, and the answer was yes. There were contracts with the company and the Stephen Harper government knew Dominic, yet they are saying it was a friendly, Liberal company and we gave it all these contracts. I would suggest it is a gross exaggeration to give the impression that this company received contracts from the government because of a friendship or a political affiliation. The Conservative Party knows that, but it does not matter. The fact is that the Conservatives want to focus their attention on character assassination. That is really what it is all about.

At the end of the day, we need to recognize that at times there is a need for outside contracts. This is not the only government that has outside contracts. Whether it is provincial, municipal or indigenous governments, or whether it is the private sector or one of the many different corporations or non-profit groups, at times they all go outside in order to get contracts, as Stephen Harper did with the same company they are asking the public accounts to look at.

● (1610)

They talk about how there has been growth. No kidding, there has been growth. Have they not been around for the last three years? Do they not realize that we have been going through a pandemic? Do they not understand that there has been a great deal of pressure on Canada's civil servants in our public sector?

We developed programs virtually from ground zero. The CERB program is a good example. I do not know offhand what contracts were awarded to McKinsey & Company, but I can say that many of the programs we established did not exist prior to the pandemic. Of course, we are going to be doing some work outside of the civil service when we have those types of demands.

I would hazard a guess that not only did Canada do that, but also the United States and European countries did likewise. I suspect people will find that over the last three years there has been an increase in contracting out for consulting and so forth. I would challenge the Conservative brain trust to clearly demonstrate that I am wrong with that assertion, but I do not believe they will be able to. I am not talking about the brain trust. I am talking about the examples.

At the end of the day, I believe that governments around the world were put in a position over the last few years, because of the worldwide pandemic, to reach out. Different times dictate different actions.

I am not too sure why the debate today on Bill C-34 had to be sidetracked. It seems that a majority of the House was in favour of it. I would like to have seen that bill considered for passage or have more time for debate.

It will be interesting to get feedback from the official opposition, in particular, as to how many hours they feel that piece of legislation should be debated. The issue we are talking about now would have been a better discussion to have at the committee stage and have an actual report that provides more details.

I can honestly say when I posed the questions earlier, like asking about Stephen Harper, I did not know what the answer was. I went to the table to ask if I could get a copy of the report, because I was told earlier that it is a very short report. I thought there might have been some thinking that went into the process of having the motion brought forward based on a discussion or some sort of explanation other than an instruction.

There are a lot of relevant issues that could have been talked about, like the issue of the procurement process and what we have to go through in order to be able to procure and get the many types of contracts we acquire.

How does that differ from previous years? If we do a comparison between 2008 and 2016 or 2021, I would anticipate that because of the pandemic there would have been an increase compared to the years prior.

Everything depends on what is on the agenda and what is taking place, not only here in Ottawa but also around the country and around the world. Having some of that background information would be far more fruitful than a simple motion that appears in the report.

● (1615)

As I indicated, I was not sitting at the committee. However, based on the fact that, I suspect, it was not a unanimous motion that was brought forward, and I am sure the members across the way will tell me if I am wrong on this, and that it was done in such a fashion that it did not allow for a proper study in the standing committee, I would question the rationale behind that.

We have had very clear indication from the Prime Minister that the issue is being looked at by two ministers, the Minister of Procurement and the President of the Treasury Board. They will be looking into the matter and ultimately reporting back. There is a high level of accountability on contracts that are issued, and that will continue.

However, to what degree did the standing committee actually ask the questions that needed to be asked and provide some background information for the report before it came to the committee, as opposed to making one demand and one demand only? I do not quite understand the rationale behind it. That is something I would have expected to hear about when the mover of the motion brought it forward.

*Routine Proceedings*

If members review concurrence motions, they will find that the mover of this motion is not new to this. He has likely moved more motions for concurrence than anyone else. He is a mischievous little guy, I would suggest. At the end of the day, I really do think it is a legitimate question to ask of the committee: Why was there not any opportunity to get some sort of background analysis in terms of justifying the position that the committee has taken?

I would hope that members, in addressing this motion, will see it for what it is. This is not a genuine attempt for more transparency and accountability. That is what it is not. What it is is an ongoing attempt by the official opposition, in particular, to engage in personal attacks and character assassination. Anything that can be perceived as making the government look corrupt, the Conservatives will bring it up and they will hammer it because they do not want to talk about policy.

If we were not debating this, we would be debating investments into Canada, the type of investments that create thousands and thousands of jobs. We would be talking about the many good things that are happening and providing constructive criticism, no doubt, in terms of where or how we can change public policy. However, I do not believe the Conservative Party is interested in public policy at all. I believe it is only interested in one thing, and I have made reference to that and I find it unfortunate.

I would leave it at the point of saying to the opposition members that when time allocation happens to come in on some piece of legislation, I hope each and every one of them will reflect on the way they chose today, as opposed to debating government bills, to stay the course of character assassination and to usurp government business and take it as another opposition opportunity for debate, as opposed to debating government legislation.

Bill C-34 is ultimately a good piece of legislation, and it would have been nice to continue that debate and have those additional three hours of debate. Through that, 15 or 20 MPs have lost the opportunity to contribute to that debate, but we will have to wait and see.

• (1620)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the questions my friend across the way asked was why we insist on talking about Liberal corruption. Why do the Conservatives think that Liberal corruption is an important issue to debate in this House?

I want to give two principal reasons. Number one, it speaks to the character of the government. The Prime Minister has, on multiple occasions, been found to have violated ethics laws. That matters in terms of our evaluation of who is running the country and the implications it has for whose side he is on.

Also, let us talk about the waste associated with Liberal corruption. Canadians are struggling. Canadians are paying higher taxes. Canadians are struggling with inflation that is being driven by government spending, so when they see this ballooning of spending on McKinsey, but also on consultants in general, when they see that, on the one hand, the public service is growing, but on the other hand there is more work being taken out of the public service with compounding increases in spending, that is very frustrating to

Canadians who are struggling, who wonder why they are paying so much in taxes when the government is essentially duplicating these functions by having a bigger public service and by contracting work out.

The member asked why this motion is important. It is important because the adoption of this motion by the House asks the independent Auditor General to conduct this investigation. That is the issue. The member opposite clearly does not want the Auditor General doing this work. He does not want the Auditor General getting to the bottom of this, but I think the majority of this House wants to hear from the Auditor General about Liberal corruption. That is why we think this motion is important, to bring in the Auditor General to get to the bottom of this.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, this is not a time-sensitive motion. The member could have brought forward this motion tomorrow, in an opposition day, but the opposition members decided they do not want to talk about policy ideas. The only policy idea they have had was that stupid cryptocurrency thing, where the Conservative leader said cryptocurrency is the way to go to fight inflation. That is their only policy idea that I have detected. They do not want to talk about policy. They have nothing about the environment.

Their focus has been strictly on character assassination since day one. The moment the leader of the Liberal Party became the leader of the Liberal Party, they were after him. We can just take a look at the S.O. 31 statements before 2015. That has been their priority. It is sad.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary always gets very worked up when he speaks. It is interesting, but we do not fully agree with him. He always says that we should talk about the relevant issues. There are several relevant issues that are being raised in the House.

There are still some troubling things involving the McKinsey firm. At the time the contracts were awarded, the firm was already the subject of major ethical concerns around the world. The firm was associated with the opioid crisis and the immigration issue, as was discussed. It is relevant to bring this up in the House and discuss it. That is what democracy is all about.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I do believe that, as the member said, these are important issues. That is the reason why, I would suggest, it does not need to be done in a concurrence motion. There are many different reports that we would have concurrence motions on. There would never ever be a day of government business for the rest of the year if we just did concurrence motions on reports.

There is an opposition day tomorrow, when the opposition members could have had this same debate. Instead of using an opposition day, they want to double down. Doubling down means there is less time for government bills. We have seen that the Conservatives do not like to sit late into the evening either to have debate on government bills. We have seen that. We have asked for more debate. The Conservative Party cannot have it both ways.

*Routine Proceedings*

I agree that we can have a good, healthy debate on the types of issues and concerns that the member from the Bloc has raised, but there is a time and place. I would suggest that now is not necessarily the time and place, when there are alternatives.

• (1625)

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I arrived here today ready to debate the matter at hand. The feedback I got from my constituents was about where the \$100 million-plus went that the government has wasted on one consultancy over a handful of years. This is something Canadians are seeing right now.

I hope the hon. member across the way will see that addressing the way the government is spending or wasting taxpayers' funds is part of our job in the opposition here. It has risen to the level where the public is very concerned about where the government is spending all the taxpayers' money.

Will the member across the way address how high this number has to go before he thinks it should be of concern to Canadian taxpayers?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I would not say a dollar figure. Let me give the member an example. Stephen Harper flies to India. He wants to have his own personal car. He spends a million Canadian tax dollars to fly a car from Canada to India, so that he would have a car to drive in.

I would argue that this was an absolute, total waste of tax dollars. I raised the issue, but I did not think of going to committee and passing a report saying, let us investigate why he spent a million dollars to have a car flown from Canada to India.

The point is that there is no doubt that when one spends billions of tax dollars, there are always going to be questionable dollars that are spent. There are many opportunities for us to look at ways in which we can investigate and make sure that the taxpayer's dollar is, as much as possible, not being wasted.

However, I do not think this is necessarily what this issue is about. For the Conservatives, the issue is more about character assassination than it is about how much money has gone out. After all, they had given contracts to the very same company. The relationship with Jim Flaherty was a whole lot stronger than what it was with this government.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I find myself in sympathy with the parliamentary secretary, up to a point. Although the hon. parliamentary secretary did say that, somehow, the Conservatives had conned the opposition parties into letting them do this, we did not have a choice. This is what happens when, on a concurrence debate, our debate for the day is hijacked.

However, this is an important issue. This is what I want to raise. Again, we do not need to just pick on McKinsey & Company. As we dig into this, it appears to me that contracting out to numerous large, global multinationals like IBM and others is a big chunk of our taxpayers' dollars that should be getting done within the civil service.

I point to a very useful comment from the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, our high-level union within the Government of Canada, that contracting fees and outsourcing have

doubled since 2011. I have been in this place that long and the doubling of outsourcing to large private corporations bothers me. It bothers me that, as Kevin Page, our former parliamentary budget officer, described it, it is basically a discussion we should have right here in Parliament on where taxpayers' dollars get spent, on consumption or investment. The government should not be out consuming a lot of private contractors at high levels. It creates waste.

The Government of Canada, internally, should be able to do most of the work. Sometimes there will be an emergency or a workplace shortage, I understand that, but in general, when I last worked as a member of a minister's staff, which was back in the 1980s, we did not rely on McKinsey & Company, nor did we rely on IBM. We had top-notch civil servants who could do all the work that the Government of Canada needed done.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I respect what the member is saying. The only thing I would add would be that, today, if we take a look at the IT industry, as an example, and the amount of expertise that is required in order to be able to advance IT, computer systems, data banks and all that kind of stuff, I cannot imagine any government in the world actually having it all insourced. There has to be outsourcing that goes in that, in terms of contracts.

When I think in terms of the pandemic, the amount of outsourcing for contracts might have increased. That is why I will be much more interested in the percentage for 2015-16. I suspect that the amount of outsourcing might actually go down over the next year or two, possibly. I do not know. I do not have the background analysis because there was no background analysis done on this report. All it was was just a very simple statement.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, Labour; the hon. member for Calgary Centre, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, Health.

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Today's debate is a passionate one. People clearly feel strongly about this issue. I will start off with a quote from a French author I really like: “'Bad' people are not the ones who do the most evil in this world. Rather, it is the incompetent, the negligent and the gullible. 'Bad' people would be powerless without so many 'good' people.”

*Routine Proceedings*

My question is, who are the good people, and who are the bad? Philosophically, I think only fools judge without knowing, but there are times when it is important not to appear foolish. The McKinsey saga has been quite the roller coaster ride, with surprises around every corner: contracts that were never tendered, a contract with a 2100 end date and no registry of lobbyists entry.

There is so much here that arouses suspicion. Like it or not, even in good faith, there are reasons for mistrust, yet the government's actions should inspire confidence. In this case, this much doubt adds up to mistrust.

It is not unusual to do business with a consultant. I myself was a consultant for 25 years. There are even valid reasons for doing so. I will outline three, or actually four, if incompetence is involved.

First, when there is an immediate lack of expertise and no time to develop it in-house, one must seek that expertise externally. That transfer of expertise is valuable.

Second, when facing a unique situation that will not be repeated, one might look for a band-aid, a temporary solution. That is valid.

Third, when a certain level of expertise is lacking, a consultant can provide it for a limited time. That is valid.

These three reasons are valid. There are no other reasons to use a consultant, except for incompetence, the fourth reason I mentioned earlier.

The example of the Business Development Bank of Canada was mentioned earlier. That astounds me. A new president and CEO was appointed on August 10. She was not just anyone. She was a former Canadian ambassador to France and Monaco, who had previously worked at the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal and at Sun Life. She had quite a resumé. She did what all political appointees do. She asked McKinsey what she should do.

Honestly, I thought that the expertise came with the appointment. I thought that was part of the package. It turns out that it is not. I think the requirement for being president of the Business Development Bank of Canada is to be able to contact McKinsey. At least that is what it seems like. It seems that contacting McKinsey is a natural reflex for this government.

However, no one elected McKinsey. We are talking about private sector people from a bona fide company who are developing public policy for the government. If McKinsey is involved it is a done deal. McKinsey has earned a reputation over the years with an admittedly excellent research system. This research system was often built on pro bono assignments on the backs of other people, which is a special kind of hoodwinkery.

I wonder: What is McKinsey doing? This firm cannot know more than everyone else about everything, at all times, everywhere in the world. That would be astonishing. The only other explanation is that McKinsey is God or the Holy Spirit, pick one.

One thing is certain, McKinsey has made itself indispensable to many. The opioid crisis in the United States was mentioned earlier, but I will not go there.

Last fall I met with leaders of the French Senate when I was staying in Paris. They presented me their report, which I could show you, were it not so astoundingly thick. The French Senate showed that McKinsey was setting up shop with weak leaders.

• (1635)

They work pro bono. They do not register with the lobbyist registry. In fact, they found the loophole in the rules that allows them to circumvent the spirit of the code. Then they take charge of creating public policies that advance a vision of the world, the vision of McKinsey, an unelected organization.

It is ironic because, by subcontracting certain responsibilities, the government has somewhat privatized Privy Council. That is problematic because McKinsey is not accountable to Canadians, and that is not ideal. The Senate of France spent dozens of meetings questioning people. All they discovered was that automatically resorting to that organization was not a sound practice.

Of course, over the years, the obsession with balancing the budget resulted in the public service losing certain strengths. That said, the three reasons mentioned earlier remain valid. However, they still came to the conclusion that there had to be transparency around contracting and that information should be published about the list of suppliers, the nature of the contracts and their cost as well as accountability regarding what happened, what they did and the outcome. That was one of the recommendations. They also recommended that there be better oversight of the use of consulting companies and that their code of ethics be enhanced.

If I may say so, the ethical rules of consulting firms can sometimes be scary. In fact, a consultant's first commandment is to make sure that the contract is profitable for the consultant. The second commandment is to make sure that the contract is renewed. As for the third commandment, see number one.

I will say it again: Hiring a consultant is not the issue. However, it is extremely unethical to contract out public policies to unelected officials who suggest the terms—terms which, if we are to believe what we have learned, no one was able to challenge. Whole swaths of public policy have been subcontracted to McKinsey without any accountability, for McKinsey or the government.

In my mind, McKinsey is not the enemy. In some ways, I am more concerned about government management. Public enterprise fulfilled a request. However, what concerns us in the reports is the lack of transparency. Why was this done without tenders, for example? There may be good reason. We need to find out.

*Routine Proceedings*

This feels a bit like subcontracting the nation-state, and that scares me. It scares me because McKinsey, which does business all over the world with all kinds of countries, with China as with the United States, with Russia as with Ukraine, becomes, in a sense, a supranational government. Basically, McKinsey has more data than most governments on both sides, but McKinsey was not elected. We need to be very clear about that.

When a government cannot even develop its own policies, there is a name for that. It is called incompetence. I think the government before us today is a tired government that cannot even be bothered to govern anymore.

The Liberal government wanted a majority, but it does not have one. Personally, I would have liked to be an artist, but I am not. Maybe I should ask McKinsey what it takes to be an artist. They could help me. The Liberals need to try to rise above partisanship and act like a government.

I will close by telling the House about an adage that, as an ethicist, I have lived by all these years, and it has to do with light and darkness. It goes something like this: Any action that needs darkness to succeed is probably more unethical than an action that can stand the light. In the case of McKinsey, I have realized that darkness is at play.

• (1640)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, procurement has regulations, and there is a process when we have to let out contracts. There are wonderful opportunities there that could fairly easily be provided, especially from a parliamentarian's point of view. We have standing committees that could take a deep dive into the issue and look at ways to improve how contracts are let out and when it is good to sole-source a contract, in what situations. In emergency situations, for example, this could potentially be used in a rather quick fashion.

Would the member not agree that to look at the types of issues he is raising, there would be a great deal of benefit in taking a deep dive at a standing committee to review how contracts are put together and issued out, making sure that our regulations are keeping up with the times?

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Mr. Speaker, the committee is already working on this. Let the committee do its job.

However, I have to admit that everything we are learning worries me. I believe that it is beyond the scope of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, which is going to examine the actual contracts.

Today, I want to speak to my concerns about the very integrity of the government. Perhaps other committees will do other work, but this is a concern that I do want to present to the House because, for me, it goes beyond the issue of procurement. Procurement is one thing. There are rules. Were they followed? We shall see, but contracting out a public policy to an unelected organization concerns me.

[English]

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague points out a difference: For procurement there is a certain something being received, but the McKinsey situation is about advice. We have some of the best public service members in the world, and when they were questioned about this, they said they could not even find what was offered to the Canadian population by these contracts.

I am wondering if the member could comment on the issue of accountability, because obviously the government gave out these contracts. What does he think we can do to help improve confidence in this situation? I am really worried that Canadians are losing trust in our institutions with each scandal that comes from the Liberal government. What can we do to regain that trust in our institutions?

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague hit the nail on the head. This goes beyond procurement. This is about confidence in government, in the government's integrity. That is a problem. I would actually take this one step further than my colleague.

Many consulting firms do business with the Government of Canada. People have mentioned Deloitte and KPMG. These two firms sell advice. McKinsey sells influence. That is not the same thing. There should be stricter rules governing influence.

I think it is currently an open bar kind of situation. Nothing is being done to find out what McKinsey does, what it has contributed, how much it cost and why it could not have been done some other way. There is zero accountability at the moment. The point is that they are selling influence, not advice.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the points he raised in the House.

As I mentioned, back home, ordinary people are having a tough time because of the cost of living and inflation. We see that taxpayers' money, Quebecers' and Canadians' money, is being used by the Liberals to help their friends, their contacts, those who have power or hidden power.

Could my colleague share his thoughts on what an injustice this scandal is to Canadians?

• (1645)

**Mr. René Villemure:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is touching on something interesting. When I walk around Trois-Rivières on the weekend people stop me in the street. They are aware of my experience as an ethicist and they ask me how is it that there is such a group of... I will let my colleagues fill in the blanks.

People are very worried about what is going on because of inflation and everything else. They do not know what to do and they are begging us to do something.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I was not planning to start my speech like this, but the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons leaves me no choice. I listened to his speech. He spent most of his time saying that we should not be debating the Conservative motion, that this was not the right place. He even said that this could have been done on an opposition day.

I would like to point out that every time the Liberals do not want to talk about something that scares them, they say we should be debating something else. For example, during one of the last Bloc opposition days, we brought up the topic of the monarchy. All day, from the beginning of the debate to the end, the Liberal members told us that we should be talking about something else and that we were not in the House to talk about the monarchy. They listed all the topics that they felt we should be talking about. Every time a debate inconveniences or embarrasses them, instead of debating the motion, they provide us with the same response. They say that we should not be debating the motion here, that we should go somewhere else.

As I said, the parliamentary secretary proposed that we address this issue on an opposition day. However, when we bring up a subject that the Liberals do not like on an opposition day, they spend the whole day saying that the subject should have been discussed elsewhere.

The Liberals are telling us what we can say and what subjects we can bring up on opposition days, but on top of that, when we manage to get an opposition motion adopted, the government does not respect the vote of the House of Commons and does not implement the motion. I am thinking, for example, of the Bloc Québécois motion to increase special EI sickness benefits to 50 weeks.

My lead-in to this speech is important because it shows how little respect the Liberals have for the House. They have a particular view of democracy. If they have as little respect for the House and Canadian democracy as they do for the taxpayers whose money they are spending, then this Conservative motion is extremely relevant. Rather than saying that we should debate it elsewhere, they need to show some backbone, face reality, and debate this issue for real.

I will now start the real debate. I hope that we can continue to debate the actual subject rather than the relevance of the debate. That would be a good start. After all, that is what democracy is.

The *Globe and Mail* is the one that revealed that contracts awarded to McKinsey skyrocketed under the Prime Minister's watch, going from \$2.2 million under Prime Minister Harper to over \$100 million under the current Prime Minister. I am therefore rising today to talk about the Conservative motion that seeks to call upon the Auditor General of Canada to open an investigation into the federal government's connections to the McKinsey consulting firm.

To clarify for those watching at home, the Conservative motion asks that the committee report to the House that it is calling on the Auditor General to conduct a performance and value-for-money audit of the work done by McKinsey & Company for the federal government and Crown corporations since January 2011. That includes

the Business Development Bank of Canada, or BDC. The committee also wants to examine the effectiveness of BDC's spending in general since 2021.

The Bloc Québécois has asked the federal government to make public all of the required information and all of the contracts so that we can find out the nature and amounts of the contracts.

For far too long now, McKinsey has held sway over Canada, over the federal government and its departments, including Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. This does not strike me as an ideal arrangement. Just look at what is happening at Roxham Road, at the files being assigned to public servants who are no longer employed there, and at the unacceptable delays. It is perfectly reasonable to wonder how McKinsey's so-called advice is helping IRCC. This is a complete fiasco. The government asks McKinsey for advice, but let us look at the results. Leaving aside the lack of transparency around the contracts, the fact that the contracts run until 2100, and the secrecy surrounding the cost, based on the current results, perhaps the government should have gone with another firm or, at the very least, asked the actual public service for help.

I see this as a failure on the Liberals' part. I will refrain from using more colourful language. I will let the auditor do her job, and I hope everyone else does too. The Bloc Québécois is satisfied with this motion, because it is time to investigate McKinsey's involvement in Canadian affairs.

• (1650)

I am not going to launch into a speech about interference in Canadian politics. As a Bloc Québécois member, I might have too much to say, and I do not have much time remaining. However, I will surely come back to this subject once or twice during our debates.

In the scrum held earlier today, one of my Conservative colleagues, the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, stated: “The Auditor General has the powers and tools to get the answers to Canadians' questions”. Personally, I would really like to ask some questions. I could even put some to the Conservative Party, while I am at it.

Members have spoken about Dominic Barton, the former McKinsey executive who was one of the people behind the Century Initiative, which seeks to triple Canada's population in the next 75 years. Former prime minister Brian Mulroney is one of the strongest supporters of the Century Initiative, except for the Liberals, of course. I am wondering if the Conservative Party shares this vision of following the Century Initiative's plan for 75 years. That is a valid question, and I am pleased that the Conservative motion allows us to ask this type of question.

When the Conservative government was awarding contracts to McKinsey, was the firm registered as a lobbyist? These are questions that we will be able to ask and might even get answered. Let us not misunderstand each other. I am not defending the Liberals. It is just that I have other questions for my Conservative friends. After all, they have been in government too.

*Routine Proceedings*

I just want to demonstrate that Canada has a long-standing friendship with McKinsey. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates opened an inquiry into the many contracts awarded to McKinsey since 2015, with a cumulative value of more than \$100 million. The actual value is likely far higher. When an 81-year contract is awarded for \$0, I have to think that it must worth a little more than that.

We recently found out about that contract, which is valid until January 31, 2100. No one here will be around to see the end of that contract. I wish I could, but I have to be honest with myself.

We do not know all the details of this contract right now, but the idea of having an 81-year contract does not seem to be on the up-and-up. I would not give an 81-year contract to a snow removal company, even if it were owned by my best friend. The answer is obvious. There is not a business owner in the world who would give 100-year contracts to a sub-contractor. However, that is what the government is doing with taxpayers' money. That is something else.

Was the record any better when it came to managing the pandemic? Can we find out what McKinsey did and how much it cost? As I said, when the government spends taxpayers' money, it is only fair that we know whether we got value for our money. However, when a \$0, 81-year contract is awarded, it is difficult to find out the truth.

A surprising fact revealed this morning is that McKinsey is not on the Registry of Lobbyists. All the other major consulting firms, such as KPMG Canada, Deloitte Canada and Accenture, are on the various lobbyist registries. However, McKinsey is not, as it claims to have no lobbying activities.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister says his friend, Dominic Barton, has a surprising list of contacts. I suppose that is why McKinsey does not need lobbyists. Dominic Barton has way too many contacts, according to this Prime Minister.

The Bloc Québécois is not asking for much. We just want to see all the unredacted contracts and all the documents produced for each department. We also want a public inquiry. Everyone knows that, to some degree, McKinsey was involved in several recent scandals here and abroad. Someone mentioned the opioid crisis earlier.

According to what the parliamentary secretary said earlier, the government is allowed to do what it did, and the same thing was happening in the United States and in European countries, such as France. Yes, it was, and now there are inquiries being carried out in the United States and France. If I understand the parliamentary secretary correctly, if someone hires a firm and an inquiry is launched into issues with contracts awarded to that firm, the same thing should happen here. They did it over there, so let us have inquiries here too. It only makes sense.

That is the way the Liberal Government of Canada thinks. This government is led by people who are clearly afraid of a public inquiry. Their reaction right now is one of fear. All I am seeing from the other side of the House is fear. If the Liberals have nothing to hide, then they have nothing to fear.

• (1655)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no fear.

The member made reference to an 80-year contract, and that has been made reference to before. This is not a contract; it is a supply arrangement. There is a difference. It does not guarantee any monetary agreement, but rather a preselection of supply from hundreds of suppliers that have this arrangement. It is a long-standing practice that saves time and money. I ask if the member would at least acknowledge that.

People still try to give the false impression that we have this 80-year contract that is going to cost millions of dollars every year. There is a big difference, but that feeds into the Conservative spin. When a member of the Bloc stands up and says that there is an 80-year contract, he is reinforcing something very misleading.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, that is proof that we should vote for this motion. It would allow us to get to the bottom of some of the questions that we have. Is it a contract or is it an arrangement? That is a good reason to vote for this motion.

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader just illustrated the relevance of such a motion and investigation.

Getting back to his question, if I tell my mechanic that this is not a contract, just an arrangement, he will laugh in my face.

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has awarded tens of billions of dollars to consultants, including \$100 million to McKinsey. At the same time, the number of public servants has risen sharply. They do not understand why this money is being given to consultants.

What does the Bloc Québécois think of this Liberal waste and pork-barrelling?

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, it was not me who said that. It was one of our colleagues. I could not agree more. I think it is disrespectful toward public servants, who want to work to the best of their abilities. By hiring external firms, the government is essentially sending public servants the message that they are incapable of doing their jobs. It is very disrespectful.



*Routine Proceedings*

The Liberals may have used certain firms in the past because the previous Conservative government had made too many cuts to the public service. The Conservatives may have some soul searching to do. Sometimes governments have to be careful about making too many cuts, because they end up losing expertise and demoralizing their departments and the public service.

Quite honestly, I agree with my colleague that this shows a total lack of respect for the public service. These people are capable of doing the work. They just need to be empowered to do it, and we need to ensure there is a modicum of respect for government employees.

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean on his excellent speech. It is hard to disagree with what he said.

He started by pointing out that, whenever the Liberals are uncomfortable with a topic or are worried it might make them look bad or lose political points, they say now is not the time to debate it.

Let us remember the last time there was an issue with contracts and the Liberals wanted to dodge the issue: WE Charity. Right in the middle of the pandemic, this same government prorogued Parliament and shut the place down. It wanted to change the channel and start over. Now it is telling us we do not have time to debate the motion, despite the fact that there is a contract whose end date is 2100 and more than \$100 million worth of contracts was awarded without ever going to tender. The Liberals say we could be working on passing bills instead.

This government passed just four bills in the previous parliamentary session and cannot even introduce its own bills, yet it says it does not have time to debate this today because it would rather introduce bills instead.

They need to stop treating people like idiots. I am not just talking about parliamentarians, but about all Canadians.

If the Liberal government members do not want to have a debate, what else are they hiding? Will the government decide when we eat and what colour of clothing we will wear today? What will be the next thing they want to impose?

• (1700)

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, the colour of the clothing would not bother me, because I am colour-blind. I have heard it said that I have trouble dressing sometimes.

Once again, I completely agree with my colleague. The government's refusal to debate is starting to get really worrisome. The last time it refused to debate, it called an unnecessary election and look at the result. That is how the Liberals debate. If it does not suit them, they hide.

[*English*]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is not often that I have a 20-minute runway to unpack a speech, so I will take my time to meander through the most important points of this, which I think we have begun to touch on when it comes to the motion. However, I see the narrowing of the scope of this particular

motion to be indicative of the refusal of both Liberals and Conservatives to unpack what is really and truly happening here.

Before I was a member of Parliament, I was a very proud city councillor in Hamilton, and I was amazed at the amount of work in our budgets that would fall under consultation. The scale there, obviously, is not quite the same as this, but names like Deloitte would pop up quite frequently. It became a process, after I was elected, of seeing these names pop up so frequently in our municipal reports and the money spent on outsourcing decision-making and advice to the consultant class.

I had the pleasure of being a member of both the government operations and public accounts committees, and the name Deloitte would continue to pop up. In fact, it became such a prominent feature within many of the studies, that I and a good friend of mine from the Conservative Party would joke and laugh every time the name Deloitte came up. However, when it comes to this particular motion and, in fact, this particular scandal, I have to say that I am amazed at the Conservative's lack of willingness to expand the scope beyond McKinsey. Why is that? I think there are some important questions to be asked.

Of course, like all Canadians, New Democrats are concerned with the significant increase in contracting out to McKinsey over the past several years. In fact, as the only labour party in the House, we are concerned with all contracting out in the public sector. This is a scenario where we have Conservative governments, which tend to be the hatchet when it comes to the public sector, and then we have the Liberal government, which would rather starve the public sector through a death by a thousand cuts. If the Conservatives are wielding a hatchet, the Liberals are holding a scalpel, and year after year, the capacity of our public sector is eroded and replaced with these high-paid consultants.

The rapid increase in the use and the value of McKinsey contracts over the last several years raises serious concerns about just why that is happening. What advice is McKinsey providing to the government?

Canadians go to the polls to elect a member of Parliament and a government, and they follow the platforms of the parties, which present ideas. Members will recall, back in 2015, the Prime Minister and the Liberal government talking about sunshine being the best disinfectant, and they talked about ending the Harper government's habit of contracting out. There has been a lot of talk in the House about who exactly is making decisions at the highest levels of our ministries across the country.

Let us not forget that there is a significant ethical component to this. Not only is it that the government is contracting out to McKinsey in these ways, but it is also McKinsey's reputation that, quite frankly, originally raised the alarms at the outset, and I will get into that. However, prior to doing that, I want to talk about the practice of both the Liberals and Conservatives to contract out and why it is that I think this particular official opposition, under this particular official opposition leader, does not have the courage to extend this conversation beyond the parameters and the scope of McKinsey.

*Routine Proceedings*

If Canadians were to do just a little research, and if they scratched the surface and went back to 2011, they would find obscene increases on a global scale for the big six, the \$100-million club of the wealthy and well-connected insiders of the consultant class in this country, the new Laurentian elites of these lands. There was Deloitte at \$680 million. PricewaterhouseCoopers, a big friend of the Conservative government, is at \$564,182,221.

• (1705)

Accenture had \$283 million-plus. KPMG had \$174 million-plus, almost \$175 million. Ernst & Young, a fan favourite of the Bay Street elite of the Liberal and Conservative governments, had \$127 million. Lastly, McKinsey & Company had \$68 million from 2005 to 2022. From 2011 to 2021, under both Conservatives and Liberals, the federal government went from \$54,355,132 in 2011 to \$418 million-plus in 2021. That is not even accounting for this most recent boondoggle.

When I look at these massive consultancies and their relationships between both parties, I have lots of questions. I would imagine, if we were to do a quick poll even within this House of Commons, we might find, in LinkedIn profiles, people who actually worked at some of these consultancies. Canadians deserve to have answers. There is a deep cynicism in government and the revolving door among the consultant class, senior public servants and partisan parties in Canada needs to end.

When we talk about procurement and the ethics in procurement, it should be noted that what is legal is not always ethical. In fact, New Democrats have tried time and time again to ensure that we have ethical practices within our procurement, yet it is widely known that McKinsey was a key adviser in the Purdue Pharma's opioid crisis. It advised it on how to unleash this drug onto the public.

One only has to visit Hamilton Centre to see just how successful it was. The advice it provided allowed for a drug crisis, an overdose and toxic-supply crisis of the likes that we have not seen in generations. McKinsey was named in a \$600-million lawsuit against Purdue. Why we as a country have not also pursued a lawsuit against Purdue Pharma and all of the pernicious pharmaceutical companies that were involved in the opioid crisis is for another conversation, but I do think that significant attention must be paid to their role in this manner.

When I talked about the big six, the \$100-million club, we also need to know precisely who these consultants are contracted with. How can one provide advice on health care when, within one's client list, is Purdue Pharma? How can one provide consultant advice for the Department of National Defence when one's clients include Lockheed Martin and many others?

On the face of this, just on the first scratch, this is a conflict of interest. It is a conflict of interest to outsource these decisions and decision-making around procurement to a company that has a vendor list that could very well benefit and profit from the very contracts it is advising on. If that is not illegal in this country today, it ought to be. It ought to be a consideration of this study. We should take a deep dive in this study beyond McKinsey to get the contract lists on all of these massive consulting companies.

Deloitte got \$680 million. That is a giant. Why are the Conservatives not talking about that?

• (1710)

Why has the scope of this been narrowed so much? I have my thoughts, but perhaps the Leader of the Opposition, when he gives his remarks, will show some courage and that he is willing to take on the broader issue at hand and not just chase another ambulance. I am on the ethics committee. I know what Conservative ambulance chasing looks like.

We need to open the scope of this study. We need to include all of them, and we need to go back to 2011 because it is quite clear that there is a correlation between the cuts to the public sector and contracting out.

Let us review this. Under Harper, who started the vicious cuts to the public sector, by the time his government was through, 37,000 jobs were lost by 2014. That was 8% of the government's workforce. They were squeezing the public sector wages and complaining about their pensions only to turn around and pay these pigs at the trough almost a billion dollars. That is absurd.

We have good people working in the public sector. We should be training and investing in their knowledge. The parliamentary secretary to the House leader, who wants to quibble about a contract and an agreement, refuses to acknowledge that past behaviour often determines future outcomes. For the last 10 years, we have had Liberal and Conservative governments continuing the habit of outsourcing, ramped up by the Liberal government.

Let us be clear. Numbers got really big for consultants under the Prime Minister, under "Prime Minister Sunny Ways". It has been sunny ways for the consultant class in this country, and it is time for us—

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, this is the second time this has happened today. The previous time was from a different member. There seems to be a desire to start calling people names such as "Prime Minister Sunny Ways" or, as we heard from the—

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Those are not names. That is not even a point of order.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, this is my point of order. My point of order is that we are supposed to be referring to members of the House by either their constituency name or their title, not made-up names like that, despite the fact that the member might like it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I want to thank the member for his intervention. I do not think it is a point of order, but I will remind individuals that we are to recognize each other by our ministries or riding names.

*Routine Proceedings*

The hon. member for Hamilton Centre.

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Mr. Speaker, I would concur: That was not a point of order. However, it is good to see the hon. member carrying the extra weight for the Prime Minister who ran on a platform of sunny ways and of ending precisely what his government well outpaced Harper on.

Let us be very clear: The Prime Minister did a job here when he ballooned these payouts from \$99 million, or actually in Harper's last year, \$75 million, to \$418 million in 2021. He would make Harper blush with the work he has done lining the pockets of the ultrawealthy, knowing their record.

Let us be clear: Either the Prime Minister and this cabinet knew who they were dealing with, or they did not. If they knew about McKinsey's atrocious record and procured it anyway, shame on them. If they did not know, it is absolute incompetence. I have a hard time believing the Liberals did not know because not only did they get these contracts under Dominic Barton, but they also made him an ambassador. With regard to national security, where is Dominic Barton now? The last time I checked, he was working with the former chief of staff of the Prime Minister in Eurasia Group. There are incestuous relationships on the Hill within the consultant class and partisan politics, and they need to end. Canadians deserve answers on more than just about McKinsey.

Will my Conservative colleagues in this House have the courage to expand the scope of this to include the other big five pigs at the trough or not? That is the question here today. In doing so, hopefully, we can finally get to the bottom of this. Hopefully, we can find a way to embed ethics into procurement. Hopefully, we can address the conflict of interest, which I believe is real when they have consultants who work for both the purchaser and the vendor. This is particularly true when it comes to the military and given the global uncertainty and obscene profiteering of war that we are seeing right now.

We spend a lot of time in this House talking about the suffering of victims, and quite rightly so. However, I do not think anybody spends enough time talking about the absolute profiteering of war. When people go to war, it is not the rich who go. Working-class people, not private-school kids, are the ones who go to the front lines to die. The people on Bay Street and the ultrawealthy on Wall Street and the likes are the ones who make money, no matter who dies, by funding both sides.

I do not know that I need the other five minutes to recapitulate the points I have already made. I appreciate having 20 minutes to go in on this very important topic. I am interested in hearing what the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has to say about agreements and contracts from the last 10 years. Maybe the Liberals see an opportunity to expand the scope of this to include the other five pigs at the trough so we can get a real sense of just who is making money, who is making the decisions around this country and who is benefiting on the backs of good public sector jobs and taxpayers.

I will concede the rest of my time.

• (1715)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, regarding the last question the member posed, the whole issue of taking a deeper dive into the area of regulations and how tendering contracts are issued would be a wonderful discussion topic. As I referred to a bit earlier, they could actually do a study and an analysis on this. The entire report we have before us today is about one paragraph. I think it is more politically charged than trying to resolve or come up with real solutions or even a real critique. Would the member agree that having that deeper dive into the bigger picture, having the standing committee look into that and then possibly doing a follow-up, would be far more productive?

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Mr. Speaker, this does not happen often, so let the Hansard reflect that I rise to agree with the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader on one point. This needs to be expanded. I will also go on the record to agree with the comments that have been made by the opposition sides: I do not necessarily have faith that the government is equipped to run an investigation that is fulsome enough to provide the answers that Canadians need.

This is why it is important to acknowledge that, in this House, we cannot direct the Auditor General. Let us be clear that their role is independent, and we can ask them to undertake an audit. That audit needs to happen, and it needs to be expanded to include the five other pigs at the trough.

• (1720)

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the questions and comments he has made in a very scintillating speech.

However, because he is asking the opposition this question rather than the government, I really want to ask him something. When the member asks about expanding this to include the other consulting firms that are involved here, I think the answer from the opposition side is that the Canadian government has spent so much since the Liberal government has been in power, we would look at the expansion of how much it has spent on consulting and where the money went. Especially, we would look at where money has been spent egregiously by the government with no result.

That would be an entertaining study, but it would take years. Right now we have one consulting firm, and the government spent 50 times more on it than it did in the entire term of the last government. We need to say that is an egregious expansion to one firm with well-connected friends. Could we drill into this and get it checked out very quickly? Would the member agree with that?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Mr. Speaker, that is scintillating indeed, but again, it appears to me that members are a little gun-shy on the Conservative side to include consultancies like Deloitte. Deloitte would make McKinsey look insignificant in comparison, when we look at how Deloitte went from \$17 million, in 2015, to \$173 million. Let us look at where that waste goes. Let us expand to allow the Auditor General to do this.

I am not here to be entertained at committee. I often work closely with members of the opposition side. I would remind the member that I remain firmly as an opposition member. I work very closely with opposition members at every committee I am on, including Conservative members and Bloc members, to hold the government accountable. However, I would challenge them to stand up and name the five other pigs at the trough. I would challenge them to go back to 2011, where they are also culpable, where their cuts to the public sector and squeezing of public sector wages resulted in these gross taxpayer expenditures on private sector outsourcing.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am listening to this debate and there is so much I could say.

Actually, I am listening to the other parties speak. On one side, we have a Liberal government that does not seem to understand that voters gave it a minority mandate. During the first scandal involving the WE Charity, it prorogued Parliament and sent us into a federal election with the same outcome. Then, it signed contracts with private companies to replace public servants. It was influenced by a private firm. Ultimately, these policies allowed the government to do business with the private sector and not respect its own public service.

On the other, we now have the Century Initiative scandal, which apparently started under Brian Mulroney. If the public service ended up being slashed, it is because the Conservatives pursued an austerity policy.

Then, there is the NDP, which often proposes major expenditures. I am trying to find a balance here. If greater care is not taken, expenditures will go up, and, at some point, similar cuts will be made. In the meantime, there will be countless debates on public finances through countless democratic cycles.

Finally, on the question of the importance of respecting the public purse to avoid going through the austerity and cuts we saw under a Conservative government, as well as the importance of seeking clarity in this debate, we need to know whether the Century Initiative that began with Brian Mulroney continued under Mr. Harper.

We can see that there are still a lot of loose ends in this whole scandal. What does my colleague think?

• (1725)

[*English*]

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the Bloc for paying me perhaps the highest compliment I could be paid in this House by referring to me as the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre, for whom I have a great amount of respect. I will take that as it was intended.

I want to appreciate that the hon. member brought up a very important word, which is "austerity". It is important for us not only to recognize exactly who is making decisions but also to ask what ideologies they hold. How are McKinsey, Deloitte, KPMG, Accenture and these others advising the government on pathways toward austerity and cutbacks, as well as cuts to the public sector and programming?

It is true that, as New Democrats, we encourage the government to provide social spending on behalf of Canadians and Quebecers across the country. However, this ought not to come at the cost of almost a billion dollars in outsourcing to consultants. We have some of the best talent in the country working in our public sector. We believe that we should pay competitive wages to public sector talent and allow those with the bureaucratic knowledge and memory to present sound decision-making advice to the government. Ultimately, what has been lost in all of this is that governments are elected to make decisions.

When the government outsources its decision-making to unelected, unaccountable, nameless, faceless supranational corporations, which have insidious ties to unsavoury characters around the world and to corruption, campaign financing violations and narcotics dealing, we absolutely need to hold it to account.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, based on his comments, the member would have one believe no government should be doing any outsourcing, which I find very difficult to fathom. In my time even at the municipal level, I knew for a fact that outsourcing for various projects was not only a necessity but a benefit to municipalities. I know this member actually happened to serve on the Hamilton City Council. When the member was on city council, did he object to every proposal to have an outside firm do work on the assumption that all the work could be done by public servants?

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for standing up to exemplify what is called the "ratchet effect", where in Liberal ideology takes Conservative cuts and amplifies them and always holds them in place. This is the beautiful symbiotic relationship of having Coke and Pepsi in this House, where they will always rail against Conservatives for making cuts to the public sector, for austerity and for everything else. However, when it comes time for them to govern, they hold firm on the neo-liberal ideologies of austerity and cuts to public sector services.

I thank him for exemplifying that and let him rise on another false point of order.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Hamilton Centre for that brief lecture. It would have been preferable if he had just answered my question. I am sure that on a number of occasions he has voted in favour, including on Hamilton budgets that would have included spending money on employing outside firms, despite the fact that he will grandstand in the House and suggest that no such thing should ever happen. In any event, I will move on.

I would just like to take a moment before I get into my speech to recognize somebody from my community, Marie Louise Benson, who just turned 100 years old yesterday. Marie Louise was actually born in the Netherlands and was 17 years old when the Germans invaded Holland. She later moved to Canada after she married the former member of Parliament for Kingston and the Islands, Edgar Benson, who also served in the government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau as the finance minister for four years.

I congratulate Mrs. Benson on 100 years. Yesterday she said, "I'm 100 on the dot, and starting a new year tomorrow". If we all could have such a great outlook on life, I think this would be such a tremendous place to live in.

It is an honour for me to stand in this place today and speak to the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, entitled "Federal Government Consulting Contracts Awarded to McKinsey & Company". At the outset, I would like to thank the committee for undertaking this very important issue.

Contracting for goods and services is a regular part of how the government operates to deliver programs and services to Canadians. The use of professional services complements the work of Canada's public professional service. For example, professional services might be needed to acquire special expertise or to meet the unexpected fluctuations in the workload. Time-limited projects, shortages in certain employment groups and shortages in certain geographic locations may also require the use of professional services. Consultants can also provide independent verification of decisions, offer another viewpoint or establish a set of options for consideration.

I will share some examples of why professional services are needed. We can take, for instance, the firefighters who were brought to help quell the forest fires in British Columbia. Another example is the services needed to operate and maintain our assets and facilities, like cleaning our buildings or repairing our vehicles. The reality is that sometimes the use of external services is necessary. Fortunately, we have robust systems and mechanisms in place to ensure that contracts are awarded in a manner that is fair, open and transparent.

With that in mind, I would like to outline the policies and processes in place for government contracting. As my hon. colleagues will know, the Treasury Board sets the administrative policy for federal procurement, guided by the principles of fairness, openness, transparency, competition and integrity, all while ensuring the best value. The directive of management of procurement sets the expectations and requirements that departments and agencies must follow so that their procurements are managed in a way that supports the

delivery of programs and services to Canadians, demonstrates best value and is consistent with the government's and Canada's socio-economic and environmental objectives.

This directive was updated in the last two years, and there is now an explicit requirement that every department have an appointed senior official responsible for procurement. This official is responsible for establishing, implementing and maintaining a departmental procurement framework that consists of processes, systems and controls for procurement. The framework supports the management of procurement so that it is fair, open and transparent.

There are also clearly defined responsibilities for government departments when conducting procurements, including those for services.

First and foremost, government departments and agencies are expected to maintain the integrity of the procurement process and protect government spending from fraud and unethical business practices. This is done through internal processes and controls, such as the standard contract clauses, and by effective mechanisms for disclosure of any wrongdoing.

Second, government departments and agencies are responsible for clearly defining the intended outcomes of a procurement, including operational requirements, expected benefits and how those outcomes align with the government's strategic direction and total costs over the life cycle.

● (1730)

Third, departments are responsible for ensuring that government gets the best value. In that regard, it should be noted that the lowest price is not always the best value. Best value can be defined in policy as a balance between pricing and outcomes, so it includes concepts like socio-economic and environmental considerations.

In addition to these controls, the Treasury Board also sets contracting limits, dollar thresholds that determine which contracts will require Treasury Board authority to allow entry into the contract and which ones are fully delegated to a minister. Under these thresholds, individual departments may enter into contracts by themselves. Public servants at Procurement Canada and Shared Services Canada, as common service providers, can be the contracting authority for other departments and can provide additional due diligence to the department. These departments have higher contracting limits than other departments, so they will typically handle large-scale procurements.

*Routine Proceedings*

Transparency and accountability are core throughout all of these processes. For instance, government opportunities are posted publicly online at CanadaBuys. Perhaps more importantly, departments are accountable to Parliament and to Canadians through the disclosure of contracting activity, which is reported quarterly. This is in addition to the annual departmental results report, which provides detailed accounts of departments' activities to parliamentarians and to Canadians.

The fact is that every government has an obligation to be transparent and responsible with taxpayer money, and it is an obligation we take extremely seriously. Unethical business behaviour by suppliers has numerous consequences. It undermines fair competition. It threatens the integrity of markets. It is a barrier to economic growth. It increases the cost and risk of doing business. It undermines public confidence in government institutions.

Departments have a responsibility for protecting government spending from fraud, corruption, unethical business practices and collusive behaviour. That is exactly what Public Services and Procurement Canada's integrity regime aims to address. The integrity regime sets out guidelines that help Canada avoid entering into contracts with suppliers that have been convicted of certain offences, like fraud, bribery and bid rigging.

Another critical tool is the Conflict of Interest Act. As hon. colleagues know, the act establishes conflict of interest and postemployment roles for public office holders, which include ministers, ministerial staff and Governor in Council appointees, such as deputy heads. It plays an important role in maintaining public confidence in the integrity of public office holders in government decision-making.

The Conflict of Interest Act has strict guidelines to minimize the possibility of conflicts between private interests and the duties of public officer holders, including when it comes to external contracts. The act also provides a stringent vetting process, with critical safeguards in place to address potential or actual conflicts of interest. They are standard contract clauses, a requirement for proposals to be reviewed through a conflict of interest lens, and the need for evaluators to recuse themselves in the event of real or possible conflicts. In addition, all contracts can be subject to review by internal audits and the Auditor General of Canada.

I would like to also mention the "Open and Accountable Government" document, which sets out core principles regarding the roles and responsibilities of ministers and ministerial exempt staff. For example, exempt staff may ask departmental officials for information, relay instructions from the minister or be informed of decisions in order to address communications and strategic issues.

Let me be very clear on this issue. Exempt staff do not have a role in departmental operations. In fact, they are prohibited by law from exercising the delegated authority of a minister. Furthermore, they are prohibited from giving direction to departmental officials on the discharge of their responsibilities or on issues relating to the management of departmental resources or operational matters.

As public office holders, exempt staff members are exempt and are expected to act with honesty and uphold the highest ethical standards. That means complying with the ethical guidelines out-

lined in the "Open and Accountable Government" document, as well as conflict of interest and postemployment obligations under the Conflict of Interest Act and the Lobbying Act.

● (1735)

They may also "not knowingly or intentionally encourage or induce other governmental officials, including parliamentarians, Ministers, public servants and other exempt staff members, to act in manner contrary to the law".

Exempt staff are required to "make themselves aware of ethical standards, expectations, and obligations of public servants set out in the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector and departmental codes of conduct".

This means that they must not "engage public servants in any activity that is inconsistent with their ethical and legal obligations".

For public servants, the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector outlines the values and expected behaviours that guide them in the activities related to their professional duties. The code is wide ranging but, importantly, it provides a platform for employees to report any wrongdoing that they witness. Taken together, these measures play a critical role in ensuring accountability. They are part of a larger system in place to ensure that the government is open and transparent to both parliamentarians and Canadians.

In our parliamentary system, the government provides Parliament with detailed financial information throughout the year. The estimates document, the departmental plans, the public accounts and departmental results report play a critical role by presenting parliamentarians and Canadians with details on the government's activities and spending.

All of the latest financial information, including planned spending authorities and estimated expenditures, is publicly available on the Government of Canada InfoBase and Open Government. This wide range of financial reports supports Parliament's scrutiny of public funds. That said, there is always room for improvement, which is why the government committed to taking steps to strengthen our procurement policy by integrating human rights, environment, social and corporate governance, and supply chain transparency principles into government procurements.

*Routine Proceedings*

There is no denying that we have a world-class public service. Whether from a formal work site or a home office, public servants across the country continue to provide Canadians with the services they rely on. Like all of us in this place, they are dedicated to serving Canadians. Providing the services Canadians rely on sometimes requires additional support. That said, we know a strong federal public service is the best way to deliver for Canadians. The government is developing a long-term government-wide public service skills strategy, including increasing the number of public servants with modern, digital skills and improving external recruitment.

As we modernize legacy systems and further digitize operations and services, increased investment in IT is essential. Where it makes sense we use internal resources, and where we need to we supplement those with external resources. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat is developing government-wide digital talent and digital skills strategies designed to identify and fill critical digital skills gaps while advancing learning and recruitment.

The TBS is also developing new guidance for departments on digital talent sourcing to help plan for its digital talent needs, increase the volume of ready-to-hire talent in pools and ensure recruitment is aligned to priority areas. It is intended to reduce dependency on contracting and to fill digital talent gaps. These efforts are expected to result in improved business intelligence, interdepartmental collaboration and access to digital talent.

Clearly, Canada has robust policies and tools in place to ensure that contracting is done in a professional and non-partisan manner. As an extra level of assurance, the Prime Minister has asked the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and the President of the Treasury Board to undertake a review of all procurements by government departments with McKinsey & Company. The intent of the review will be to verify if these procurements were conducted in accordance with Treasury Board policies and directives.

The government takes its responsibility as the steward of public funds very seriously, and it is committed to ensuring that government spending stands up to the highest levels of scrutiny. To that end, the government welcomes a performance and value-for-money audit, by the Auditor General, of the contracts awarded to McKinsey & Company since January 1, 2011, by any department, agency or Crown corporation.

It will, therefore, be my pleasure to vote in support of this motion.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. However, we have questions about McKinsey.

We know full well that we are talking about deliverables and contracts, even if my colleague says the contrary. Are they verifiable and quantifiable? This firm has a history of non-verifiable and non-quantifiable deliverables, which enables it to do whatever it wants without any accountability to parliamentarians and journalists.

Can my colleague respond to that?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, the member started off by saying that she has questions about the contracts, and what this motion does is specifically ask for those questions to be answered. I do not have the answers to those specific questions. I told the member how I would be voting on this, and I think that if we let due course occur, she will get the answers to those questions. I hope the manner in which they are presented to her satisfies the questions that she has.

• (1745)

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. parliamentary secretary spends quite an amount of time in the House on all debates but, particular to this one, I just have one question for him. It is a simple one. He just spoke at length. Did McKinsey prepare his speech today?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, the answer is no.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to know that the government will be voting for this motion. I will as well.

Does the hon. parliamentary secretary agree that, really, McKinsey is the tip of the iceberg, as the hon. member for Hamilton Centre said moments ago? We had \$17 million this year for McKinsey, and a total of about \$100 million since 2015. That is a lot of money. In this year alone, it is \$22 billion. If we do some quick math, it takes 1,000 million to make a billion. In that context, should we not be looking more broadly at the IBMs, the Deloittes, the defence contractors and all the outsourcing that occurs to foreign corporations in this country?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, despite the fact that the member for Hamilton Centre decided to use the limited time he had for a question for me on such a frivolous question, I actually think he had a really good point earlier in his speech, and that was when he brought up the issue of why it is not expanded.

I personally do not have a problem with that. I spent a great amount of my time talking about the openness and transparency of government and what our commitment was to that openness and transparency. This motion could have been brought forward in a way that addressed that on a more holistic scale, because I think the member for Hamilton Centre has a good point: Why just limit this to one? Why not make it more open? I do not think that anybody on this side of the House is afraid to hear the answers that come out of that.

Unfortunately, to the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, we are debating this motion, which is very specific in nature, and I think it is a topic for another day. Perhaps the committee responsible for this will open up the scope to address that concern.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have to say to my colleague from Kingston and the Islands that, in all my time in the House of Commons, that is the best speech I have heard him give. Thank you for that. Thank you for supporting the motion we are putting forward here, in getting exposure on these contracts in particular, and thank you for not bending to opening this up so that we are boiling the ocean, as people used to say in consulting work, where we are going to have to look at things that will take us years to look at. This is one specific contract.

I will ask the member if he will actually commit to doing this as efficaciously and quickly as possible, to get this done within the next few weeks so that we can totally expose the amount that McKinsey has taken from this government and what results the government has actually gotten from that \$100 million-plus of advice over the last handful of years.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, well, the member said “you” on a number of occasions. You have not indicated how you are going to be voting yet, so I would hate to put that in your mouth, to suggest that you are voting in favour of this.

To answer his question, in terms of how quickly, I can guarantee him one thing. We will vote on this much sooner than the Conservatives let the average piece of government legislation pass through the House.

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, since my colleague is being so transparent, I would like to ask this question. Is it a conflict of interest that McKinsey was receiving millions while Dominic Barton was on the economic advisory council? Could he answer that for me?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, as I indicated in my speech, we have a number of acts that can address that. We have a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner who oversees order in council appointees, as well as parliamentarians and others. I will leave it up to those professionals, whom we as a collective body have tasked to oversee this to determine whether somebody has acted in a manner that is a conflict of interest.

Despite the rhetoric between the member for Hamilton Centre and I a few minutes ago, the problem is that the Conservatives' only objective with this motion is to try to create a new conspiracy for people to believe in. It is something brand new. I listened to Green and NDP members, and they have reasonable ideas. It is unfortunate that the Conservatives cannot follow suit.

• (1750)

**Mr. Matthew Green:** Madam Speaker, in my remarks, I referenced the cuts under Harper to our public sector. He cut our public sector by 8% up until 2014.

In the spirit of some fairness, I will throw the hon. member a bone. Will he respond to his government's plans to restore capacity within our public sector by paying our public sector's market rate, or will he stand by his defence for contracting out so we continue to pay private sector consultants three times that rate?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, there was a follow-up question to that of the member for Hamilton Centre from a Bloc member. I thought I heard her say that we cut the public service and scaled back on it, which is not true.

To the member for Hamilton Centre, I agree that when we can, we should be utilizing our public service. That is what we pay them for. When we pay them well and treat them well, they will want to stay and work for us. However, I also respect the fact that there are times when contracting something out makes more sense. It might be something extremely specialized. It might be for something we know will mean a short-term increase in workload. We have to be willing to be flexible in our approach, and we have to use all options available.

**Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in the vein of reasonableness, I have a question for my colleague. I will agree with my friend from Calgary Centre that that was probably one of our Liberal colleague's best speeches. However, I do not think we have decreased the size of the public service. I think it has gone up by about 30%. Also, third party contracts have gone up by 30% to 35%.

With the public service being increased and the number of third party contracts being increased for consulting, does he believe Canadians are getting fair value for their dollar? If they are paying more, are they getting better services?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, two Conservatives have now told me this was the best speech I have ever made. However, about three months ago, I made a speech on the environment and on how Conservatives used to be such great champions of the environment. I thought that was a pretty good speech. Actually, Brian Mulroney sent me a letter afterwards congratulating me on that speech, but if they think that was a good speech, I will take it.

To the member's question, we have processes in place to make sure we get the best value for money. I spent a great length of my speech going into the details of how that is done. I trust the processes. I also trust the fact that sometimes the processes might not be properly followed, in which case we have rules and processes in place to correct that behaviour and deal with it appropriately.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

After eight years, we have had an opportunity to assess the results of the latest grand experiment. We know the experiment we are always told we need to conduct. The experiment is that socialist parties come along and tell voters that life is not fair, that there is too much greed and that the solution to greed is for government to get big and powerful, take the people's money and spread it around in a way that is fair so that everybody gets their rightful due.



*Routine Proceedings*

The question is who actually gets to carve up the spoils and decide who gets what. The answer, of course, is government itself, and government makes its decision based on politics. Of course, politics is based on, unfortunately, influence and those with influence tend to be those with money. As a result, those with money can convert that money into political power, and that power back into yet more money, and that money back into more political power, and the cycle goes and goes and goes.

The promise was that the government would get grand and powerful and take from the rich to give to the middle class and those working hard to join it. Do members remember those people? We do not hear about them very much anymore, after eight years. In fact, in practice, the game is played very differently.

Let us talk about the very simple question of public finance: from whom to whom. From whom has the money come, and to whom is it going? Let us start with "From whom?" The money is coming from the working-class people of this country, who are under a siege not seen in at least 40 years. Inflation has reached a 40-year high, as the cost of government has bid up the cost of living. Half a trillion dollars of inflationary deficits have increased the cost of the goods we buy and the interest we pay.

The real human impact of this highly predictable economic phenomenon is that 67% of Canadians now agree that everything feels broken in Canada. We have nine out of 10 young people who do not own homes say that they never will. We have students, according to media reports, living in homeless shelters while they study. We have 1.5 million people eating out of food banks in a single year, some of them asking food bank presidents for help with suicide, with medical assistance in dying, not because they are sick, but because the poverty they experience after eight years of the Prime Minister is so insufferable that they would rather end their misery altogether. The average mortgage payment has doubled from \$1,500 to over \$3,200. The average rent payment in our 10 biggest metropolitan centres has doubled as well. By the way, food prices are up 12%, and energy prices have, off and on, experienced inflation at times 100% year over year, and these are the commodities that make up a much larger part of the budgets of the low-income and working-class people.

The answer to the question "From whom?" is, of course, Canada's working-class people, the people who get out of bed every day and do the nation's labour. They are the ones who are paying the bills for this experiment.

The second part of the question is "To whom?" Who is getting all this benefit?

When we look around our communities, we do not see a lot of people putting up their hand and saying, "Boy, I sure have received a windfall." I do not know how many constituents of the members in this chamber here today are getting \$1,500-an-hour contracts from this government: zero. We are talking about a very small group of people who are getting benefits.

Who are they? Well, let us start chronologically. Let us go back and start with SNC-Lavalin. This is a perfect example of the experiment of which I speak. They went to a socialist country called Libya. The word "socialist" is actually in the republic's name, so

one would think it would want nothing to do with a multinational. Of course, that multinational bought influence and stole over \$100 million from the poorest people in Africa.

● (1755)

Now the Prime Minister was not going to let a company like that face criminal charges, so he actually fired his attorney general because she refused to have those charges dropped. We saw the Prime Minister protecting a corporation that had stolen from Africa's poorest people, a corporation of amongst the most privileged people on Planet Earth.

After that we saw the Prime Minister give multi-million dollar grants to Loblaw's to pay for fridges and to highly profitable credit card companies to provide them with corporate subsidies.

Recently, his finance minister was confronted about the plan in the budget to fund \$2 billion to a company that does not exist. The finance minister, when she heard that allegation, said that was absolutely false, it was not \$2 billion, it was \$15 billion. We can imagine who is going to benefit from that.

Now, we have McKinsey. The Prime Minister gave a glowing speech about his non-friend friend, the non-friend who likes to hug, Dominic Barton. The Prime Minister said he had hired Mr. Barton for \$1 a year. Somehow \$1 became \$50 million, then it became \$100 million and then it was \$120 million. As the price tag kept rising I actually asked the Prime Minister, close to a dozen times in the House of Commons, what the total dollar value was of all the contracts paid to this company after eight years. He still cannot answer the question.

We know that the company is making a lot of money. According to the government departments that hired it, in many cases it did no work of any value. The public servants who could have done the job themselves say the company came in with a bunch of fancy charts and graphs, and the latest MBA-isms, and made off with millions, and no one can actually figure out what they did for the money. That is to whom the money is going.

In fact, the government has increased the budget for high-priced consultants by nearly 100% to over \$15 billion. For context, we have 15 million families in Canada. That means each family is spending \$1,000 in federal taxes for high-priced consultants. That is to whom their money is going. For those sitting at home wondering why their paycheques evaporates in federal taxes and asking where it all goes, that is one answer to the question.

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Should we be surprised that these are the people who are getting all the money? This is the circle the government travels in. These are the friends that it hangs out with at Davos. None of my members went to Davos. We are not going to Davos. We stayed in our communities while the meeting in Davos was happening recently. We worked for our people, on the ground, the common people. This is the House of Commons, and the common people deserve to have a voice in the House of Commons.

We learned the lesson here, that just because the state takes over the economy does not mean it transforms human nature. It does not mean that it abolishes greed. It just redirects greed. As Macaulay might say, if I might paraphrase him:

Wherever you throw the carrion, the raven's croak is loud;  
Wherever you fling the honey, the buzzing flies will crowd;  
Wherever down river garbage floats, the greedy pike you see;  
And wheresoever such lord is found, such clients soon will be.

Macaulay referred to the flies chasing the honey. Flies do not make honey; they take honey. Bees make honey. That is the kind of difference we have. When the government runs the economy, people get rich by taking. When there is a free market economy, people get better off by making. Bees make honey, through voluntary exchange, through pollination with plants. A voluntary exchange of work for wages, product for payment, investment for interest. Millions of these voluntary exchanges are what make people better off.

Instead of a state-controlled crony capitalist economy, we want a free market economy with small government and big citizens that empower individuals to do what they want with their money. That is how we put an end to this kind of crony capitalism, and put people back in charge of their money and their lives.

• (1800)

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, to be clear, all capitalism is crony capitalism. The question is, does the leader of the official opposition have the courage to expand the scope of this study to investigate all the pigs at the trough, including Deloitte, Ernst & Young, the Conservative favourite PricewaterhouseCoopers, and KPMG? Why stop at McKinsey when we can go for all of them? Does the leader of the official opposition have the courage to do that?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Yes, Madam Speaker. Is that clear?

Let us be clear about something. The member believes in capitalism; he just believes that capital should be controlled by bureaucrats and politicians. He believes that if we take the same human being who is a CEO and move him over to make him a top bureaucrat or top politician, suddenly he will become an angel. He believes in allocating capital. He just wants it to be done by force of the state rather than the free enterprise and voluntary exchange of customers, workers and entrepreneurs. He believes in the ultimate control, crony capitalism, which is controlled by the state and directed by people with power. That is what he believes.

• (1805)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I find that answer very interesting because it begs the question of why the Conservatives did not bring forward a more holistic motion. If the Leader of the Opposition is genuine in saying

the opposition motion today is one that opens the books up, as he said, and looks at everything, why would he bring forward a motion that is centred on one specific company? If it were not for anything other than political gain—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I just want to remind members that the leader of the official opposition is able to answer questions without any help from colleagues, so I would ask members to please hold on to their thoughts.

The hon. parliamentary secretary can finish his question.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, the member admits that he wants to open this up, yet his motion is specific to one particular company. Was the concurrence motion motivated by a genuine interest in looking into an issue, or was it motivated by political gain whereby the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives think they can drum up an issue to exploit the fears and anxieties of people?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, it was the former. It was a desire to look into the issue, but we also know how to set priorities and we need to.

When we are examining Liberal wrongdoing and corruption, it is like drinking from a firehose. The question we always have is, where do we start? We started with McKinsey because that is where most of the smoke is and that is where we are likely to find the first flame. However, we are prepared to examine all of the \$15 billion-plus in massive high-priced contracting out that the government does. I can say that we will cut that waste when I am Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulo, BQ):** Madam Speaker, if my colleagues had followed the recent work of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, they would have known that a motion was moved to examine all the documents from consultants from 2011 to date. That motion should be voted on next week.

That being said, I know that all segments of the population and all professions are being affected by the aging process. Since the beginning of the study on McKinsey, it is astounding to see how no one saw or heard what happened, how no one was able to talk about it and how no one remembers what happened, or who got contracts and why.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party wants to complete the investigation into McKinsey, but we are quite willing to investigate all massive contracts worth \$15 billion or more awarded to all such companies.

We are willing to work with anyone to get to the bottom of all these contracts, because Canadians do not work this hard to send cheques to consultants who charge taxpayers \$1,500 an hour.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Speaker, that was an incredible speech from my incredible leader. It is certainly an honour to serve with the member for Carleton, and it is always very difficult to follow his speeches, but that is what I am going to have to do here today.

The bottom line is that the main reason we have brought forward this concurrence motion today is for one reason and one reason alone, and that is that we do not trust the government to audit itself. I say to call in the auditors. That is what I say.

Why should we have any faith in the government to audit itself after the horrific things that we have seen in the time that the Prime Minister and the government have been in office? We have seen things such as SNC-Lavalin, which was a terrible scandal. We have seen things such as the WE Charity, where millions and millions of dollars were spent without any idea as to where it was going.

As a woman, I find especially offensive all of the women who have been thrown under the bus, such as the former justice minister, for example, or the former health minister. We have seen Celina Caesar-Chavannes, who has now said that she was not treated well by the government or the Prime Minister and, sadly, most recently the former minister of sport, who had to take a leave of absence in an effort to deal with the government. Conservatives do not trust the government to be ethical or to audit itself, so I say to call in the auditors.

Liberals will not admit to how much money they have spent. On January 4, CBC published an article showing the Liberal government has spent over 30 times more in contracts with McKinsey & Company than previous government, but on January 17, The Globe and Mail published an article stating the actual value of the government contracts with McKinsey since 2015 amounted to \$101.4 million, much higher than previously reported. However, it did not stop there.

On January 31, The Globe and Mail published another article based on documents in a court case in Puerto Rico. Federal contracts awarded to McKinsey are now estimated to be at least \$116.8 million. We have asked the Prime Minister several times in the House to tell us the amount he has spent on McKinsey & Company. The Liberals will not even admit to how much they spent. It is time to call in the auditors.

Major policy decisions are being made by McKinsey & Company and not public servants. We have seen the influence of McKinsey & Company throughout the government, for example, specifically with immigration. We have seen Dominic Barton's influence on the immigration project, along with his new century initiative. This is influencing immigration policy within our country, in addition to other policies.

I just came from the government operations committee, where the current CEO of the Infrastructure Bank admitted to one of our fantastic members, the member of Parliament for Haldimand—Norfolk, that the Canada Infrastructure Bank was actually a product of

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Dominic Barton and McKinsey. He actually admitted to that, and it is not surprising because if we look at the Order Paper questions that we received, the outline of McKinsey's goal was consulting advice and recommendations on “decision criteria to screen and evaluate potential investments, including objectives, terms and principles [and] benchmarking review of these criteria with other infrastructure banks around the world”, based on its mandate.

It does not stop there. Other projects McKinsey was hired for by the Infrastructure Bank included, “Consulting advice and recommendations on strategy-related matters to advance the CIB's mandate and increase in public impact”. It sounds like it was hired to try to convince the public it was a good thing. It goes on to say, “Facilitating expert adviser workshops and recommendations to advance the CIB's mandate and increase the public mandate.”

Once again, we cannot trust the government because its major policy decisions are being made by McKinsey and not by public servants. We have to call in the auditors. There is a consistent lack of transparency and accountability that we have seen by the government.

• (1810)

When we had Mr. Barton at the government operations committee last week, he tried to create the illusion of no relationship, no friendship, between himself and the Prime Minister. However, good friends embrace when they greet each other. Good friends have friends over for dinner, as we saw Dominic Barton do with the current finance minister. He was over at her house for dinner with other influential people.

In addition to all the other things I previously mentioned, there is a clear lack of transparency and accountability with this government and its relationship with McKinsey & Company. We have also seen it from the former finance minister, Bill Morneau, who actually makes reference to it in his book. We have seen the glowing welcome that the Prime Minister gave Dominic Barton at Davos at the World Economic Forum, and in 2016. There is a clear lack of transparency and accountability, and there is the proximity of the relationship between the government, the Prime Minister and McKinsey & Company. Do members know what we need to do? We need to call in the auditors.

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A government should not be doing business with a company with such low ethical standards. I would not even know where to begin there. I could start with the campaign financing in France that we have seen. We could talk about McKinsey's contributions in the opioid crisis with Purdue Pharma. We could talk about the criminal charges for insider trading, which its former employees have been implicated in. We could talk about the consulting work that it did for the U.S. immigration, ICE, and creating terrible conditions for refugees. We could talk about McKinsey's strategizing for Russian missile producers.

We could talk about McKinsey's implication in China. I thought it was public knowledge, but unfortunately the minister for procurement and public services had never heard of this. The company's retreat in China in 2018 took place only seven kilometres from an internment camp holding thousands of ethnic Uighurs. This was just a week after a United Nations committee had denounced the mass detentions and urged China to stop. McKinsey also consulted for China Communications Construction, which has built militarized islands in the South China Sea in violation of international law.

Of course, there are ties with the Russian bank. In August 2018, the VEB bank, which is owned by the Russian state and known to be intertwined with Russian intelligence and under United States sanctions, hired McKinsey to develop its business strategy.

Once again, a government, the Canadian government in particular, where we have such high ethical and moral standards across our country with our citizens, should not be doing business with a consulting firm with such low ethical standards. We need to call in the auditors.

Finally, it is not producing good value for money. It has been reported that McKinsey has, in fact, increased its contracts by up to 193% over market value. With this government alone, we saw that 20 out of 23 contracts were not placed in competitive bid environments. Many of them were sole-sourced, in fact. That is 20 out of 23, which once again makes us question the influence. We have seen the bad use of money, as in the example coming out of the Business Development Bank of Canada, where we saw lavish events and chauffeurs being flown to the other side of the country. We see public servants who are completely demoralized as a result of not being consulted on these projects and all of the authority being handed over to McKinsey.

I think we need to simply look at everything. The evidence shows that we should not trust the government to audit itself. We do not know how much it has spent or how it has made its major policy decisions, with a lack of transparency and accountability, working with a company that has no strong ethical values or moral standards and not producing good value for money. What do we need to do? We need to call in the auditors.

• (1815)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am not sure if the member is aware, but this side of the House will be voting in favour of the motion. We do not see a particular issue with it.

We have guidelines and policies in place for department heads and various different public servants to follow. We have processes to ensure that this happens. Does she believe that the processes in place are being properly administered by our public service?

• (1820)

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, it is apparent that they are not being followed, because even public servants are coming forward and expressing their discontent with the implication of McKinsey & Company in policy decisions, outcomes, policy directions and execution of policies within the government. They are clearly not being followed.

The fact that the government would propose that it investigate these policies, which it has not itself followed, is really quite ridiculous. That is the reason we are here today with this motion asking to bring in an objective third party, the Auditor General, to do a thorough verification.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we just came from the OGGO committee, and the Conservatives demonstrated that they are willing to support the NDP in expanding this to look at all of the outsourcing, especially the \$100-million-plus procurement club, which includes companies that benefited greatly under their government. In fact, under the Harper government, PricewaterhouseCoopers went from \$9.8 million to \$44 million a year in outsourcing, a 450% increase.

When the Conservatives initially looked at McKinsey, which is the small player of the \$600-million-plus procurement club getting outsourcing contracts that are literally running away from Canadians, why did they not put forward a motion to look at Accenture, Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers? I would like to learn why they neglected to look at those companies. Again, I want to commend the member for supporting the NDP's call to expand the scope and probe of these companies.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, as a relatively new member of the government operations committee, I know we have an outsourcing study, which is continuing. I certainly look forward to continuing to evaluate many of the other outside companies that provide consulting to the government.

*Routine Proceedings*

I think we are here because the Canadian public, and even the media in this country, turned Canadians and the official opposition onto what was going on in the House and with the government in relation to the unique relationship between McKinsey & Company and the government. Certainly, while I think the points made are very important, our leader has said that he looks forward to empowering the public service once again by reducing the use of consultants.

I really think it was the Canadian people who drove us to push on the McKinsey file.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for her speech.

The Bloc Québécois fully supports complete transparency in federal public spending. As we know, the Senate of France conducted a study on the growing influence of consulting firms' relationships with various governments around the world and released a report containing recommendations. The report recommends more transparency, no secrecy, meaningful openness about all contracts, and accountability. Consulting firms are not accountable at this time.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of those recommendations.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. He raises a good point. McKinsey's involvement in government decisions is part of this motion. It is not about just one, two or three departments. It is about several departments. We want to know how the government has worked with McKinsey. I am willing to look at the government's relationship with McKinsey for all departments involved.

• (1825)

[*English*]

**Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. Before I begin, I do want to recognize a life well lived, the life of Mr. Rex Renkema, of Kamloops. He passed away over the holidays. Mr. Renkema was a mentor to me. He was a pioneer in the legal field, in my view. He was well respected by his colleagues, both at the bar and in the community. He had an incredible impact on my career and the careers of others. I obviously wish his family all the best in this difficult time. May perpetual light shine on Rex Renkema.

With that, I have just a few minutes to speak on this topic. One of the first places I want to start is when it comes to money. As the Leader of the Opposition just eloquently pointed out, when we break down the amount of money that went to consultants, it would equal, if I understand the math correctly, about \$1,000 per family. This is a Liberal government that frequently does cartwheels over the fact that we are giving \$500 to people to help them with a mortgage or we are giving \$600 for this or a few hundred dollars for that. The Liberals frequently accuse Conservatives of really not caring about the middle class, and yet here they are giving the equivalent of \$1,000 per family to outside consultants. That, to me, is

something that deserves a measure of inquiry, and a significant measure of inquiry at that.

However, let us go one step further. The reality is that the public service has grown by approximately 30% under the Liberal government. Not only do we have a ballooning public service, we have a government intent on spending as much as it can, as quickly as it can, on whatever it can. Part of that spending, wherever it can spend, is on these consultants. Consultants should really be a mechanism of last resort.

We should not be calling external people in on contract, and generally contracts are paid at a much higher level than a salary, when we have people who could do the job already. I am mindful of the fact that on occasion there needs to be an external contract. There might be somebody with a significant area of expertise that the government needs to retain.

The problem is this, when we are literally spending billions of dollars on contracts, in this case \$120 million on one firm, one has to ask why we are not going through our public service. Why is it that with a public service that has expanded by 30% in the last few years, we in Canada cannot take care of these things? These are fundamental questions that we need to ask. After all, if every Canadian family were to open their wallet, \$1,000 of that money would be going not to the salaries just of the public service but, above and beyond that, directly to pay external contractors.

In my view, this requires an independent inquiry by somebody like the Auditor General, not the government itself. As has been raised before, the government has done whatever it can to shirk responsibility. Jody Wilson-Raybould was prepared to blow the whistle on the government, to say things were not right and were not fair. As the attorney general, in my view an independent minister of justice, that was her job. She stood up to the Prime Minister. She was supposed to be this country's highest lawyer. What happened? She was not in the job very long afterwards.

SNC-Lavalin shows us that we need a measure of independence here when we consider where this money went and how it got there.

• (1830)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, we would like to request a recorded division.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, 2022, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, February 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PETITIONS**

## CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have three petitions to present this evening.

The first is from citizens and residents of Canada who wish to draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following: The Liberal government promised, in its 2021 platform, to deny the charitable status of organizations that have convictions about abortions, which the Liberal Party views as dishonest.

This may jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do not agree with the Liberal Party on this matter for reasons of conscience. Many Canadians depend upon and benefit from the charitable work done by such organizations.

The government has previously used a values test to discriminate against worthy applicants to the Canada summer jobs program, denying funding to any organization that was not willing to check a box endorsing political positions of the governing party.

Charities and other non-profit organizations should not be discriminated against on the basis of their political views or religious values and should not be subject to politicized values tests.

All Canadians have a right, under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to freedom of expression without discrimination. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis without discrimination on the basis of political or religious values and without the imposition of another values test, and affirm the rights of Canadians to freedom of expression.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the next petition is from petitioners who point out that, although Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig were recently released after 1,000 days of unjust detention in China, there are at least 115 Canadians still being detained in China, including Huseyin Celil, who has been detained for over 5,000 days.

The Chinese government has refused to accept his Canadian citizenship and has denied access to lawyers, family and Canadian officials. He was coerced into signing a confession and underwent an unlawful and unfair trial. Evidence now makes clear the Chinese government's treatment of the Uighurs meets most, if not all, of the criteria for genocide as outlined in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and Canada cannot remain silent in the face of the unjust suffering of a Canadian citizen.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to take the following actions to address the situation: One, demand the Chinese government recognize Huseyin Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal service in accordance with international law. Two, formally state his release from Chinese detainment and return to Canada is a priority of the Canadian government, of equal concern as the unjust detentions of the two Michaels. Lastly, appoint a special envoy to work on securing his release and seek assistance of the Biden administration and other allies around the world in obtaining his release.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I want to remind the hon. member, and all members, that when they present petitions, it should be a summary of the petition and not verbatim.

## HAZARAS

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I respect that. Unfortunately, these are issues that I am not as familiar with, but I was asked to present them. I will do my best to shorten this particular one.

The citizens of Canada draw the attention of the House of Commons to the fact that Abdul Rahman Khan, the emir of Afghanistan, was installed by the British government and received a subsidy from it. They waged a genocidal campaign against the Hazaras from 1891 to 1893. It wiped out the vast majority of this ethnic group.

There were tens of thousands of Hazaras who were forcefully displaced from their lands and many other thousands were forcefully proselytized, raped and enslaved from 1891 to 1893. The petition goes on to talk about the fact that even as late as August 1998, hundreds, if not thousands, of men, women, children and elders were slaughtered in the cities of Mazar-e Sharif and Bamiyan.

The Hazaras still continue to face systemic and targeted persecution in post-2001 Afghanistan. It is clearly a serious issue. Canada has spent \$3.6 billion in assisting Afghanistan and we lost 158 brave men and women in uniform in the fight against the Taliban. Afghanistan remains one of the largest recipients of Canada's international financial assistance.

Therefore, the undersigned call upon the Government of Canada to take action. They ask to formally recognize the 1891 to 1893 ethnic cleansing perpetrated against the Hazaras; to designate September 25 as Hazara genocide memorial day; and to support Bill C-287 to ensure that all development assistance sent from Canada to Afghanistan is contributing to the peace and security of the region for all peoples.

● (1835)

## DECriminalization OF DRUGS

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is timely that I table this petition given that we are on the eve of the critical meeting between premiers and the Prime Minister to talk about health.

The petitioners are talking about the health crisis right now, about the poisoned drug supply and the toxicity of those drugs that are killing valued citizens, like mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and family members of people in our communities.

They cite that the war on drugs has allowed organized crime to be the sole provider of most controlled substances. That has resulted in widespread stigma. They are calling on the Government of Canada to reform current drug policies, to decriminalize simple possession of drugs listed in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, and to provide a path for expungement of conviction records for those convicted of simple possession.

Lastly, with urgency, they ask to implement a health-based, national strategy for providing access to a regulated safer supply of drugs and expand trauma-informed, just-in-time treatment, recovery, harm reduction services, and public education and awareness campaigns throughout Canada to save lives and take this epidemic head-on.

#### MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in the government's drive to dismantle the military, it is demoralizing the existing troops and preventing people from signing up through its implementation of systemic racism and its removal of Christianity from the forces. It is doing that by taking away the military chaplains. The people in this petition want to overturn the decision to take out the Christian religions from the military.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be tabling a number of petitions this evening. The first petition highlights the human rights situation in Afghanistan. In particular, it draws the attention of the House to the horrific violence that has been inflicted on the Sikh and Hindu minority in Afghanistan. It highlights various specific instances and calls on the government, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to do all they can to support the Sikh and Hindu community in Afghanistan.

#### FALUN GONG

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights the ongoing, horrific persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China. The petitioners note that the Falun Gong is the traditional Chinese spiritual discipline that consists of meditation exercises and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. They note that information has been uncovered about various forms of persecution, including forced organ harvesting and trafficking targeting Falun Gong practitioners.

They call on Parliament and the government to condemn these measures, to call for the end of the persecution of Falun Gong, as well as to continue to strengthen efforts to combat forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

#### Routine Proceedings

• (1840)

#### CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, next I am presenting a petition that raises concern about the second proposed values test we have seen from the current government. It was in the Liberals' 2021 platform. They propose to deny charitable status to any organizations that have views with respect to abortion that they consider dishonest. The charities act already contains a prohibition against dishonest conduct. However, this was targeted against those who hold views that the Liberal Party does not agree with. This proposal could jeopardize the charitable status of hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do not agree with the Liberal Party on these things. It follows a similar values test that was associated with the Canada summer jobs program that we saw in the past, which was rescinded in response to significant public criticism.

The petitioners are calling on the House and the government to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis, without the imposition of another values test. They also want to see the government affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am presenting is with respect to the ongoing detention of Mr. Huseyin Celil, a Canadian citizen who has been detained in China for well over a decade.

The petitioners share a bit of Mr. Celil's background. He is a Canadian Uighur human rights activist who was detained because of his work supporting the political and religious rights of Uighurs. He is a Canadian citizen. He was taken from Uzbekistan. This is happening in a context where this House has determined that the Government of China is committing an ongoing genocide against Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to fight for the release of Mr. Celil, in particular to push the Government of China to recognize his Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services in accordance with international law, and to formally state that securing the release of Mr. Celil from Chinese detainment and his return to Canada is a priority of the Canadian government of equal concern as the unjust detentions of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. The petitioners want to see the government appoint a special envoy to work on securing Mr. Celil's release, and to seek the assistance of the Biden administration and other allies around the world in obtaining Mr. Celil's release.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

## HAZARAS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition deals with the human rights situation of another minority group in Afghanistan, the Hazara community. The petitioners share some of the history, going back to the 19th century, of violence targeting the Hazara community. They highlight Canada's close connection with Afghanistan, the work that was done over a long period of time, and the lives lost to try to establish and preserve freedom and democracy in Afghanistan, which of course makes it particularly sad to see what is happening in that country right now.

The petitioners want to see the government recognize the genocide the Hazaras were victim of and designate September 25 as Hazara genocide memorial day.

## MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition I am presenting highlights a proposal in the 2022 report of the Minister of National Defence's advisory panel on systemic racism and discrimination, a proposal that ironically was itself discriminatory. It calls for the exclusion of clergy from religions that have a different view on gender and sexuality than the Department of National Defence.

The petitioners call on the government to reject those recommendations and to affirm the right of all Canadians, including the Canadian Armed Forces chaplains, to freedom of religion.

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

## LABOUR

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I said last week on Ground Day that I would be back again every week to drag the government here to have a discussion about the need for mental health parity in this country. Here I am again, on the eve of what will hopefully be a historic meeting tomorrow of the Prime Minister and the premiers of the 10 provinces and three territories in this country, to talk about health care in this country. I hope mental health will be at the forefront of that conversation.

The last three years, as we know, have been extraordinarily difficult, and that has taken its toll on the mental well-being of many Canadians. No one is untouched by the impact of the mental health crisis that is taking place in this country.

Last fall, a joint report by the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction found that almost 35% of respondents reported moderate to severe mental health concerns, and fewer than one in three people experiencing mental health concerns were accessing services. Financial constraints were noted as a key barrier to obtaining supports, while financial concerns were identified as the top stressor across most of Canada.

We know that these are difficult economic times for many, and things are getting worse. As Canada navigates through these difficult economic times, it is more essential than ever that we get support to those who are struggling so they can access mental health care regardless of their ability to pay.

Recently, the Douglas Coldwell Layton Foundation commissioned Abacus Data to conduct a survey of 2,000 working Canadians to explore the impact of working conditions and personal finances on their mental health. Not surprisingly, it found that work is a regular source of mental health distress for one in three workers, or about 6.5 million working Canadians. This includes burnout, anxiety and depression. The survey revealed that four in 10 workers say that negative emotions caused by their workplace are increasing. The most troubling finding of all is that 9.4 million respondents to this survey, or almost half of working Canadians, described their mental health as less than good.

The evidence is in, so what is there to do? What actions must be taken to address the mental health needs of Canadian workers?

We know that the promises of the government during the last election about the good sense of establishing the Canada mental health transfer have not happened. It was a comfort to many millions of Canadians and to many millions of Canadian workers that they would have access to services and that life was going to improve. It was, after all, the second commitment listed in the Minister of Finance's mandate letter from the Prime Minister. Marching orders had been given and help was on the way. Regrettably, while the fiscal and costing plan presented in the election campaign indicated that \$875 million would be committed toward this transfer by 2023, no funds have been allocated to date out of this new money.

The Liberals are going to pat themselves on the back tonight and talk about old money. What we want to hear about is their promise and them fulfilling it.

We read in the media that direction has been given to ministers that new programs must be funded in part through cuts. This is alarming. It is incredibly short-sighted when it comes to mental health. It cannot happen here.

In 2011, a study commissioned by the Mental Health Commission of Canada estimated that the poor mental health of Canadians cost our economy at least \$50 billion annually, not including at least \$6 billion in lost productivity of workers. Therefore, I am hoping the government will make a commitment, especially on the eve of tomorrow's meeting with the premiers and the Prime Minister.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1845)

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni's continued work. I had an opportunity to visit the member's riding and I can tell us that it is a beautiful place with a very positive vibe and very great people, so I thank the member for raising this.

We are following through on measures to better protect the mental health of workers in federally regulated industries. Members can see that this commitment is not only reflected in the Minister of Labour's mandate letter, which states that the minister will move forward with and secure passage of amendments to the Canada Labour Code to include mental health as a specific element of occupational health and safety and to require federally regulated employers to take preventative steps to address workplace stress and injury. Also, we have taken concrete actions since the government has been in power, since 2015.

The steps we have taken to meet this commitment are numerous. We have moved forward on 10 days of paid sick leave for all federally regulated workers in Canada.

We recognize that mental health is health, period.

We have also worked closely with unions and employers to make sure that they understand our commitment to this question.

I had an opportunity to be in British Columbia this summer, talking with the building trades and the BC Federation of Labour. We had excellent dialogue on this very subject and they had some really good ideas, as well, that we are looking at incorporating.

We are also looking to push the right to disconnect in this new economy. We are going to prioritize the fight against violence and harassment at work.

Last week, in fact, the Minister of Labour ratified convention 190 of the International Labour Organization, which aims to fight violence and harassment at work in every jurisdiction around the world. We are leading this fight.

Addressing mental health is a complex issue and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. When it comes to changing policy and regulations, it takes a lot of research and consultation with stakeholders to get this issue right. That is exactly what we are doing.

We had consultations with stakeholders between the spring of 2020 and the fall of 2021, to get their views on how the Government of Canada can better support the mental health of federally regulated Canadian workers.

We held virtual engagement sessions with a number of key stakeholders and partners, including the Mental Health Commission of Canada and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. We met with the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, who are experts in this field.

We are engaged with indigenous partners, employers, unions and non-governmental organizations. We have also invited interested Canadians to provide feedback.

During our virtual sessions, we talked about various aspects, including barriers and, of course, solutions, solutions that went from clarifying legal requirements and increasing expertise to addressing the stigma and improving data and research.

In other words, work is well under way and we will continue to move forward to make mental health a priority for federally regulated Canadian workers.

Work is also ongoing to develop a right to disconnect policy, which would clarify the expectations around answering emails and texts outside of work hours. We can see that we have done a lot in this field.

We continue to be committed to Canadians and we are leading the way. I look forward to continue working with all parliamentarians, as we move forward on this important issue.

• (1850)

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague. I appreciate my colleague addressing workers and the needs of workers.

What I do not appreciate is that the government made a promise in 2021 to deliver a mental health transfer. It has not done that. Our overall health care spending on mental health is between 5% and 7%. In the OECD, the average is 12%. This is unconscionable, that it has not delivered. We need parity when it comes to mental health and physical health in our country. This is costing lives. It is unconscionable that it has delayed on this promise.

I do not want to have to drag everyone here at the end of the day. I do not want to drag us here. I do not want to drag the parliamentary secretaries here. I do not want to keep all the staff here late at night.

Every week I will continue to bring them back here until they deliver on their promise of a mental health transfer. It is costing lives. This is critical. I hope that tomorrow they deliver on the promise and I hope it is a historic day for all of us.

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his continued work in this area. I mentioned in my speech highlights of a few things that we have undertaken, but there certainly are more.

We are taking action to protect the rights and well-being of workers. This is a top priority for us. We are going to make sure we do things the right way. We are going to work in close collaboration with our partners and stakeholders, including the Mental Health Commission of Canada, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, and the federally regulated employers and labour groups, just to name a few.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

To get this right, we need to talk to people. We need to know about their lived experiences, the barriers they face and their perspectives. That is how we are going to get this right, and this is how we are going to move this important issue forward.

## CARBON PRICING

**Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, on November 22, 2022, I rose in the House and asked a question of the government linking taxes, carbon taxes in particular, with the rate of inflation we are experiencing in Canada. I used the example of Japan and the decisions they are making to address inflation in Japan versus the ones we are making here.

I got a response from the Associate Minister of Finance, the member for Edmonton Centre, which was more of a song and a dance than a reply. I hope I get a better response from the government tonight.

Let us address this. In November, Japan was experiencing 4.2% inflation. Canada, on the other hand, was experiencing 6.8% inflation. As a result of the inflation Japan was experiencing, it cancelled its increase to the carbon tax, which was expected to take effect in April of this year, but that has been cancelled. Canada, on the other hand, is increasing its carbon tax by 30%. Notably, Canada's carbon tax right now is \$50 per tonne, and it will rise to \$65 if the government continues on the path its on. Japan's carbon tax is about \$3 Canadian per tonne of carbon, so there is a significant difference between what we are doing here. We can see why inflation is much more of a problem in Canada.

Carbon tax this year is expected to bring in \$8.27 billion into Canada. Not to be undone, when pressed on the issue, the governor of the Bank of Canada actually admitted, after some study, that the carbon tax itself was contributing 0.4% to the inflation rate in Canada. Instead of 6.8%, without the carbon tax, we would have an inflation rate of 6.4%. That amount is going to increase by about 1.3 times, so about 0.52% of our inflation rate is going to be part and parcel of the carbon tax.

Let me bring home what that means. This summer we had oil prices rise. West Texas Intermediate, the grade we measure our oil by, was about \$110 per barrel in the world. That equated to about \$2.10 per litre filling up in Calgary. Think about the last time oil was that high. It was actually \$1.40 per litre, so it has gone up an extra 70¢ per litre. Part of that is inflation, and part of that is the price inflation. Apples to apples, it should be about \$1.72 per litre versus \$2.10. Where is the extra 40¢? I will tell colleagues. It is in the form of taxes on gas. It is excise taxes. It is carbon taxes. It is clean fuel taxes.

I know the narrative on the other side is going to tell me that *x* per cent of the economists around the world believe that a carbon tax is the most effective way of pricing carbon and reducing carbon emissions. I could agree.

Let me ask this: If this is so, why are so many other taxation mechanisms required? There is the clean fuels standard; the clean electricity standard, which is on its way; emissions caps, some targeted at specific industries; vehicle mandates; and massive subsidization of chosen paths forward. This is billions of dollars that the

government is spending needlessly, and all of them are, by design, inflationary. This is inflation built upon inflation.

The savings of Canadians are at risk. The energy security of Canadians is at risk. Will the government come clean and provide Canadians clarity on what the future looks like in the designed inflationary spiral that it is designing here?

• (1855)

**Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, unfortunately, what the member for Calgary Centre failed to identify is something that has become quite obvious. Climate action is no longer a theoretical political debate, it is an economic necessity. A few months ago, the Parliamentary Budget Officer published an announcement showing that climate change has negatively impacted and will continue to negatively impact the Canadian economy. The reality is that we can lead the fight against climate change, and we can do it in a way that creates good-paying jobs and new businesses for Canadians from coast to coast.

Our government also understands and appreciates the fact that a national price on pollution is the most effective and the least costly way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Let us make it very clear that our price on pollution does not make life less affordable for the large majority of Canadians. In jurisdictions that do not have their own pricing system consistent with the federal benchmarks, such as Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, approximately 90% of the direct proceeds for the fuel charges that are being directly returned to the residents in those provinces through the climate action incentive payment are very significant.

In 2023, for instance, these increased payments mean a family of four will receive \$745 in Ontario, \$832 in Manitoba, \$1,101 in Saskatchewan and \$1,079 in Alberta. In addition, families in rural and small communities like mine are eligible to receive an additional 10%. Therefore, the reality is that most households are getting back more than they pay.

When it comes to the higher cost of living Canadians are dealing with, our government understands that it is difficult for many people to put food on the table. That is why we took action. We took action through many measures that were recently passed, including making life more affordable through the doubling of the GST, through dental and rental relief, through our child care plan. I am on the phone all the time with my constituents who tell me it is making a real difference.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

On inflation, there is some good news. In Canada, it was 8.1% in June and now it is down to 6.3%. While that is still high, it is lower than what we have seen in many of our peer countries. For example, in the United States, just south of the border, it is 6.5%. In the euro area, it is 9.2%. In the United Kingdom, it is 10.5%. Still, inflation at 6.3% in Canada is too high, in my opinion, and we continue to take measures to help reduce it.

While the targeted investments we made to support Canadians and our economy through the pandemic have meant Canada has experienced a strong rebound like no other from the pandemic recession, we do understand that the coming months will continue to be difficult times for many Canadians, for our families, for our friends and for our neighbours, and that is why we continue to support Canadians who need it most when they need it: right now.

I spoke about some of our measures. For instance, our affordability plan has been providing up to \$12.1 billion in new supports, with many measures continuing in 2023, to help make life more affordable for millions of Canadians. Just on the GST credit, which we are doubling for six months, this is delivering \$2.5 billion in additional targeted support to roughly 11 million individuals and families. Many of them are seniors and young people who are getting that relief right now.

● (1900)

**Mr. Greg McLean:** Madam Speaker, I said the member was going to talk about the price on pollution and how everybody agrees that is the way to go forward here, except when we are addressing inflation. There are certain mechanisms that the government has tools to address. It is going to have to choose which path it is going to take, but inflation is a real concern for all Canadians.

I will also point out to the member that inflation is measured differently in different jurisdictions. If people believe that our inflation rate is lower in Canada than the United States, they should look at the way we measure it versus the way it is measured in the United States. They will find that housing deflation is the difference between the two. There actually is lower inflation in the United States. However, we do measure it, and I appreciate him reading the statistics that say we are lower. In fact, we are not, though.

The member did talk about the Parliamentary Budget Officer. If he is going to talk about the Parliamentary Budget Officer, he is going to have to pay attention to his other report that says the carbon tax is costing Canadians a lot more than he is giving it credit for. This is a problem that needs to be considered in his inflation adjustments and we have to address it going forward.

I do not want more narrative. Let us address the—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Terry Sheehan:** Madam Speaker, our support is targeted and fiscally responsible. Our government wants to help Canadians get through this challenging economic time marked by high inflation. That is why we are continuing to provide inflation relief, through our affordability plan and other targeted measures, to Canadians who need it the most: the most vulnerable. Canadians can count on us to continue supporting those who need it while also

carefully managing our finances and protecting our environment. That is what Liberals do best.

## HEALTH

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, last week, I found out that the government spent \$6.7 million in fiscal year 2022 to house 10 people at a Calgary area quarantine hotel, which works out to about \$670,000 per person. I asked a very simple question in the House: Was anyone fired for this? The government did not even acknowledge that this was a problem. I want to say why this is a problem, just so that, before I ask the question again, my colleague opposite understands.

First of all, fiscal year 2022, which was April 2022 onwards, was after most of the world had already lifted virtually all COVID restrictions. This was after the Government of Canada and most provincial governments and municipalities had eased COVID restrictions. This was after the government's own panel of experts said that the quarantine hotel was not necessary. This was after months of the government refusing to show any data that home quarantine could not provide the same capacity of preventing the spread of COVID that hotel quarantine did. There was no justification for this expense.

This expense was incurred even though the government had the option to end the contract with these hotels with a 30-day notice period. It did not end these contracts until after this outrageous amount of money had been spent. To me, this boils down very simply to an incompetent government that is not doing its job. It is not monitoring public expense, and at a time when inflationary spending is creating a cost of living crisis, every penny counts. The government cannot afford to be spending the same price as a beautiful two-bedroom home five minutes away from this hotel on a program that there is no justifiable reason to have. There was no justification to spend that amount of money, particularly in fiscal year 2022.

When I asked the question in the House, and I remember it vividly, the minister did not even say, "This was a problem and we should have ended it. I am looking into it to make sure this is not happening in other hotels, and I assure the Canadian public we want to be good stewards of tax dollars. I will fire somebody over this. Somebody deserves to be fired over allowing waste like this to happen."

In the ensuing week since this exchange happened, we found out that it was not just happening at this one Calgary hotel. There were dozens of hotels across the country where this type of waste happened in fiscal year 2022 after COVID restrictions had been lifted.

I am just going to ask my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, the question again: Has somebody been fired over this waste?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

● (1905)

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to come here to night to talk about some of the measures the government took earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the health and safety of Canadians. My friend and colleague opposite is doing her job well, and I appreciate that. I want to thank her for doing her job well. She knows that I do not work in HR, so I cannot comment on any specifics in regard to people's employment, but I can speak to some of the measures we took throughout the pandemic to keep Canadians healthy.

[*Translation*]

Our government consistently worked to protect Canadians by adapting our response to COVID-19 based on the latest science and evidence.

In fact, experts say that without our public health measures and vaccines, 30.7 million more Canadians would have contracted the virus, 1.85 million of those people would have been hospitalized and 700,000 would have died.

[*English*]

These are some numbers that are truly troubling. Gratefully, we did not get to the worst-case scenario.

The Public Health Agency of Canada had arrangements with hotels as part of their designation as quarantine facilities under the Quarantine Act, and these facilities were there as an important measure to stop the spread and to save lives. At present day, there are no designated quarantine facilities in operation in Canada. These facilities were part of our overall efforts to reduce and manage risk.

The various waves were very unpredictable. Nobody knew when they were coming. Over 22,000 travellers were admitted to designated quarantine facilities between March 22, 2020, and September 30, 2022. The costs associated with the program were not just for the rooms. There was lodging, meals, security, transportation and all sorts of public health measures. Several other countries that had quarantine hotels for travellers, such as New Zealand and Hong Kong, as well as Australia, some of those continued their programs well into 2022.

Our government has always worked to protect Canadians. We have adapted our COVID-19 response based on the latest science and evidence. Designated quarantine facilities met public health guidelines for the purposes of accommodating travellers to quarantine as required by emergency orders under the Quarantine Act.

It was a huge challenge for everybody in Canada and around the world over those couple of years, but we did our best to stand up for Canadians and make sure that there was a safe place for them to go when they got back home after a trip.

Once again, I want to thank my friend and colleague for doing her work, and for her diligence. I would be glad to take a rebuttal.

● (1910)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner:** Madam Speaker, that \$670,000 a person on 10 people, that happened after restrictions had been lifted, long after restrictions had been lifted. This program should have been cancelled. The government should have phoned the hotels and said that we cannot afford to waste the same amount of money it would cost to gift a family who is struggling with a house. Nobody did that.

It cost our country millions and millions of dollars, unnecessarily. It could have been used on health care. It could have been used on anything else. It was flat out waste. Somebody needs to be held to account for it.

My colleague said he is not HR, that he cannot say he would be fired. Does he at least agree that someone should be fired for wasting this money? Will he commit to holding his government to account to make sure there are consequences for its waste?

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden:** Madam Speaker, I have to say I appreciate my colleague's work, and I have appreciated her work over the last couple of years. She has been a really unique voice of reason from the other side. There have been some times when we have really had to shake our heads and say, "My gosh, what are people reading on the Internet?"

Just recently, the former leader of the Conservative Party did an interview. With respect to his caucus, he described that a bunch of them were spending a lot of time on the Internet. He said, "There was a section that went right down the rabbit hole of COVID—Ivermectin, the whole nine yards."

I am glad that group does not include my friend from Calgary Nose Hill. She has been an extraordinarily rational and cogent voice in the House throughout the pandemic, and I thank her for her work in holding the government to account.

Our government remains committed to evolving our public health response as situations change, and as public health demands change, we will adapt to the needs of Canadians and apply appropriate measures at the border and monitor compliance with public health measures to prevent infection and to ensure that we continue to be a safe country for—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Unfortunately, that is the end of the time.

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:12 p.m.)





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