



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

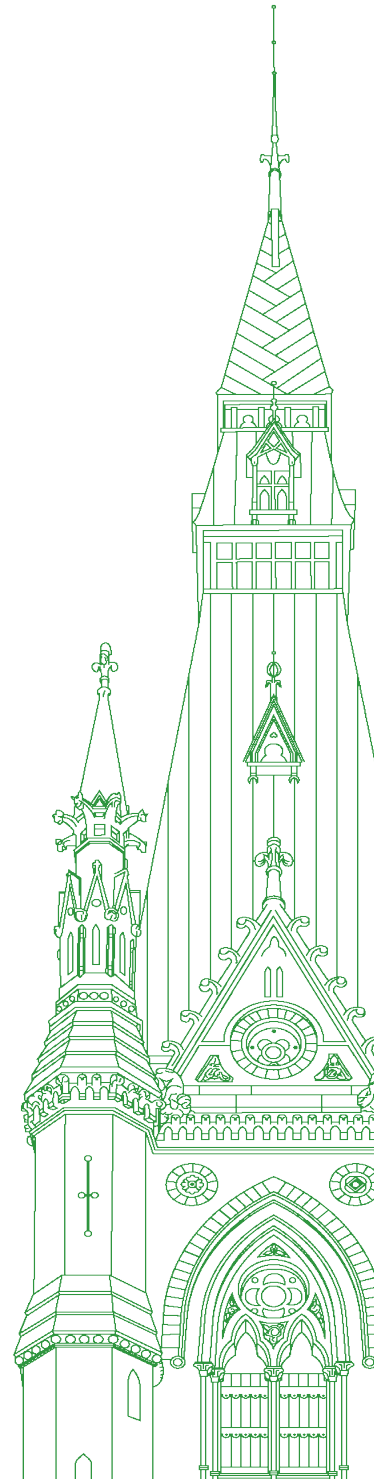
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 170
Tuesday, March 21, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to inform the House that yesterday during question period, I misspoke when I said the leader of the official opposition was offered a briefing on foreign electoral interference. What I meant to say was that the leader of the official opposition had stated publicly that he would refuse such a briefing on classified information.

I apologize for the confusion.

* * *

CANADIAN OMBUDSPERSON FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTERPRISE

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the annual report on activities from 2021 to 2022, as prepared by the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, the whips of the recognized parties be allowed to submit to the Acting Clerk of the House, before March 31, 2023, a list of members that have not voted and should be considered as paired for divisions Nos. 218 to 256, and that the parliamentary record be amended accordingly.

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

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the fourth report of the Standing Committee on International Trade, presented on Thursday, February 9, be concurred in.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

How did we end up with this report from committee so that we are here today talking about it? Well, I will give a bit of background.

We signed a trade agreement in 2020, which was CUSMA. This was almost three years ago. That agreement specifically stated that we would not allow goods made with forced labour to be imported into Canada on their own or through supply chains. I have been very curious as to the progress made with respect to this file.

The Minister of International Trade came to committee, and I had the opportunity to ask her what progress had been made, in particular with respect to goods seized from the Xinjiang region of China. As we know, there are real challenges with the goods being made in the People's Republic of China.

I had an exchange with the minister. I asked her, “Have any shipments been seized as a result of this at the Canadian border? Do you track that?” Her response was, “I believe that there have been.” She then went on to talk about some bills and other things.

I also asked, “is the department keeping track of any of this? Are there any numbers that...[you] can release to this committee?” She did not have any numbers to give to me but finally said, “Absolutely, I am working very hard with the Minister of Labour and with my colleagues to ensure that we do have the mechanisms in place to live up to this important [thing].” She went on to say, “What I am saying is that the commitment by the Canadian government to ensure that there is no forced labour in our supply chain is real and that we are working on it.”

Routine Proceedings

This prohibition started in 2020, and the minister is saying in 2023 that she is working very hard on it and believes we received some shipments. As a result of that, I asked an Order Paper question, and members might be very surprised at the answer. My Order Paper question was this:

With regard to government measures to stop the importation of goods made using forced Uyghur labour in China, since 2016: (a) how many times have such goods been intercepted or seized at points of entry by the Canada Border Services Agency or the RCMP; and (b) what are the details of each instance....

I asked about the description of goods, quality, estimated value and so on. Members would be shocked to know the answer that came back was absolutely nothing. There was zero, zip, zilch. In three years, the government has not been able to seize a single shipment made by forced labour from the Xinjiang region of China. It is a shocking abdication of responsibility. The Minister of International Trade has done absolutely nothing on this in the past three years.

If we want to look at CBSA, the Minister of Public Safety has also completely abdicated his responsibility on this. It has seized absolutely nothing. One might ask what the problem is and say this is probably a complicated thing. Well, guess what. It is not.

Over the same period of time, the United States has seized more than 1,400 shipments. It is taking this seriously. It is living up to its obligations in CUSMA. The United States has seized 1.3 billion dollars' worth of goods over this period of time and what has Canada done? It has done absolutely nothing. It is all talk, no action, not only on this but on virtually any file we want to talk about with the government. However, this is an important one.

The Liberals are going to say that it is really difficult to do this and that it is hard to figure out where goods comes from. Right. It is very hard, but guess what. The United States has put together an entity list, which is a list of companies that are very clearly using forced labour in their supply chains or directly for the manufacture of their goods. That list is publicly available, and I have the entire list right here. If it is so difficult, the minister could cut and paste it, but I know that is hard. The Minister of International Trade has time to approve a very lucrative contract for her friend, but what she does not have the time to do is cut and paste the entity list the United States has created as a result of our trade agreement.

● (1005)

I know we all have to make priorities. A former member of this place, Mr. Dion, once asked, "Do you think it's easy to make priorities?" I suspect that this attitude has leaked into the current government. Cutting and pasting is a very difficult thing to do.

About 1.4 billion dollars' worth of goods was seized from the United States, and there was zero from Canada. This is embarrassing. The Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of International Trade have completely abdicated their responsibilities on this file, and no matter what they say, there is no excuse because there is an easy-to-use list. The United States is not the only one that has a list. There are all kinds of organizations around the world that have done investigations into this, and they have produced lists.

How is it that we cannot give a similar list to CBSA and say that goods coming from these companies must be intercepted at the border? I do not know. I think it would take about 10 minutes. In fact, I

would be happy to table this document so the minister can pick it up, get someone to type it up and send the instructions to CBSA. I know it is hard work being in government, but members are not willing to do any of that hard work.

This problem is not getting better, but bear in mind that the government has done absolutely nothing on it. When I say "nothing", I mean nothing. I got back my Order Paper question, and it has done nothing. As a report by World Vision says, "Unfortunately, Canada is a significant contributor to [the] global problem" of using child and forced labour in supply chains. "As this report reveals, Canada imported nearly \$48 billion in risky goods in 2021". It goes on to say that that represents a nearly 30% increase since 2016.

Talk about being asleep at the wheel. I mean, the government is not even at the wheel, and the problem is getting worse all the time. I do not understand what it will take for the Liberals to spur themselves to action. I have asked the minister at committee about this, and there have been questions on it in the House of Commons.

Again, I go back to the fact that it is not all that complicated. The United States has published a list and acted quickly. However, it did not just publish a list; it also passed legislation. On December 23, 2021, President Joe Biden signed into law the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act, "which bars the importation into the United States of products made from forced labor in the Xinjiang region of China."

I became a lawyer because I am not very good at math, but this is almost two years later, in December 2021. What has the government done? Has a single piece of legislation been passed? No. Has it given instructions to CBSA to seize goods from the known list of entities? No. What is even more glaring is that at one point, in an article that talked about this, CBSA said it had seized one shipment to say it was doing something. However, the answer to my OPQ says it has seized absolutely nothing. Actually, I apologize. I said it did not do anything and that was incorrect. It put out an advisory for Canadian businesses doing business in the Xinjiang region. Stop the presses. There were two advisories saying they should check their supply chains.

"Hear, hear!" for the hard work that was done by the government on this file. The government should be absolutely ashamed of what it has done on it. It should be embarrassed by the lack of action it has taken. The Minister of International Trade should be embarrassed because she has done nothing. The Minister of Public Safety should be ashamed as well. They have done absolutely nothing.

This takes very little work. The United States is a trusted partner, and it is part of our Five Eyes intelligence network. If it has published a list of companies using forced labour and seized 1.4 billion dollars' worth of goods, we can do the same thing, but the government has not done it. I would like to know why.

Routine Proceedings

• (1010)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I see the Conservatives are up to their mischievous ways in moving concurrence of a report. I am not surprised, I must say. I understand the New Democrats were also proposing to bring forward a concurrence motion. I think that was fairly widely known. The members across the way know how to use the rules of the chamber to trump what the NDP was hoping to do today.

My question to the member is not to marginalize the importance of the issue of labour and the exploitation of labour, which has been an issue not only the last few years but also for many years, even under Stephen Harper. We will recall Stephen Harper, the former prime minister, and the scary days of the Harper regime. It has gotten even scarier within the Conservative Party, as it has turned an even harder right.

Can the member indicate to us what it is that Stephen Harper did to address the concerns he has raised?

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I would like to know what Laurier did. How far do we go back in time for the Liberals to justify their abysmal lack of action?

That was the member's response. His response could have been, "The member makes a great point. We are going to get back to the drawing board. Why does he not give me the list? We will get it to CBSA, and we are going to get it done."

Instead, he asked what a prime minister who governed the country eight years ago did. Talk about being morally bankrupt on such an important issue. The member should be ashamed for asking that question.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulo, BQ): Madam Speaker, as members know, I was a history teacher. One of the biggest fears of historians—something I do not claim to be since I just taught the subject, which is a tough enough job—is to see the mistakes of the past being repeated.

Regardless of who was or was not there or which party was in office, the reality is that we should have long since stopped using the services of people who are underpaid and exploited. We should have had the ethical fibre not to use services from countries that underpay their workers.

I would like to know what solutions my colleague would propose to finally ensure our practices are ethical.

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, I thank the Bloc members on committee who voted for this motion.

A very simple first step would be to take the list of entities that the United States has done the research on. It has said that it very clearly knows that these companies are involved in the use of forced labour. This is just with respect to the Xinjiang region of China. We can look at other parts of the supply chain, of course.

They could take that list today. As I have said, we are prepared to table it. The members could walk it over to the respective ministers and tell them that it is a well-researched list and to give it to CBSA to say that any goods from the companies on the list will be automatically seized because we know they are using forced labour. It is a very simple solution. They could do it quickly and have it in place within a couple of days. I just do not understand why they will not.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the question of the use of forced labour in our supply chains is a very important question, and I am glad we are debating it, but it also raises the question of the huge level of exploitation we have seen through the myth that globalization could lead a race to the bottom and we would all be better off.

I would refer my colleague to the Joe Fresh brand, the cheap clothing sold by Loblaws. When a building collapsed, killing over 1,000 people in those sweatshops in Bangladesh, Loblaws paid out the equivalent of 150 bucks per person killed due to the negligence, yet when workers attempted to get their rights heard in a Canadian court, Loblaws and Joe Fresh walked free. They were not responsible for what was happening because they had outsourced this misery to a third world jurisdiction.

We have to have standards in Canada. We have a right to ensure that what we buy is sourced ethically. I would ask my hon. colleague if the Conservatives are willing to look at changes to the laws to make sure that these kinds of practices are not allowed to go on without accountability measures.

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Madam Speaker, we absolutely have to look at the use of forced labour, not only in the Xinjiang region of China but also, of course, in any of our supply chains. We have to be willing to work with any party in Parliament to try to get some progress on this.

I would say a good first step would be, if the Liberals will not take a copy of the list, maybe the member from the NDP could walk it over to them. They could copy and paste it, and we would at least have a good start.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this important topic, and I want to recognize the work of my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon, our shadow minister for trade, who is thinking very much about how to not only advance Canada's economic interests in trade, but also apply moral values and principles to the approach we take to trade and the importation of products.

Routine Proceedings

When most Canadians think about slavery, they think of history. They think of stories they have heard or read, or movies they have seen, about the Underground Railroad, the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade, the American Civil War, and figures such as Abraham Lincoln and William Wilberforce. These are important things for us to learn about from our past to understand the ongoing legacies and harms that resulted from that violence.

However, we need to also immediately associate the reality of slavery with the contemporary experience. The ongoing reality is that there are people, many people, in our world today who are enslaved, who are forced to work against their will without pay, or without proper pay, and who are compelled into those positions as a result of various forms of disadvantage, in many cases because of their ethnic identity. As well, we have trading relationships with countries that are involved in the horrors of modern-day slavery.

When we reflect on the injustices of the past and wonder how people allowed that to happen or why people were so indifferent, we need to then pull that reality up to today and ask why we are not doing more. It was not everyone, but many people were so indifferent to the horrors that were happening around them at those times. We need to ask why today we are not more seized with the reality of modern day-slavery and with the actions we need to take in order to respond.

A few years ago, I visited Whitney Plantation, and it was a powerful exposition of the horrors of slavery as it existed in the United States in the past. It is very important for all of us to bring that reality forward and recognize the continuing horrors of slavery today.

There are limits to what those of us in Canada, whether we as Canadian parliamentarians or members of the Canadian public, can do to respond to these horrors, but at a minimum, we should be setting a firm standard of not being complicit. That is, we should be doing everything within our power to not be in any way supporting or enabling the practice of slavery around the world. That includes firmly saying no to the importation of any products made from slave labour.

I think there would be agreement in the House on the principle that we should not be purchasing products made from slave labour, but the problem has been the complete absence of will on the part of government to implement this. As my colleague said, we have seen no shipments of products from the Uighur region in China stopped as a result of slave labour. There was one case of a shipment that was stopped and then subsequently released.

We can compare that level of enforcement to the much stronger levels of enforcement we have seen in the United States and other countries. Any time we have a significant gap of enforcement on an issue in Canada, and we can say a similar thing about foreign interference, frankly, and there are high levels of enforcement, such as shipments being stopped and people being arrested or expelled for spying, etc. in other countries, then we need to ask if this is because Canada is not being targeted or if it is because Canada is not being effective in its enforcement.

We should not have a situation where ships containing products made from slave labour are told they cannot dock in Seattle but

then have the same ships with the same products dock in Vancouver. That is not, in any way, morally acceptable.

Let us acknowledge as well that international supply chains are complicated. Saying as a moral absolute that we should not be importing products made from slave labour is something I hope we can all agree on, but figuring out the systems and processes that are going to get us there is potentially challenging and complicated. However, what my colleague has said, and rightly so, is that we should simply work with the Americans to collaborate and align our enforcement, using the information and research they have already gathered. That would make the enforcement process much simpler.

• (1020)

I would like to see us go further than that. I would like to see us gathering together like-minded partners from around the world to ask if we can have a common standard, as well as common tools of enforcement to keep out products made from slave labour.

Given the research and analysis that is required, if we can have a group of like-minded partners, G7 countries, or perhaps others, saying that we will all work together to ensure the effective enforcement of rules around keeping out products made from forced labour, then it would be less resource-intensive for us to do that work. We could simply say that, if an analysis has been done collectively among allies or by a trusted agency within a country that says that there is a high risk that particular products were produced with slave labour, then those products will not be able to be sold in any of the partner countries working together on this common frame. I think that makes sense from a moral perspective and follows up with our moral obligations.

It also makes sense from practical and resource perspectives. Why would we have a different assessment from our partners and allies on whether a particular product was made from slave labour? It has been encouraging to see in the United States, which is admittedly a highly partisan environment, issues surrounding forced labour have been effective cross-party collaborations between Republicans and Democrats. I would like to see that spirit prevail in this place as well, but it requires, I think, the government to listen and respond to the legitimate concerns that have been brought forward because, the government has done nothing so far.

We have, and I give due credit, a private member's bill from an individual member of the government that deals with a specific issue around disclosure, but we have not seen, contrary to promises that have been made, government legislation on some of the broader issues around forced labour and supply chains. We have not seen what many people are calling for, which is a specific targeted approach to some of these extreme hot spots of forced labour.

In some cases, we see forced labour happening in ungoverned or less governed places. It happens outside of the law, without the official sanction of the state involved but, notably, in the case of the Uighur region in China, we see forced labour happening in a way that is coordinated as part of a genocide of the Uighur people, a genocide the House has recognized, but that the government has still failed to recognize.

When we have a state-directed genocide associated with forced labour, surely we should have a targeted approach to that specific region. I have said many times before that I support a framework that aligns with the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in the United States, which presumes that products that come out of the Uighur region have forced labour involved in those products, unless it can be proven otherwise. If it can be proven otherwise, they are okay, but it is reasonable to presume that products coming out of that region have a very high risk of forced labour, so we should just say no to products coming out of that region, unless we can prove otherwise.

If we were to adopt measures like this, it would strengthen that alignment, that opportunity for shared enforcement, among allies.

I would continue to call on the government to benefit from the work that is being done in other countries. This is a case where it is acceptable to copy someone else's homework. When the work is being done in other countries, we can be more effective in our enforcement of keeping products made from forced labour out if we simply work with our allies.

In closing, I would submit this: If slavery were still going on in an industrial scale in North America, if there were still plantations in the southern United States, we would not be comfortable importing cotton or other products that came from those plantations. We would say no in that particular case. We should say no, as well, in the case of slavery happening in China or other parts of the world, and we should be effective in aligning our enforcement with our allies to get that done.

• (1025)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments and those of his colleague. This is an important issue that we are debating today.

With respect to the Xinjiang integrity declaration, it is about a broader examination of what is going on in China, particularly with respect to one community, the Uighur community.

On the issue of Chinese human rights violations, it is articulated quite clearly in the Indo-Pacific strategy, which our government launched last November. It talks about being clear, open-eyed and transparent about calling out human rights violations against Tibetans, Hong Kong democracy dissenters, Taiwanese individuals and Uighurs.

Does the member acknowledge that this is an important step in the right direction, vis-à-vis more accountability and transparency for China?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think I did a panel with my hon. friend precisely on the Indo-Pacific strategy. I told him, at the time, that the Indo-Pacific strategy sounds, in certain respects, like the Liberals are trying to talk like Conservatives, but they are still acting like Liberals.

This is the problem. If we read the Indo-Pacific strategy, sure, there are some pieces in there where Tibetans are mentioned and that is good, and Uighurs are mentioned and that is good. There are

Routine Proceedings

a few things in there that we can nod along to, but in terms of the substance of what the government has done, before and since it released that strategic document, the government is not following through.

What I care much more about, and what Uighurs care much more about than what is written in a strategic document, is whether products made with slave labour are being prevented from getting into Canada. That is what really matters, and the rubber has not hit the road.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for his speech and I thank the member for Dufferin—Caledon for his leadership on this issue.

Obviously this raises a number of questions. Which companies and which type of products will be targeted? Will consumers be prepared to pay more? I think that goes without saying when it comes to human rights, but at the end of the day, will consumers be aware of the choices they have to make? Will this have an impact on Canadian companies and their suppliers? Are we prepared to make these choices? I would like my colleague's thoughts on this.

There may also be a connection with Bill S-211, which is currently at third reading stage in the House after passing all the steps in the process in the Senate. Will Bill S-211 provide answers to the motion being moved and debated today?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. It is a pleasure to work with the Bloc on these issues.

As for Bill S-211, as I was saying, I believe that this bill is positive. It helps in achieving certain objectives, but it does not encompass everything that needs to be taken into account. There are several other measures to bring in. I had asked the government to do more in order to achieve these objectives. I will vote in favour of this bill, but the story does not end there.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, if one wants to deal with slave labour products, all one has to do is walk through any shopping mall. It has been identified that 83 major brands are tied to slave labour, like Abercrombie & Fitch, Adidas, Carter's, The Gap, Bosch, Calvin Klein, General Motors, Google and Dell.

We have seen the reports. We know where these corporations are. Is it about working with our allies or simply saying, in Canadian law, that if a corporation is selling products in Canada from slave labour, it will be held accountable? I imagine that if we actually put laws in place to deal with that, the companies would up their standards. Right now, they are getting a free pass and it is not acceptable.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I share the hon. member's criticism of many of these companies. Frankly, they talk a good game when it comes to corporate social responsibility or community engagement in North America, but they completely fail to apply those principles in other countries. Some of the companies, for example, were very happy to talk about Black Lives Matter in North America, but they were not in China saying that Uighur lives matter. It was very clear, with many of these corporations, that if they were sincere about questions of racial justice and inclusion, for instance, they would understand that it is a global obligation to talk about these issues, not simply an obligation to talk about them in particular consumer markets where the discussion of those issues is more appreciated, as opposed to other places, where it would have been detrimental to their business to actually be focusing on these issues.

We need to hold governments, as well as corporations, accountable, but I think it has to come down to enforcement. The government, in order to stop slave labour, has to stop these products from coming into Canada.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an important issue, as I mentioned in my earlier intervention, that is being discussed today, and it was raised at the trade committee prior to this.

When we talk about the Xinjiang integrity declaration, we are speaking about the issues regarding goods whose provenance originates in a particular part of the People's Republic of China, known by locals as East Turkestan and by the PRC government as Xinjiang. The notion of the integrity declaration is to ensure that the provenance of goods that are coming from that particular area does not originate in forced labour or even slave labour, as has been mentioned by some members opposite, specifically on the part of Uighurs. This is a significant concern, not just for the Government of Canada but for our allies and many liberal and democratic nations around the planet, as it should be. I think the awareness of Canadians and folks around the planet has been accentuated in recent years with the rise of more strident policies on the part of the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party of China.

That is the scope of what we are discussing right now. It is about the declaration itself and what actions are being taken under the declaration.

In order to contextualize the discussion, we need to understand the evolving approach to the People's Republic of China itself. The People's Republic of China is under President Xi, who, as we speak, is visiting with Vladimir Putin, of all people, in an effort to address and shore up the alliance between Putin and Xi. That is a cause of concern for all right-thinking and democratically oriented governments around the planet, particularly those that oppose an illegal and unjustified invasion.

That gives us a sense of where President Xi is in terms of overtly aligning himself with the policies of Vladimir Putin. Those policies include policies of aggression. We are seeing Putin's aggression vis-à-vis Ukraine. We are seeing an aspiring, more aggressive, imperial-based Chinese policy, in terms of potential ambitions with respect to the island of Taiwan, the way China has treated Tibetans in

the last 63 years, and the treatment that is being meted out toward Uighurs.

With respect to our policy as a government and as a Parliament regarding this part of China and the position we are taking, I would say we need look no further than the things that have been passed on the floor of this chamber. I am speaking of a motion, about 12 to 18 months ago, with respect to labelling what is transpiring in Xinjiang with the Uighurs as a genocide. That is a very significant conclusion to be drawn by parliamentarians. It is something that parliamentarians voted on in this chamber, and it is an accurate depiction, if the evidence is borne out from what we have thus far. We know that those factual elements that have been laid out, if proven, would demonstrate genocide in terms of international law. That is a significant aspect to consider.

About six weeks ago, we passed yet another motion, entirely unanimously, in this chamber to again address the Xinjiang region. What I am speaking of is a policy and a motion that was presented by the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, if I have that correct, who is also the chair of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. It is the idea that, with respect to Xinjiang, what we need to be doing as a government and as a nation is ensuring that individuals who are fleeing that type of persecution have a safe haven here in Canada, and bringing as many as 10,000 Uighurs to this country by 2024. That is a very significant step in the right direction in terms of taking a position as a Parliament and as a government toward the human rights violations that are occurring in the Xinjiang region.

Members heard me outline in my original intervention that we have also taken a very significant orientation shift with respect to our foreign policy. I am talking about the Indo-Pacific strategy. We can talk about what the Americans are doing with their Indo-Pacific economic framework, the IPEF, as it is called in the United States. Canada, the United States and many other nations are veering their orientation and foreign policy that is geared toward Asia away from China and its strident, aggressive policies, including its human rights violations, and toward other nations. The Indo-Pacific strategy is a classic example of that.

● (1035)

Why do I raise this in the context of Xinjiang? It is because the Indo-Pacific strategy speaks directly to this very issue. What am I speaking of? There are several pages dedicated to Canada's eye-wide-open understanding and approach to China as a strident and more assertive, disruptive nation. What the Indo-Pacific strategy outlines is that with respect to China, what we will do is be more clear, articulate and transparent about holding China accountable for various human rights violations.

Routine Proceedings

I am speaking of the Tibetan Canadians whom I represent and their Tibetan counterparts who remain in the Tibet Autonomous Region, and the human rights violations that have occurred since 1959, and before 1959, with respect to that community for the last 64 years. That is important to underscore in terms of their religious freedom, linguistic freedom and cultural freedom. We are talking about things such as Hong Kong democracy protesters and what has been transpiring over the last two or three years in terms of Hong Kongers daring to rise up and speak out against legislative policy that would restrict their freedom of expression. We are talking about individuals, such as those on the island of Taiwan, who fear for their physical safety and their survival as an independent nation among the community of nations. We are talking about Uighurs who come from East Turkestan, also referred to as Xinjiang by the People's Republic of China, and their rights to physical safety, religious freedom, cultural freedom and cultural liberties, of which they are being deprived in the People's Republic of China as we speak.

Those positions, those components are articulated in our Indo-Pacific strategy, and I think that is important because it shows the orientation of the government vis-à-vis China, and Xinjiang in particular.

Some of the contributions to the debate thus far by the members opposite have included criticisms, indeed in some respects accusations, that the Government of Canada is not raising these concerns with sufficient alacrity, sufficient clarity or sufficient repetitiveness or comprehensiveness, including in international dialogue. Nothing could be further from the case. I know with absolute clarity that the issue of Chinese human rights violations, whether it is with respect to Uighurs, Tibetans or Hong Kong democracy protesters, is articulated at every instance and at every available opportunity by representatives of the Government of Canada, including at bilateral and multilateral meetings, and multilateral forums.

I will give a case-in-point example in which I participated. In February, the OECD held an annual forum on responsible business conduct, which is exactly what we are talking about in this context, and that is about the conduct and comportment of enterprises that operate outside of one's borders. At that forum, I was there as the head of the Canadian delegation, representing the Minister of International Trade, and I went to specific lengths to articulate the positions we are taking as the Canadian government with respect to responsible business conduct. I articulated, specifically, references to the Indo-Pacific strategy and the very Xinjiang integrity declaration that is the subject of this morning's discussion. That prompted a very strong and firm response by the Chinese delegation that was present at those Paris meetings, who effectively indicated as follows.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

They told me, in good French, that I was telling lies.

[*English*]

They indicated that I was effectively lying about the state of play in the People's Republic of China.

I was not lying when I was articulating, in an open international forum at the OECD, China's track record of violating the human rights of Uighurs, Tibetans and others, particularly with respect to people who originate from Xinjiang. The fact that those instances are being articulated by the Canadian government should give some comfort to those in this chamber who would argue that we need to be doing more of this. We are doing it. We will continue to do it. We will continue to do it in as many forums as possible.

We have to understand the approach toward Xinjiang within the broader context of our approach to labour issues. This has come up about forced labour in the supply chains, a critical issue. The issue of potential slave labour being in supply chains is also a very critical issue. Canadians need look no further than the mandate letters, which we publish as a government, that are given by the Prime Minister to different members of cabinet.

Canadians who are watching right now could look clearly at the mandate letter that has been provided to the Minister of Labour. The Minister of Labour's mandate letter articulates and provides a direction from the Prime Minister for him to work on a comprehensive piece of legislation that would work to eradicate forced labour from Canadian supply chains. That is something that the minister has been mandated to work on, something that he, his political team and his departmental team are working diligently on. That would include things such as a due diligence standard, standards that Canadian enterprises need to operate under, and also repercussions for transgressing those standards, including for not rooting out forced labour in supply chains.

We have heard a little about Bill S-211, which is being sponsored in this chamber by the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, who has served in this chamber for about seven terms. It originates in the other chamber, in the Senate, from Senator Miville-Dechéne.

Bill S-211 and the mandate given for government legislation to the Minister of Labour demonstrate our government's commitment to eradicating forced labour from our supply chains. While we are looking at this, it is also important to understand the international context, and the international context is a wide one.

In meetings at the OECD, I talked to the actual governmental representatives of about four different nations that have launched into this area of eradicating forced labour from supply chains. People talked to me quite candidly about what is working in northern Europe, what is working with respect to the U.K. Modern Slavery Act and where things could be tweaked.

They talked about how the Dutch, the Germans and the French, for example, are approaching it. These are important conversations that we are having, because what we seek to do with our legislation in Canada is to adopt an international best practice, to pick and choose what works in different jurisdictions and to improve on where there may be obstacles, errors or challenges that those other jurisdictions are coming up with.

Routine Proceedings

That is to indicate to Canadians who are watching today that the idea of eradicating forced labour in supply chains is an important one, but it is also a complex one in terms of getting it right. It dovetails with things such as the size of the company, what companies the due diligence standards apply to and what the penalties are on the back end with respect to those companies.

When we look at eradicating forced labour from our supply chains, we need to zoom out to see what we are doing to ensure proper and responsible business conduct. I will point to several things. We launched the responsible business conduct strategy in April 2022. On behalf of the Minister of International Trade, I was there to launch it with a whole host of civil society organizations. They were very keen to see what we were doing to ensure that Canadian entities working abroad are acting and behaving responsibly and that they are complying with the law and with Canadian values.

Those include things like an attestation clause, which is attached to our responsible business conduct strategy, for Canadian enterprises that are going to work abroad or in various parts of the planet. In order to avail themselves of things like the trade commissioner services and of the very hard-working Canadians who operate in 160 offices around the planet to help Canadian enterprises do business in all four corners of the globe, those entities need to attest formally, in documentation, that they will abide by Canadian values, norms and laws, and also abide by international norms, guidelines and statutes in the locations where they will be doing the work.

That is important and it should go without saying. However, by having a quid pro quo, meaning that without the attestation the entities do not avail themselves of trade commissioner services, we are putting teeth to the notion that Canadian enterprises must conduct themselves responsibly when they work abroad. These are very critical.

As part of the responsible business conduct strategy, we are also developing a due diligence standard, which also dovetails with the work that has been taking place at the Minister of Labour's offices.

There is also a whole host of legislative tools that we have implemented. The list of legislative resources is quite in-depth. We passed legislation that deals with the corruption of foreign officials. It should go without saying, but one cannot be engaged in corruption of foreign officials and in bribery acts when one is a Canadian entity operating abroad.

We passed legislation, the Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act, that deals with one of Canada's great fortes, which is our mining expertise and our mining know-how in Canadian mining operations operating abroad. In the extractive sector, there must be transparency that is informing the conduct at all times of Canadian entities that are operating abroad.

We passed the Customs Tariff Act amendment, which deals with the entities that would be brought into the country. Directly relevant to the issue that has been raised in today's debate, it is about goods that are being brought into the country and that they must abide by the Customs Tariff regulations and amendments. We put this in place to guard against human rights violations on the part of goods that are entering into the country.

We created the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise. We created this entity in our first Parliament as a government, circa 2018-19. This is the only office of its kind on the entire planet. To purport, as the members opposite have, that we are not showing leadership on responsible business conduct abroad is categorically false.

The creation of a Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise, whose annual report I tabled moments before this debate started this morning in this chamber, demonstrates what we are doing as a government. We put money where our mouth is to create, fund and staff that office with personnel so they can examine critically the conduct of Canadian enterprises abroad and the kinds of norms, rules and values that are being observed by those enterprises.

● (1045)

We heard interventions by the New Democratic member two or three times in this morning's debate about the garment industry. In regard to that, the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise, pursuant to her own mandate, initiated a study of the garment industry and Canadian enterprises operating in locations like Bangladesh. That is specifically the work that we feel needs to be done. It is being done right here in Canada, by virtue of legislation that we passed, in an office that we created and that we staffed. Again, this is the only country on the planet that has such an entity. That is critical initiative and critical leadership.

Regarding legislative initiatives, we also legislated UNDRIP and passed it. We have abided by UNDRIP, we have ratified UNDRIP and we have passed legislation that relates to UNDRIP. Why is UNDRIP related to issues of conduct abroad? One cannot deal with responsible business conduct abroad without understanding the impact enterprises have around the planet.

Let us pick a continent, such as Asia, South America or Africa. There are indigenous communities all over the planet affected by the conduct of Canadian enterprises. Let us pick a sector, such as the mining sector, the garment sector, etc. When indigenous communities are affected, we have responsibilities, pursuant to UNDRIP, that inform what can and cannot happen vis-à-vis those indigenous communities. Those communities can and should be availing themselves of the benefits from the resources being extracted from the wealth that is on their land. That is an important legislative component that has not been mentioned by the member opposite in raising this issue of debate.

There are also international commitments that we have not only led on, in terms of signing onto, but that we have also worked to further. I will just raise four. There are the UN guiding principles with respect to responsible business conduct. There are the OECD guidelines on responsible business conduct, which were the subject of the conference I attended in Paris in early February this year, regarding how businesses must comport themselves when they are operating abroad.

Routine Proceedings

My NDP friends will be keen to know that we are very active regarding international legal organization guidelines that dictate labour norms and labour conventions with respect to how businesses must operate and what kinds of protections they need to observe when they are operating abroad. We also have been in the forefront of advocating for sustainable development goals and meeting those sustainable development goals at an international level.

The last piece I will speak to is an industry component of industry leadership on the part of Canadian entities taking the reins themselves. I will point to, as one example, the Mining Association of Canada's "Towards Sustainable Mining". It is called the TSM initiative, in the vernacular in the industry. TSM is something that has been adopted by nine countries around the planet, so far. It is looking at adding four more.

At the PDAC conference that I just attended in Toronto, which is the biggest mining conference of its kind in the world, that initiative was touted by all of the nations that were there. Many nations were expressing interest in participating in it. This is to demonstrate to Canadians that there is not only a component of what good government is doing and what Parliament is doing, but there is also a component of what industry is doing to ensure that the conduct of its enterprises operating abroad is clear, accountable and transparent with respect to human rights.

Let me bring this back to the Xinjiang integrity declaration. One thing that I agree on with the members opposite in raising this issue of debate is that it is an important declaration and an important. Expedited work needs to be done with clarity on this issue and act on the declaration itself. That is an important initiative, and we need to show leadership not just in creating the declaration but also in acting on the declaration and working to ensure that goods coming in from that part of China are not tainted by the scourge of forced labour, including Uighur forced labour.

That is one of the reasons I decided to run for office and stand in the House eight years ago. It is about taking a human rights lens and applying it to the various policies of the Government of Canada. I felt that it was something that was sorely lacking in the previous government. I will acknowledge that some of the legislative measures, including, I believe, the issue about the extractive sector transparency measures, were enacted by the previous government, so there were some good initiatives made by the previous government.

Since 2015, we have taken that ball and moved it significantly forward by creating the CORE, creating the customs tariff amendment, passing UNDRIP and launching a new responsible business conduct strategy. That is the work I am committed to continuing, with the help of all parliamentarians in the House, to ensure that initiatives like the Xinjiang integrity declaration are fully fulfilled.

• (1050)

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, if my life is ever on the line and I have an untenable case, I am going to get in touch with the member, because he tried to take a lot of information to create a case that the Liberals have done something, when the absolute result is nothing. It is like writing a 20-page paper on a particular topic, getting an F, and the teacher says that the topic was something else, so of course I got an F.

The issue is whether the government has actually intercepted any goods made from the Xinjiang region of China where we know forced labour is being used. The answer to that is no. The member said the Liberals talked about it, that he went to a conference and he had a stern word with a representative for the PRC.

That is great, but the United States has created a rebuttable presumption that goods from the Xinjiang region are based on forced labour. It is rebuttable. If a company can prove the goods are not, they can come in. In addition, the U.S. has put together a list of entities they know, so it is two things that are going on.

This is not hard. It is really simple. I can give the member both of these things. Will the Liberals just do it? Will they take this list, put together the list and create the rebuttable presumption that goods from Xinjiang are being made with forced labour and therefore are not importable into this country? Will they do it?

• (1055)

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for starting this debate. I think the level of sarcasm in his intervention is beneath him as a parliamentarian, but I will put that aside.

With respect to the question that was raised, substantively, on the issue of this debate, it is important that we take evidence and information from all parties, whether that is the leadership that is being shown by the Americans, by the European allies or folks in the South Pacific, like Australia or New Zealand. It is important to aggregate as much information as possible, to learn what actions are being taken by other governments abroad and to see if we can work with that.

On the eve of, or a few days before, a visit by the President of the United States to this august chamber, I think it is incumbent upon us to be consulting with our American counterparts about this and many other issues, specifically as they relate to the Indo-Pacific.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. Essentially, businesses must be required to be more transparent about the efforts they make to eliminate child labour. Unfortunately, it exists everywhere. My colleague spoke about clothing manufactured in Bangladesh, but we also see it in food and protective equipment. Child labour is also used to make our computers.

The United States, France and several EU countries have stricter laws.

What does my colleague think of Canada's efforts to be stricter and to require greater transparency from businesses?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Bloc member. This type of question highlights the pervasiveness and complexity of the situation.

Routine Proceedings

We could talk about the fact that clothing is produced with cotton from Xinjiang, China. However, when we consider our computers, telephones and other goods, such as furniture, we should know these goods are all tainted by the scourge of child and slave labour around the world.

The complexity of the situation requires that we study the matter several times and develop, as the Minister of Labour is doing, a bill that applies to any region in the world and any type of product—not just clothing, but also computers and telephones, for example.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, there are a number of issues we have to talk about here, in terms of Canadian law and protecting those in the global south who are exploited through ruthless practices that are considered illegal here, whether or not it is slave labour in China.

I would ask my hon. colleague about the Joe Fresh disaster, where over 1,000 people died while working in sweatshops for Joe Fresh and Loblaws. Ontario courts threw out their attempt to be compensated and to hold the Canadian companies accountable for the conditions that existed in Bangladesh. It was just thrown out by the court. The people who suffered the horrific deaths, over 1,000 people in Bangladesh, were paid the equivalent of \$150 per family per death. That is outrageous.

We can talk about working with our allies, and we can talk about international agreements. However, we have a responsibility in Canada to say there is going to be a corporate accountability mechanism for the companies that use slave labour and they are going to be accountable. Those companies that offshore to the sweatshops that use brutal conditions, where people are suffering and dying, are going to be held accountable.

Is the government ready to take the steps necessary to make sure companies take responsibility for the abuses that are happening?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I have a couple of things in response to the member's question.

Obviously, I am not going to opine on the floor of the chamber about determinations made by an individual court in Ontario or at the federal level with respect to what is called the extraterritorial application of law, where the Bangladeshi laws can be enforced here in Canada. What I would say is that it is important to ensure that the responsibility and the accountability that attach to Canadian enterprises operating abroad renders them more accountable vis-à-vis potential human rights violations that occur abroad.

Where we can cure this is not by purporting to enforce Bangladeshi laws in Canadian courts, but by enforcing Canadian laws in Canadian courts. Where I find agreement with the member is with measures such as our Extractive Sector Transparency Measures Act, amendments to the Customs Tariff, UNDRIP, etc. Passing domestic laws in this chamber that relate to this issue, such as the forthcoming forced labour bill from the Minister of Labour, would ensure accountability for Canadian enterprises operating abroad in Canadian courts, which is the result I believe the member is after.

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, for decades, influential consulting firms have been telling companies, especially American and Canadian ones, to outsource their production to cut costs associated with wages and corporate social responsibility. That has led to massive job losses here, but also working conditions abroad that are worse than they were during the period from the 18th to the mid-20th century, in other words, since the start of the industrial age.

Obviously, we need to consider here how not to be complicit in forced labour. Is my colleague aware that the thirst for profits and the blind use of consultants on the sole basis of their reputation have had disastrous consequences for decades on workers' and human rights?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, I can say that we are all aware of the fact that there were serious threats to and serious violations of human rights around the world during the two centuries my colleague mentioned. We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that change is occurring in terms of rights, legislation and culture relating to human rights protection, here in Canada and especially elsewhere in the world.

That is what needs to be reinforced in our legislation, goals and principles, and that is what we will promote with the soon-to-be-tabled bill from the Minister of Labour. It is a rather complex but important issue because human rights must be protected and the kinds of violations to which the member is referring need to be eliminated.

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, previously the member for Dufferin—Caledon brought up the fact that an answer from the government to a written question, Question No. 1112, signed off by a parliamentary secretary, indicated that since 2016, CBSA has not actually seized any goods coming into Canada that were made through slave labour or forced labour. I listened carefully to the speech given by the parliamentary secretary, who did, indeed, do his very best to defend the government's record, but it has been seven years and no goods have been seized at the border. One shipment was stopped, but then released.

Can the parliamentary secretary simply answer this question: When can we expect the government to actually direct the CBSA to seize goods made through forced labour, as the Americans are doing?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, the mere fact of this debate, the issue that came up at committee, is important in terms of having a salutary impact on the behaviour of Canadian government institutions and raising this is an important priority on the part of the Parliament of Canada with respect to CBSA officials.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, Nicolas de Condorcet used to say that the truth belongs to those who seek it, not to those who claim to own it.

With that in mind, I welcome this motion, and I voted in favour of it when my Conservative colleague moved it in committee. For me, it is a step in the right direction, the beginning of something, a project. I am really glad the Conservatives have moved this motion. The last time I moved a motion to bring in a real due diligence policy seeking to pass it by unanimous consent, I heard a lot of howling from the opposition on my right. I use the word “right” in every sense of the word. I am glad the Conservatives finally woke up a bit, although it took a while.

I also moved a motion on mining companies. The Standing Committee on International Trade has completed its study on mining, but we have not yet adopted the report. We have not yet heard from the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development. When I moved my motion on the subject of mining, the Conservatives also opposed it, so I am pleased that they have come to their senses. It is better late than never, as they say.

I also want to thank the previous speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development. Recently, I was fortunate enough to go to Paris with him for the OECD summit, which focused on this particular issue. I am glad to see that the OECD and most countries are becoming aware of the problem. Unfortunately, this meeting turned into a bit of an exercise in one-upmanship. Everyone said they were taking this issue seriously and working hard in their communities to advance this cause. However, there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, as the expression goes.

This is a topic that resonates with me because I also tabled a petition in the House last spring, I believe, or early last summer, to bring in a meaningful due diligence policy. I have also co-sponsored bills. Bloc members never judge a bill by its cover. When a bill is good, we support it; when it is bad, we do not support it.

I have co-sponsored two NDP bills. The first is Bill C-262, which has yet to move past first reading. If we are serious about this issue, we need to get on it, we need to make this a priority. The second is Bill C-263, which seeks to establish an office of the commissioner in this matter because an office like that could act as an authority.

Let us take a step back in history. Once upon a time, there was colonization. We call many countries “developing” nations nowadays. They are southern nations, based on the old north-south divide. There used to be something called colonization. Colonial empires, or metropolises as they were called, wanted to get their hands on resources, so they went and took over other lands. They did not all go about it the same way. Some felt that the people on those lands, whom they considered inferior, needed to be civilized. Others took things even further: those people had to be exterminated, unfortunately.

For others still, colonization meant stripping these people of all power and reducing them to insignificance for as long as they did business with them. This was often the British colonization model. The people no longer had any political power, but the colonial powers would pretend that they did. They let them elect leaders with little power, local leaders from their own tribes. This gave them the illusion that they still had power over their lives, which was a complete lie. It was called indirect rule. Then decolonization happened, as we know.

Next came globalization. Starting in the 1980s, we were told that we needed to free up the multinationals and free up capital to ensure that it could be moved from one place to another, without borders, so that profits could be made, because all those profits would contribute to the common good. That was a very bad interpretation of the words of Adam Smith, who is credited with introducing the “invisible hand” theory. In reality, Adam Smith never came up with an invisible hand theory. The invisible hand is metaphor that he used three times to talk about different things. If we look at Adam Smith's work, we see that what he actually said is quite the opposite of what people took from his words in the 1980s and 1990s.

When the Berlin Wall fell, the Iron Curtain also fell. It imploded, collapsed. That led to the rule of unadulterated neo-liberalism. All of the supranational bodies were saying that the time for nations and sovereignties was over, that it was the end for the social safety net. The time for measures and policies was over. Now was the time for capital to be deployed, for it to move from one jurisdiction to another by any means and at any time. It needed to be freed up as much as possible so that anything could be done with it.

Obviously, today, that is no longer the case. We might say that globalization is in crisis, that we are returning to a multipolar world. It appears that there are several environmental and social consequences to these utopias. Among them, there is this idea of having a great global supply chain where every country can do its part. This also has consequences.

• (1105)

Quebec has fared well under free trade. It has been a beneficial experience. We certainly need to continue to diversify our trade partners, but not at all costs. We have seen the human consequences in terms of human rights, obviously, but also the use of forced labour. That is the point of today's motion on the importation of goods linked to the use of forced labour.

If we are going to address the problem, then we need to be serious. With what is referred to as dumping, a product can go through another country that is used as a flag of convenience. Then the product arrives here and we think it was made in places where forced labour is controlled and regulated, when in fact that is often not the case.

Routine Proceedings

The Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability, the CNCA, has made a number of demands. I am going to read them, because I think they are quite comprehensive. According to the CNCA, there are five essential elements in effective due diligence legislation which many Canadian and Quebec civil society groups agree on, and they are the following: require companies to prevent all human rights violations throughout their global operations and supply chains; require companies to develop and implement human rights due diligence procedures, and report on them, as well as require them to consult rights holders; require meaningful consequences for companies that fail to take these obligations seriously and guarantee impacted communities access to effective remedy in Canadians civil courts; be consistent with the United Nations guiding principles on business and human rights and apply this legislation to companies of any size, while possibly allowing small business in low-risk sectors to be exempt; and apply to all human rights, because all human rights are interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.

On June 22, 2022, I tabled a petition along those same lines:

Whereas:

some Canadian companies contribute to human rights abuses and environmental damage around the world;

people who protest these abuses and stand up for their rights are often harassed, attacked or killed. Indigenous peoples, women and marginalized groups are particularly at risk; and

Canada encourages companies to stop these harms from happening in their global operations and supply chains, but does not require them to.

We, the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada, call on the House of Commons to adopt legislation on due diligence for human and environmental rights that would require....

The rest of the petition contains more or less the same formal demands made by the CNCA which I just read. It also aligns with the motion I moved for unanimous consent, which, I would remind members, was rejected by the right in the House.

Let us now discuss the bill in question. I applaud the sponsor, who has attempted previously to bring forward legislation on this matter. There was Bill C-243, which was withdrawn in favour of the very similar Bill S-211.

We supported it and we will continue to support it, but it is just not enough, because if we ask ourselves whether the bill helps individuals who are affected obtain justice or redress, the answer is no. Does the bill seek to include communities and workers who are affected? No. Does the bill apply to businesses of all sizes in all sectors? No, it only applies to businesses with over 250 employees and “significant” revenue and assets.

Does the bill apply to all human rights? No, it only applies to forced labour and child labour. Those are hugely important issues, and this is a step forward, but it should go much further. Are businesses required to respect human rights? No, they are only required to report annually on whether they have taken steps to recognize and prevent the use of forced labour, but reporting is not accountability.

Does the bill require businesses to prevent harm? No, it only requires an annual report. Does the bill require businesses to take steps to identify, mitigate, prevent or report human rights violations

and environmental damage in their supply chains, because the problem applies to the entire supply chain? No.

• (1110)

There are no compulsory due diligence standards for businesses. Do they face significant consequences if they cause harm or fail to implement due diligence standards? Again, the answer is no.

All the questions I just asked would be answered in the affirmative under the NDP Bill C-282, which I co-sponsored. This bill ticks all the boxes. I therefore encourage the government and the House to refer it to committee for study as soon as possible, because it provides a much better response to what is needed and to the urgency of the situation.

I would also like to talk about Canadian mining companies, which I suggested would be a good subject for study by the Standing Committee on International Trade. First, let me clarify one thing. It is a real stretch to call them “Canadian” mining companies, because they are just using Canada as a “flag of convenience”. Mining companies are often Canadian only on paper. They choose Canada because its lax laws make it ridiculously easy to incorporate here, to present themselves as Canadian companies and to benefit from speculative benefits offered through and by the Toronto Stock Exchange. Canada is just being used as a “flag of convenience”. It is basically a front.

I have seen this first-hand. The Bloc Québécois actually proposed a bill in 2009 that would have gotten to the heart of the issue, as it created an actual review commission that would have been politically independent and would have had the power to conduct its own investigations, without needing a complaint or a political directive. It would not simply have been a symbolic ombudsperson. This commission could have conducted its own investigations and publicly questioned Global Affairs Canada, or Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, as it was called at the time, if the department were even seen to support a mining company that was caught violating human rights.

I travelled to Chile and Colombia, and in Colombia, I saw a mining company that was originally Canadian fall into Chinese hands. Speaking of forced labour, we saw a bus full of prisoners arrive from the People's Republic of China. Once the local miners have been squeezed out, one of the arguments often used to gain acceptance for these projects in mining areas is that they will create jobs. However, bringing in prisoners from the People's Republic of China is not exactly creating local jobs. Furthermore, diplomats must not provide unequivocal support for the aggressive tactics used by Canadian mining companies abroad, as Canadian embassies have been known to do. Embassies are being ordered to provide support through diplomacy.

We also need to talk about money. It is important to talk about that, because Export Development Canada has investments in many problematic companies, including Baru Gold, which was mentioned several times. EDC continued to hand out loans to Teck Resources for its Quebrada Blanca mine in Chile, despite the political crisis and brutal repression going on in that country. In 2019 alone, EDC invested between \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion just in Chile's extractive sector.

Vale was involved in two recent tailings dam disasters in Brazil. At the company's Brumadinho mine, hundreds of people were killed in January 2019 when a tailings dam collapsed. It is also the co-owner of the mine near Mariana, where a similar disaster wiped out an entire village in 2015. Both mines had been built using the riskiest method regulators would allow. Vale's other activities include a railway along which residents are regularly struck by trains, and a mine that was ordered to shut down several times because of the impact it was having on indigenous tribes.

Vedanta Limited, a subsidiary of Vedanta Resources, received between \$100 million and \$250 million in loans in 2017. In 2018, there was a massacre at a smelter plant in India run by a subsidiary of Vedanta Resources. Police opened fire on a crowd of thousands who were protesting the planned expansion of the Tuticorin plant. Thirteen people were killed and dozens of others were injured.

• (1115)

According to Emily Dwyer from the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability, who testified at committee, some of the other mining companies that received funding from Export Development Canada and were mixed up in human rights violations include Teck Resources and Kinross.

The mining industry in Canada received \$6.524 million in funding in 2022. This is a serious matter.

When we talk about accountability and the origin of goods, we need to be serious and take a closer look.

I will now wrap up my speech in order to debate this issue with the rest of the House. We need some genuinely serious policies on this, such as Bill C-262 and Bill C-263, which I co-sponsored, and the bill that the Bloc Québécois introduced in 2009 about a review commission for mining companies.

This needs to be taken seriously, because the ombudsperson is currently nothing but a complaints office and a web site. That is no way to deal with the serious, violent, brutal violations happening around the world.

In closing, I want to wish everyone a happy end to the “no new clothes challenge”. March was dubbed “no new clothes” month. That lines up nicely with the theme we are discussing today.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, building on my friend's intervention, I will take the occasion today to wish all Ismaili Canadians a very happy *Navroz Mubarak*, the start of the new year and the first day of spring.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

I appreciate the speech given by my colleague who sits on the Standing Committee on International Trade with me and who, as I mentioned, was with me in Paris.

First, I want to point out that the only difference between Bill S-211 and Bill C-282 from the Bloc Québécois is their place on the Order Paper. There is a chronological order to be followed.

Next, I agree entirely that the regulations, directives and strategies established by the House and the government must apply to every company and every institution, particularly Export Development Canada.

I would like to ask a question about something that was raised in Canada's strategy for responsible business conduct abroad. I am quoting from the document:

The July 2020 amendment to the Customs Tariff prohibits the importation of goods that are mined, manufactured or produced wholly or in part by forced labour.... Furthermore, the government is committed to enacting legislation to eradicate forced labour from Canadian supply chains and ensure that Canadian businesses operating abroad do not contribute to human rights abuses.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): A question in excess of two minutes is a bit long.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. I really enjoy working with him on this issue.

We will always applaud any step in the right direction, but we also have a duty to point out that we think the bill is too timid. That is also part of democracy, debate in the House and political debate on this matter.

However, I disagree with my colleague about the nature of the differences between the two bills. I do not have the time to repeat everything I said, but I did go over the differences, which are mainly the size of the businesses and the sectors they work in, the revenue thresholds and the requirements imposed.

I believe that there are many differences between the bills, and they are not purely symbolic. Therefore, I would again urge the government to place Bill C-262 in the order of precedence. We are very enthusiastic about this idea.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Dufferin—Caledon did his job and looked into the matter. He submitted a written question to the government. Question No. 1112 asked whether the Canada Border Services Agency had intercepted any goods from the Xinjiang region of China that were made or produced using forced labour, and, if so, how many times since 2016.

Routine Proceedings

The answer was zero. Because that answer came from the government, I would like the committee whose report we are debating in the House to look into that.

Since we know the answer is zero and no products have been intercepted at our borders since 2016, what more can we do, as opposition members, to force the government to direct the CBSA to do its job?

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, in order for there to be political will, there must also be funding. I would say that the issue lies at the top, which is to say that we need real investigative and auditing bodies like the ones I listed. We need a commission that is empowered to take action in this area, and we need to give real powers to the ombudsperson, whose role is a total joke at the moment. It is a joke, but this is no laughing matter. This has to be backed up by money and diplomacy. Oversight bodies must not encourage these practices. They need to foster a culture of accountability, not impunity.

• (1125)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. I come from mining country. Over the years, we have seen the fight to have some of the highest environmental standards, the safest working conditions and workers who are paid good wages for the work they do. However, we know that Canadian companies do not have this reputation in the global south.

In fact, there are a number of Canadian companies that are mythic companies in Canada but have been accused of some horrific human rights violations. I think of the 2016 report by Osgoode Hall Law School, “The Canada Brand”, which identified 44 murders, 403 attacks and 700 cases of targeting of indigenous people in Latin America to pursue Canadian mining interests.

We know the horrific story of what happened to the women in Guatemala and the allegations of rape at Hudbay Minerals. Does my colleague support the ability of survivors of this kind of abuse to take their cases to Canadian courts to hold these companies accountable under Canadian law?

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, yes, I definitely do. I would also say that this goes to the heart of what we have always advocated for. It goes to the heart of the motion I sought unanimous consent to move, to no avail. It goes to the heart of the petition I tabled in the House last June. It goes to the heart of the two NDP bills that I co-sponsored and wholeheartedly supported and that I am mentioning again today to remind everyone that they exist, because they are still at the introduction stage.

Yes, we definitely need to do this. It is urgent. Right now, the ombudsperson has no powers and her position is symbolic. All she can say is that if there are any human rights violations, go to her well-designed website. That is a problem.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, when we talk about results, we really mean what we expect from the CBSA and all government agencies. I hear the member talking about another ombudsperson, and it reminds me of what members on the government side are

saying. They talk about statements, meetings, quotes on websites, updates to websites or meetings they have had in other countries about this, but they do not talk about results.

An Order Paper question was tabled in the House, as was an answer, which said that no goods produced using forced labour have been intercepted and sent back to Beijing in the People's Republic of China. The question is therefore whether the government takes this seriously. My question for the member is whether he would agree that, on this issue, what really matters are the results, the execution.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, clearly, if there is no result, the means were insufficient. This goes without saying. The intention and the results must often be judged separately. People had been calling for the creation of an ombudsperson for a very long time but, in the end, it amounted to very little. It is disappointing, but it is what it is. I would like to thank the Conservatives for putting this question on the Order Paper, because it was very educational and allowed us to attach a number to this reality, or rather a lack of a number.

I would not say that nothing is being taken seriously, especially since the sponsor of Bill C-243 is someone who is working hard on this file. I will not question his honesty on this issue and on the file. He has been moving motions on this issue for a long time. He proposed something similar during the Harper government, and it was his own party that did not support it in large enough numbers. However, it obviously does not go far enough. The fact is that no goods are being sent back, and that number speaks for itself.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for his speech. I thought it was very striking. He explained what the bill would address and, more importantly, what it would not. The answer is that it will not change anything.

I understand that this bill will not fix what is happening in the textile industry and the supply chains. Members will recall that, 10 years ago, 1,000 people died in a textile factory in Bangladesh. These events triggered a social awakening and opened our eyes to the work women do in abhorrent conditions. How can we actually address that in a bill?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has 10 seconds to answer the question.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, it is impossible for me to answer in 10 seconds. I would simply encourage my colleague to read Bill C-262 and Bill C-263, which contain all kinds of provisions that respond to that. I think everything is in there.

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a great honour to rise in the House. I will be sharing my time with the member for Windsor West.

The fact that we have to discuss, in 2023, the need to stop slave labour products from entering Canada is a very telling indicator of where we are in the world right now.

Routine Proceedings

Of course, the focus of the Conservatives is the horrific treatment of the Uighurs in China, but we need to broaden this to look at the global race to the bottom that has led to such massive exploitation of environment, indigenous people and the rights of working people around the world.

What we are talking about is the dark side of globalization. Five years ago it would have been heresy to question the great myth of globalization, but that was before COVID and the fact that the supply chains were not able to withstand it, that we could not provide our frontline medical workers with proper PPE because we did not have the factory capacity. This was due to the fact that we had offshored all these basic things that a country needed to keep itself safe to the lowest common denominators and to the sweatshops in the global south.

Before, with globalization, we were told that it would lift all boats. It certainly lifted some boats. It lifted the superyachts, but it was always about freeing the power of capital to live and move wherever it wanted without obligation, the environmental or legal obligations in the jurisdictions they worked within. In fact, globalization was about limiting the power of countries and regions to protect their interests. We know what happened when Mexico tried to stop toxic chemicals. It was targeted because that was supposedly unfair to trade.

We are now at a point where the global supply chain is using slave labour. This is not some dark, obscure fact. All one has to do is go to any shopping mall and into any of the big stores. We know the companies that have been named as being complicit in slave labour, companies such as Adidas, Carter's, Gap, General Motors, Google, Bosch, Calvin Klein, Abercrombie & Fitch, Dell. Those are just a few of the 83 that have been identified. Those corporations have their products in all our stores.

I find it interesting that the Conservative focus is that we should try to work with our international allies to deal with this somehow, as opposed to saying to these companies that if they deal with slave labour, they get charged, end of story.

What we see here, again, is this myth of the race to the bottom, that somehow people are surprised that we would end up with slave labour. I go back to the free trade debate with Brian Mulroney.

In that original free trade debate, it was argued that if we merged our environmental and labour standards with the United States, we would all be better off. Of course, we saw a huge bleed-off of manufacturing jobs. At least with the United States, we were dealing with comparable economies. However, it was Clinton and Mulroney's decision to extend it to Mexico that was the real indicator, because Mexico had much lower wage standards. It did not have the protection of laws that Canadian and American workers had.

Once the free trade agreement was set with Mexico, we saw the setting up of the maquiladora sections, where these companies just moved across the border and were protected under Mexican law from all kinds of obligations to pay proper wages, to pay even properly into the Mexican system. It was the race to the bottom. Our country signed on right then, and 766,000 U.S. jobs moved over the border into Mexico, to low-wage maquiladora plants.

It is interesting that those plants were also locations where horrific numbers of young women were being found murdered and sexually mutilated. If we are creating disposable products, we somehow are creating disposable people. We have never actually dealt with that.

From the model that they had with the maquiladora section set up in Mexico was the idea to offshore to the global south. Remember Jean Chrétien and the great China initiative? It was not that we were going to be able to sell our furniture into the world's biggest market. This was about capital being able to offshore its jobs.

• (1135)

The company known at that time for the biggest drive of going to American and Canadian corporations and saying that they could make more money by shutting down their operations and shifting that work over to places like India or China was McKinsey; McKinsey that is now getting \$100 million in contracts from the federal government; McKinsey being the company that has been called the single biggest factor in the destruction of the American working and middle class.

What we saw in the move to shift work to low-wage jurisdictions without legal accountability or legal standards was the race to the bottom, and it became more severe as economic precarity grew in North America.

We ended up with a situation like, for example, Joe Fresh. I spoke about it earlier today. Joe Fresh and Loblaw's were selling cheap clothing. People could pay \$2 for shirts for their kids. These were being made in sweatshops in Bangladesh in horrific conditions.

A collapse of one of these sweatshop factories killed 1,135 human beings. Those human beings died because of corporate negligence. Another 2,500 people were injured. There was no accountability for Loblaw's, which makes record profits, or for Joe Fresh. They paid \$150 per person and walked away. That is astounding.

We know the story of Apple, the very cool iPhone company, and of its people working in sweatshops in China. Workers were so mistreated that they started to kill themselves in such numbers that the contractor put nets out to try to catch them from jumping. That is a degrading, despicable race to the bottom, yet there was no accountability. Apple remained the cool company.

Routine Proceedings

In fact, speaking of Apple, if people have its phone, when they pick the phone up, they are picking up at least a ton of rock. That is what it takes to make a phone. That ton of rock is coming out of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is coming out of the slave labour conditions in the Congo. Our supply chains have not even addressed that.

We need to start talking about the corporate accountability and responsibility for allowing this race to the bottom to happen. What has it meant for the jobs that used to be here?

I will quote from the RAND Corporation, not exactly a left-wing think tank. It has worked for the U.S. military for the last half century or much longer.

RAND looked at the growth of inequality in the United States and it identified, from the 1980s, that \$50 trillion from the savings and wages of the working and middle class was transferred to the upper class, the 1%. RAND says that this is the equivalent of \$1,144 for every worker for every month for four decades. That is what created the growing political inequality in the United States, the growing uncertainty and the anger out there.

We have to address in the House accountability for what happened that allowed globalization to shift responsibility, to shift work to brutal, underfunded conditions where people are exploited, while undermining the middle and working class in North America. To do that, we need corporate accountability.

If subcontractors commit crimes against people in the Global South, they need to be held accountable for it. If they are using slave labour and selling those items in malls, they need to be held accountable for it. Canadians expect that. They also expect that corporations are going to be held accountable for this offshoring of work to sweatshops, the slave labour conditions and the brutality that we have seen over the last few decades.

The time has come where we have to start to shift back to corporate responsibility, environmental responsibility and fair labour standards.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member posed some questions earlier with respect to identifying issues that were much broader than just one particular part of the world. In fact, there are human rights violations occurring throughout the planet for which people need to be held accountable.

I know him to also be a strong advocate for indigenous rights. What has changed in the last four to five years is that we have at-torn to the international convention UNDRIP. We have also domesticated that agreement by passing legislation in this chamber, on which he, I and many others in this chamber voted. With respect to UNDRIP, it talks to specific rights that are ascribed to indigenous people.

I want to put one of those rights to him and ask him whether that kind of promise and legislation can help fulfill the protection of human rights violations that relate to indigenous communities abroad. Article 26, paragraph 1, in the text of UNDRIP says, "Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which

they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired."

Does that kind of legislative mechanism, which is now passed into law in Canada, provide him with some of the potential for enforcement of the rights of indigenous persons abroad who are affected by Canadian enterprises that are operating and violating their rights?

• (1140)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, we certainly need to have a fair playing field, and one of them is the rights of indigenous people to participate in resource development and the right to say no.

We cannot have armed gangs, threats and intimidation, like we saw with the horrific allegations against Hudbay Minerals in Guatemala. There has to be legal accountability for such measures.

In Canada, for example, the Ring of Fire, could be a massive benefit, economically, but the Neskantaga First Nation, which has gone 28 years without clean drinking water, has not been consulted by anybody on this. This is highly problematic.

We have the opportunity in Canada to create a standard for the development of critical minerals by using high environmental standards, indigenous consent, indigenous support, and we cannot allow that to be weakened. This should be the Canada brand that allows us to meet the challenges of an environmentally sensitive future. We need to be pushing for this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It was extremely important.

It is sad that we have come to a point where we need to legislate something as important as this.

What sorts of controls would my colleague recommend for companies that do not already have basic ethical standards in place to self-regulate in such cases?

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, one of the really disturbing signs was the Joe Fresh lawsuit in Canada. What happened was horrific. It was thrown out by Justice Paul Perell, who, by the way, has not had a great record with the survivors of St. Anne's residential school. However, that is a side issue.

The fact that corporations are allowed to make this kind of money and there is no accountability for the conditions that led to over 1,000 people dying is outrageous.

Routine Proceedings

It is the same with the issue of Hudbay Minerals in Guatemala. It has to be held accountable in a Canadian court. Once these corporations are held accountable under Canadian law, not under Bangladeshi law, or Guatemalan law or anywhere else, we will see these activities end, and we will start to see higher standards.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I wish I could have stood and cheered at every syllable of the speech by the member for Timmins—James Bay, because it is exactly right.

We lived through an era, particularly through the 1990s, of triumphalism of transnational corporate rule. That included the World Trade Organization rules that we were not permitted to ask “Was this product made by child labour?” That was called a process and production method, PPM. We were not supposed to be able to look behind where the carpets came from that were made in India, or where our chocolate bars that we give our children on Halloween came from. Did slave children pick those cocoa beans? Probably yes, over and over again. There is slave trade in the shrimp that we buy at the grocery store. There is slave trade in the chocolate bars that we are still buying.

When do we get rid of these pernicious rules that protect human slavery?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, again, one of the dark falsehoods of globalization was that it was going to bring freedom. When China was allowed into the WTO, Bill Clinton said “The genie of freedom will not go back into the bottle.” We saw what happened. This was right after the Chinese government used tanks against unarmed protesters in Tiananmen Square. There is nothing naturally democratic about capitalism. Capitalism needs to be constrained.

• (1145)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will start with a bit of acknowledgement of the member for Timmins—James Bay's work domestically with the Canada pension plan and ethics reviews, which are very important. When we think about the Canada pension plan, it goes back to Pat Martin, a former NDP colleague. For many years, he said that we actually need to have green and ethical screening of our investments for the Canada pension plan.

For those Canadians who are tuning in right now, it is disgraceful that, to this day, our Canada pension plan has actually supported child labour and invested in everything from guns to tobacco and other types of endeavours that would be seen as reprehensible. We continue to have this arm's-length approach to how we use the public funds from many people who are activists against this use and many investors in Canada; this actually includes investments into small and medium-sized businesses, which have to compete globally for our own investments that we have in endeavours of such a nature.

Coming from an industrial town in Windsor-Essex County, I have seen our job losses at the expense of using child and forced labour. This includes not only the abuse of those individuals but also ethnic cleansing and other types of imperialism that other countries use labour for. Many times, this has been through investors

coming from our country, so we have actually undermined ourselves.

I have been at meetings where, for example, unions from Mexico have come down and said not to allow the investments because there is abuse of their women, children and men. There is a short-term gain from jobs through exploitation versus what would be a long-term gain from the proper investment and necessary humanitarian advancements.

Finally, the member for Elmwood—Transcona has carried on the amazing work of his father, Bill Blaikie, in this chamber. Thanks to this, with the U.S.-Canada-Mexico Agreement, we got at least some type of a labour and environmental lens that can be applied. However, we see how fragile that is; in this last number of weeks, even the United States has been identified with problems on labour and using children. This includes the Ford Motor Company, which is founded, in many respects, in my riding across from Detroit, Michigan.

These are real things that are happening because we do not impress upon investors the right, necessary standards or do the routine things we should. I want to transition a bit to talk about one of those routine things, which is with our Customs and Immigration Union. I was here at the beginning, when they used to actually use students to cover their employment breaks at the border. In this past year, we have again seen the government not taking the contract or the types of necessary supports very seriously.

When we talk about the CBSA and our men and women who are on the line for us every single day, we do not give them the proper supports. Today's debate, with the verbiage coming from the government side on this, is upsetting because the routine thing we could do is actually support our CBSA officers, who have had to deal with extraordinary circumstances under COVID while underfunded.

In fact, this last summer they had to go into forced practices to actually have proper staffing because the government has mishandled the implementation of the right people. On top of that, it is even trying to move toward more automation as opposed to having men and women at our border as a policy.

That is really what the ArriveCAN situation was. We know there was lots of discussion in the House about its mismanagement as an application on someone's phone. However, at the end of the day, this was really about the Liberals trying to defund men and women at the border. We have also seen this at airports that have moved to automation, and we are seeing it at land borders. This is unacceptable, especially when I have been fighting for over 20 years for a new border crossing here in Windsor-Essex County, the Gordie Howe International Bridge. We are finally getting it, but there is going to be a shortage of officers. Moreover, that is the best line we actually have to back up the policies that are spoken about in legislation made in the House.

Routine Proceedings

Why do we have underfunding at our ports? Why do we check very few of those facilities? Why do the men and women in our CBSA not have the proper technology or the right supports?

• (1150)

I was in the House and chamber when then Liberal MP Derek Lee called them wimps. The CBSA officers were not getting the proper supports at that time, so the government did nothing to actually discredit that statement. What we did then is that we moved to a modernization process and gave them some better skills and supports. However, through successive governments, they are constantly going through contract renegotiations and often working without a contract or collective agreement, on a regular basis. That is unacceptable.

If we want to do the routine things to back up what we say in the chamber, we could support our men and women at the border. That means proper identification. Those things that they can do are very much an important skill set for ending not just the issues with forced labour and trade agreements, which we do not enforce on the shipping level but arrive on our doorstep, but also public safety issues.

I have done a lot of work on fraud and prevention of different types of things coming into our country. I always remember that we have a lot of different devices and types of materials coming into Canada that need to be checked regularly; it is actually important for our economy that we check them because we are competing against manufactured knock-offs and a series of different things. We cannot assume that they are just garments or clothes. The reality is that some of the knock-offs that have come into our Canadian society and even our industrial manufacturing industry include parts for hospitals, airplanes and cars. These things are getting through our system right now, but we can identify and deal with them if we have the proper training and supports.

Therefore, when we talk about today's motion, we have identified this particular issue, especially with regard to the Uighurs and the genocide taking place, as well as the series of other exploitations that are very important. Here, we have to come back to what we can control, which, at this time, is supporting our CBSA officers by having proper collective agreements, having proper training facilities and doing proper staffing on a regular basis all the time. That is where we can control something and make a difference at this moment. Having words in the House and dealing with the larger corporate issues that we have less control over are things that will be challenging, but we should take them on. However, again, I have referenced the CBSA because it could be done in a heartbeat, as could the issue related to the Canada pension plan. That is a politically appointed process to get on its ethics board and actually follow through.

The member for Timmins—James Bay brings up a really good point in terms of accountability, of being back on our shores here for the investments and exploitation that take place. There is no reason we could not start that in the House with our own investments as a country and as a government nation deciding how our public money is used.

One of the most upsetting things about this is that those are the simple things that we can control, and yet we hear more excuses

and complaints from the government having to exercise basically the systems that it has employed at its fingertips. I have regularly witnessed this, and it has always been the excuse that it is the capitalist way or the free market economy that is out there. Let us take a look at that as I wrap up here.

If, at the end of the day, we want the free market economy with no regulations, then we are getting child exploitation, women's exploitation and other populations who are migrating for different reasons. Even in our country, when it comes to foreign workers coming in, there is exploitation. Therefore, it is up to us as policymakers to make decisions to change things.

If we want to just accept the free market the way it is right now, then we are literally accepting the exploitation of children, women and migrant workers as the status quo. That is unacceptable from my standpoint as a New Democrat, and I think it is unacceptable for most members in this chamber. However, at the end of the day, it takes real action on what we have that is controllable instead of complaining about the things we cannot control.

• (1155)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the last number of years in particular, I have witnessed a great deal of advocacy within the chamber from all sides of the House in terms of dealing with the issue of forced labour in general and forced child labour in particular. I have found that we are now at a stage in which we have a department that is actually developing and looking at ways to bring in legislation.

Could my colleague provide his thoughts on how this issue of forced labour is something that offends members on all sides of the House?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the challenge that we face here, and what I find most offensive, is that we know all this. However, we do not act, and the government is still consulting. What is there to consult about on the exploitation of children? I do not understand that.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments and the direction he took in talking about the actions we can take, for example, on the enforcement side.

The member spoke about the CBSA urgently needing to update not only its collective agreement but also the number of employees who are working at border facilities. In Niagara, for example, when we did the ArriveCAN study, Mark Weber, the president of the union, mentioned our Rainbow Bridge. He said that instead of having 100 officers, it is staffed with only 48.

I think this is an important area where things that can be done should be done quickly. Could the member elaborate a little more on that?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from a fellow border colleague who knows the stress that the issue brings, and I thank him for his work on that.

Mark Weber was very clear in terms of what the CBSA and its members can do. With the proper training and supports, we can actually advance not only the protection of general society with regards to our border officers, with everything from gun control and a number of different initiatives on the drug response and so forth, but we can also do the same for businesses that want to compete fairly by intercepting illegal products or those actually manufactured under duress or through other types of measures. However, quite frankly, this needs boots on the ground. In fact, last summer, the CBSA had to go into forced vacation time and other initiatives because it did not have the proper staffing. So those are things we can control.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my excellent colleague from Windsor West for his intervention. I was not surprised by his point of view on this topic. I would like him to take it a bit further.

What can we do to be less dependent on the Chinese market? What can we do to make our supply chain more domestic? How can we do this without passing on costs to consumers? That is the big issue.

How can we be more resilient and increase local production in order to improve conditions for workers? They are affected by the supply chain. We also need to offer help for foreign countries that are often in difficult situations when it comes to child labour.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's work on our committee, where rights and fair balance are part of his regular work.

One thing I look at is Quebec and Montreal, where the textile industry was undermined by public policy through our trade agreements. These agreements actually allowed for a lot of the work to go to Jamaica historically, and now it has been offshored to China and other places at the expense of good workers, a good system in place and good quality. That is what we have to look towards: our trade agreements and following up.

If there are going to be supports, then we support, for example, child care, dental care and pharmacare. We support all the things that can actually subsidize the worker in the sense of making sure that any type of public money goes to training and the individual's well-being. In that way, governments will not just fund corporations and see the investment disappear to other areas; otherwise, we end up undermining ourselves by basically funding the competition.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is not the first time I have risen on the issue of forced labour and the impact it has had not only on Canadians but throughout the world. We have had a number of debates on this issue. It was not that long ago that we debated Bill S-211.

Routine Proceedings

I know the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, whom I consider a dear friend, has put a great deal of effort into the issue of corporate responsibility and good behaviour for many years. It is well over a decade. I can recall being in the third party with the member when he talked about this, and sitting beside individuals like Stéphane Dion. We understood and wanted to deal with this issue, which is no doubt of critical importance.

One aspect that I always thought of was the way to get corporations to take certain actions as corporations. Individual board members were never really held accountable. There are many aspects in Bill S-211, but one of the aspects I liked was putting more responsibility on the board of directors so we could go after them for forced labour in general. We had very healthy debates on this issue.

What I find interesting is the way the Conservative Party has brought forward what we are debating. If I read the motion itself, which does not take long to read because it is pretty straightforward, it says the committee looks at the bill and comes back with a report. It is pretty straightforward. It states:

That the committee report to the House that it calls on the government to immediately take any and all actions necessary to prohibit the importation of any goods made wholly or in part with forced labour and develop a strategy to prevent the importation into Canada of any goods mined, produced, or manufactured wholly or in part with forced labour.

This report was tabled here weeks ago. I find it interesting that the Conservatives chose today to ask for concurrence in the report as opposed to just accepting it, because after all, I do not think there is anyone in this chamber who does not understand the importance of the issue, whether it is the Prime Minister or members of the opposition wanting to see something done on this file. I suspect the motivation for the debate today has more to do with preventing the NDP from bringing forward a concurrence motion on a PROC report. It is interesting that the Conservatives chose this particular topic. I understand the way the rules work in the chamber, and at the end of the day, I am always happy to talk about an issue that is so very important.

As for the motion itself, I would like to share something with members. I do not need to table it because it is public knowledge. The member across the way who introduced the motion asked what the government is doing. The parliamentary secretary spoke exceptionally well about how Canada, in many different fora, can play a leading role in dealing with the issue of forced labour and the impact it has on our supply chain. The Conservatives were very quick to scoff at that.

It is interesting to hear the Conservatives when they are in opposition versus when they are in government. When I posed a question to the member, I noted it is all fine and dandy to be so critical of the government and to make accusations that are not necessarily founded. I asked what the former government did, the Harper regime. The member mocked the question, of course, because Stephen Harper did not do anything.

Routine Proceedings

● (1200)

I do not have a problem with contrasting that with what we have been able to do and deal with. The parliamentary secretary made reference to our international presence. What people do not necessarily recognize, which we should acknowledge, is that Canada, with a population base of 38 million people, carries an incredible amount of weight when it comes to international policy. We have seen that in many different ways.

I have always been a big fan of Lloyd Axworthy. If we look at the banning of land mines, an issue Lloyd Axworthy championed on behalf of the Government of Canada, and the success we were able to achieve, we again have to put that into the perspective of the world. The same principles apply for a wide variety of different issues, and this is one of those issues. Unlike the scoffing coming from the Conservative benches, I believe in what the parliamentary secretary who spoke before me said when he talked about the influence of standing up and speaking out, even in the presence of China.

We hear a lot about China, because it was the example and has been the example used. Whether it is the Uighurs or Tibetans, we recognize that, yes, there has been a great deal of exploitation. However, the government is not just talking about that on the floor of the House of Commons. We are talking about that internationally, even in the presence of China. That means the Government of China, and often Chinese officials, will be very irritated, but I believe it is a role that Canadians expect because it is a part of our values.

If we look at the sheer immigration numbers and the people who want to come to Canada, it is a very impressive thing. I believe that is because they look at the values and opportunities Canada has to offer, which translates into the House of Commons and the role we play not only domestically but internationally. That is the reason it is important that, whether it is the Prime Minister or a critic from the opposition party, if we have the opportunity to talk about Canadian values, this is the type of value we should be talking about.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations many years ago. It talks about the rights of children and their protection, and there are things we can do. That is one of the reasons why a few minutes back I made reference to a public document, which the parliamentary secretary made reference to earlier. I actually printed out a copy of it. It is the ministerial mandate letter for the Minister of Labour, authored by the Prime Minister. It provides instructions, and members who are watching or following the debate can easily look into it themselves by doing a simple Google search.

The letter that comes from the Prime Minister states:

As Minister of Labour, your immediate priorities are to work with federally regulated workplaces to ensure that COVID-19 vaccinations are enforced for those workers and to advance amendments to the Canada Labour Code to provide 10 paid days of sick leave for all federally regulated workers. I also expect you to work with federally regulated employers and labour groups, and with provincial and territorial counterparts, to make workplaces fairer and safer for everyone across the country as well as lead our efforts to eradicate forced labour from Canadian supply chains.

To realize these objectives, I ask that you achieve results for Canadians by delivering the following commitments.

● (1205)

Then the letter lists a number of commitments, and this is one of them:

With the support of the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development—

I would like to emphasize this.

—introduce legislation to eradicate forced labour from Canadian supply chains and ensure that Canadian businesses operating abroad do not contribute to human rights abuses.

I challenge the member who chose to turn this into a political issue by saying the government has not done anything and who then went on to criticize Canada's border control. That is why I posed the question. In opposition, it sure is easy for the Conservative Party to be as critical as it wants, knowing full well that when it was in government it did absolutely nothing on this file.

Even during a pandemic and many other aspects like a war, we can see that this is a priority of the government. We have different departments coming together to provide legislation. Tell me where the former government had any interest in passing legislation. The Conservatives can talk about this, but their math is all messed up, as pointed out earlier after one member said it is eight years later. Sometimes it takes a little while to clean up the Conservative mess. We went on to have a pandemic, and now a war is taking place, but we have seen other budgetary measures and legislative measures, some of which have already been pointed out by a previous speaker. There is a very clear indication that we are developing legislation.

I will note something interesting in the EU:

On 14 September 2022, the European Commission presented a proposal for a regulation to prohibit products made using forced labour, including child labour, on the internal market of European Union (EU). The proposed legislation fits into the context of EU efforts to promote decent work worldwide.

I do not know all the details of this, but I think it is important for us to recognize that this is not just about Canada alone. Canada does work very closely with its partners, with its allied forces, the EU being one of them. That was referred to in 2022. The Prime Minister's letter to the minister was back in 2021. It does take time, as a great deal of consideration must be factored in. From a good governance, corporate perspective, companies want to ensure that supply chains are being supported by non-forced labour, and those that are prepared to put in that extra effort will ultimately have more security going forward.

I do not believe that Canada is alone. I believe it is working with other like-minded nations in recognizing the harm that forced labour causes. Forced labour takes many different forms. There is exploitation of individuals here today in Canada. When we think about exploitation of labour, we should not believe it is just something beyond our borders. There is a role for provinces in particular, along with the federal government, in looking at what is not only happening abroad but also happening here in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

• (1210)

I know it exists. I have advocated consistently in the past against the exploitation of human beings. It is just wrong, and as parliamentarians we would like to make sure we are making progress in dealing with that. Human smuggling takes place, and it is pure exploitation, whether it is getting an individual into a factory or selling an individual for sexual services. Unfortunately, it is something that happens.

I believe the United Nations said that it could be as high as 10%. Members should not quote me on it, but I believe it is somewhere in that neighbourhood worldwide, with about 10% of the population of the globe being exploited in one form or another.

I mention children more than anything else because that is where my primary focus is, but there are other vulnerable groups, some more than others, that need to be taken into consideration. I like to believe that, as Canada continues to move forward on this file, we will continue to have healthy discussions. My colleague's legislation will be coming forward at some point in the future once the appropriate consultation has taken place.

I believe this is an issue that has been here since well before any of us have been around. I am not just talking about inside the House of Commons. I am talking in life in general. It is something that is not going to be cured overnight. At the end of day, we do have a responsibility, a responsibility that has been taken very, very seriously.

The government has seen the benefits of trade. Canada, more so than most countries around the world, is dependent on trade. It is dependent on exports and imports. It is not like we are a self-sufficient country in producing that does not require the importation of products. We are far from that. That is one of the reasons that, as we move forward, and we will move forward on this file, we do so in a way Canadians can get behind and support.

Interestingly enough, there was reference to the North America trade agreement. We saw, incorporated into that trade agreement, the issue of workers' rights and environmental concerns. As a government, we have signed off on more trade agreements than any other government before us because we recognize just how important trade is to our country. At the same time, we have very much taken a keen interest in the supply chain and getting rid of the exploitation of people. I believe we are going to see more effort on that issue in the coming months and years ahead.

With those few words, I am thankful for the opportunity to share some thoughts and look forward to any questions, if there are any.

• (1215)

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify something. The government member seems to be saying that I said they have done nothing. I did not say that. I said they have done things. They passed an advisory for businesses. They have had a couple of talky-talky moments at international places. They have passed some legislation and other things, perhaps.

However, the result is nothing, so it is a lot of talk for absolutely no results. Canadians want results on this. The U.S. has seized

1,400 shipments totalling \$1.3 billion and Canada has seized zero. All their talky-talky has actually produced no measurable, tangible results. They could do it very quickly. The U.S. has a list of companies. I have it. He could give it to the various ministers. He could cut and paste it and deliver it to CBSA. It is simple. It could be done tomorrow, and it would stop at least these goods from coming into the country. Why is it so hard for this member and the government to do it?

• (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member belittles the efforts that have been put into place. The Canada Border Services Agency has done fine work over the years in protecting the interests of Canadians.

We have actually invested more in the CBSA than the former government. I can assure members that we have done more in taking products off the market than Stephen Harper ever did during his 10-year period.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned that there are international conventions, particularly to protect the rights of children.

In spite of that, every day, children still work for pennies a day in factories without adequate ventilation or health and safety protections. Too many of them continue to be beaten daily or have fines deducted from their salary for the tiniest mistakes. In short, they work in conditions similar to those prevalent over 100 years ago. All because a desire for profits led companies to outsource their manufacturing, in whole or in part, at the recommendation of very well-known consulting firms.

Yes, some steps were taken, but they remain insufficient as long as children, families and workers continue to live in the conditions that I described. Continuing to continue is, clearly, not enough.

My colleague mentioned the importance of doing more. What examples of concrete and conclusive measures for the future does Canada intend to implement to protect the 99% of the population being subjugated by the other 1%?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I look forward, as I am sure the member opposite does, to the work the department of labour is currently doing to deal with the issue at hand. It is working with other departments and doing the essential consultations. We have to do those consultations, and it is a wide variety of consultations that have to take place. That work is being done, and I look forward to seeing some of the results of that work in the coming months and years ahead of us.

Routine Proceedings

On the convention of rights for children, I think that, when we compare Canada to other nations in the world, we do exceptionally well, and we can play a very strong leadership role. That is why I indicated that Canada does often punch over its weight when it comes to ensuring human rights and the protection of children and vulnerable people by speaking out in the forums provided to do so, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about leadership on the global stage. We know that Canada remains the only country in the world to have created a Canadian ombudsperson for responsible enterprise. Another area of Canadian global leadership has been the environment.

I want to put to him a question that has not yet been injected in a comprehensive manner into today's debate. It is the idea that, when we are enforcing standards on Canadian enterprises operating abroad, those include environmental standards. How can that help with our work to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member raises an excellent point. That is one of the reasons why, when we take a look at the more recent trade agreements, we will see that there is an environmental component to them.

With the exception of the Conservative Party of Canada, everyone else seems to understand and appreciate that climate change is real, and that we do have to do things to protect our environment into the future. Incorporating the environment in our trade agreements sends a very strong message.

Also important are things such as the Paris conference, which took place back in 2015, when countries around the world came together to recognize that things such as the price on pollution are good things. At one time, even the Conservative Party supported it. There are many things we can do to enhance and promote a healthier environment as well.

• (1225)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is a rare opportunity in this place to bring into sharp focus one reason the Government of Canada has consistently failed, regardless of who is in the PMO, to meet climate targets. The reason is directly related to the debate today, and it is trade rules. The World Trade Organization interceded.

We used trade sanctions that made the ozone protocol, the Montreal Protocol of 1987, work spectacularly well. In 1997, we negotiated Kyoto, and the difference was the interference by the World Trade Organization and trade ministers saying to environment ministers that they were not allowed to use enforcement mechanisms that work because the World Trade Organization and the trade ministers did not like that.

It was not a ruling, but I put to the House that we need to re-examine the ways in which the World Trade Organization has undercut the work of the Paris Agreement and, for that matter, the more recent work at COP15 in Montreal. Trade rules must not undermine global survival, any more than they must not be used to continually

support forced labour and children's labour. We need to examine the trade rules and make them work for survival.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, never before have we seen the issue of our environment elevated to the degree it has been, not only here in Canada, but also in many places throughout the world.

There are some chronic abusers, and there are areas in which we could even improve here in Canada, but at least we have a government that is committed to making a difference. That is one of the reasons why we brought in legislation to ultimately achieve net zero. As a government, we recognize that something has to be done. As a government, we incorporated it into a trade agreement. As a government, we are constantly raising the issue of environment in trade over virtually all other issues. We recognize the importance of our environment.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to question the member opposite about Canada's record when it comes to fighting foreign human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

The United States seized 2,398 shipments suspected to be tied to forced labour and modern-day slavery, and Canada seized only one in that same amount of time. After it was contested, it let the shipment go through.

Does the member think that Canada is doing a good job of stopping forced labour coming through our border?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think we have to compare apples to apples. The United States has a very different situation with human trafficking than Canada. We both have an issue in dealing with it and responsibilities.

I do not necessarily know all the details the member is making reference to. I suspect that he might be comparing apples to oranges.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do intend to split my time, but I just cannot quite notice the member I intend to split my time with, so when I get there and see the member, I will name his riding. It is possibly in the Wellington region.

I am glad to be joining this debate, because this is, for me, about the accountability of the government on the enforcement portion of passing legislation, regulations, rules and advisories that come from the work we do here, so it is about holding the government to account. Part of holding the government to account is doing the work the member for Dufferin—Caledon did. He believed the government was not doing enough to prevent goods made with forced labour from coming into our country, so we asked ourselves questions.

Routine Proceedings

In this House, we have the option to ask an oral question during question period, or we can write a written question and then submit it to the government to respond to, and that is exactly what the member did. They are called Order Paper questions. They are written questions. One was Question No. 1112, which basically asked the government the very simple question of how many goods made with Uighur forced labour coming from the Xinjiang province were seized at the border since 2016 by the Canada Border Services Agency or the RCMP, and the answer was a big fat zero, nothing. The government had stopped one, but as the member before me from Peace River—Westlock commented on, it was then released.

In the same time, the United States government seized over 2,300 shipments of goods at the border, because that government was directed by the U.S. Congress to four specific areas that the Department of Homeland Security was told to watch for. It is on their website. Members can go on the website. In fact, the member for Dufferin—Caledon has repeatedly stated in the House that he has that list. I looked it up and I have the list, too. We would be happy to provide the government with the list, and then the Liberals could use it. This is great. This would be bipartisan co-operation. We are trying to help the government do its job. The Liberals could just come over to this side, and we would give them the list. There is even something called “electronic mail”. I do not know if members have heard of this. We could send them the email list and they could actually use it and adopt it.

The four areas the Department of Homeland Security said were of special concern were apparel, cotton, tomatoes and polysilicon. Based on those four categories or sectors they are especially concerned with, they have seized thousands of shipments of goods that were found to be using Xinjiang as the source region and Uighur forced labour.

Uighur forced labour has gone up in its use in the People's Republic of China since 2017. Those labour camps were established in 2017. There is a generalized acceptance that this is when that program started. The program was intentionally created by the Communist government in Beijing. It started early on. The level of repression has been going up since Xi Jinping was first elected in 2013. He is on his third term, and now likely his permanent term, as essentially a dictator in the People's Republic of China.

We can compare the timelines. The member for Dufferin—Caledon has done the investigative work a parliamentarian is supposed to do and has proven that the government has not been enforcing the rules or, if it has been enforcing them, it has been incredibly lax. It basically has not done anything.

Since then, we have had one government caucus member after another, and parliamentary secretaries, come out and give the best possible version of events. They really try incredibly hard. In the future, I hope never to be before a court, but if it ever comes to that, I would look to that side to find one of those members to defend me, because they really gave it the best possible face they could have. They talked about convening things, declarations, meetings they have had, advisories that were posted and attestations. People can click on the website and read the terms of reference about what they are not supposed to do, and they can click an attestation and move on. Actually, I was speaking to the member for Dufferin—Caledon, and based on attestations, the government's own officials

say that nobody has been found guilty of breaking them and there has been no follow-up on this attestation.

This reminds me of a Yiddish proverb. It is a great one. I was looking for this one. It is from a book called *Kvetch*, so it took me a while to look it up and find it in there: “A drowning man will reach even for the point of a sword.” In this case, it proves the point we are making on this side of the House, that the Liberals have done nothing, if all they can point to is advisories, websites, web pages, an ombudsman, and attestations, which have not done much of anything.

• (1230)

We have a written question in the House with a response that says we have zero goods from this particular region, a region that is so egregious with its known violations of the human rights of the Uighur people that the United Nations has written successive reports on it. We have had rapporteurs go there, actual rapporteurs doing work on the ground and trying to ferret out what has been going on. It was Bachelet in this case. We have had repeat congressional hearings. We have had hearings in the different parliamentary committees of this House and in the United Kingdom as well. We know what is going on. We have heard the stories of the Uighur people.

I went online to see the People's Republic of China's response to the United Nations report. They said everything is okay and there is full employment in the Xinjiang province. They said everything is good and all laws are being respected. They especially drew attention to something on page 109 of their response, if anyone wants to read it, which says that the religious rights of the Uighurs are being respected. There are so many mosques outside of the Xinjiang region they can go to. There are nice pictures of very happy workers. I am sure all of them knew what was going to happen here.

I notice that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is getting ready to speak after me and add to my contributions. I will share my time with him.

That is the point. The government has reached for the sword and it is pointing to what we are pointing to, but it only has pretty words. It only has attestations and declarations, websites and web pages, while we have its own words showing the proof of its work, that it has done nothing since 2016. No goods have been stopped at the border and actually seized. As we said, one shipment was stopped but eventually released. The Americans have proof that they have actually obtained results, and we want results.

This reminds me of our sanctions regime. Equally, there have been members of the public who have come to testify before the Canada—People's Republic of China special committee of the House, and they have basically said that enforcement is lacking on the sanctions regime we have. I profess that I believe this is part of the sanctions regime we have against regimes of the world that do things we disagree with, where we find profound violations of people's human rights.

Routine Proceedings

This House has found that the People's Republic of China is committing genocide against Turkic Uighurs in the Xinjiang province. The House has said that. In fact, the government was so inspired by its own principles that it abstained on that motion. It sent in a minister at the time, who has now resigned from this House, to say that they are abstaining as a government. As a cabinet, they are choosing to abstain on the matter. That is deeply embarrassing for them, and it should be embarrassing for them. It is embarrassing for all of us that they would do that.

We have passed a motion since then calling on the government to expedite this and ensure that another 10,000 Turkic Uighurs would be brought to Canada as refugees and that we would identify who they are. This is an incredibly important part of ensuring that we have accountability in the House. When the Liberals are not doing their jobs, they need to be raked over the coals for it.

If the Minister of International Trade has the time to hand out a sweetheart \$25,000 contract to a friend, she has the time to expect that her cabinet, the rest of her colleagues and she herself are all doing the job that they were sent here to do. She was named to cabinet. She should be doing her job. We have proof that she is not. She is failing on the job to deliver the results that are needed. It has been seven years since 2016.

I just heard a member say that it is the pandemic. We blame the pandemic. When world trade was collapsing and fewer goods were being shipped, it is not as if the CBSA officers stopped doing their work. They were still on the job. It is not as if goods were being stopped all over the world at borders; we still had many goods coming into the country.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that you are giving me the signal. I almost wish I had not shared my time with the member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I could have used the extra 10 minutes to lambaste the government for its failure.

We owe it to the people in Xinjiang province to ensure that we have a regime in place that stops goods at the border and seizes the goods made with their labour. The Americans have done it. Other western governments have done it. We have the results showing that by the government's own accounting, it has not done it. It is a shame.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives make a great deal of reference to China. On all issues, they tend to focus a lot of attention on China. What does the member suggest the Conservative Party, in general, would do in dealing with China when it comes to the issue of trade, given that there was a secret trade agreement that was signed with the former prime minister of Canada? Can he provide his thoughts on what kinds of consequences there should be for China generally, based on the comments that we are hearing today from the Conservatives?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, that is actually quite simple to answer. I would turn to the member for Dufferin—Caledon and ask him for the electronic list that the Department of Homeland Security has of companies sourcing forced labour goods and trying to ship them in, and I would give it to the CBSA. It is pretty simple.

Also, the particular treaty the member is referring to is not secret; it is a public document that was approved by the House.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been reading *Watson's Dictionary of Weasel Words*. It is a fascinating book, and I have been studying it very closely. It has such goods words, like “aspirational”, “drill down” and “recontextualize”. However, I would ask my hon. colleague about the term “move on”. I would like to quote this so I get it correct: “Going-forward basis: It is a popular form of escape from responsibility, accountability or discomfort, much favoured by cads, con men and carpetbaggers, etc.”, as in “Let's not dwell on the past”, “Let's not wallow in the lens of history”, “Let's not waste public money setting up inquiries”, “Let's not waste time arguing about who said what and whether or not they meant it.”

I would like to ask my hon. colleague if he thinks that the advice we are getting from *Watson's Dictionary of Weasel Words* might help give clarity to the debate that we have been having in the House for the last few weeks.

• (1240)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure which book the member is referring to. I kind of missed that part. I did catch the word “inquiry”, though, and I notice that we are still waiting to hear how the New Democrats intend to vote on our motion to call the Prime Minister's chief of staff to testify before a committee of the House.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is an advisory that has been put out by the Government of Canada that says, “The Government of Canada is deeply concerned by reports and documentary evidence of repression of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities by Chinese authorities”.

The U.S. version says, “The People's Republic of China (PRC) government continues to carry out genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghurs and members of other ethnic and religious minority groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang), China. The PRC's crimes against humanity include imprisonment, torture, rape, forced sterilization, and persecution”.

I wonder if the member could comment on why the Government of Canada's approach to this, including not seizing any goods, is seemingly so at odds with our number one ally and trading partner.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. He named some of the crimes that we see happening against the Turkic Uighur people in the Xinjiang province, which have really ramped up since 2017, the start of these formal labour camps that the regime in Beijing keeps referring to as “vocational schools”, typically. That is kind of the nomenclature it uses. As someone of Polish heritage, I am pretty used to this from Communist regimes. They give everything weird names. “Potemkin village” comes to mind as well. This is consistently done by regimes like this.

We should be aligned in this case with our partners in the USMCA, who have done a much better job, especially the Americans, in enforcing the rules. If we are going to take this to heart, we have to enforce the sanction regimes passed by the House.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the answer we were given earlier, that consultations are being held on the steps to be taken to improve the forced labour situation, that is to say to eradicate it.

With respect to children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed on November 20, 1989, or almost 34 years ago. They have had 34 years for consultations, so we wonder if they are asking all eight billion people on earth what concrete steps should be taken.

I would like to hear what my colleague thinks about this.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. As I said, this reminds me of the Yiddish proverb: “A drowning man will reach even for the point of a sword”.

With respect to this file, the government talks about consultations, commissions, websites and attestations. That is not good enough. What we need are results from the CBSA, to ensure that goods imported into our country are not made with forced labour.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government can introduce all the legislation it wants and Parliament can adopt all the legislation the government presents. The government can introduce all the regulation it wants and it can sign all the treaties it wants. However, if it does not operationalize that legislation, does not operationalize those regulations and does not put into effect those treaties, it is all for nought. What is going on with Xinjiang is a good example of this.

Clearly, a genocide is taking place in Xinjiang. As members know, Canada is obligated under the genocide convention to prevent genocide. Article 1 of that convention says, “The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.”

One of the elements of a genocide is “[i]mposing measures intended to prevent births within the group”. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said the birth rate in Xinjiang plummeted by 50%, one half, between 2017 and 2019. In two short years, 24 months, the birth rate went from 16 births per 1,000 people to eight

births per 1,000 people. Clearly, one element of the genocide is taking place.

Two other elements of genocide under the convention are “[c]ausing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group” and, second, “[d]eliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”. There is evidence that both of these elements are also in place in the massive detention camps the PRC has set up in Xinjiang. There is evidence based on satellite imagery, survivor testimony, investigative journalism, leaked documents, smuggled videos and so many other pieces of evidence, documenting hundreds of detention camps built by the PRC in Xinjiang province.

It is estimated that more than two million Uighur Muslims have been detained in these camps. Some experts have called these camps the greatest detention of a group of people since the Second World War. PRC authorities first denied the very existence of these camps, but when presented with high-resolution satellite evidence, they recanted and explained them away as simply educational camps.

Documents obtained by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists have highlighted what is going on in these camps, including torture and forced labour. There is evidence that Uighurs are being forced to pick cotton and produce tomatoes that the PRC is exporting around the world, which is just like what happened during another genocide. During the Holodomor in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933, millions of Ukrainian peasants were forced to produce grain that Stalin then exported to the rest of the world, leaving them with nothing, not even seed grain for the next year's planting and harvest. As a result, over three million Ukrainians starved to death. Therefore, clearly, a genocide is taking place in Xinjiang. Parliament recognized that a genocide was taking place in early 2021 by adopting a resolution in the House.

It is now time for the government to uphold the international rules-based order. It is now up to the government to uphold two treaties to which this country is a party. It needs to uphold, first, the 1948 genocide convention by preventing genocide from continuing, by preventing the importation of products like tomatoes and cotton that have been produced using forced Uighur labour. Another treaty that the government should be upholding, if it is serious about upholding the international rules-based order, is our obligation under the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement. Article 23.6 of the agreement requires Canada to ban imports produced by forced or slave labour. The agreement says, “Accordingly, each Party shall prohibit the importation of goods into its territory from other sources produced in whole or in part by forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory child labor.”

Routine Proceedings

• (1245)

Subsequent to the signing of the USMCA several years ago, Canada and the United States adopted legislation to implement the elements of the CUSMA treaty that ban imports that have been produced using forced or slave labour. Parliament amended the Customs Tariff Act in July 2020 to bring Canada's laws into conformity with CUSMA, and the government published regulations stemming from those changes to the Customs Tariff Act that came into effect that same month, July 2020, some two and a half, almost three, years ago. A year later, the United States also changed its laws to bring them into conformity with the CUSMA treaty, but here is where the similarities end.

While the similarity between Canada and the United States is that both of us have implemented laws bringing CUSMA into effect, and both are party to the genocide convention, it ends there. Since these laws have come into force, the United States has stopped thousands of cargo container shipments from entering the United States from Xinjiang, but Canada has not stopped a single shipment from entering this country. In fact, the government temporarily halted one shipment from coming into Canada and subsequently released it. I believe that was in the province of Quebec.

No shipment has been blocked, interdicted and prevented from entering Canada, despite the fact that, south of the border, the U.S. government is upholding the rules-based international order and has prevented the importation of thousands of cargo containers containing things such as tomatoes, cotton and solar panels that have been produced using a labour force of millions of Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang province. Despite the U.S. interdicting thousands of shipments, the U.S. government has admitted that this is not good enough. In fact, it has plans to hire over 300 new positions at the border to continue to interdict even more products coming into its country from Xinjiang. It has plans to implement new computer systems and new training, and to conduct outreach to importers to prevent further shipments from arriving on American shores.

However, in Canada, nothing has happened, despite the fact the law came into effect almost three years ago. One shipment was temporarily blocked and then admitted into Canada. Meanwhile, thousands of cargo container shipments have been blocked from Xinjiang by the U.S. government because it is upholding its treaty obligations, its laws, the regulations it has published and the rules-based international order, which the current government says it supports. However, as the CBC, The Globe and Mail, and so many other investigative journalists have reported, tomatoes and cotton produced in Xinjiang, likely with forced labour, have continued to flood Canadian supermarket shelves and retail shops. The government turns a blind eye despite the fact it has these treaty obligations under CUSMA, it has these laws in place, and there are regulations that have been gazetted.

Let me conclude by saying this. The government can introduce all the regulations it wants, Parliament can pass all the laws it wants and the government can sign all the treaties it wants, but none of this has any effect unless the Government of Canada and its agencies operationalizes these laws and regulations, upholds these treaties and starts putting the work in place to actually block shipments from Xinjiang from coming into Canada.

That is why I will support the motion in front of the House. If the government is truly going to uphold our international reputation and the rules-based international order that it says it so deeply believes in, then that starts with doing exactly what we are calling for in this motion: to start blocking cargo container shipments at the Port of Vancouver and other Canadian ports that contain tomatoes and cotton from Xinjiang that have been produced using forced and slave labour.

• (1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I made reference to during my comments was in regard to the Minister of Labour and the mandate letter provided by the Prime Minister, which gives very a clear indication that we are to be developing legislation. That legislation is, in fact, in the works. I am not going to indicate when we will see it, because I am sure the member can appreciate that it does require a great deal of consultation and working with a wide spectrum of different types of stakeholders.

Could the member provide his thoughts in regard to the type of work that should be done prior to introducing legislation, given the consequences of a substantive piece of legislation that we hope to be producing at some time, whether it is in months or years?

• (1255)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, the government does not need new legislation. It has immense powers under existing framework legislation. It has immense powers under the Customs Tariff Act and its regulations.

The government needs to get its hands dirty and figure out exactly what it needs to do to empower the Canada Border Services Agency officers to interdict these shipments. It needs to sit down with frontline officers and ask what they need, in terms of training, computer systems and personnel. Let us get this done in the next six months so we can stop bringing in these products that have been produced using Uighur forced labour.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I have to say that I completely agree with him on the answer he just gave to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government. We do not need consultations or other measures.

Billions of dollars are at stake. That may be why the situation is not going to change anytime soon and also why the government is acting with a little too much caution. Between 2015 and 2020, there was even an increase in the estimated dollar value linked to forced labour.

My colleague provided many suggestions about how to improve all of this. Does he believe that transparency and perhaps even labelling could also be solutions?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I believe that the government needs to provide us with more information. I believe that is a problem here in Ottawa. We could even say that this place is information-free compared to the capitals of other G7 countries.

[English]

It is a huge problem with the lack of transparency and information. It is very difficult to find out from the government whether or not shipments have been interdicted and blocked. We often have to get that information through access to information requests or other investigative techniques, rather than the government being transparent about what is going on by default.

That adds to the problem. People are generally not aware that we are not upholding our treaty obligations. We are not upholding the rules-based international order when it comes to preventing imports using forced Uighur labour. Part of that problem is the lack of transparency from the government about what exactly is going to be interdicted at the border.

We do know one thing, which is that no shipment has been blocked from Xinjiang that has been produced using forced Uighur labour.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the CBSA officers, one of the things we had this summer was mandatory working during vacation time and mandatory overtime. One of the things we could do is actually expand their operations and boots on the ground, so to speak.

What are the member's comments about that, versus what right now is an agenda to actually move to more automation? Where do the Conservatives stand on that?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, it is hard for me to give a specific answer to that question, because we are not presently in government and I do not have access to that information, unfortunately.

The minister should sit down with frontline CBSA officers and, obviously, the head of the CBSA, to talk about what resources and tools they actually need to start blocking these cargo container shipments. Ninety-eight percent or so of the world's trade arrives on these cargo containers. There has to be a way to implement computer systems, training and other measures in order to interdict these shipments. The United States has been doing it and they are further improving on their record. There is no reason why Canada cannot do the same.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to talk a bit about the forced labour happening around the world and the concerns around the importation into Canada of some of the products that have been produced by forced labour. I want to talk a bit today about products that get a free pass.

Increasingly, we have these environmental, social and governance indicators, or ESG indicators. To some degree, that ends up having a watering-down effect and folks who have a so-called environmental footprint get a free pass on some of the other issues.

A number of organizations around the world have pursued looking at so-called green technology, wind turbines or solar panels, for example. What happens then is that these products get a great brand around their environmental bona fides. People with solar panels or wind turbines get a relatively free pass. We can override a number of other issues. We have seen this right here in the province of On-

Routine Proceedings

tario. A lot of locals who live in areas where wind turbines or solar fields are being put up are frustrated. They do not necessarily appreciate these, yet they have little recourse to fight them.

We see the same thing happen when it comes to forced labour around the world. When it comes to the production of wind turbines or solar panels, for example, a blind eye is turned to the use of forced labour. For instance, most of the cobalt in the world, if not all the cobalt in the world, comes out of Congo. Vast amounts of that cobalt are harvested by forced labour and child labour.

There have been examples from the U.S. Department of Labor, where up to 75% of the polysilicon that goes into the making of solar panels comes from forced labour around the world. Reports have identified 90 Chinese and international companies whose supply chains for these solar panels come from forced labourers. Seven of the top 10 wind turbine manufacturers come out of China and over 50% of the installations around the world come from these seven companies in China. Most of these companies have been identified by the Sheffield Hallam University. It has shown that forced labour is a major part of all of these companies' supply chains.

I want to highlight today that while these are green technologies, they sometimes allow us to overlook the forced labour that is in many of these products.

• (1300)

[Translation]

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

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. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

PETITIONS

BALDWIN EAST AERODROME

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by thousands of Canadians, including the residents of the Town of Georgina and the small but mighty community of Pefferlaw.

Government Orders

The petition calls on the government to prohibit the development of the so-called Baldwin east aerodrome. To date, the Liberals have done nothing to prevent the planned dumping of more than 1.2 million cubic metres of potentially contaminated soil on the environmentally sensitive area within the Lake Simcoe watershed and have ignored the previous involvement of the aerodrome proponents in waste management and illegal fill dumping.

The petitioners call on the Minister of Transport to prohibit the construction of the Baldwin east aerodrome and amend related Transport Canada regulations to ensure that the false pretense of building an aerodrome could not be used to illegally dump fill. We need action.

HAZARAS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this petition comes from constituents of mine, who are calling on the government to prioritize Hazaras coming into Canada as part of the target of 40,000 Afghani refugees.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the fact that over 28,000 Afghans have been brought to Canada as refugees. They also remind the House that for the past 130 years, the Hazara ethnic group has faced genocide and systemic ethnic cleansing in Afghanistan; that since the fall of Kabul in August 2021, Hazaras have once again been targeted by the Taliban regime, as they are also a minority religious community; that the Taliban regime is responsible for the massacre and genocide of Hazaras; and that Taliban gunmen have directly been involved in executing Hazaras and forcing them to leave their homeland.

Again, the petitioners remind the Government of Canada that, as part of its international obligations, it has an obligation to also ensure that the Hazaras form a sizable portion of the 40,000 Afghans who are being brought to Canada as refugees.

• (1305)

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as I rise to present a petition today, I am struck by how timely it is. We would not have known, when I pulled this petition for today, what we would be debating in a concurrence debate.

The petitioners from my riding are calling on Canada to pay attention to the fact that companies within Canada, Canadian-based companies, are responsible for human rights abuses around the world, such as killing, attacking, harassing indigenous peoples and other citizens in societies around the world and marginalized groups, and are on their way to also damaging the environment in those countries.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to require, through new legislation to protect human rights and environmental due diligence, that Canadian companies prevent adverse human rights impacts and environmental damage throughout their activities and supply chains; to require these companies to do due diligence as to subcontractors and so on; to be sure that the products Canadians buy from them do not involve human rights abuses, forced labour or slavery; to avoid, insofar as it is possible, environmental damage around the world; and to establish a legal right for

people who have been harmed by Canadian companies overseas to seek justice in Canadian courts.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

HISTORIC PLACES OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from December 2, 2022, consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act respecting places, persons and events of national historic significance or national interest, archaeological resources and cultural and natural heritage, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to talk about legislation that all members of the House should get onside with and support.

Bill C-23 is all about people, places, our history and our heritage. When I think about our heritage, a flood of things come to mind about our Canadian identity. It was not that long ago that we were talking about the \$198-billion, 10-year health agreement between the national government and all the different provinces. I remember saying that our health care system was at the very core of what it meant to be a Canadian.

We can talk about a policy of that nature or about Canada's rich diversity, which is second to no other country in the world. In fact, I often have had the opportunity to talk about that diversity when I have gone to a multitude of different types of events whether in Winnipeg North or outside it.

We often hear that one of Canada's greatest assets is our diversity. Our heritage is changing everyday through people and the things we do as a society. Compare our values today to what they would have been 30 years ago with respect to diversity and the way in which we approach a wide variety of different areas.

Government Orders

When we look at Bill C-23, one cannot help but reflect on a private member's bill that was passed through the House a couple of years back. It went through second and third reading. It ultimately went to the Senate, but unfortunately it died in the Senate. It was a private member's bill, Bill C-374, which was introduced by my friend and colleague, the member for Cloverdale—Langley City, a man who is very passionate about our heritage and our parks. I believe that legislation received unanimous support in the House of Commons prior to going to the Senate. That legislation was not word for word to this legislation. In fact, there is a significant difference between what we have before us today and ultimately what passed through the House unanimously but died in the Senate.

The principle of the importance of our historic places, people and acts is something we have to ensure we preserve. Bill C-23 is all about that. That is why I hope that at the end of the day all members will support it.

I did not know about the number of canals in Canada. Why is that important? There are nine historic canals listed in the bill, such as the Rideau Canal, Trent-Severn Waterway, the Sault Ste. Marie Canal. The canal that really made me reflect upon is in the province of Quebec, the Saint-Ours Canal. My ancestry, a few generations back, came from that area. I suspect that some of my family might have even historically been a part of that. The bill goes on to list the canals, whether in Ontario, Quebec or Nova Scotia, and the important role they play. It gives specific directions.

I use the canals as an example because if we look at what the legislation would do, it would establish a very strong framework to deal with something that should be important to all of us.

● (1310)

The designation of a place, person or event in Canada is something we should all take an active interest in. That is what I like about the legislation. I believe passing this legislation will put us at par with and maybe even better than some other jurisdictions. As the member for Cloverdale—Langley City pointed out to members a couple of years back, it is warranted and necessary, and I am glad the department has made it a priority to such a degree that we are now debating it after it was introduced the other day. I hope members see fit to support the legislation so it can go to committee and hopefully receive some sort of passage. Let us get it back into the Senate, hopefully before the end of the year, because as I said, while it is not identical to Bill C-374, it sure did receive a great deal of support.

When I think of the legislation, there are certain parts that are worthy for me to reference. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is something that many members of the House of Commons and I hold very dear. We want to see action on the calls to action. Over the last number of years, we have seen many calls acted on by this government, whether through statutory holidays or the language legislation. Many different calls to action have been acted on, and within this legislation we are seeing call to action number 79.

It is gratifying, but at the end of the day, it is hard to believe we need to put this into legislation. I think this should have been automatic many, many years ago, and perhaps decades ago. This legislation would ultimately put into place a guarantee of indigenous

representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, for example. This is a board that helps portray Canada's history and where we have come from. How can one not incorporate call to action number 79? I am glad to see it has been incorporated into the legislation. I am also glad to see it note that when a board is looking at some form of designation, it would need to take into consideration indigenous knowledge so we ensure there is a fairer reflection of our history.

I want to give a tangible example that I think has made a profoundly positive difference in the city of Winnipeg. In the city of Winnipeg, we have what we call The Forks, where the Red River and the Assiniboine River come together. There are some historic buildings there. There is the Via Rail station, which is such a wonderful heritage building where often someone can get their citizenship court ceremony. There is also what used to be freight type buildings. At one time, The Forks was a rail yard and there was very limited access to the Red and Assiniboine rivers.

● (1315)

What we had was different levels of government recognizing the heritage within The Forks and investing millions of dollars to convert The Forks into what it is today. They took heritage buildings and converted them to have a modern use while preserving their heritage. We can take a look at the walkways along both the Red River and the Assiniboine River and the value they have added to the city of Winnipeg. Today, it is the most visited spot in the province of Manitoba. I heard a while back there are close to two million visits a year at The Forks, and there is a very important educational component to it for children and adults alike as it continues to evolve.

Prior to this investment and recognition, we might have had virtually no people going down to The Forks. Compared that to what it is today, and ultimately there is no comparison. There is no comparison because at one point in time it was hidden away from the residents of Winnipeg and those who were visiting our city, whereas today it is recognized as one of our shining attractions. If anyone is going to Winnipeg, they have to check out The Forks. It is an area that Winnipeggers are very proud of.

We can talk about downtown Winnipeg, or we can go into rural communities, where there is Riding Mountain National Park. If we were to check with some of my Conservative colleagues from the rural northern area, we would find they are very proud of Riding Mountain National Park, the many things it has to offer and the museums located in many different communities.

Government Orders

What is important, I believe, is that within the legislation, there are mechanisms that would enable anyone to ultimately make a suggestion about and bring forward what they believe should be recognized. It is therefore not just top-down. It is something that allows anyone in our communities to suggest any individual, an example for me being Louis Riel from Manitoba; place, like The Forks, as I highlighted as an example; or event. One could talk about the occurrence that took place in Upper Fort Garry many years ago or what was taking place in Lower Fort Garry, all of which are examples in Manitoba of things that could be recommended in hopes they are accepted.

I talked about the fact that this legislation would put into place a very strong framework, and through it and complemented by regulations, we would see criteria. There is no doubt that we all have personal opinions on what we think should be recognized from a national historical perspective; we all have our personal thoughts on that. However, we need to establish criteria.

First and foremost, I would say that within the legislation, anyone could come up with their thoughts on a person, place or event, and recommend or suggest that it be recognized. The criteria and eligibility would likely restrict a number of those thoughts and ideas, at least possibly in the short term, but at the end of the day, we have an excellent organization in the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

● (1320)

With respect to issues of transparency and sustainability and the issue of reconciliation, we have a board in place to protect the interests of Canadians in preserving the important things that we hold dear as part of our Canadian identity. As I mentioned, the legislation would mandate full participation from indigenous community members, along with provinces, which have been there in the past, and a few others. At the end of the day, this is the group of individuals who would ultimately provide recommendations and assist in drawing conclusions.

One thing I did not make reference to is heritage buildings. We have beautiful heritage buildings across our country, and I made reference to a couple of them in my example of The Forks. I am promoting The Forks today, as members can tell. There are federal buildings throughout the country that have played some historical significance.

I think of Pier 21 in Halifax. I remember having a tour of that facility. We get a sense of pride from it, as it is a part of our Canadian identity. Immigration today is so critically important to our country, as it has been in our past, and Pier 21 amplifies that.

Let us look at what has been done to the building. Obviously, if we had a picture that is hundreds of years old, it would look quite different from what it looks like today. However, because of inter-governmental investments and many volunteers who recognized the true intrinsic value of Pier 21, when walking through it today, we see a modernized facility that preserves and protects the heritage of the building itself. That is something we should be encouraging.

Not only does this protect our history and preserve it for future generations, but it also creates jobs. Through alternative uses, it brings people into the facility so they can learn more about our her-

itage. It becomes an attraction. If we talk to the Minister of Tourism, no matter where he is in Canada, he is talking about how wonderful our tourism opportunities are. We underestimate just how important our heritage can be in promoting tourism. It is used as a magnet for tourism.

If people look at the legislation, they will see it is not controversial. It is legislation that should be universally supported by all members, as we saw when the member for Cloverdale—Langley City brought in Bill C-374 a couple of years back and received unanimous consent. I hope my colleagues in the Conservative Party will recognize that and not want to filibuster this particular bill. Hopefully we will even see it get royal assent before the end of the year. How nice that would be.

● (1325)

The Deputy Speaker: I am really impressed that the hon. member was talking about the canals in Nova Scotia. The historic Shubenacadie Canal was on the list.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I struggle to understand why this bill had first reading in June of last year and is only being brought back now for second reading, almost a year later, if this is something the government feels is so important. It seems like the government lacks urgency on this, as with other things, like the concurrence debate we just had. There is no urgency there.

Going through law school, I was always told that the devil is in the details, and I have some details that I want the member to comment on.

With this piece of legislation, the minister would have the ability to “restrict or prohibit the navigation, anchoring or mooring of vessels in historic canals”. The Trent-Severn, for example, in Ontario, is a massive tourist draw and people use it all the time. The minister could shut it down with the powers in this bill. The other troubling part in the bill is that these powers could extend to lands adjoining or incidental to historic places, which could be privately owned lands. What safeguards is the member willing to put in place so there can be no overreach by the minister with respect to using historic canals or lands adjoining historic places?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would suggest that there is the issue of ministerial accountability. If there was an issue of closing down a canal, I suspect there would be a great deal of thought before a minister would do that, as it goes far beyond a department having to make a decision by itself. There are opposition members who would be more than happy to hold the minister accountable if, in fact, a poor decision was being made. That is not to say that our government would make a poor decision.

Government Orders

The member opposite also made reference to why we waited so long. Bringing forward legislation to deal with child care, dental benefits and a wide spectrum of issues to support Canadians, even though the Conservatives did not support most of that stuff, takes time to get through. If only we had more time to bring things back.

I can assure the member that it is a priority for the government. We do want to see the legislation pass, and hopefully the Conservative Party would be sympathetic to allowing this bill to pass, given what I suspect is the unanimous support of the House.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a speech on Bill C-23 given in December, the Bloc Québécois stated its interest in the issue and its intention of supporting the bill.

We support this bill because it is in keeping with Canada's desire to honour its international commitments under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It recognizes indigenous knowledge, which could help the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

My question is this: Will the bill be serious enough and tough enough to stop real estate developers from demolishing historic sites, tourist attractions, in order to do business and make major profits at the expense of the environment and this country's history?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the short answer to that is yes.

Through time, what we have witnessed is that people continue to understand and appreciate the importance of our heritage and our buildings. To this very day, I find it somewhat shameful that the city of Winnipeg lost its original city hall. It was an absolutely beautiful building. Obviously I was not part of the decision-making process back in the 1960s, but it was such a beautiful, historic building.

I do not think for a moment we would have lost that with today's values about or attitudes towards the importance of preserving our heritage. This legislation has teeth. Obviously, it will be supported by regulations. Support for the legislation goes far beyond just the House of Commons, as it also incorporates indigenous community support and provincial support.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's legislation calls for ensuring indigenous representation. We know the government has failed in so many ways in providing respect to indigenous peoples. We see this with the boiled water advisories. We see the lack of housing that is by indigenous, for indigenous. These are all crucial elements where the government has, quite frankly, failed over the last few years.

Could my colleague tell us how the government would step up to ensure that its investments are adequate to ensure indigenous representation and participation on these boards and in the activities foreseen by the bill?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would have to agree to disagree with the member opposite. I believe the government has made significant strides. In fact, I would suggest that no govern-

ment in the history of Canada has made more efforts, provided more financial resources and taken more action than the Liberal government over the last six years in addressing the importance of the relationship between Canada and indigenous people.

Within this legislation specifically, there is call for action 79, which ensures there is a guaranteed partnership within the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. It also ensures that, when the board is making decisions, indigenous considerations have to be taken into account.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, permit me for a moment, because I am sure members felt the same sense of nostalgia for Pier 21, to call out the name of the woman who made it possible, who was a dear friend of mine, the late Ruth Goldbloom. I also want, for my hon. friend for Winnipeg North, to give a shout-out to Gail Asper, who was a similar driving force in her work and gave us the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg.

I definitely support Bill C-23, but it needs work. Those in the heritage community find it strange and cannot figure out why this piece of legislation could fail to use the same terminology for a “historic place”, which is something people are used to. This throws a great deal of uncertainty into how we protect our national sites. How many Crown corporation sites are not covered? How many federal buildings that are designated important to our heritage are left in a sort of murky state? Therefore, I will be bringing forward amendments that flag that.

As this is the first chance I have had to speak to Bill C-23, I would ask the hon. member this: Would the government be open to amendments to improve the legislation to ensure it meets the needs and demands of the heritage community?

• (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would be disappointed if the leader of the Green Party did not bring amendments. She consistently does that.

The short answer to the member's question would be that the Government of Canada has demonstrated over the years that we are very much open to amendments if they add strength and make the legislation better, whether they are coming from Liberals, Conservatives, NDP or Green members. The idea behind this is to make better and strong legislation. As I said, it is establishing a healthy framework.

The member also pointed out individuals, and there are so many individuals in our communities who do not necessarily hold elected office but who contribute immensely to ensuring that the proper recognition and designation is given to so many things, such as people, events and places. I would like to express my appreciation for the fine work they do in preserving and encouraging future generations of Canadians to have the value we see in heritage sites today.

Government Orders

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak today. I will be sharing my time with the hard-working member for Dufferin—Caledon.

This is a piece of legislation with good things in it that I think everybody in the House will support. It also has some things that speak to the importance of the committee system and getting a bill to committee so experts can weigh in and highlight any potential shortcomings, and any potential unintended consequences that may result from legislation that tries to do as much as this bill tries to do, which is not incredibly clear. I think even the government recognizes that because it brought forward this bill in June of last year, and this is the first time that we are actually debating it in the House.

On the front of things that we can all agree on in the House, the move to amend the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to include first nations, Inuit and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, is really important. That representation is a significant step and an important part of the legislation.

There are other things we might agree on. I think it is really important to preserve our heritage. It is really important to Canadians to have the ability to visit places of historical significance and learn from the stories that are told at those places. I would encourage all members of Parliament to visit as many of these places, while we have this opportunity to meet Canadians, as we can.

I am going to use this opportunity to speak to one such place that I would highly encourage members of Parliament, particularly members from the government, the NDP, and even the Bloc, to come and visit. It is listed on the Canadian Register of Historic Places. This place is right in the heart of my constituency. In fact, it is about three minutes from where I grew up in the town of Devon and it is the Leduc No. 1 Discovery Well site.

I will read from the Canadian Register of Historic Places, for everyone's benefit, because I am sure that once folks hear this, they will learn some things and it will drive them to want to come to visit to learn some more. It says, "The heritage value of the Leduc No. 1 Discovery Well site lies in its association with the finding of massive petroleum deposits in Alberta and its connection to the dramatic social and economic transformation of the province in the second half of the twentieth century."

I will break away from what the register says to point out that it also led to a "dramatic social and economic transformation" of the entire country. We all, and our kids and grandkids, for those of us who have kids and grandkids, have benefited from this, and future generations will also benefit from what happened in 1947 at the Leduc No. 1 Discovery Well site.

The Canadian Register of Historic Places goes on to say:

In the first half of the twentieth century, Canada was almost entirely dependent upon the United States for its oil supply. As Canada's industries were established and grew, the demand for domestic oil to power the country's economic engine grew. The Imperial Oil Company Ltd., founded in Ontario in 1880, began to explore for oil and gas deposits in Western Canada in the 1910s. For three decades, they were unsuccessful, drilling 133 dry wells in the region. On February 13, 1947, however, the Leduc No. 1 Discovery Well blew in to the delight of the spectators assembled for the occasion. The eruption of oil from Leduc No. 1 triggered extensive exploration for further petroleum deposits as seismic teams, geologists, and

geophysicists fanned out across Alberta in search of "black gold." Though the Leduc field was a major find, new fields with even larger petroleum reserves would be discovered in subsequent years.

Again, I will break away to speak to the relevance of this bill. I am guessing that for some members of the House, this is a new story, a story they had not heard before. It is a story that is absolutely critical to our history as a country, certainly to the history of my province and my region, and to our economic history, our economic story in Canada. If more members of Parliament maybe understood this story, took the time to visit parts of the country where maybe there would be a little bit of a different view on political issues, the issues that we discuss in here every day, maybe we would have better debates with more context than we have right now.

I will continue again. This is from the Canadian Registry of Historic Places, which this bill addresses and seeks to fine-tune in our approach to our Canadian history.

• (1340)

It states:

The spectacular discovery of oil at Leduc in 1947 marked a watershed in Alberta's economic and social life. The find attracted massive American capital investment into the province and resulted in the creation of wells, refineries, and pipelines throughout the province. Oil exploration also uncovered another valuable resource under Alberta's surface—natural gas. The population boomed in subsequent decades as fortune-seekers—many of them well-educated professionals—flocked to Alberta to tap into the province's new-found wealth. New towns were established near oil fields and both Edmonton and Calgary grew dramatically. Edmonton became a service centre for the oil fields and home to numerous refineries, while Calgary developed into the administrative and managerial heartland of Alberta's burgeoning petrochemical industry. The tremendous wealth generated by the province's reserves of oil and gas also accelerated the demographic shift in Alberta from a rural to an urban population and funded the creation of universities and colleges, galleries and museums, and hospitals.

That is where the entry in the registry ends.

I would point out the last phrase, "funded the creation of universities and colleges, galleries and museums, and hospitals". The funding accrued to the benefit of not just Albertans but also Canadians across the country through transfer programs, tax revenues and all the different economic mechanisms this country has established over the years. Some of these are widely supported and others widely debated among my constituents. There is no question that the health care system we enjoy today, our education system, our post-secondary education system and the social safety nets across this country, from coast to coast, in every province and every territory, are owed to a great extent to the benefit that has come from this one plot of land in the centre of Leduc County as recognized on the Canadian Register of Historic Places.

Government Orders

In closing, as we debate really important issues around the environment, health, immigration and all the different things that we debate day after day with an eye to making Canada better, I would encourage members of Parliament who have the opportunity to fly to Edmonton. It sounds like in the coming weeks, we will finally get direct flights into Edmonton again. I encourage members to take a 15-minute drive from the airport to visit this site of historic importance in Leduc County at Leduc No. 1.

This is what my Conservative colleague, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent has done. I had an opportunity to host him at Leduc No. 1 at one point in time. I gave him a bit of a tour of the Canadian Energy Museum there. It was interesting because he came out and a tour bus pulled up. I was kind of excited, as a member of Parliament, to introduce my distinguished colleague from Quebec to the folks on the tour bus. Lo and behold, the folks got off the bus, and all their faces lit up as they saw this celebrity. It was a bus full of tourists from Quebec visiting Alberta. The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent was an absolute celebrity as he shook hands with every single person on that bus, and I grew to understand why this gentleman is such a legend in his riding and his home province of Quebec.

I have used my time to give one example of the potential benefits of this legislation if we get it right. I am really looking forward to looking at some of the potential challenges with the legislation at committee and hearing what experts from across the country have to say on some important parts of this bill.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am also of the opinion that Bill C-23 should be sent to committee so that we can make any necessary changes.

My colleague ended his speech by talking about the challenges with this bill. Even just looking at clause 2, the definitions, I do not see a clear definition of what constitutes a person or place of national historic significance or national interest.

I also do not see, in subclause 24(1), how much time the minister has to support a request for designation from the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

Does my colleague see the same challenges? What other challenges does he see?

[*English*]

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, there are numerous potential challenges with this bill, and among the least of them might be definitions. I think that speaks to why the government has taken so long to actually bring it forward for debate.

I have other concerns. We are a country right now, over the last eight years, which has had a significant challenge building anything. I want to make sure that, as we make efforts to protect our Canadian heritage, we do not inadvertently make it harder and harder to build anything in this country. That is an important part of the conversation that we can look at when we get this bill to committee, and we hope to hear more of that through the debate in the House today.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I understand my colleague is really putting forward a changed position from that of the Conservative Party five years ago. Then, the committee on the environment had a study on heritage sites, and Conservatives said that although they agreed in principle with the need to support indigenous perspectives in heritage sites, they felt this would represent additional stresses to the federal government's fiscal framework.

I get the sense the member is providing a new position in which the Conservative Party believes that it is important for indigenous peoples to be represented and that there should be adequate resources to ensure their participation in these important sites. Could the member clarify this? Have the Conservatives changed their position from five years ago?

Hon. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, we have absolutely not changed our position. This is a different piece of legislation. The member has been around this place for a long time and understands that different legislation requires a different approach. There are important conversations we need to have.

I represent an area with a significant indigenous population, with many living off reserve. The community of Maskwacis is just south of my constituency, which is already the largest constituency in the country by population by a long way. I take my role as a member of Parliament to be very important, and I hear from constituents and constantly learn from them every day. Again, this is why it is so important to get this bill to committee and make sure we hear from experts from across the country and every community to ensure that we always have the strongest legislation we can.

• (1350)

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to be able to discuss the bill today. I obviously think there are some very good things within the bill. I think that it would set up the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. It would add indigenous representation in response to truth and reconciliation recommendation number 79.

I would quickly note that the piece of legislation before us had its first reading in June 2022. Here we are in March 2023, and it is coming up for second reading. I wonder why it has taken the government so long to do this.

I was a history major in university. I love history. I love the concept of expanding Canadian historic sites from coast to coast to coast. I love the idea of finding ways to make sure we maintain them, like maintaining birthplaces of prime ministers. Therefore, there are certainly things within the bill that I like and am very happy to support. However, going through law school, we were always told that the devil is in the details. When I look at the bill, I describe it as “the iceberg bill”.

Government Orders

I question why the Liberals have designed the bill in this way. If they really wanted unanimous consent for a bill like this, why did they put so many things in this particular piece of legislation that, quite frankly, can be considered controversial? I want to talk about those, and I am going to explain the actual pieces of the legislation that I find could be controversial. When I then combine this with how I have so little faith in the government to do what is right, it gives me incredible pause.

For example, the government says it has done a lot to prevent the importation of goods made with forced labour from the Xinjiang region of China. However, we had a concurrence debate on that today, and the evidence is that the government did not do anything. This is one reason that I do not have a lot of faith in how it is going to implement certain sections of the bill.

I want to talk about this. The first thing is that the bill would give the minister powers to recognize the national historic significance or national interest of places. The minister can make that designation. I think that is absolutely fine, but when it has taken place, the minister gets other powers. That is what I am concerned about, and I want to talk a bit about that.

With respect to historic places and canals, this bill would give the minister the power to restrict and prohibit the navigation, anchoring and mooring of vessels in historic canals. If the government designates a different waterway as a historic place or historic waterway, will those powers extend there? For example, if we were to dedicate a certain portion of waters on the west coast of Canada as a new historic site or historic waterway, would the minister then have the power to determine whether navigation can go through that? If we think of the tourism industry on the west coast with the cruise ships, etc., would the minister be able to limit where the cruise ships can operate? That is sort of deeply problematic to me.

Right here in Ontario, we have the Trent-Severn system. Thousands of Canadians have cottages along this system, and the minister would have the power to restrict or prohibit vessels from mooring or operating in the Trent-Severn Waterway. The government will say that the minister would never do that unless they absolutely had to, but the reasons for being able to make that designation are not defined in the bill. It is a blank cheque. I am sorry to say this, but I would never give the government a blank cheque for anything because it just has such a terrible track record on things like this.

The bill is highly problematic, and it has to be studied at committee. I am very hopeful the government members, recognizing how important it is to add indigenous representation to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, will put some guardrails in place to restrain the minister's powers to make these kinds of restrictions or prohibitions. That is the way to build consensus with all parties and make sure the bill will have speedy passage.

The government does not have a good track record of doing that, though. The general approach has been that it is the government's way or the highway. Therefore, I am asking its members today to make sure that there is going to be a very collaborative approach to how we do this.

• (1355)

The member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin spoke about the Leduc No. 1 well and the historic significance of that, which could be designated by the minister. The minister has the power to designate a historic place. That is fine. I think there are somewhere near 36,000 submissions on this. These designations would take place from coast to coast to coast.

The devil is in the details of that, because the bill also gives the power that the minister may have the authority over lands adjoining or incidental to historic places. What does that mean? Why has that not been clearly defined in the act?

Let us say, for example, the government decides to declare a historic place near someone's property. Then it says the windmill on the property is taking away from the historic place, and that person needs to take the windmill down or the government needs a chunk of that person's land. What are the rules regarding that? What is going to restrain the minister's power?

Someone might say that is overreaching, except the government does not have a good track record of collaborating. The government does not have a good track record of ensuring that it does not overreach. I can go on about the challenges of the minister having power over lands adjoining or incidental to historic places.

Have the Liberals defined what “incidental” means? I think we all understand what “adjoining” means, but have they defined what “incidental” means? Of course they have not. Why have they done it? Why have they included language like this in a bill that they say everyone should support? It is sloppy drafting. It is trying to put way too much into the bill that should not be in it.

There are other powers in this bill that were not mentioned in the member's speech and have not been discussed. There are new offences created under this act, and if a person is convicted under this act, the court could order the seizure of an item or property.

Let us think back to my example of the Trent-Severn. If they say someone cannot operate on the Trent-Severn, then someone who has a cottage there decides they need to get in their boat to go to the grocery store, because those exist, then they could be charged and the boat could be seized. That is a problem, but wait, there is more.

They are also setting up the historic places protection fund. Where is the funding for that going to come from? It is also not clear in the bill if the proceeds of seizures will go into the historic places protection fund.

We can think of the conflict of interest that exists if the government says the more things we seize, the more money we have in the fund. We know the government likes to tax everything, whether it is the escalator tax on alcohol or whether it is tripling the carbon tax. The government is addicted to tax and addicted to revenue.

If there is an incentive in this bill for the government to seize property or personal property and use those proceeds, then we have to be very concerned that it is exactly what it is going to do. This bill, I agree, should be supported and it should go to committee, but the committee needs to do the really hard work of looking at what exactly is in this bill.

I am hopeful that I have illustrated just some of the concerns I have with this legislation, and that the committee will take those concerns very seriously and find ways to rein in the power of the minister that is unconstrained now, to define what “incidental” means and to make it clear that the proceeds from seizing things are not going into this fund. Those are my concerns.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to take part in many events this month held in recognition of International Women’s Day, including an inspiring luncheon hosted by Nisa Homes, a non-profit operating 10 women’s shelters across Canada, and the Vedanta Ashram Society celebration at Halifax’s Hindu temple to pay tribute to the women volunteers who have supported the temple for five decades.

We have the Power of Success dinner for all women in business. I had the honour to join the 67th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, where issues like the gender pay gap were on the agenda. I also announced over \$1 million in federal support for entrepreneurship centres in Halifax West. Much work remains, but I am confident that we are building a brighter world for women.

As my daughter welcomed beautiful baby Isabelle Angelina, my first granddaughter, last week, my hope is that all doors will be open for the next generation of girls.

• (1400)

The Speaker: Before I go to the next hon. member, I just want to remind everybody in the chamber that S.O. 31s are being spoken and everybody wants to hear, so let us keep our talking to a minimum so that we can all enjoy what is being said.

The hon. member for Niagara West.

PELHAM CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I attended the ceremony for the Fonthill and District Kinsmen Citizen of the Year award. This is a very special event in my riding of Niagara West. We were all happy to gather safely in person, to celebrate once again, after a three-year break due to the pandemic. I have attended almost every year since I was elected back in 2004.

This year's recipients were Brad and Brayden Saplywy, a father and son duo, who helped raise almost \$10,000 for Pelham Cares, a local charity. How did they do it? For the past three years, Brayden

Statements by Members

and his dad have decorated their truck in Christmas lights, 9,000 lights to be exact, to raise awareness for funds for charities. Next year, they are planning on adding 10,000 lights to the truck. What an incredible story of solidarity and generosity.

Other folks who have received the Kinsmen Citizen of the Year are Gary and Rosemary Chambers, Ron Kore and Michael Jacques, among many other outstanding members of our community.

I am proud to represent Pelham and other townships in our close-knit community of Niagara West.

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks World Down Syndrome Day. The 21st day of the third month was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplification of the 21st chromosome that causes Down Syndrome. Down syndrome is a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always existed and is universal across all racial, gender and socio-economic lines. One in every 781 babies born in Canada has Down syndrome.

I want to take a moment to recognize the incredible individuals with Down syndrome who make important contributions to our communities every day. Unfortunately, these individuals often face discrimination and are denied opportunities to fully participate in society. This year's theme is “with us not for us”.

As we celebrate this day, let us commit to creating a more inclusive society that values diversity and supports those with Down syndrome and their families. Together, we can create a world where everyone can live fulfilling lives.

[Translation]

BOCUSE D'OR FIRST PRIZE WINNER

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the prestigious 2023 Bocuse d'Or culinary competition in Lyon, Signé Caméline's roasted camelina oil won first prize in the Bocuse d'Or SIRHA Innovation Awards, the highest international honour in the field of culinary products. It is the first time a product from Quebec has won this prize.

I am proud to congratulate Olíméga, a family business that uses sustainable, environmentally responsible growing techniques. I knew the company when it was just starting out around 15 years ago. I am deeply moved to rise in the House to congratulate Chantal Van Winden, Raymond Durivage, Guillaume Cloutier, my dear friend Marc-Antoine Cloutier, and the entire team. Signé Caméline roasted camelina oil is a 100% Quebec-made, high-nutrient product that is grown and processed in Saint-Édouard-de-Napierville, in Montérégie.

Statements by Members

This bright yellow plant is also grown in my neck of the woods, in Témiscamingue. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of Services Agritem, Ferme Alain Sarrazin and Ferme Mondou et Robert. I am proud to welcome Lorraine Mondou and Michel Robert, who are with us here today.

* * *

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, as I celebrate 11 years of remission from cancer, I had the honour of being chosen as the honorary president of the Canadian Cancer Society Relay for Life, being held in Pincourt on June 10.

[*English*]

That night, I will be walking for Tarik, a young, bright man who went to Westwood High School and completed his first year at John Abbott College. He was passionate about history and politics. He loved to draw, paint, play video games and build Lego. Above all, he loved spending time with his best friends Bella, Aysha, Hailey, Maddy, Jazzy, Isabelle and Flanny.

Sadly, Tarik lost his battle with cancer on January 26, taking his last breath in his mother's arms, at the age of 19. Tarik was a warrior. During his treatments, his mother said he never complained. He just carried on. If he had a message to share with anyone else battling cancer it was "be brave, you got this".

To Tarik's mother Donna, his sister Cerine and his great aunt Sharon, who join us in Ottawa today, I want to thank them for sharing his story with me. He truly was a special young man.

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

It will be an honour for me to walk in his memory in June. I invite everyone from Vaudreuil—Soulanges to join me in paying tribute to those who are still battling this disease and those we have lost. Together, we can all help end cancer.

* * *

[*English*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, elections in Canada are for Canadians to decide, not to be influenced or decided by foreign interference to suit foreign interests or agendas. If our elections have been interfered with by foreign entities, Canadians deserve to know who is responsible, what actions have been taken against them and what is being done to prevent it from happening again, and yet the Prime Minister and his Liberal-NDP government are blocking attempts to get to the bottom of how Beijing operated interference networks to affect our 2019 and 2021 elections.

Canadians want and deserve a public inquiry into this election interference and they deserve to know why the Prime Minister and his NDP friends are doing everything they can to prevent this from happening.

What does the Prime Minister know, when did he learn about it and what did he do or fail to do about Beijing's election interference? These are questions from Canadians and the people of North Okanagan—Shuswap. What does the Prime Minister have to hide?

* * *

NOWRUZ

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, across Canada, many communities celebrate Nowruz, the beginning of the Persian new year, the coming of spring. It is a time for sharing a meal, assembling the haft-seen table and, most important, it is a time for family and friends to come together.

However, around the world, from Iran to Tajikistan, Turkey to Afghanistan, many communities that should be celebrating have been facing extreme difficulties. They are in our hearts, thoughts and prayers, and we wish them peace and happiness.

This year, our family celebrated our son's first Nowruz, a moment of great joy for us and a chance to pass on traditions from one generation to the next.

May this new year bring us all peace, prosperity, love and light.

Nowruz Mubarak. Navroz Mubarak.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, as a proud Canadian of Greek origin, I rise in the House to commemorate Greek Independence Day and the struggle of the Greek people to break free from the Ottoman Empire.

March 25, 1821, symbolizes the courage and fortitude of the Greek people who fought a formidable power to gain their independence.

[*English*]

On this day, we honour all the heroes who sacrificed their lives for the re-establishment of Greece, Greek civilization, democracy, and the Orthodox faith. We also recognize the cultural and political impact of the Greek Revolution and its influence on the modern world.

The Greeks have inspired us with their courage, resilience and love of freedom and democracy then and, as reliable allies against tyranny, more recently.

[*Member spoke in Greek*]

[*English*]

*Statements by Members***GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

The Speaker: I want to remind hon. members that statements are being made, and they are very important to the individuals and very important to us. For those who are talking, I would ask that they talk much lower or wait until statements are over and come back in the chamber, so that we can all enjoy and hear what hon. members have to say.

The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest issues small businesses and industries are facing across Canada is labour shortages. However, even businesses that find qualified workers, there is no affordable place for them to live.

It is not just workers who cannot find a place to live. I have not-for-profit affordable housing projects for seniors that have been impacted by the Liberal's record inflation that has more than doubled construction costs from \$3 million to \$7 million dollars.

Inflation is not the only problem. I am hearing from affordable, sustainable housing projects that are running into a wall of bureaucratic red tape with respect to re-zoning and permitting that delay construction while costing hundreds of thousands of dollars.

During a public housing meeting that I hosted, the frustration from Canadians, developers, municipalities and not-for-profits was palatable over the lack of affordable housing.

Addressing the housing crisis ultimately comes down to a simple question of supply and demand along with urgent action. I recommend the Liberals start adopting the policies we have put forth on housing, accreditation and getting rid of the gate keepers or get out of the road and let a Conservative government do it.

* * *

● (1410)

NEW WATERFORD COAL BOWL CLASSIC

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the 2023 winners of the New Waterford Coal Bowl Classic and the School Sport Nova Scotia Division 2 boys' basketball provincial champions, the Breton Education Centre Bears. Known for their relentless full-court press defence, that defence led them to multiple-point victories in each of their wins.

This year's Coal Bowl felt for many like a return to form as the first tournament held since the pandemic began to impact our communities in 2020.

The first-ever Coal Bowl was held in 1982, but this is the first year that both contenders for the top spot came from Cape Breton. The Bears played fellow Cape Bretoners, the Riverview Ravens, in the championship game to take the title. However, it is no surprise that two of the top spots were from Cape Breton, because Cape Breton creates champions.

I congratulate the Bears on their well-earned victory. Go Bears. I am glad they could be in Ottawa to celebrate that today.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with continuing inflation, skyrocketing food prices, rising interest rates, unaffordable housing, labour shortages, foreign interference, daily reports of violent crime and ethics violations, no wonder the anxiety level of Canadians has continued to escalate. Every day brings new revelations of overreach and failures by the Liberal-NDP coalition.

As April 1 approaches, Canadians brace for the tripling of the Liberal carbon tax and the cost of everything will rise again as a result of their mismanagement.

What the government is underestimating is the resolve of the people of Canada. Canadians refuse to yield. The day is coming soon when they will exercise their power. Canadian men, women, young and old will exercise their right to bring about change. Then, together, with a majority Conservative government, we will fix what they have broken.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, repeatedly the Liberal government proves that it does not care about Canadians. If it did, then inflation would not be at a record-breaking 40-year high. The Liberals' solution: an automatic escalator on the alcohol excise tax, increasing taxes on beer, wine and spirits by 6.3% on April 1, alongside the carbon tax like a sick April Fool's joke. This tax increase will devastate consumers; beer, wine and spirit producers, 95% of which are small businesses; and other Canadian entrepreneurs who can barely make ends meet as it is.

This tax hike will also have sweeping negative impacts on industries like tourism, food and hospitality, among many others. Enough is enough already. Taxpayers should not have to pay for the Liberal government's chronic fiscal mismanagement. They should not have to struggle under this cost-of-living crisis.

Will the Liberal government axe the planned excise tax, yes or no?

The Speaker: Once again, I want to remind everyone that S.O. 31s are taking place and we all want to hear what the hon. members have to say. I want to encourage them not to speak very loudly or just whisper among themselves rather than talking loudly and interfering with the hon. members and their messages from back home.

The hon. member for Orléans.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

THE FRANCOPHONIE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the month of March symbolizes our francophone pride and our linguistic duality. Yesterday, on March 20, francophones in my community of Orléans, across Canada and throughout the world celebrated the International Day of La Francophonie.

My colleague, the Minister of Official Languages came to my community, to the Collège catholique Mer bleue, under the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-est, and we met with students to talk with them about the importance of speaking, studying and living in French.

March 8 was also International Women's Day. I had the privilege of hosting over 115 women in my community at my ninth annual breakfast where I presented the 2023 Orléans Leading Women and Girls Recognition Award to 49 women and girls for their leadership and community involvement.

Finally, I want to thank everyone for continuing to promote our beautiful French language, in all its diversity.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in solidarity with those honouring March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It was on this day, in 1960, that the Sharpeville massacre claimed the lives of 69 Black people murdered by the police during a peaceful demonstration against the pass system in apartheid South Africa.

In Hamilton, we have a long legacy of community-wide human rights activism. I am especially proud to congratulate my sister and MPP elect Sarah Jama, who as an ardent anti-racism organizer and who won a decisive victory in the by-election in Hamilton Centre.

Today, I would also like to recognize the tireless efforts led by my brother Darren Green and the USW Hamilton Steelworkers Council, alongside the HCCI, HARRC, ACCA, CCAR, the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, the Hamilton Black History Council and dozens of other local organizations over the past decade. They continue to come together on this day to honour the victims of racial discrimination and continue our pledge to fight to see it eliminated.

The Speaker: Once again, I want to remind everyone that S. O. 31s are taking place and we all want to hear the messages that are coming across.

The hon. member for Drummond.

[Translation]

CLAUDE FOURNIER

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, filmmaker Claude Fournier passed away last week at the age of 91.

An icon of our culture and a pioneer of our film and television industry is gone. He was a member of the generation of filmmakers who created direct cinema, a distinctly Quebec contribution to the history of the seventh art.

He directed the classic Quebec film *Two Women in Gold*, the first of a series of erotic comedies with such suggestive titles as *Hot Dogs* and *The Apple, the Stem and the Seeds*. They were all big box office hits.

He worked in other genres as well, producing the wonderful film *The Mills of Power* and several television series, including *Juliette Pomerleau* and *Félix Leclerc*, which showcase his impressive versatility. He even flirted with English-language film by producing *Alien Thunder*, which starred Donald Sutherland.

Mr. Fournier leaves behind his wife and collaborator on many projects, Marie-Josée Raymond, and his twin brother and well-known television personality, Guy Fournier. We extend our sincere condolences to them and to all his family and friends.

I thank Claude Fournier for everything.

* * *

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Terry Dowdall (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no matter what our diet is, we all want tasty, fresh and sustainable food at prices that we can afford and that ensure a fair living to those who produce it.

As parliamentarians, the least we should be doing is to make growing our food more affordable. However, not all parties seem to be that way. In fact, the Liberals are slapping the punitive carbon tax on farmers to make it harder to farm and to make our food more expensive. When the Liberals are done, a 5,000-acre farm will pay \$150,000 per year in carbon taxes alone. Those costs will be passed on to regular Canadians. However, we do not have to worry. The NDP leader will blame it all on the grocery stores.

At a time of food insecurity and food inflation at a 40-year high, the family farm is increasingly unsustainable, but the high-tax Liberal-NDP coalition will keep increasing taxes because that is what those parties do. Only Conservatives would cancel the tax and help farmers to keep growing.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Emmanuela Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 25, Greeks across Canada and around the world will celebrate Greek Independence Day. It is the day that marks the beginning of the Greek War of Independence, the start of the revolution which would allow the people of Greece to regain their freedom after 400 years of Ottoman occupation.

On this day in 1821, the words “*eleftheria i thanatos*”, meaning “freedom or death”, became the slogan of the nation and brave men and women fought courageously for a better future for their country, for a liberated Greece.

• (1420)

[Translation]

There were heroic revolutionaries like Theodoros Kolokotronis, Laskarina Bouboulina and Rigas Feraios, who wrote: “It is finer to live one hour as a free man than 40 years as a slave and prisoner”.

[English]

It is thanks to the heroes of 1821 that Greeks are still around today to thrive in communities around the world. We remember them, we march in their honour, and tonight the Canada–Greece Parliamentary Friendship Group will host a reception on Parliament Hill to celebrate the occasion.

[Member spoke in Greek]

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has backed down and flip-flopped after weeks of pressure from the Conservative Party to allow just one of his aides to testify about how Beijing helped the Liberal Party in multiple elections.

He is delaying the truth. He has appointed a friend, neighbour from the cottage and member of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation to produce a report that will take months.

Will he finally end the cover-up and launch a public inquiry today?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue. It should not be a partisan issue, and it never should be.

That is why we have appointed David Johnston as an independent expert to identify any gaps in the system. The special rapporteur will make public recommendations, which could include a formal inquiry or some other type of independent review. We will abide by those recommendations.

Two national security bodies will undertake separate reviews of foreign interference in our elections, because we take this issue very seriously.

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it took weeks of pressure for the Prime Minister to back down and flip-flop, but allow only one of his top advisers, one of the key people involved in the campaigns that Beijing helped the Liberal Party win in multiple elections. However, what we really need is the full truth.

He has named his neighbour, family friend, ski buddy and member of the Beijing-financed Trudeau Foundation to look into the matter, which is nothing more than a delay.

Will the Prime Minister allow Canadians to get to the truth and prevent this from happening again before the next election, with a full public inquiry now?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know this is an extremely serious issue and should not be a partisan issue.

That is why we named David Johnston as the independent expert to identify any gaps in our system. He will make public recommendations, which could include a formal inquiry or some other independent review process. We will abide by those recommendations.

Also, we have two national security bodies that will undertake independent reviews of foreign interference in our elections, and we are also taking further immediate action to bolster our institutions, better coordinate government efforts to combat interference, counter disinformation and move forward on a foreign influence registry.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, data out today shows that food prices are exploding. Anyone who has been to a grocery store already knew it, but what is the Prime Minister's solution?

He wants to raise taxes on the farmers who produce our food and the truckers who ship it, which means more expensive groceries at the grocery store. It is part of his plan to triple the tax on heat, gas and groceries.

The Prime Minister loves to jet around at other people's expense, burning fossil fuels. Will he show some decency and some compassion for the people he has harmed and cancel the April 1 tax hike?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I sat down with farmers a few weeks ago to hear their concerns and to talk with them about how we are moving forward, they expressed to me their real concerns, and, quite frankly, their leadership in the fight against climate change and their leadership on protecting the environment.

That is why I underlined to them and to all Canadians that the Leader of the Opposition is simply wrong in his approach on not fighting climate change.

Oral Questions

The price on pollution puts more money back in the pockets of Canadians while keeping our air clean. Indeed, a family of four in the opposition leader's riding received over \$185 from our government in January, thanks to the climate action incentive—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$185 will not even cover a week's groceries for the average family after food prices have exploded under the Prime Minister.

If he thinks our farmers are doing such a great job fighting climate change, as I do, then why does he have to tax them again with a big tax hike on April 1? It is worse; it is not just food he is taxing. He wants to increase home heating costs and gas prices, a full 14¢ a-litre tax, a tax that he wants to triple.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his planned April 1 tax hike so that Canadians can afford to eat and to heat and house themselves?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, as of April the climate action incentive will increase in the member opposite's riding. A Canadian family of four will receive \$244 in his riding.

We have made that because, even as we move forward on putting a price on pollution, we are putting more money back in the pockets of Canadian families. Canadian families know that we do have to fight climate change while making sure things are more affordable.

That is why we stepped up on issues like dental care and rental care, two issues the Conservatives voted against.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, now he calls single mothers polluters because they buy groceries. He calls farmers polluters because they use fuel. He calls seniors polluters because they heat their homes. This is from a guy who, we just found out, for one of his four government-funded mansions, spent \$8,000 a month on utilities to heat the pool and the sauna. He flew 17 times in one month, including one 10-minute flight because he did not want to drive an hour from Waterloo to Toronto.

Why does the Prime Minister not stop his high carbon, high tax hypocrisy and cancel this tax?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian are facing challenging times right now because of incredibly challenging global contexts, whether it is the war in Ukraine or whether it is the end of the pandemic and disruptions of the supply chain. There are lots of issues and inflation facing Canadians right now, but instead of offering solutions, the Leader of the Opposition plays up partisan, personal attacks.

On this side of the House, we are focused on delivering for Canadians, delivering a GST rebate that helped 11 million Canadians last fall, delivering rental benefits and dental care that Conservatives voted against. We will continue to be there for Canadians while he plays talking games.

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all the opposition parties are calling for an independent public inquiry and they want to see a commissioner appointed. We are talking about the majority of members of Parliament, which is no small thing. Many experts are recommending such a commission, including Mr. Rosenberg himself.

There is broad consensus in civil society in favour of such a commission, and the intelligence agencies are expressing serious concerns. I, for one, do not understand and want to ask the Prime Minister a very direct question. Why not call an independent public inquiry led by a commissioner appointed by the House?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect us to take this issue seriously, and that is exactly what we have done. We appointed an independent expert, David Johnston, our former governor general. We have given him a mandate to identify any gaps in the system. The rapporteur will make public recommendations, which could include a formal inquiry or some other type of independent review, as he deems necessary to reassure Canadians. We will follow his recommendations.

In addition, two national security agencies will be undertaking separate reviews with respect to foreign interference, and we will continue to take this seriously.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know a little something about independence, and the special rapporteur who was appointed is about as independent as I am federalist.

The President of the United States is going to be in the House on Friday. The fact that the government does not want to launch a public inquiry sends a rather odd message in terms of national security for the entire continent, does it not? I am not accusing the Prime Minister of anything, but why not take this opportunity to put an end to the unfortunate impression that he has something to hide?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians need to have confidence in our electoral system and in our democracy. That is why we appointed David Johnston, a former governor general, as an independent expert. We are pleased to announce that his mandate was made public this morning. David Johnston is not partisan. He is a patriotic Canadian who has always put Canada first and who served admirably as a governor general after being appointed by a Conservative politician.

Canadians are rejecting the unfounded attacks on a man who spent his career serving Canadians. As for my colleague's federalism, I will let him explain how he got there.

• (1430)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats care deeply about democracy and are deeply concerned about political interference in our system. That is why we forced the government to end the obstruction in committee and to allow the chief of staff of the Prime Minister to testify, rendering the Conservative motion useless, which is not surprising because the Conservatives just want to play games. In fact, they are right now, the Conservative Party members, blocking our motion to have a vote in the House on a public inquiry.

My question to the Conservative leader is this. Why is he playing games? What does he have to hide? Why will he not stand up?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I just want to remind the hon. members what question period is about. It is about the opposition holding government to account, not discussing among themselves.

The right. hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to stand up to reinforce what my hon. parliamentary colleague pointed out, that the Conservative leader and indeed Conservative parliamentarians seem to be more focused on playing partisan games and personal attacks than they are on actually seeing Canadians reassured about the state of our democracy and the tools we have to counter foreign interference.

That is exactly why we chose to move forward with an unimpeachable expert, former governor general David Johnston, who is going to look deeply and seriously, with a wide and deep mandate released this morning, to reassure Canadians that all is being done to protect our democracy.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think I have figured it out. It turns out the Liberals and the Conservatives both have something in common. They are both opposed to a public inquiry.

[Translation]

People deserve a public inquiry because foreign interference undermines trust in our democracy.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, it turns out that I have to repeat this again because it is so important.

It looks like the Liberals and the Conservatives both have something in common. They are both opposed to a public inquiry.

[Translation]

People deserve a public inquiry because foreign interference undermines trust in our democracy, undermines trust in our electoral system.

Oral Questions

My question for the Prime Minister is the following: Why is he wasting time? Why does the Prime Minister not call a public inquiry immediately?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know full well that such sensitive issues involving national security cannot always be discussed in public.

That is why we have brought in Mr. Johnston as an independent rapporteur. He will be able to get to the bottom of the matter in an independent, non-partisan way, which may include a public inquiry if he decides that is necessary. In addition to that, there is a committee of parliamentarians with the right security clearance to look at all these issues and report to the House.

We will continue to take this as seriously as we need to—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. According to reports in *The Globe and Mail* around the time of the 2021 federal election, CSIS outlined a sophisticated strategy to disrupt our democracy and back the re-election of the Liberal Party and the Liberal government.

Has the Prime Minister ever been briefed on the activities of Beijing or its affiliates in support of the Liberal Party in any election, and, if so, when?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope all members will appreciate that this government takes allegations of foreign interference very seriously, which is why we appointed independent panels, made up of non-partisan professional public servants, that certified that the elections in 2019 and 2021 were free and fair. We have received recommendations from those panels, which we are now implementing.

Last week, we took the additional step of appointing David Johnston, a former governor general appointed by Stephen Harper, and a man with impeccable qualifications, to do the job. He will now provide recommendations, up to and including a public inquiry, to ensure that we protect all of our democratic institutions.

• (1435)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are serious questions that I think the public deserves real answers to, so I will ask another question I hope the government can answer.

CSIS documents obtained by *The Globe and Mail* suggest that Beijing's consulate in Vancouver took credit for the defeat of at least two Conservative candidates in the 2021 election.

Was the Prime Minister or any other member of the government ever briefed on Conservative candidates being targeted by Beijing, successfully or unsuccessfully, and, if so, when?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hon. colleague knows very well that our government, unlike the previous Conservative government, immediately took steps to strengthen Canadian democratic institutions against the ongoing threat of foreign interference, which CSIS identified.

My colleague likes to quote CSIS reports. In 2013, when the current Leader of the Opposition was responsible for democratic institutions, CSIS identified the growing threat of foreign interference, and the previous Conservative government did absolutely nothing. In fact, the Conservatives brag about it, because it did not affect the Conservative Party, so they did not decide to do anything about it.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Prime Minister was frequently briefed about Beijing's election interference. In the face of that, this is what a CSIS whistle-blower wrote in *The Globe and Mail*: "Months passed, and then years. The threat grew in urgency; serious action remained unforthcoming." That is an indictment of the record of the Prime Minister.

Beijing interfered in two elections under the Prime Minister's watch and he turned a blind eye to it. Why?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Since we have taken the reins of government, this government has been consistently proactive in taking foreign interference seriously by giving CSIS new threat-reduction measure powers and by ensuring we crack down on foreign funding, which could be used to meddle in our elections, through the introduction and passage of Bill C-76 and through the creation of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, which has all recognized parties doing important work together to protect our democratic institutions.

That is the record of this government. I am proud of it, and we will continue to ensure that we do everything possible to protect—

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no charges have been laid. No diplomats have been expelled. The Prime Minister kept Canadians in the dark, and it took a CSIS whistle-blower to make the public aware of Beijing's election interference. That is the record of the Prime Minister.

Either the Prime Minister was completely asleep at the switch or he allowed it to happen because it benefited the Liberal Party. Which is it?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague should be careful not to make outrageous allegations that he knows very well have no basis in truth.

Our government, from the beginning, took the issue of foreign interference very seriously. We put in place a number of steps, including a National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, created by law, with access to all relevant documents and officials, to make assessments about this and other national security issues. Far from what my colleague is saying, we have taken this issue seriously from the very beginning and continue to do so.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a whistle-blower put their career on the line. That person made a deliberate choice to reveal the truth about Beijing's interference in our election even if they wondered, and I quote, "Who will take care of my family if I go to prison?"

This is a national security official who is well aware of the consequences of their actions. All because the Prime Minister did nothing to prevent Beijing's interference in the last two elections.

If the national security situation is so critical that someone risks going to prison, why did the Prime Minister turn a blind eye for so long?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that, on the contrary, the Prime Minister and our government took this important issue seriously from the beginning, by seeking to strengthen Canadian democratic institutions against interference from China and other countries. This is not a new phenomenon in Canada or elsewhere around the world.

The good news is that we have put in place measures to reinforce our democratic institutions and we will continue to do so, particularly through the work of the Right Hon. David Johnston. We will put in place all other necessary measures to go even further.

● (1440)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CSIS said that the Prime Minister was briefed several times on Beijing's interference in our elections.

I will again quote the whistle-blower: "Months passed, and then years. The threat grew in urgency; serious action remained unforthcoming. I endeavoured, alone and with others, to raise concerns about this threat directly to those in a position to hold our top officials to account. Regrettably, those individuals were unable to do so".

Why did the Prime Minister ignore these warnings?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that we did not ignore these warnings. The former Conservative government ignored them when it was in power. We did the opposite. We put in place a suite of measures to strengthen our democratic institutions and to share intelligence vital to national security with parliamentarians.

We have a panel of independent experts chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council that certified that the 2019 and 2021 elections were free and democratic. The good news is that we will continue to strengthen these measures.

Oral Questions

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the debate over Chinese interference in our democracy demonstrates the Prime Minister's systematic and long-standing lack of ethics.

He floated the threat of a confidence vote to keep his chief of staff, Katie Telford, from having to appear. In other words, he actually threatened to force an election, all to avoid telling the truth about information he has had for a very long time about Chinese interference.

What is it that the Prime Minister wants to keep Ms. Telford from admitting to, so much so that he would consider bringing down his own government?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is just not true.

It is our goal to make sure that all the witnesses needed to answer questions are available. Many ministers have already gone to committee. Several people will be appearing before the committee as well.

We will make sure that someone is there to answer all the questions asked.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, knowing that China interfered significantly in the last two elections, the Prime Minister has threatened to trigger another election with a confidence vote.

Before the details of China's interference tactics could even be investigated, before the electoral system could even be strengthened to counteract these illegal practices, the Prime Minister threatened to trigger another election, even if it means that Beijing can resort to the same strategy a third time in a row, scoring a hat trick.

When will we finally get an independent public commission of inquiry?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague does not get too hung up on the truth. Making up facts does not seem to bother him all that much.

The Prime Minister has been very clear. This will not be a confidence vote. He said so this morning, as reported by all the papers. It is clear.

If the Bloc Québécois is just trying to pick a fight, stir the pot and impede our work here, it could at least stick to the facts instead of making things up all the time.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are playing games by threatening an election. Meanwhile, in the real world, there are real people in the Chinese community who are facing real threats from the Chinese regime.

As for the notorious Chinese police stations, Safeguard Defenders confirmed yesterday that 83 Canadian citizens have already been detained and deported to China to face trial, and those are only the cases we know about.

Beijing is literally arresting Canadian citizens in Canada under the Prime Minister's nose. This is serious.

When will he finally launch a real independent public inquiry?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always make certain that our position on China is clear, and it is clear. We will never tolerate any form of interference in Canada's democracy or domestic affairs.

I think it is important for all my colleagues to understand that we are always going to make a distinction between the Chinese government and the Chinese people themselves.

Unfortunately, Chinese Canadians in this country are too often the target of these actions. I call on all members of the House to support Chinese Canadians in every riding across the country.

• (1445)

[English]

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his loyal Liberal caucus keep trying to distract, divide and cover up their failure to protect Canadians from foreign interference. Canadians deserve to know the truth about Beijing's interference in our elections. We need to learn exactly what the Prime Minister knew and what was done to defend our democracy.

Will the Prime Minister finally identify all 11 federal candidates who received funding from Beijing, yes or no?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague and all members in this chamber that we take foreign interference very seriously, which is why we have put in the people, the authorities, the resources and the technology to protect all of our institutions, including most especially our elections. It is why last week we appointed Mr. Johnston, a former governor general appointed by Stephen Harper no less. He is unimpeachable and has the ability to put forward concrete recommendations, including and up to a public inquiry, which, if he does, this government will respect, because we take the work of protecting our democratic institutions very seriously, and we are committed to continuing to do that.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not the truth Canadians expect.

Just recently, Global News revealed that two high-level national security reports before and after the 2019 election suggest the Prime Minister's Office was warned about Chinese government officials and the direct funding they were giving to Liberal candidates. However, the Prime Minister continues to express that this information was never shared with him directly.

The question now is simple: Who in the Prime Minister's Office deliberately and intentionally withheld the information from him, and will he be terminating that person, yes or no?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a government that believes in taking foreign interference with the utmost seriousness, which is why we have raised the bar when it comes to being transparent in how we are doing that work, through the creation of NSICOP, through the creation of the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency and now with Mr. Johnston's appointment as the special rapporteur. He will put forward the next best practical steps so that we can continue to reinforce our democratic institutions, including our elections.

This is not a partisan issue. It is one that all members should unite behind, and I hope that will include the Conservatives as well.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we see this over and over again: skirt, deflect; skirt, deflect; skirt, deflect. At the end of the day, I find this all very perplexing. We know there have been reports given by CSIS to the Prime Minister's Office. Somehow those reports did not make it to the Prime Minister's ears. At least that is what he tells us.

My question for the Prime Minister is this: Was he not even just a little curious as to who the individuals were who withheld that information from him? Would he not want to know, or did he already know and simply did not need to ask?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the mandate that has been given to Mr. Johnston will allow him to look into all of the questions and concerns that have been raised around the elections in 2019 and 2021. I will highlight the fact that two independent panels have already verified that those elections were free and fair. Now Mr. Johnston will continue to work with all parliamentarians and with the committees and bodies charged with the responsibility of protecting our national security so that we can shine a light on the way we protect our elections. That is precisely what this government is focused on. I hope Conservatives will join in that effort. This is not a partisan issue. It is a—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the media reported that CSIS informed staff in the Prime Minister's Office that Liberal candidates were receiving money and support from Beijing and that nothing had been done about it.

Does the Prime Minister really expect Canadians to believe that he did not demand answers from those who withheld this information from him, or did he not ask because he already knew the information?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is fully aware that our government has taken the threat of foreign interference seriously from the very beginning. That is why we put in place a series of measures that enabled a panel of senior officials chaired by the Clerk of the Privy Council to confirm that the 2019 and 2021 elections were indeed free and democratic.

We have strengthened the measures already in place. Mr. Johnston will provide an analysis and make recommendations if there

are other measures we can implement to continue to ensure that there is no foreign interference in our elections.

* * *

● (1450)

[*English*]

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now that the New Democrats have forced an end to the government filibuster at committee and secured the testimony of the Prime Minister's chief of staff, I think we owe it to Canadians to make a little more time in this place to talk about the issues affecting them in the pocketbook, like grocery prices, for instance. Even as inflation begins to slow, grocery prices continue to rise at an outpaced rate, and grocery companies are walking away with all of that in profit while Canadians are cash-strapped.

The solution is to impose a windfall tax on grocery companies that are overcharging Canadians for their groceries as a clear signal that they will not get to walk away with that money and that the money will be reinvested in Canadians who are staring down the barrel of a recession.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member will know, the inflation rate today for February was posted at 5.2%. That is still too high, and we are going to continue to support Canadians who need the support when they need it most. In our country, tax fairness is a fundamental principle of taxation. That is why we insisted that insurance companies and banks pay more with the Canada recovery dividend, 1.5% more, on income over \$1 billion.

We will continue to watch very closely what the grocery companies are doing, and we will continue to be there fighting on the side of Canadians.

* * *

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the IPCC just gave another dire warning: If we do not act now, the devastating consequences of the climate crisis will only get worse. President Biden just announced a budget that eliminates billions of dollars in U.S. fossil fuel subsidies and invests that money in the low-carbon economy. This is what leadership looks like. Other countries are stepping up to the plate, but the Liberals want to keep giving billions to rich oil and gas CEOs.

Will the Liberals stop dragging Canada backwards and finally end fossil fuel subsidies?

Oral Questions

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after a decade of complete inaction by the opposition when it was in government, we are showing that leadership. The IPCC is right: Climate change is real. Climate change is urgent, and we are taking action. That is why we need to continue doing what we are doing. We put a price on carbon pollution. We have an emissions reduction plan that speaks to how we are going to reduce emissions across all sectors of our economy. We have committed to ending all fossil fuel subsidies for unabated fossil fuels.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has now been over a year since Russia began its devastating further full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It is important to remember that this invasion is a threat not just to Ukraine's security but also to Canada's national security, to NATO and to countries around the world.

Despite Putin's war crimes and unrelenting aggression, today Ukraine stands strong. In my view, Canada's military aid, including our training of the Ukrainian armed forces, has played an essential role in Ukraine's progress on the ground.

Could the Minister of National Defence share with Canadians the impact she believes that Canada's training has had on the ground, on the battlefield in Ukraine?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, the Canadian Armed Forces have trained over 35,000 members of the Ukrainian armed forces. We are training Ukrainians in England. We are training Ukrainian engineers in Poland, and we are training them on the use of the Leopard 2A4 battle tank.

As President von der Leyen said, the Canadian Armed Forces have been instrumental in terms of the resilience being shown on the battlefield in Ukraine. We stand with Ukraine as it fights for its democracy, sovereignty and stability.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years under this tax and spend Liberal Prime Minister, many Canadians are sinking into debt. They cannot afford food, heat or shelter.

On April 1 of this year, the Liberals are determined to make life even more difficult for struggling Canadians by increasing the carbon tax. It is more money out of their pockets. Canadians are spent.

When will the government cancel this cruel and callous carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times in the House, affordability is extremely important to every member in every party here. We have taken significant steps, including doubling of the GST tax credit, enhancement of the workers benefit, investments in

energy efficiency and a number of other things to address affordability issues.

Eight out of 10 Canadian families will get more money back than they pay with respect to the price on pollution. It is, in effect, an affordability measure in itself. Canadians not only expect their politicians to be smart and thoughtful and to address affordability issues but also to believe in and address climate change.

● (1455)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that empty answer is not giving any reassurances to struggling Canadians like John and Judy in my riding. They are just one senior couple among many who built this country. How does the government repay them? It has increased the tax on their already ludicrously high heating bill by nearly 20%.

The Prime Minister needs to stand up today and justify this unnecessary and completely avoidable tax hike to John, Judy and the countless other Canadians suffering under this carbon tax.

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, we will not take any lessons from the party opposite. Its plan for seniors was to raise the age of retirement to 67. The first thing we did was to restore that back to 65. Unlike the party opposite, we have been investing in seniors by increasing their old age security and guaranteed income supplement. These are all measures the party opposed.

We have had the backs of seniors before, and we are going to continue to make sure we support seniors.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under the Prime Minister, Canadians have never been more indebted. Wasteful government spending has driven up the costs of heating, housing and food. We know that Canadians can no longer feed themselves because food banks are overwhelmed.

In fact, in a recent visit to a community food bank in my riding, I was shocked to see people lined up out the door to get food. On April 1, it is going to get worse because the completely tone-deaf Liberal government is going to increase the carbon tax.

When will the Prime Minister finally get out of the way so that we can fix what he broke?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is Canadians who decide who is in government and not Conservative members of Parliament. However, let us be clear that 2.7 million fewer Canadians are in poverty today than when the Conservatives were in government.

When it comes to supporting Canadians, we have been there, whether it is supporting children with the Canada child benefit, supporting seniors with the guaranteed income supplement, increasing the GIS or old age security for those over 75 or the Canada workers benefit. In fact, when it comes to supporting food banks, our government has been there. We are there through the community support services recovery fund. We are going to be there for Canadians, and we are going to be there for the organizations—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would sincerely invite this member to come down to the Food Share Food Bank in Cobourg, meet with these individuals and tell them that life has never been so good because that is just not true.

The truth of the matter is the Liberal government is as incompetent at fighting the affordability crisis as it is at climate change. It fails to meet every target. It continues to make life more and more expensive for Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister finally get out of the way so that we can fix what they broke?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Sport and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives are as worried as we are about how Canadians are doing, then they should explain why, every time we want to help Canadians who need it most, they vote against the measures that could truly help them.

For example, when we offered a \$500 top-up to Canadians who are struggling to pay rent, the Conservatives voted against it; when we permanently got rid of federal interest on student loans, the Conservatives voted against it.

They should explain why they refuse to help Canadians during these difficult times.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the ink on the health transfers agreement is not even dry and the federal government is already making cuts.

It has announced \$82 million in cuts to health care funding, and half of those cuts will be made in Quebec. Ottawa is taking \$41 million out of our health care system. The minister must know that all our health centres are in crisis. At this time, the ER in Lachine has been partly closed since February. In the Outaouais, the ER occupancy rate is at 200%.

How can anyone be so heartless as to make cuts to emergency rooms at this time?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am certain that my colleague, like all members of the House, agree that in Canada we receive health care based on need and not on our ability to pay. The Canada Health Act is clear. In Canada, what gives us access to health care is our health card, not the privilege of being able to pay for health care or the inability to pay for it.

That is why we will continue to ensure that all Canadians can have access to free quality health care.

• (1500)

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the federal government is doing is completely unacceptable. Quebec has not yet received one cent from the forced agreement on health transfers. On top of having to wait for the money to be budgeted in Ottawa, we now know the minister is already making cuts.

Not only is he barely meeting one-sixth of Quebec's emergency room needs, but, before the money is even paid out, he is taking \$41 million away from us.

Is there anyone left on the other side of the House who is smart enough to understand that now is not the time to make cuts to health care?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform my colleague that the Government of Quebec, Mr. Dubé and I are working together to ensure that, in Quebec as elsewhere in the country, access to essential diagnostics remains free.

There is an opportunity for the Quebec government to correct the situation and recover the money that has been cut, as is currently the case in British Columbia. We will work collaboratively to ensure that Government of Canada funding is used to guarantee that medically necessary care, including diagnostics, can be accessed free of charge in Quebec as well as across the country.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's April 1 planned tax hike on alcohol is no joke for Canadian craft brewers.

This buzz-killing tax would mean fewer jobs, fewer paycheques and higher beer prices for Canadians, who already pay some of the highest beer prices in the whole world. We can talk about hosing Canadians.

Will the government help our buds make more suds and freeze the April 1 escalator tax on alcohol, or will it continue its brew-haha on job-killing, inflation-inducing tax hikes on Canadian craft brewers and consumers?

Oral Questions

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, puns notwithstanding, we understand, and I understand as Minister of Tourism, the importance that the beer, wine and spirits industry brings to our communities, our microbreweries and our very ridings.

However, let us be serious about serious matters. This escalator has been in place for a long time. It is about tax fairness. What we are actually talking about is less than 1¢ per can of beer. That is what the federal amount is. Let us have the Conservatives talk about serious matters, and we will respond in a serious manner.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under the Liberal Prime Minister, it is no secret that times are tough for Canadians.

On April 1, our local breweries, distilleries, wineries and cideries will be hit with a 6.3% increase on the excise tax, the greatest increase in 40 years. Forty-six percent of the cost of a beer is already tax, and now the Liberals want Canadians to pay more.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility for denying our hard-working Canadians an affordable drink and stop the tax increases?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, look at the facts. We reduced and actually eliminated excise duty on low-alcohol beer effective July 1, 2022, which makes our practices consistent with the G7. What the federal amount of this excise tax inflation increase represents is less than one penny per can of beer. That is what we are talking about.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister drove Canadians into the worst inflation in 40 years. If that were not enough, he is now attacking Canadian microbreweries. On April 1, the excise tax on beer, wine and spirits is going up by 6.3%. This will hurt everyone from producers to consumers. After eight years under this government, the price of everything is going up. Will the Prime Minister end his thirst for inflation? Because Canadians are high and dry.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we eliminated the excise tax on low-alcohol beer last year. This puts us on par with the rest of the G7. The excise tax increase in question represents less than one cent per can of beer. It has been in the works for a long time. We know that times are tough for Canadians, and that is why we have a series of measures to make life more affordable.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, studies estimate that nearly 1 million Canadians will be living with dementia by 2030. Throughout the pandemic, people with dementia and those who care for them have been disproportionately affected.

Last week, our government announced \$68.3 million in investments in research on aging and brain health. Can the Minister of Health explain how this money will contribute to the health and

well-being of people with dementia, their families and their caregivers?

• (1505)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lac-Saint-Louis for his excellent work.

Safety and wellness are critical aspects of quality of life, particularly for aging individuals. That is why the national strategy on dementia will continue to improve quality of life for people living with dementia, as well as their families and caregivers. Funding will also go towards research on aging and brain health in order to support the most promising areas of research, and that is because a healthy brain is essential to overall health.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, there are almost six million Canadians without access to primary care. In my province of Nova Scotia alone, almost 140,000 people do not have access. Two days ago, the Conservatives over here introduced a blue seal program under which there will be a common standard for doctors trained elsewhere to gain a licence here in Canada. Canadians are beyond frustrated knowing that the doctors who have immigrated to this country are only to be left out in the cold.

When will the Prime Minister admit his wrongdoings and take action on behalf of all Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, access to family health teams and primary care in Canada is indeed essential. I am grateful for the question. That is why I am going to send a copy of a letter I sent to health ministers a couple of weeks ago to my colleague so he sees why and how provinces and territories have already committed to national licensure for health professionals, including the recognition of foreign credentials for health workers in Canada.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps that is too little too late because we know the government promised 7,500 doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners. To date, none have been delivered. This is in spite of the fact that there are more than 50,000 doctors and nurses in Canada who are not working in their chosen profession. The Conservative blue seal program would allow internationally trained health professionals a clear pathway to licensure and a clear answer with respect to their credentials within 60 days of coming to Canada.

Why has the government constantly and consistently betrayed qualified new Canadians? When will the Prime Minister take action?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regret and with respect I would say this is indeed a bit too late. We have done that just a few weeks ago. We have been working on that months ago and years ago, and that is why this is already happening in Canada, including in Atlantic Canada, P.E.I., Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Ontario and British Columbia. We are making important and quick progress, obviously with the collaboration of provinces and territories, so that people who come to Canada can quickly use their tools, talents and expertise to serve Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

PASSPORTS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a citizen from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier received five envelopes from Passport Canada containing confidential documents of citizens from five different provinces in Canada, including credit card numbers, passports and social insurance numbers.

This is an alarming situation. Canadians are losing confidence. How many Canadians have found themselves in this situation? Luckily this information fell into the hands of an honest citizen.

How can Canadians trust the Prime Minister when his government cannot even handle confidential documents?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, this situation is completely unacceptable, and I would like to thank the member opposite and the citizen involved for turning in these documents. As soon as I heard about this, I asked the department to do an investigation to make sure that it does not happen again.

I can assure the member that this is completely unacceptable. We are responding appropriately and effectively.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over a year ago, this government tabled Bill C-11, the online streaming act. Still, there is so much disinformation about how this legislation helps artists in my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills and across Canada, while also protecting the freedom of expression for Canadians.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage please update the House on how this bill would make tech giants pay their fair share, celebrate the best of Canadian content and serve the needs of all Canadians?

• (1510)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her great work.

The online streaming bill is very clear. It would make tech giants pay their fair share to Canadian culture, but some tech giants do not want to do that. The Conservatives are trying to make this about free speech, but it is written in black and white in the bill. It has

nothing to do with what people post online. It is about the biggest companies in the world contributing to our music, our movies and our television. It is about creating the next generation of great Canadian artists.

Let us stand up for them and pass Bill C-11.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everyone knows the Liberals' air passenger protections are not working. Even the minister himself knows it. He has promised new legislation this spring, but he has not consulted with any of the leading consumer advocacy groups on this issue. He is in luck because we did the work for him.

Yesterday, I tabled a bill that would finally protect air passengers and include the recommendations of those groups.

Will the minister do the right thing, steal our homework and ensure that his government's third attempt at protecting air passengers actually works?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his advocacy. He remembers that in January of this year, I reached out to him and asked for his input, as I am developing the framework for our government to table in the House of Commons.

I have consulted with advocacy organizations. I have consulted stakeholders in the industry, and I am looking forward to it. It is our government that has put in place the passenger bill of rights and it is our government that will strengthen and clarify the passenger bill of rights.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first nations in our region are in crisis and the government is missing in action.

In God's River, Gods Lake Narrows and Oxford House, drugs are destroying the lives of people. In God's River, the RCMP took up to two and a half days to respond to a serious incident. There is a housing crisis, a cost-of-living crisis and an unemployment crisis. First nations leaders and members on the ground are clear: They have never seen it this bad.

What will it take for the government to act on the humanitarian crisis that is destroying families and first nations right now?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, I visited Gods Lake and I can say that the member is right. We have to do more together to protect members of that community, and all communities that are struggling under the weight of a colonial system that has not invested in their prosperity, whether we are talking about economic reconciliation, closing the infrastructure gap or ensuring that people have equity to education, on which, by the way, our government has actually acted. This is the work we must do together as Canadians, because in this country everyone deserves a fair chance to succeed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—INSTRUCTION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

The House resumed from March 20 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:13 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 St. Albert—Edmonton relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1525)

[English]

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

(Division No. 267)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chabot
Chambers	Champoux
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Fortin	Gallant
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin

Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Lake
Lantsman	Larouche
Lawrence	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Martel
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Michaud
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Normandin
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Plamondon	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Savard-Tremblay
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shiple	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Tochor
Tolmie	Trudel
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Williams	Williamson
Zimmer— 147	

Business of Supply

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies

Routine Proceedings

Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
O'Connell	Oliphant
O'Regan	Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schieffe	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh
Sorbara	Sousa
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koevorden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi— 177	

PAIRED

Members

Bezan	Desbiens
Duguid	Lametti— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: 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 to concur in the fourth report of the Standing Committee on International Trade.

● (1540)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 268*)

YEAS

Members

Aboutaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall

Routine Proceedings

Dreeshen	Drouin	Pauzé	Perkins
Dubourg	Duclos	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Dzerowicz	Plamondon	Poillievre
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Ellis	Epp	Rayes	Redekopp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Reid	Rempel Garner
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Richards	Roberts
Fergus	Ferri	Robillard	Rodriguez
Fillmore	Findlay	Rogers	Romanado
Fisher	Fonseca	Rood	Ruff
Fortier	Fortin	Sahota	Sajjan
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Saks	Samson
Freeland	Fry	Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Gaheer	Gallant	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Garrison	Gaudreau	Schiefke	Schmale
Gazan	Généreux	Seeback	Serré
Genuis	Gerretsen	Sgro	Shanahan
Gill	Gladu	Sheehan	Shields
Godin	Goodridge	Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Gould	Gourde	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Gray	Green	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Small	Sorbara
Hallan	Hanley	Soroka	Sousa
Hardie	Hepfner	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Hoback	Holland	Stewart	St-Onge
Housefather	Hughes	Strahl	Stubbs
Hussen	Hutchings	Sudds	Tassi
Iacono	Idlout	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Ien	Jaczek	Therrien	Thomas
Jeneroux	Johns	Thompson	Tochor
Joly	Jowhari	Tolmie	Trudeau
Julian	Kayabaga	Trudel	Turnbull
Kelloway	Kelly	Uppal	Valdez
Khalid	Khera	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Kitchen	Kmiec	Van Popta	Vandal
Koutrakis	Kram	Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Vidal	Vien
Kusie	Kusmierczyk	Viersen	Vignola
Kwan	Lake	Villemure	Virani
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Vis	Vuong
Lamoureux	Lantsman	Wagantall	Warkentin
Lapointe	Larouche	Waugh	Webber
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Weiler	Wilkinson
Lawrence	LeBlanc	Williams	Williamson
Lebouthillier	Lehoux	Yip	Zahid
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)	Zarrillo	Zimmer
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert	Zuberi— 325	
Lightbound	Lloyd		
Lobb	Long		
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)		
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)		
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)		
Maguire	Maloney		
Martel	Martinez Ferrada		
Masse	Mathysen		
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)		
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)		
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty		
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)		
McLean	McLeod		
McPherson	Melillo	Nil	
Mendès	Mendicino		
Miao	Michaud		
Miller	Moore		
Morantz	Morrice		
Morrison	Morrissey		
Motz	Murray	Bezan	Desbiens
Muys	Naqvi	Duguid	Lametti— 4
Nater	Ng		
Noormohamed	Normandin		
O'Connell	Oliphant		
O'Regan	O'Toole		
Patzer	Paul-Hus		

NAYS

PAIRED

Members

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 25 minutes.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

HISTORIC PLACES OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act respecting places, persons and events of national historic significance or national interest, archaeological resources and cultural and natural heritage, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today as the Bloc Québécois critic on indigenous affairs to shed some light on the bill currently before us, namely Bill C-23, an act respecting places, persons and events of national historic significance or national interest, archaeological resources and cultural and natural heritage.

I will not talk about everything in the bill. It is an update and a reworking of an act from 1985. As the indigenous affairs critic, I would like to draw specific attention to its reference to indigenous peoples. It is in the bill's preamble, in fact. It is one of the biggest changes to the Historic Sites and Monuments Act.

Madam Speaker, I apologize. I forgot to indicate that I will be sharing my time with my invaluable colleague, as my leader would say, the member for Terrebonne. Now back to my speech.

As I was saying, one of the major changes in the bill is the voice given to indigenous peoples. There is a reference to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC, in the bill's preamble.

More specifically, the bill refers to call to action 79, which is quite long. To paraphrase, the idea is to work more and more with first nations so that they feel like they are active participants in everything that has to do with heritage. We are talking about parks and all the historic sites of commemoration or national interest.

There is also a reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The preamble is meant to respond to articles 15.1 and 15.2 of the declaration, which should, in theory, be implemented in the next few months. I know that the consultation process is over. This is a first step.

There are structural changes in the bill, for example, on the issue of powers and on the legislative framework for offences. I would like to focus on the issue of structure for the sake of consistency and out of respect. This still relates to what I just mentioned, specifically, the TRC's call to action 79 and articles 15.1 and 15.2 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

That said, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the bill. The perfect is the enemy of the good, but we can improve it. In any event, that is the purpose of second reading and referring the bill to committee, where changes can be made. Even though we are in favour of the bill, I would like to raise a few points about its structure.

I want to clarify that I will be talking about two major changes. One of them is representation. Previously, the act did not give first nations representatives a seat at the table. Three positions are now being added to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Three new members will sit on the board. That is the first thing. It is in subclause 9(2) of the bill, which reads as follows:

Representatives for First Nations, Inuit and Métis

(2) The representatives appointed under paragraph 8(2)(b) are to be appointed on the recommendation of the Minister made after the Minister has consulted with a variety of Indigenous governing bodies and a variety of entities that represent the interests of Indigenous groups and their members.

That is the first thing. We are seeing some progress. I will come back to it later to suggest improvements that could be made with respect to representation.

Then there is also the issue of tenure of office. The relevant clause reads as follows:

10 (1) A member appointed by the Governor in Council holds office during pleasure for a term fixed by the Governor and Council of up to five years, but they continue to hold office until their successor is appointed.

Reappointment

(2) A member may be reappointed.

As I interpret it, a reappointed member would have no time limit or term limit.

• (1545)

Clearly, the fact that the board will have first nations, Métis and Inuit representatives is in itself an important change. Of course there are places of interest to them that they wish to preserve and that are meaningful for them and the population at large. We must also identify these places, learn about them and recognize their existence and importance.

That said, I worked on Bill C-29, which provides for the establishment of a council whose purpose is to monitor the progress of reconciliation efforts. I thought that Bill C-29 went much further than Bill C-23. Obviously, Bill C-29 also stated that indigenous representatives needed a seat at the table, but first nations, Métis and Inuit communities were guaranteed a seat too. This bill mentions first nations, Métis and Inuit representatives, but the wording of subclause 9(2) does not guarantee that the Inuit, Métis and first nations will be represented. It is a possibility, but there is no indication that everyone will be at the table. That is something I wanted to raise.

There is also the issue of the process. Will all due respect, I find that the process is unclear. Of course, the Governor in Council will be able to take part in the recommendation, but we still do not know which indigenous governing bodies will be consulted. Once again, does this mean that the Métis, Inuit and first nations peoples will all be consulted, or just a few groups chosen at random? The same applies to the question of indigenous interest groups. We have no idea how inclusive this will be. The preamble says that one of the aims of the bill is inclusivity. Yes, there is some opportunity for inclusivity, but there is no guarantee that each of the various indigenous interest groups or governing bodies will be represented.

Then, there is the tenure of office. Individuals will be appointed rather than elected. In my view, the fact that there may be changes and that the deck may be shuffled at some point is a good thing, it could create new energy and at least give the impression of greater representativeness. In this respect, I would like to make a comparison with the clauses of the current version of Bill C-29 regarding nominations. It is not exactly the same thing, but there is a guarantee that a member of the board may be elected only after being nominated by the Assembly of First Nations, by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, therefore the Inuit, by the Métis National Council, and by the Native Women's Association of Canada.

In Bill C-29, there is an attempt at representativeness, and there is also a guarantee that specific groups will be consulted. Nothing is left to chance. I am not saying that it is perfect, because it is not up to me to say whether indigenous groups feel represented or not. It is up to them to decide. However, here we are at least trying to cast the widest net possible, and we are offering guarantees to all three groups. That is something.

The same applies to the term of office. Bill C-29 allows for a maximum of two terms. After that, there will be changes to the board. I feel that Bill C-23 might be stronger if it was modeled on Bill C-29. This is only a small part of the bill, but I wanted to mention it because of the whole issue of consultation, which is crucial for the first nations. Out of respect for the first nations, and for the sake of inclusivity and transparency, I think that, when it comes to Bill C-23, we would be wise to look at the work done on Bill C-29 to ensure a fair and diverse representation of all three groups of indigenous peoples.

• (1550)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-23 takes into consideration the calls to action on reconciliation. I believe it is number 79 that ensures there is representation from the indigenous community on the board. The member seems to have some concern about whether or not that representation is within the legislation, but my understanding of the legislation is that it is there. It also ensures indigenous consideration in decisions being made by the board.

Would the member not agree that in recognizing that this legislation, in principle, is good and sets the framework, many of the ideas and suggestions she might have as an opposition member could in fact have a positive outcome once the bill gets to the committee stage, where at the very least her questions could be answered more specifically?

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, if my colleague had listened to me carefully, he would know that that was the whole point of my 10-minute speech on the bill.

I stated that we were in favour of this bill and also that improvements could be made in committee after this second reading stage. That is exactly what I talked about for 10 minutes.

Government Orders

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for sharing her experience regarding these issues.

Is she concerned that the bill gives too much power to the government, cabinet and the minister?

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague from Sarnia—Lambton. It is very easy to work with her because, as we just heard, her questions are very clear and simple.

Obviously, as a democrat, I always hope for as much representation as possible and for power to be shared among as many people as possible. We ourselves are representatives and we speak for others.

Obviously, I am always interested in challenging power, the minister's power, because we want this work to be neutral and objective, not partisan.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a very important bill in that it addresses the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 79. It ensures there is going to be indigenous representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada from first nations, Métis and Inuit.

I just came from Tseshah First Nation, and they announced findings related to the unmarked graves of children who attended the Alberni Indian Residential School. They made themselves unequivocally clear:

23. Canada, B.C., churches and others fully fund all memorialization projects, including [Alberni Indian Residential School] survivor priority of a memorial with the names of all students who attended [Alberni Indian Residential School] with a gazebo and more (like those seen at war memorials) in Tseshah territory.

24. Memorial fund for survivors' headstones. Survivor paraphrased quote: "If Canada can help pay for headstones of war veterans, why can't they pay for our warriors (survivors) who had to go through the war of the residential schools?"

Does my colleague agree that Canada needs to step forward, go beyond this today and ensure that it funds the calls for truth and justice from the Tseshah people and other nations that had Indian residential schools placed on their lands without permission? They are now caretakers and have to uphold the healing process that needs to happen.

• (1555)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Of course, the content of the question is not directly related to the bill currently before us.

However, everything can change in a bill. This one is more or less symbolic. Yes, it grants certain powers to the ministers, but it does not really provide the spending powers it refers to.

Government Orders

Like my colleague, I completely agree with the fact that the government needs to fund research and then beyond that, seek the truth and begin reconciliation. This needs to be done and quickly because sites are disappearing. Sites of memory are not necessarily eternal and neither are the people around us who hold these memories. Obviously, it is important to do this, to do this quickly and to consult the first nations and make them stakeholders who decide for themselves.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, today we are seized with Bill C-23, which seeks to advance reconciliation between the Canadian colonial government and indigenous nations. First, I would like to draw the House's attention to a fine example of a model agreement, namely the peace of the braves agreement.

This model nation-to-nation agreement between Quebec and the Cree nation is based on the principle of a people's autonomy. It gives the Cree people the means and resources they need to govern themselves in a true partnership with Quebec. It did not take gnashing of teeth and rending of a prime minister's garments to achieve this, but rather a conviction, inherited from New France, that Quebec's destiny is intertwined with that of its indigenous brethren.

I would like to point out that the Quebec people simply would not exist today if our partnership had not been solid from the outset, when New France first came into being. Without that partnership, we would have been buried under the snow, decimated by scurvy or massacred by our enemies. Kondiaronk, Pontiac and Louis Riel were our allies in victory and in defeat, and the Bloc Québécois will obviously stand alongside their descendants in their quest for recognition and emancipation.

The Bloc Québécois believes that it will always be important to give the indigenous peoples a say in all matters that concern them. Since we support reconciliation and support the indigenous peoples' demands in terms of a nation-to-nation relationship, the Bloc Québécois naturally supports the appointment of representatives for first nations, Inuit and Métis to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

Bill C-23 is not bad in and of itself, but it does not do much to make life better for indigenous nations. Let us be frank. This bill is just a drop in the ocean, given the number of policies that will be needed to stamp out the inequality to which the first nations have been subjected for more than 150 years. Despite its promises and fine words, the federal government is ignoring or is simply incapable of providing first nations with basic services, such as clean drinking water and assistance in emergency situations such as floods and forest fires.

Increasing indigenous participation in the designation of historic sites is an important step, but they need the means and resources to protect their historic sites and their heritage. It is all well and good to give indigenous peoples more of a say when it comes to protecting our heritage, but more could be done.

As a good economist, I would always argue that any nation's power and capacity to act is measured by its economic power. The purpose of Bill C-23 is to increase indigenous participation in the designation of federal historic sites, which is a noble goal, but it would have been even more noble to seek to ensure that these na-

tions have full freedom of choice, which necessarily involves increasing their economic power. It cannot be said enough that indigenous services are underfunded, grossly mismanaged or both. Indigenous people have been economically vulnerable for the past 150 years, which is sad.

I have serious concerns about the protection of built heritage in indigenous communities. It is well known that these communities are unfortunately the first victims of the effects of climate change. I believe that extreme weather events caused by climate change could seriously compromise the preservation of first nations' built heritage and historic sites. Because they are generally in remote locations, they are underserved. Because of serious gaps in the federal government's response plan, extreme weather events are particularly destructive to indigenous communities.

In a recent report that was considered this week by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which also heard from the minister, the Auditor General noted that the federal government's management of extreme weather emergencies is abysmal. The Auditor General's report found that over the past 13 years, first nations communities experienced more than 1,300 emergencies leading to over 580 evacuations affecting more than 130,000 people. Some of these people were evacuated more than once for different emergencies.

Furthermore, we have been aware of the problem for a long time. The Auditor General noted that “[m]any issues have not improved since we first identified them in our 2013 audit of emergency management on reserves”. That was 10 years ago. The source of the problems is a serious lack of prevention funding. The Auditor General found that “funding for structural mitigation projects identified by First Nations did not meet First Nations' needs”.

• (1600)

I think that this lack of investment in infrastructure will inevitably have a negative impact on the conservation of our built heritage and historic sites. For example, the first nation infrastructure fund, which helps first nations build infrastructure such as levees to prevent or mitigate the effects of weather events, is seriously underfunded. The fund has only \$12 million a year until 2024 to finance structural mitigation projects, out of an Indigenous Services Canada budget of more than \$30 billion. At this rate, it will take more than 24 years to finance the infrastructure needed to protect first nations.

I have submitted clear demands to the Minister of Indigenous Services. To keep first nations territory and its inhabitants safe, we must first conduct a specific, comprehensive assessment of the risks and damage to which these communities are exposed. Then we need a clear, precise timeline for delivering the materials and building the mitigation and adaptation infrastructure as fast as possible.

Government Orders

My fantastic colleague, the hon. member for Joliette, told the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs that the Atikamekw community in Manawan had to pay out of pocket for the equipment needed to fight a major fire, since there was no government prevention plan.

More than 10 years later, the Auditor General made the same observation. The federal government is incapable of doing the slightest bit of prevention or preparation, yet prevention and preparation are the key to protecting our heritage and historic sites. We need to look to the future and consider possible risks to the conservation of our heritage and historic sites. The federal government has shown time and time again that it is flying blind.

If the government is serious about including indigenous nations in the protection of our heritage, then it is a good idea to create positions for them on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Once again, it is a noble goal, one that we support. However, I believe that it is even more important to make sure that these communities have the resources and funding they need to protect their built heritage and their residents from extreme weather events. After all, they are the ones in the best position to protect their heritage.

I sincerely hope that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, on which I sit, will no longer hear public servants and the minister say that the problems persist, that they still exist, while we continue to draft nice bills like the one we are discussing today yet fail to provide for concrete solutions, funding and better management.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague emphasized the lack of heritage infrastructure.

My question is very simple: Does my colleague agree that these monuments should be included in the bill and be assessed so that we can restore and maintain our infrastructure?

• (1605)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I agree that these monuments should be included.

In fact, I think it is worth mentioning that I am glad that the wording is changing and that they are no longer being referred to as national monuments or national historic sites, since there are many nations within Canada. Now they are Canadian monuments and historic sites.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my riding, I see a large number of historic sites, many of which I dearly love, as do local residents.

If I run through that list, there is Craigflower Manor House, from 1856; Craigflower Schoolhouse, from 1855; four Esquimalt naval sites; Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse, the first permanent lighthouse on the west coast of Canada; Hatley Castle; the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory; and the Weir's Beach Earthworks, which commemorates a Spanish landing site. What is particular about the list is that first nations have, of course, lived forever in my riding, and they are not on this list. I hope this bill will, by in-

cluding first nations representation, get us a better and more representative list of historic sites in my riding. I wonder if the member shares my enthusiasm for these improvements in our list of national historic sites.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I do share his enthusiasm.

I also wanted to mention that I think that improving first nations, Métis and Inuit representation on the board is in fact intended to remedy those significant oversights.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think there are some difficulties with this bill when it comes to waterways. The Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change are all authorized to make decisions.

What is the mechanism for determining who is responsible for waterways?

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question, but also for making the effort to ask it in French.

I am certain this is not the first example of a potential lack of coordination within the federal government or a division of responsibility that is not necessarily equal and well established. I think this is a very good point to raise in committee. I know this bill will be considered in committee after second reading, so that would be an interesting aspect to explore.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that it appears the Bloc is supporting at least the principles of the legislation. When we think of the contributions of heritage, and one could ultimately say our arts community makes us who we are as a nation, it is important that we recognize that heritage. We do that with a designation so people can advocate for names, places and events. It is important that we treasure and recognize it. What are the member's general thoughts on that principle?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I rarely say anything personal in the House. I am married to a historian. Consequently, I would be in no position to say that legacy and cultural and historical heritage are not important.

Government Orders

I think it is essential to remember the past. That way, we can ensure we will not make the same mistakes twice, and we can pass on what our ancestors did. It is extremely important to who we are and to our identity, both as Canadians but above all, on our side, as Quebecers. Our history is our heritage, and it is extremely important to us.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):
Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Centre.

I am very pleased to take part in this debate on a bill about which we agree on the principle, but where we still have some concerns about the wording and the powers granted directly to cabinet and which may, in our opinion, put our country on an undesirable tangent. We have, then, the opportunity to delve into this further.

We should remember that Bill C-23 concerns “places, persons and events of national historic significance or national interest, archaeological resources and cultural and national heritage”. Essentially, the main improvement in the bill to how historic sites or monuments are currently designated is the positive response to recommendation number 79 in the inquiry to ensure reconciliation with the first nations.

Since we are talking about history, I want to remind the House about the historic event that occurred on June 11, 2008, when the Prime Minister of Canada made a formal apology to the first nations on behalf of our country regarding the shameful and unspeakable tragedy of the residential schools. It was the Prime Minister of Canada's formal apology on behalf of all Canadians that led the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to produce this report, which was tabled seven or eight years ago, and to make recommendation number 79, which proposes that first nations be given a greater role in defining what constitutes a historic site, monument or event by having them participate in the assessment of these cases.

We agree with the principle of this bill. We also agree with the fact that we need to do a better job of maintaining and promoting our heritage sites. Speaking of heritage sites and first nations, I am proud to remind members that my riding, where I have the great pleasure and privilege of representing the people of Wendake, is home to a wonderful little church. I am not saying that pretentiously. It is absolutely wonderful. The Wendat church, Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, is located on the banks of the Kabir Kouba waterfall. It has been there since 1730 when the first chapel was built. It was designated a heritage building by the Province of Quebec in 1957 and a national historic site in 1981. It is with great pride that I remind members of that.

Even though we agree in principle, we want this to move forward, and we will vote in favour of the bill to have it referred to committee, we do have legitimate concerns. We believe that in some cases there may be excessive powers granted to the executive council. More specifically, if we look closely at the legislation, it says, in clause 34, “The Governor in Council [in other words, cabinet] may make regulations respecting federal historic places”. It lists 18 areas where the government gives itself the discretionary power to take immediate action and intervene in heritage sites. In our opinion, this may raise concerns, especially when the bill also gives the government the power to prohibit navigation in certain

sectors, which could have immediate repercussions on commercial activities and transportation activities, certainly, but also tourist activities. We need to take into account that this power may unfortunately be used for what we consider to be the wrong purposes.

The same could be said when it comes to broadening the impact this could have on both the designated site as well as the area surrounding an historic site. How can we objectively and neutrally define the surrounding area where the government would have to right to directly intervene to put an end to a given activity? That is a bit of an overreach.

That is why we have these concerns that we are going to raise in the clause-by-clause study in parliamentary committee. We are going to hear from the experts and hear what people have to say about it. Essentially, that is where our concerns lie, especially since this could also have a direct impact on developing our mining potential, our natural resources.

• (1610)

I want to remind members that, in that regard, the member for Carleton and leader of the official opposition made a promise to all of Canada's first nations six weeks ago in Vancouver. We essentially want to engage with first nations to ensure they are partners in the prosperity resulting from development projects. Whether it is natural resources, mining potential or other elements that could be promoted by first nations, we want them to be partners in our country's prosperity. Gone are the days when someone could step in and decide to develop a piece of land or work directly on it in order to extract its mineral or hydrocarbon potential. We want this to be done in partnership with first nations. That is the promise that our leader made in that regard.

Those are our concerns. We know that there are more than 1,000 historic sites in Canada, with 171 under the jurisdiction of Parks Canada. They are mainly rural or urban places, sacred spaces, archaeological sites or battlefields. There is, to say the least, a very well known battlefield in Quebec. There are also historic homes, places where discoveries were made and places of scientific discovery.

I have been thinking about this. I am not a historian, but I studied history and would have liked to be a history teacher. However, when I entered the job market, they told me to come back in 20 years, since they would not be hiring until then because of job security. I did something else: I became a journalist, and now I am a member of Parliament. I am happy with how it all turned out. That being said, when it comes to history, we need to know how to recognize where the event occurred and the impact it had.

Earlier this morning, the hon. member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin mentioned that I visited Leduc No. 1, the site where, on February 13, 1947, oil was discovered, which would give rise to the oil boom that has benefited all Canadians for more than 70 years. The hon. member suggested that Leduc No. 1 might become a national site, and I agree with him. Some may reproach me for being from Quebec and talking about Alberta and oil. Yes, and they would have a point. Three weeks ago, an HEC study revealed that Quebec consumed 18 billion litres of oil last year, and that 47% of that oil came from the United States. As long as we are an oil producing country, I would rather support Canada than send billions of dollars to Texas and Louisiana, although I have nothing against those states.

Yes, I think we should consider the possibility of honouring Leduc No. 1, since it is an important historic site where a major event took place. Similarly, in 1990, the Canadian government recognized that the Beauharnois hydroelectric plant was a national historic site. The plant was recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. That was the right thing to do, since we know that Beauharnois was the first hydroelectric plant built under Hydro-Québec to be expanded from 1948 to 1953 and that it virtually launched Hydro-Québec, a new Crown corporation at the time.

Let us keep in mind that Hydro-Québec was created in 1944 as a result of the nationalization of Montreal Light, Heat and Power Consolidated and others. Along with Montreal Light, Heat and Power, there was the Beauharnois power plant, not far from Montreal, and, under the authority of Hydro-Québec, for the first time, there was increased potential. Beauharnois was therefore Hydro-Québec's first major project in the years between 1940 and 1950. It is not true that Hydro-Québec was created in 1960. The project ended in 1948-1949. We could even consider recognizing other heritage areas of this type.

I think that my time is up now. I will be pleased and more than happy to take questions from my colleagues.

• (1615)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as members may know, Bill C-23 would enable and encourage recommendations and ideas people might have. The member made reference to a few very specific thoughts.

When we think of our heritage, we need to think of people, places and special events, or a combination of any of those three areas, and advance it to where criteria and eligibility need to be met. What is nice about the legislation is that it sets a more detailed framework that would allow this to take place. Would the member not agree, in the principles of the legislation, that this is good legislation that should ultimately go to the committee?

• (1620)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to repeat what I said earlier at the beginning of my speech. We do agree with the principle of the bill because it would open the door to the first nations, which is recommendation number 79 of the Crown commission that we had to address the issues of reconciliation with the first nations. Everything started when the Right Hon. Stephen

Government Orders

Harper tabled official apologies to first nations here in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008, which was among the most important statements made by any prime minister in history to please and to reconcile with first nations, with the authority of the government.

Yes, we do agree with the principle. We have concerns with too much power being put in the hands of cabinet ministers.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would just like him to confirm that he did say he would like Leduc No. 1 to become a Canadian historic site.

If so, would he agree that this is not the right time for that, since we are turning towards renewable energies instead? It seems to me that this historic site designation would be rather inappropriate.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I have no authority to make any declarations other than to say that, yes, it would be a good idea. Since February 13, 1947, Alberta and other neighbouring provinces such as Saskatchewan have contributed substantially to the creation of wealth in this country, to say the least. Over \$500 billion has been paid out in equalization to all provinces in Canada.

Need I remind my hon. colleague that we are facing major challenges today with respect to the environment? My colleague cherishes the province of Quebec, as do I. Need I also remind him that, in Quebec alone, we consumed 18 billion litres of oil last year? That is the reality. Surely he does not need me to remind him that the best-selling vehicle in Quebec is the Ford F-150. That is not what I drive. I do not like it.

The reality is that 47% of the oil we consume comes from the United States. As far as I know and since I checked just this morning, neither the state of Texas nor the state of Louisiana is currently contributing to equalization. That may have changed in the last few hours. If I am wrong, my colleague can stand up and say so.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the last time I heard my colleague speak to this subject, he exclaimed how interested he was in history, and that really came through here.

There are historic sites in my riding. There is the Rossland Miners' Hall; the Rossland Court House; the Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre in New Denver, which talks about the Japanese internment during the Second World War; and the Doukhobor Suspension Bridge, a remarkable bridge built over a hundred years ago over the Kootenay River near Castlegar. However, as we know, none of these speak to that first nations indigenous history of Canada, which is so important. The good thing about the bill before us is that it would more than encourage that. It would make it possible.

I am just wondering if the member could comment further on letting first nations and indigenous peoples take the reins.

Government Orders

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, this is why we support recommendation number 79 from the Crown corporation's report on reconciliation with first nations, which was created by our former government. Yes, we do agree with that.

I am very proud to raise that in my own riding I have a historic site, the parish of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette in Wendake, which is part of my riding. I welcome any other historic sites for reconciliation and recognizing that first nations are very important in our history.

● (1625)

[Translation]

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House of Commons today to discuss Bill C-23. Today and every day, I am pleased to represent the interests of the citizens of Calgary Centre.

One of the purposes of this bill is to create a Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Among other things, this bill gives the minister the authority to recognize the national historic significance or national interest of sites. It also gives the minister regulatory powers, and that is where we have a problem. The Governor in Council can make regulations respecting historic sites administered by the Agency.

[English]

This is where we might differ a little.

[Translation]

There are many other regulatory powers to be concerned about.

[English]

One of the main parts of this bill, which we strongly support, of course, is the call to action 79 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I will read that into the record here very quickly, if I may:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal organizations, and the arts community, to develop a reconciliation framework for Canadian heritage and commemoration. This would include, but not be limited to:

- i. Amending the Historic Sites and Monuments Act to include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and its Secretariat.

That is the most important part of this one, and that is also what is in the bill that we need to support strongly. This is something that has gone on for too long in Canada, where we are not including the most important part of our history, pre-colonialization, in the decisions in the historic sites across Canada.

I do not know how that happened. I have been exploring, in my riding and across Canada, where the division happened in what was a real consensus between the colonialists who came to Canada and the first nations who were here before they came to Canada. They used to work very much hand in hand together. Somewhere in our history, that compact seemed to get broken, and we seemed to be separate entities. We are only coming past that dark part of our history in these years, as we deal with things in the House of Commons.

This call to action, of course, is part of that reconciliation. It is an important part of this bill that we need to make sure we instill in law here in Canada and in the laws going forward.

There are other things in this bill that are huge regulatory oversteps. The minister, the Minister of the Environment in this case, would have the sole authority to designate a historic site. That might sound innocuous to my colleagues. It is not so innocuous when we look at everything that has been given to this minister, and everything that has been given to this minister that he has made gross oversteps on.

I could give a few examples here. The first thing I am going to talk about is the Impact Assessment Act. The thing about the Impact Assessment Act, passed in August 2019, is that it allowed the minister, not Governor in Council, the cabinet, but this minister alone, the Minister of the Environment, to actually say, "yes, I get to approve a resource development by myself in any part of Canada, or I get to disapprove of such a resource development", which is contrary to the Canadian Constitution.

The Canadian Constitution allows resource development in the provinces to be the purview of the provinces. It is only when it crosses provincial boundaries that the federal government or, in this case, the federal Minister of Environment might get involved.

This was an overstep, and it was recognized by the Alberta Court of Appeal in May 2022, when they overturned, by a good margin of four to one, the actual constitutionality of the Impact Assessment Act.

What was lost to Canada in those almost three years, between the passage of the bill and the overturning of the bill, ruling it unconstitutional, in the Alberta Court of Appeal, were three years of project developments in Canada's natural resource industry.

That is a whole bunch of uncertainty and hundreds of billions of dollars of projects, literally hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions of taxation revenue to this government to pay for things like health care and education. We will note the deficits that the government has plunged itself into as a result of not having enough revenue to pay for the programming that it is so fond of signing cheques for. This is a problem.

● (1630)

The Impact Assessment Act is in limbo right now, until it goes to the Supreme Court of Canada, after being overturned by the Alberta Court of Appeal. People need to recognize that the Alberta Court of Appeal is five justices, all appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada. This is not an Alberta versus federal decision. These are actually people who are appointed by the federal government who have overturned a piece of federal legislation soundly.

Government Orders

I think anybody who is a constitutionalist around here could look at that and say, “If the constitutional authority rests with the provinces, why does the federal Minister of the Environment, by himself, get the authority to turn this over and say no, the provinces cannot do this?” It defies constitutional law, and I am going to be wondering what happens when the Supreme Court of Canada hears this. Is it going to acquiesce, or is it going to agree with everybody else in Canada who says yes? This has been a gross overstep and it needs to end.

The second thing I am going to talk about is something that happened this past summer. In June 2022, the Minister of the Environment thrust some new regulations on the migratory birds regulations. The regulations actually say that if people discover a pileated woodpecker nest anywhere near a construction site, they cannot construct anything for three years. Regulations do not come to the House. We know that. They actually go through the Hansard process.

All of a sudden that became a regulation that impeded the progress of the Trans Mountain pipeline, which had been under construction for a number of years at that time, and it is still under construction. There is a reason it is grossly over budget. The Minister of the Environment keeps putting roadblocks in the way to getting it completed. As a matter of fact, he stated he does not want to ever see this pipeline created.

This is in stark contrast to the Minister of Finance, who is responsible for the entity that actually builds the pipeline, who says we need to build this pipeline. We have a conflict here at cabinet. There is the Governor in Council, and now there is one minister able to make this decision about many of these regulations that are going forward. This is a problem in our governance.

It is a serious problem. We have already been exposed to what it means: \$30 billion. It is \$22 billion over budget for a major Crown project. That is obscene. That is something Canadian taxpayers are paying for. It is dissonance on the front bench of the Liberal government. The Liberals need to get their act together. This is something that we need to make sure we do not replicate in this legislation going forward. It is a gross overstep.

I should add one more thing about the TMX pipeline. It is over budget. The benefit of the TMX pipeline, at the end of the day, is that we are actually going to receive about \$22 billion a year in national benefit as a result of the building of this pipeline. In as much as the project itself is not going to pay the proponent the amount of money that has gone into it, and we need to acknowledge that, it is a huge benefit for this country on a yearly basis going forward. It is \$22 billion in revenue per year going forward, and we are way behind on getting it built.

I will also talk about budget 2019, where the Minister of the Environment could not get things one way, so he got things another way when he actually—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have been very patient in listening to the member. He is talking about everything but Bill C-23. He is talking about oil development.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is a lot of latitude in what is permissible in speeches. The hon. member has made mention of the bill in question.

The hon. member has one minute and 15 seconds.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the intervention from my learned colleague, as always.

Budget 2019 was another example of the Minister of the Environment overstepping, as we are seeing the authority being given in this bill, when they actually unilaterally withdrew lands that were designed for ski resorts in the Rocky Mountains without even discussing with the proponents of that. What is the problem here? There are all kinds of things. This is about waterways regulation that is going to be unilateral. This is about development of lands. It is going to be unilateral approval or disapproval by one minister.

We have already heard from my speech, which was very relevant, how this negatively affects our country. We need to make sure that we address and that parts of this do not go forward as written. We need to make sure that we have the full authority of the government and that it has proper authority in order to make this happen. The minister may want all this authority, but it is not up to the House of Commons to give him alone that authority.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

I look forward to my colleagues' questions.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to thank my colleague and congratulate him on his excellent French. Well done.

In his speech, my colleague also mentioned that he would like to relieve the minister of the responsibility and assessment of heritage sites. We know that the bill effectively addresses the TRC's call to action 79.

Can my colleague tell me who could possibly be in a better position to negotiate with all levels of government, including the municipal level, than the minister and his entire team? Can my colleague across the way answer me?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. It is a good question.

It is not the minister himself who is responsible for the approval of regulations, it is the Governor in Council. It is cabinet, the council of ministers, that is responsible for Canadian laws. It is not just one minister, it is all the ministers. As I said, there seems to be a conflict between the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change about the Trans Mountain pipeline. This cannot go on.

Government Orders

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I too would like to thank my colleague for speaking French. Any efforts members make to speak French in the House are really very important. Right now, the French language is in decline across the country. I think it is important that the House send a message to francophones everywhere, all across Canada, that we are concerned about French here. I commend my colleague.

The debate on Bill C-23 is a bit flat. Everyone pretty much agrees. Apart from some minor details, everyone pretty much agrees on the bill overall. It is a bit boring.

Since members are unanimous on this bill with regard to indigenous peoples and reconciliation, does my colleague not agree that there is more meaningful action to be taken? I agree with this bill. Let us pass it and move forward.

Indigenous peoples are facing challenges related to housing, homelessness and domestic violence. We know that 8% of female homicide victims in Canada are indigenous, even though indigenous women represent only 4% of the population. I think that there are a lot of issues that this government still has not addressed.

Would my colleague agree that we should start dealing with those issues as quickly as possible?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is on call to action 79, which calls for indigenous, Métis and Inuit representation on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and its secretariat. That is one of the calls to action. The other calls to action are just as important, but in this case, we are only talking about call to action 79.

Also, we do not agree with the part of the bill that gives the Minister of the Environment the power to approve Canadian regulations.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague from Calgary Centre's interesting speech on national historic sites. He spent a great deal of time talking about the Trans Mountain pipeline, and it did pique my interest. It made me think that perhaps there is a category of historic sites that has been egregiously overlooked by the federal government, and that is boondoggles.

I wonder if perhaps my friend would support the pre-emptive designation of the Trans Mountain pipeline, a pipeline that is costing Canadian taxpayers some \$30 billion, as a national historic site. Perhaps he could offer his thoughts.

• (1640)

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, Conservatives are in accord with our friends in the NDP in this regard. This has been a gross overspend. We would like to see exactly where the money has been spent, but in the annals of Canadian history, to be \$22 billion over-budget on a \$7.5-billion project, before the government got involved, shows exactly what is wrong with the government. It thinks it can spend its way without any accountability whatsoever.

This bill we are talking about today—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and address a packed House this afternoon. The government often calls its legislation “historic” and often it is not historic. However, in a very formal sense this is a historic piece of legislation insofar as it establishes rules around national historic sites.

Just as a preface, though, to the points I would like to make about this legislation, I imagine that much has been said by Conservatives about the issue of gatekeepers, about how the government's great fondness for red tape, for regulations, for gatekeepers, is making it harder for people to go about their business.

What is a gatekeeper? A gatekeeper is a regulator, an authority of some kind that prevents people from being able to go about their business or to do things that they should reasonably be able to do. Maybe the gatekeeper allows them to get through the gate eventually but imposes additional conditions or challenges that prevent that individual from going forward in a sufficiently timely way.

I think many Canadians look at various aspects of their lives and at the way government is operating, and they see way too much gatekeeping. They see way too much red tape. Modern life, because of the bureaucratization of various things, has just become excessively complicated and frustrating for people who are trying to proceed with normal life and do things that, in times past, were not over-regulated.

Conservatives are putting forward an agenda aimed at reducing red tape, at making life easier for Canadians and at allowing development to proceed without undue barriers. We made a number of genuinely historic announcements in the past week about initiatives that a Conservative government would implement, aimed at removing gatekeepers. One of those announcements was around housing. We have said that there was too much gatekeeping, too much Nimbysism, happening at the municipal level that prevents housing from getting built. When there are all sorts of little barriers that accumulate into large barriers, we see a shortage of new housing, which in turn makes housing less affordable for Canadians.

Our leader has announced strong measures that are going to require municipalities to get that gatekeeping, that red tape, out of the way. We have also announced a new measure around credentials. For over 50 years, people with trade certifications have been able to work in other parts of the country. However, people with certain professional distinctions are not able, if working virtually for instance, to easily provide that professional support across the country.

These are some instances of gatekeeping we have committed to addressing, and that, I think, need to be addressed urgently. They are a part of this whole constellation of red tape the government is piling on Canadians. This is the reality about how the government approaches things and how we approach things.

That brings us to the discussion of Bill C-23. I welcome the applause from across the way from the member for Winnipeg North. I mentioned this before, but he recently referred to me as a “mischievous little guy”. I am very proud of that, actually. I know that if the member for Winnipeg North has considered me to be mischievous, then I have had a good day. I will do my best to keep it up.

When it comes to Bill C-23, the government is saying a number of things about the designation of historic places and sites. On the face of it they seem reasonable, saying that the government should be able to designate certain places, persons and events as having historical significance for the country. It wants to have the designation of those places with plaques erected to celebrate those places, perhaps. It wants to be consulting widely, including consulting indigenous Canadians on those designations, and thus regulate the use of those places in a way that accords with their historic status.

● (1645)

On the face of it, at least for the second reading vote where we vote on the principle, there is some logic in saying that, yes, there can be a framework for the designation of certain sites, recognizing their historic significance. However, the concern is that we have a government that has such a tendency to use every possible pretext for imposing additional red tape, for making it harder to proceed with development project. It is a government that talks a good talk sometimes about the housing affordability challenges but in practice has done nothing to actually get housing built, a government that is fundamentally comfortable with red tape, gatekeepers and barriers preventing people from going about their normal lives. When that is the reality of what this government is all about, then people are understandably looking at Bill C-23 and asking what tools it would provide to the government for additional gatekeeping and additional restrictions on development.

When the power is vested in the hands of the minister and the minister would be able to make these designations, which would automatically impact the use of a place, and areas around it, by the way, that could create significant problems if that power is used in a way that is unreasonable. If the government is making these kinds of designations, and if the effect of making those designations is that development projects in and around the area are not able to move forward and the existing use of a particular land or particular place is no longer allowed, and if these designations are made in a way that does not reflect proper engagement or consultation with local people in the area, that would be a significant problem.

We can look at the tool that this legislation would provide to the minister to make designations and to use those designations in a variety of ways and, frankly, I would say that it is consistent with a pattern we are seeing from this government in terms of legislation. We are seeing legislation with less and less practical detail. Rather, we are seeing a lot of legislation that enables the government to do something later on.

Government Orders

Right beside Bill C-23, we had Bill C-22, a bill that would provide a benefit for Canadians living with disabilities. In effect, the bill would empower the government to create aspects of that benefit but not prescribe the nature of that benefit in legislation. We had Bill C-41, a bill that would empower the government to make certain exceptions in the Anti-terrorism Act, but it did not provide specificity around places where it would apply and many other aspects of how those exceptions would function. Thus, we have this pattern with the government of taking on new powers for itself through legislation, without seeing the specifics in the bill.

The kind of rhetorical approach the government brings to these debates is this: “Just trust us. We mean well. We are going to make sure that, when we are designating these places, it is going to be in accordance with what makes sense. We are reasonable people, for goodness' sake.”

However, the problem is that Canadians do not see the government as reasonable. They do not see the government as trustworthy. What we have actually seen, particularly from the Minister of Environment, and I think from the government in general, is a lack of recognition of the important role that jobs, opportunity and development play in our country, and the need to remove gatekeepers and red tape. We have not seen from the government a proper appreciation of that, and the effect, I think, has been very negative for this country.

I want to now speak on the issues of indigenous consultation that are in the bill. The legislation—

● (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am going to interrupt the hon. member for two seconds. I have to say this before 5 p.m.

[*Translation*]

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 Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Democratic Institutions; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Finance.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, thank you for announcing to the House that I will be delivering the late show later this evening. If, after this speech, the member for Winnipeg North and others feel they have not heard enough, they can certainly stick around.

Just to preview a little, I will be speaking at that time about the Liberal McKinsey scandal, about the fact that the government—

Some hon. members: Which one?

Government Orders

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have to say there are so many scandals that it is hard to keep track. We are going to need to publish a scandal almanac so we will know exactly which one at all times.

This is the scandal in which the Liberal government gave over \$100 million in contracts to McKinsey, a company with a very shady record of activity around the world that includes, most concerning to many Canadians, giving advice to Purdue Pharma on how to supercharge the opioid crisis. Stick around for that, Madam Speaker. I will be speaking to that later tonight. You may not have a choice. There will be someone in the chair, regardless.

On the issue of Bill C-23, I was speaking about the government's engagement in terms of consultation with indigenous Canadians. I think, sadly but very clearly, what we have seen with the government when it comes to engaging with indigenous communities is that it has always been a one-way street. If there are indigenous organizations or communities expressing opposition to development projects, the government says it has to listen and it has to really elevate the voices on that side of the debate.

On the other hand, if we have indigenous communities, organizations or nations that are supportive of development, that want to see development projects proceed, then the government very clearly does not listen. It tries to elevate one perspective that exists within indigenous communities while ignoring another.

Let us acknowledge that, within any community of people, there is going to be a diversity of perspectives about the best way to proceed on certain issues. Development projects can be one of those contentious areas where there will be differences of opinion.

The government takes a very one-sided approach to its supposed commitment to consultation. What sticks out to me most in this regard is some time that I spent in northern territories and meeting with indigenous leaders there who talked about development restrictions the government had imposed with absolutely no consultation. It was sort of a phone call to a premier right before an announcement was made. That is how the government stopped development projects, yet it talks increasingly as if proponents of projects, those proceeding with development projects, have to get to something near unanimity.

If we realize that, in the process of talking about consulting indigenous Canadians, the government is actually interested in listening to only one side of the equation, then we realize that it is not about meaningful consultation but about the government trying to find people within indigenous communities who share its perspective and ignoring people who have a different perspective.

I fully acknowledge the diversity of views that exist in any community on development projects, but I know, certainly with people I talk to, indigenous peoples living in my riding and others across the country, there is a sizable constituency out there saying that natural resource development projects in particular contribute to jobs and opportunity growth, and that is very positive for these communities.

In the process of that consultation, it is important to ensure that the government is hearing from the full spectrum of opinions. However, what we then often see is that, when the government is creating consultation mechanisms, it preserves for itself control of who

actually participates in that consultation mechanism. There was a bill that the government put forward recently creating an indigenous advisory council. In that context, the minister would be able to do the initial appointments. On the one hand, it was saying the government wants to consult with people from indigenous communities, but on the other hand, it would choose the people it is consulting.

• (1655)

That obviously takes away, to some extent, from the meaningfulness that could have been realized if representatives were not selected by the government that was then going to consult with them about a specific issue. I flag this because this legislation, Bill C-23, speaks about setting aside seats for first nations, Inuit and Métis representatives on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, but the process of appointment retains substantial control over those appointments in the hands of the government. It is saying it would appoint from these communities, but it is going to be the one doing those appointments. That is something important to flag in whether this would be effective.

As I said, Conservatives are supportive of the principle of having certain sites with genuine historic significance being thus designated, and of having particular frameworks around the protection of those sites once they are thus designated. We are supportive of that in principle. We will be supporting this legislation at the second reading stage, which is where we are at, and this is where we consider the general concept of a bill in principle.

The rubber is going to hit the road when we get to the committee study on this legislation and when we work through how to ensure the government is not able to use this legislation to such a general extent as to be able to put a halt to development projects anywhere and to use the designation of a place as having historic significance to block development. It is worth saying, sort of as a bit of a coda, that almost any place is probably of some significance to someone, so the broad enabling power this legislation could give government is something we need to be very careful of.

How limited is its use going to be? Is it going to be so broad as to be open to the Minister of Environment? He, let us be clear, has a particular animus for the energy sector and development in that sector and he, at one time, illegally climbed onto the roof of the premier of Alberta's home to protest that premier's policies. We see, rightly, condemnation of instances where politicians in protests are targeted in their homes, but the Minister of Environment has never addressed his record on this. We know he has a particular approach when it comes to development in this sector, so giving such significant enabling powers to the government, to the Minister of Environment in particular, raises some red flags. That is why the rubber will hit the road at the committee stage of this bill.

Government Orders

Finally, the approach of Conservatives is to recognize that, reasonably, there is a role for government, but we want to do everything we can to get red tape and gatekeeping out of people's lives; make people's interactions with government simpler, clearer and more predictable; reduce their taxes; and give them more control over their own lives.

Our goal as a party is to realize a fuller vision of human freedom, where people can live in strong communities and strong families, independent of government overreach and government bureaucratic control, and independent of the bureaucratization of every aspect of their lives. That is the vision our leader has articulated about removing gatekeepers, defending freedom and recognizing that strong individuals, families and communities are the fundamentals of life far more important than government.

While we recognize some value in the principle of this legislation, I can assure members that we will continue to be vigilant to ensure the government, to the extent we are able, is blocked from overreaches into people's lives, that we fully realize that vision of human freedom. I suspect it will take a new government, a new Conservative government, to bring us to that point, but for the time being, we will use the opportunities we have in opposition to do precisely that.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech, or at least the part about Bill C-23.

After a long preamble about our government's sound management of housing and the labour shortage, he eventually got around to speaking to Bill C-23. He focused on the designation of places.

I would like to ask my colleague if he agrees that Bill C-23 will facilitate access to information and improve its quality and that the register will help us make the right decisions.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I disagree with some aspects of the member's characterization of my speech. Part of the obligation of members of Parliament is to provide a broader and deeper analysis of the principles involved, and I think I have done that. Maybe the member can take some time this evening to watch the speech again on CPAC. He might enjoy that. Perhaps it will be edifying to him and those he watches it with. I know the member for Winnipeg North does this on a regular basis.

An hon. member: All the time. I have your speeches on repeat.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, if that did not make it on the record, the member for Winnipeg North shared that he has my speeches on repeat when he goes home. Unfortunately, it has not had the desired effect. You would think that if he were really watching and listening, he would—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will go to another question.

The hon. member for Shefford.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, which was very wide ranging.

I will try to be as quick as possible while addressing all the different topics he mentioned.

First, to reduce red tape, the Bloc Qu b cois would like a single tax return. I hope that the Conservatives will also think about that.

Concerning today's issue, that is the bill for indigenous people, I have just come back from the United Nations, where the issue of water was discussed. During this trip with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I noted that Canada is lagging behind and that, because of the actions of previous governments over the past few decades, today, in 2023, there are indigenous people who do not have water. That is absolutely unacceptable.

I just got back from an Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting where we discussed the fact that the way Canada has treated indigenous peoples for quite some time is a stain on its international reputation.

Furthermore, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is currently studying the issue of human trafficking. Ninety-six percent of the victims of human trafficking are women. That is an astonishing percentage. Of that 96%, a significant percentage are indigenous women being exploited in human trafficking and modern slavery.

Beyond the symbolism of historic sites, how can we take concrete action to support indigenous peoples?

• (1705)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the member mentioned human trafficking. I believe she is one of the co-chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary Group to End Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, and I want to thank her and all members who are involved in that group, including my Conservative colleague from Peace River—Westlock. This is a very important issue, and it requires additional action.

I agree with the point the member is making about Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples. It has been easy for the current government to reach for acts of recognition. Acts of recognition are very important, and I do not want to dismiss those at all, but they are not as important as the substantive changes that happen on the ground. Making designations and apologies, and putting a plaque on a historic site, are things that are very meaningful, but they do not have the same level of impact as clean drinking water, and jobs and opportunities in all parts of the country, which are areas where the government has fallen behind. It found it easy to make steps of recognition and harder to actually deliver the results.

Government Orders

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, this bill would add three members to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board from first nations, Métis and Inuit groups. This is not about adding red tape. Indigenous people's sitting on this board is not red tape. In fact, this bill is in response to the truth and reconciliation call to action number 79. These are not recommendations. These are obligations of Canada.

When the member refers to gatekeepers and indigenous people, the only way I can bring that connection to gatekeepers is that indigenous people are caretakers. They are caretakers of our lands and caretakers of the people who live on their lands. I do not think they should be referred to as gatekeepers in this context.

I will bring it back to the dissenting report the Conservatives put forward in the 2017 report on heritage sites from the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. They agreed in principle with the report and supported indigenous perspectives on heritage sites. However, they emphasized that this would be “representing additional stresses to the federal government’s fiscal framework”. Does my colleague acknowledge that seeking and protecting the truth requires funding and resources, or does he think it should be forgotten and support the colonizers' approach to remembering Canada's history?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, there are a few respects in which, respectfully, my colleague attributed views to me, either directly or indirectly, that I do not hold. I, for instance, do not oppose, and in fact I would support, the inclusion of indigenous representatives on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. I did make the point that the appointment process for those individuals remains one that the government is able to control. I suggested that maybe, when we talk about indigenous representation on certain boards, we should think of ways for that appointment process to ensure those individuals are in some way selected by the community, but I certainly agree with the principle of representation.

The issue I have with this bill is not about the powers it would give to indigenous communities. It is actually about powers it would give to the minister because the minister would have extraordinary powers under this legislation concerning the designation of sites and setting regulations for their use.

When I was speaking about gatekeepers, I was speaking about powers that are vested in the hands of government to arbitrarily block or control development in ways that are contrary to what may well be what local indigenous people want as well. I hope that clarifies that the issue is with the powers of the ministers. That is the concern we have. We are supporting the bill in principle, but these are issues we are going to raise at committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very long speech. I am going to talk about the very long detour that he made at the beginning, as we were all wondering how he was going to land on topic. He eventually got there after a few minutes. He talked about housing, actually, and he touted his party, which released a housing plan two weeks ago.

I have never heard the Conservatives come up with coherent solutions to the housing crisis that we are experiencing in Canada

right now. Obviously, the current Liberal government is useless. It is one of the worst governments we have ever seen when it comes to the housing crisis. CMHC economists say that, in Quebec alone, 1,100,000 units need to be built over the next 10 years to address the crisis.

We often hear the Conservatives, who have close ties to the private sector, say that the private sector will take care of it. It is true, the private sector will build 500,000 units, but governments will have to somehow step in and build 600,000 units in the next 10 years. That means the government is going to have to spend and invest to fix this problem.

Does my colleague have a plan for tackling this crisis?

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I will say that the announcement our leader made last week was quite historic. It was so historic that the place where he made the announcement might one day be designated a historic site. The important point about that announcement was that, in the current situation, we are seeing so much gatekeeping at the municipal level. We need a federal government that is prepared to stand up and say, across levels of government, on the funding the federal government provides, that we need to ensure barriers are removed and housing is getting built.

There are a variety of different factors that influence the price of housing, but a key one surely has to be the supply of housing. If there is not enough housing supply, then prices are going to be pushed up. I will say that it was a historic announcement by our leader, and it will be proven to have a very significant impact. Conservatives have been proposing a number of different measures around improving access to housing for a long time, including opening up federal lands and other such measures. Our leader is taking this as an important step further with these historic proposals.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by mentioning that I will be sharing my time with the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

I, for one, will focus on the topic at hand. I do not need to say that previous speeches have covered just about everything except Bill C-23, which I am going to talk about. I want to talk about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action 79, which calls for an inclusive and transparent designation framework to protect federal historic sites for current and future generations. I am thinking of our children and grandchildren. What we are doing today is for their future. This is about designating our built heritage, designating historic sites that have been neglected over time and demonstrating the importance of involving indigenous communities in decision-making.

Bill C-23 is a critical step in ensuring that places, persons and events of national significance are designated in a very inclusive manner. This sustainable and transparent bill reflects the depth of historical diversity. This designation will promote reconciliation and social cohesion.

The bill is guided by the principles of inclusivity, transparency and sustainability. It modernizes the identification, presentation and conservation of places, persons and events of national historic significance in order to ensure that the designation process is fair and equitable. We all have historic sites in our ridings that are facing challenges in terms of the environment, maintenance, budget or recognition. These files often get lost amid all of the other files that we have to deal with in our ridings. This bill pays special attention to our country's rich cultural heritage and the presence of the first peoples. It is very important to recognize their heritage in Canada.

In addition, the bill will ensure that federal historic sites are protected for current and future generations. This will allow these sites to be repurposed and adapted for a changing climate, thus contributing to a sustainable future for Canadians. In my constituency, some heritage buildings were heavily damaged during the 2019 floods. We did everything we could. We filled sandbags and gathered teams of volunteers to protect the buildings, but we need to do more because climate change is here to stay. We are here to confront it. Thanks to Bill C-23, we can be there for historic buildings and sites, but we will also have an action plan and be able to add them to a proper register so we know where they are located and how they should be conserved.

The bill also touches on authority over historic canals. I want to talk about historic canals. All historic canals are federal historic sites administered by the Parks Canada Agency. That means the provisions relating to the protection and conservation of federal historic sites would apply to historic canals, as would the provisions relating to regulations, enforcement, offences and penalties.

The Carillon Canal, which is in my riding, is one of nine historic canals. The famous Rideau Canal is another. Incidentally, since taking office, we have made major investments to protect the Rideau Canal and to keep this beautiful heritage site open for tourism. There are others in Canada, including one in my riding that will be protected by Bill C-23. The Carillon Canal is located in the magnificent municipality of Saint-André D'Argenteuil in my riding. The canal is on the Ottawa River in Carillon, Quebec, and it was designated a national historic site of Canada in 1929. It will soon celebrate the 100th anniversary of the day it was recognized for its importance to Canada's history and economy. Today, the canal serves as a crossing for the Carillon hydropower generating station and provides a gathering place for people in my community. To me, it is an honour.

• (1715)

The bill would also provide for the power to make regulations respecting the administration of federal historic sites administered by the Parks Canada Agency. This power will make it possible to protect the heritage value of a historic site, including its cultural, historic and archeological resources, as well as its natural characteristics, its flora and its fauna. This power could also be used to ban certain harmful activities. I am proud to support this bill.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about canals. I think this is a very good example of something we need a little more detail on in this bill. If the bill gives the sole responsibility for decision-making about her-

Government Orders

itage sites like canals to ministers, and something comes up that is a concern to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Fisheries or the Minister of Tourism, what is the mechanism to sort out the differences?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, this bill will enable us to not only identify and classify the infrastructure, but also assess its condition. How can we protect this infrastructure from climate change?

The simple act of entering the historic canals in the register will make it possible to work on improving the state of each of Canada's nine historic canals.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It is interesting that he talked about historic canals. I was once hired to promote our historic canals for a few months. I had already visited those canals by sailboat with my father, since I learned to sail when I was young.

My colleague talked about the Rideau Canal. He also spoke about climate change. We all have good memories of skating on the Rideau Canal, but it is clear that climate change has consequences. I was not able to skate on the Rideau Canal this year. Climate change is also having an impact on indigenous peoples.

How can the government say that it wants to take action on climate change and that it cares about indigenous issues while continuing to invest so much money in things like Alberta's oil sands, which are still doing so much damage and have significantly contributed to the increase in greenhouse gases?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very relevant question about climate change. Our government has done more than any other government in Canadian history to deal with climate change, and we will continue to do so.

Indeed, the Rideau Canal unfortunately was not accessible. For the first time in Canada's history, the Rideau Canal did not open for skaters. That is proof that climate change is significant. We have to tackle it, and this bill will let us assess the Rideau Canal situation. Maybe we will be able to tackle this situation along with the environment so we can keep it open longer in the winter for skating.

Government Orders

• (1720)

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, in 2018, the Auditor General pointed out that the Liberal government was not assigning enough funding to national historic sites to keep them from falling apart. We are adding more, and with this bill, hopefully we will add more indigenous-led historic sites. I am wondering what the government's plan is to properly fund the preservation of these sites.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, it is high time that we were able to properly catalogue all our sites. In each of our constituencies, there are buildings that are abandoned, that are dilapidated because no work is being done and that have been improperly assessed. This bill will allow us to assess the condition of dilapidated buildings and implement action plans to protect our heritage. Right now, buildings are being condemned to demolition because they have not been maintained over the years.

It is time to pass a bill that will allow us all to work together for our Canadian heritage, for our children and grandchildren, to remind us that Canada has a legacy from the past.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise this evening and speak to Bill C-23, an act respecting places, persons and events of national historic significance or national interest, archaeological resources and cultural and natural heritage. This is a bill we support, of course, in large part because it would contribute toward the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 79.

At the outset, I will note two of the main things the bill would achieve. First, it would add three members to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board from first nations, Métis and Inuit groups. Second, it would require that Parks Canada incorporate indigenous knowledge into the designation and commemoration of historic sites. Of course, indigenous participation and leadership in these processes is so vitally important as we come to terms with the legacy of colonization and as we begin to fully recognize the value and significance of indigenous history in our country.

Earlier, I was talking to my colleague and friend, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, and he noted that despite the long indigenous habitation in the riding he represents, there is not a single indigenous national historic site. That prompted me to look at the list of national historic sites in British Columbia, and I was overwhelmed to see that there is a bit of an embarrassment of riches. I thought that at the outset I would read through some of the really remarkable national historic sites in Skeena—Bulkley Valley, which comprises northwest British Columbia, the beautiful north and central coast and the islands of Haida Gwaii. There are 15 of them, and I think all but five are indigenous sites. It is truly remarkable.

Five of the national historic sites in northwest B.C. are located in Haida Gwaii, many of them in Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and at the Haida heritage site. I am not going to try to accurately pronounce some of the village names, these ancient village

sites that have been protected by the Haida people in partnership with the federal government, other than the village site of Skedans, which I had the great privilege to visit last summer alongside the Haida hereditary chief, Guujaaw, who has a long history of leadership on Haida Gwaii. The former premier of British Columbia, John Horgan, was with us that day as well.

It was a gorgeous summer day, and we took a boat out to Skedans, a site also known as Koonaa. We walked among ancient trees and saw totem poles that date back hundreds of years covered in moss, with many of them leaning and some decomposing into the ground. We saw the house site excavations where majestic long-houses once stood, and I reflected on the long history. It made me recognize one of the great values of designating national historic sites relating to indigenous history: For newcomers like me and my family, it gives an opportunity to reflect on the length of indigenous occupation of these lands and waters.

The community that I currently live in was founded in 1913 with the advent of the railroad. On the north coast of British Columbia, there are archaeological sites that have habitations dating back 14,000 years. It is truly remarkable.

There are, of course, other national historic sites in northwest B.C. worth mentioning. Kitselas Canyon is a spot just outside of the community of Terrace, where the Kitselas Nation makes its home. The mighty Skeena River is forced through a cleft in the rock, and I had a chance last summer to paddle through it in my little solo canoe, which was a bit of a terrifying experience to be honest. The Kitselas people, who lived at the village site of Gitaus, were once toll-keepers on the Skeena River. As other nations travelled upriver, at this narrow canyon the Kitselas would charge a toll as they passed by. It is a really remarkable place.

• (1725)

Gitwangak Battle Hill is a national historic site near the village of Gitwangak. This is a historic hill fortress where the Gitwangak people, part of the Gitksan Nation, defended against intruders. There are so many, I could easily fill my time reading them from this list.

Fort St. James is a historic Hudson Bay Company post on the shores of Stuart Lake, a place I had a chance to take my two daughters when they were very young. The first crossing of North America by Mackenzie in 1793 is noted as a national historic site in Bella Coola. The Chilkoote Trail extends between the riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley and Alaska. These are all important sites, and they deserve protection.

There are many more historic sites in northwest British Columbia, particularly indigenous historic sites, that I believe are worthy. The hope is that this bill, should it pass into law, would empower the federal government, working with indigenous people, to seek out and designate additional sites and ensure that indigenous knowledge is properly recognized and communicated through the sites.

The two actions that I mentioned were adding members to the board and ensuring that Parks Canada properly incorporates indigenous knowledge. These are important things, but the other aspect beyond designating new sites and ensuring that knowledge is conveyed through these opportunities is that we need to properly resource and fund national historic sites so that this history is preserved for future generations. This is where the federal government has a lot of work to do.

I note that numerous studies have pointed to the need for additional funding for national historic sites. In 2017, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development issued a report recommending that the annual funding for the national cost-sharing program for heritage places be increased to a minimum of \$10 million annually. However, the 2023-24 funding cycle only has \$2 million available.

That brings me to a national historic site that I want to talk about in my remaining minutes, and that is the North Pacific Cannery. This is a historic salmon cannery on the bank of the Skeena River near the District of Port Edward. It operated between 1889, over 125 years ago, and 1981. It is owned by the District of Port Edward, a very small municipality, and run by a non-profit society. This is the last remaining intact salmon cannery on the west coast. It is a truly remarkable historic site.

At the North Pacific Cannery, I met with Knut Bjorndal, the mayor of Port Edward, as well as Heather Hadland-Dudoward, the manager of the cannery, and board president Mona Izumi. They talked about the need for more operational and restoration funding. There are 27 buildings that are part of the North Pacific Cannery. It reflects a unique piece of history of workers of indigenous, Chinese, Japanese and European descent who worked there on the bank of the Skeena River processing wild salmon. It harkens back to an era when there was an incredible abundance of wild salmon coming up the Skeena River. We need to protect this place, and there is a need for additional resources to do so, both in operational funding and funding to renovate the buildings that are at risk of falling into the river or falling into greater disrepair.

This year in Prince Rupert, which is right next door, there are going to be over two dozen cruise ship visits. The cannery is a key tourist attraction for visitors to the north coast. Unless we invest in it properly, and unless the federal government recognizes the value of this history and provides adequate funding to the small non-profit society and tiny municipality that own and operate this site, there is a real concern that it will fail to meet its potential as a tourism destination. Then, future generations of visitors will be unable to reflect on the history that it represents. Much more gravely, it could also fall into serious disrepair, and aspects of this history could be lost forever.

Government Orders

I saw Mayor Bjorndal a couple of days ago. I told him that if I ever had a chance to plead his case in the House of Commons and urge the federal government to provide funding for the North Pacific Cannery, this truly unique historic site, I would do so.

● (1730)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I share my colleague's concern about the fact that the bill is ambitious. Currently, we cannot even fund the heritage sites we have in my riding. Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie came from Sarnia, and his grave is there. It was very difficult even to get money to keep that up. My worry is that the bill is supposed to promote reconciliation, but if it is not adequately funded and we are adding indigenous members to the board, they may start to perceive that they are not actually seeing anything.

Does the member share my concern?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, yes, as I was remarking near the end of my speech, providing adequate resources is such a key component. It is not enough to simply alter the composition of the board or provide direction to Parks Canada; we also need to ensure that the federal government is providing adequate resources to protect our built history and ensure the designated sites have what they need to manage the history in perpetuity. I think that is a real shortcoming in the conversation around national historic sites.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his rather extraordinary speech. It made me want to go straight to British Columbia. In fact, I think the B.C. tourism board should hire him or should send his speech to people to encourage them to go there and see how interesting the historic sites really are. It really makes you want to go there.

Quite apart from Bill C-23 currently before the House, I think everyone pretty much agrees today on the issues of truth and reconciliation. We have talked about housing, murdered women, homelessness, and the reserves in northern Ontario and Manitoba that still do not have clean water. Many challenges remain when it comes to reaching out to indigenous nations.

What does my colleague think is the priority issue that should be dealt with immediately other than Bill C-23?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

● (1735)

[*English*]

I will try. My French is a very early work in progress, but I heard the member's remarks about how much he values the effort, so I will do my best.

Government Orders

He was talking about reconciliation, the need for us to do better and to do more and the opportunity that national historic sites represent in that regard. I do not believe that the bill would go far enough toward realizing the potential of that, ensuring that we are portraying history and recognizing the sovereignty of these nations and the relationship we have as we should. This relationship is in its very early days, and I would have hoped that the bill would go further when it comes to national historic sites.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will follow up on the comments we heard just now. In terms of the funding that needs to be available for the upkeep of these sites, a lot of sites commemorating the indigenous history of our country really do not have a built environment. I think it is important to create the interpretive centres that would tell us, finally, about the indigenous history of Canada and to provide funding for that necessary part of our national historic sites.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the really important aspects of this work. We often fixate on the built environment, built history, artifacts and these types of things for interpretation. However, when it comes to indigenous history, so much of it is contextual and part of oral history. As such, having indigenous-led interpretation to help understand the context of places that are significant to indigenous people is very important. This deserves investment and attention from the federal government.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise to speak in the House. Today, we are talking about Bill C-23, an act respecting places, persons and events of national historic significance or national interest, archaeological resources and cultural and natural heritage. Fortunately, it also has a short title: the historic places of Canada act.

This bill is an attempt to follow up on one of the recommendations from the truth and reconciliation report. Members will recall that the Right Hon. Stephen Harper made an official apology to first nations people for the residential school situations. He then commissioned this truth and reconciliation report, which came with over 90 recommendations. Recommendation number 79 is the one that this act is trying to address. Conservatives absolutely support this. Stephen Harper started it, and so we definitely want to see this come to pass and to send it to committee.

In my talk today, I am going to reflect on some of the concerns that I have with the bill, and as usual, some recommendations on how to fix them.

I will start with subclause 43(3). What happens in the parks part of this bill is that the park rangers would be given new authorities. They would be given similar authorities to what peace officers have. They would then carry out their work. Basically, I want to read subclause 43(3) because it is very concerning. It states:

A park warden or enforcement officer may exercise any powers under [search and seizure] without a warrant if the conditions for obtaining a warrant exist, but by reason of exigent circumstances it would not be practical to obtain one.

It would obviously be a violation of section 8 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms to search and seize without a warrant, so the important part of that phrasing is “exigent circumstances”. However, I do not know that a park ranger would necessarily understand that they would normally get a warrant, but if someone were going to be injured or some building were going to be destroyed or some-

thing, there may be some urgent circumstance. Moreover, there is no indication of a requirement for training on that. Therefore, there needs to be some training.

The second concern I have with this bill is that it would give additional powers to the minister and to the Governor in Council, which is essentially cabinet, to designate places or to prevent a place from being designated. That is way too much power to give to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. I say that because he has a history of doing things to influence the outcomes that he likes or does not like.

For example, in 2022, he decided to put in regulations about migratory birds, which caused a delay in the Trans Mountain pipeline project. He has already said he never wants to see that project built. I would not want a situation where there is some kind of project or natural resources thing that is in the national public interest and the minister has the sole power to decide to designate a heritage place that would become a barrier to that project. We do not need to put that kind of power in his hands. We have to keep in mind that this is the minister who, in his former life, was arrested for his environmental activism. For example, in my riding, I have a heritage site that is where oil was first discovered in North America. I do not ever want to see the minister have the power to decide that is not going to be a designated site anymore. That sole-power thing is a problem, and there need to be checks in place.

Under clause 34, another thing the Governor in Council, which is really cabinet, could do is to make regulations on about 18 different circumstances. This is becoming a chronic problem with bills that the Liberal government brings forward. The Liberals have no detail in the bill and leave it to the regulations later. Sometimes, thinking about Bill C-11, the government knows what the criteria are that it is going to bring forward to the CRTC on what content should be promoted or buried. Even though the opposition has been asking the government to share that for more than a year, it will not do so.

● (1740)

If we look at Bill C-22, the bill about disabilities, it does not say who is eligible, how much they get and when they are going to get it. Those are details that are actually very important in order to approve bills in more than just principle.

We are at the stage where we are approving this one in principle, but the ability for cabinet to make regulations after the fact needs to be much more limited than it is. There needs to be some driver of why it could not be foreseen.

Government Orders

There is also a part of this bill that would increase indigenous representation on the board from first nations, Inuit and Métis, and that is a great addition. There are some occasions when they do not all agree on something. We have seen instances before, like with the Coastal gas project, for example, with the Wet'suwet'en, where 85% thought one thing and 15% thought another. Again, there does not seem to be a mechanism to resolve when the board cannot agree about something, so that would be very important.

Another protection I would like to see in this bill has to do with the issue of cancel culture. We have seen in our country, over the last few years, quite a number of historic monuments that were vandalized, destroyed or forced to be taken down. I think about the Queen Victoria statue. I would not want to get into a situation where somebody is not a monarchist and they become the minister and have the sole power to designate something as “not a site”, for example.

I remember when I was at university in Kingston, there used to be a pub there called Sir John A. Macdonald, and they made them take that away. I do not know if it was officially a historic site, but it was certainly historic in my life. I definitely do not want to see that.

Another thing is that 15 Christian churches have been burned, some of which were historical sites, and the government has not taken any action. How we are going to address the protection of things that are already heritage sites and not try to rewrite history, as it were? That will be an important question.

I also want to make sure the board members who are chosen have the best interests of the country and the people they are representing at heart. In my riding, there are people who are paid environmental activists who chain themselves to the employees' pipelines, etc. It could cause a lot of trouble if those people were on the board of this particular committee. Who is vetting the board members? It says the government is going to choose. If “government” means the Minister of the Environment, who was previously an environmental activist, then I do have a concern there as well.

Let us talk about navigable waters. There is a lot of red tape already in the area of navigable waters. There are federal regulations, there are provincial regulations and there is always a long delay in getting any resolution. Now we would have the Minister of Environment and Climate Change having powers, but what if the Minister of Fisheries or the Minister of Tourism do not agree? I have raised this point in the questions a few times, but there has not really been a good answer. There needs to be some mechanism to sort out who is on first and who has the prime responsibility. I personally do not think it should be the Minister of the Environment, when it comes to navigable waters. That is clearly something that is a concern of Fisheries and Oceans, unless it is for tourism.

If we think about some of the balancing of priorities, we know that when it comes to designating heritage sites, they are expensive to maintain. In my previous questions, I talked about, in my riding, Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie's grave, which was falling in to disrepair and it took a really long time to get fixed. We need to make sure there is a plan in place to afford the things we are designating.

• (1745)

I do like the idea of a registry for those locations that are heritage locations. That will be helpful. I think it will also help prevent people from removing things that were at heritage sites, because the reasoning for them being chosen in the first place will be a part of that.

The final concern I have about this is that the government has brought this bill and again is giving more power to the government. Its track record is not great on this. We have seen numerous times that the government has used its powers and it was not in the interest of the people. I think that is why people are losing trust in the democracy and in the current government.

There need to be some protections put into this bill that would allow us to expand and recognize heritage sites, to afford to fix them, to make sure that we are not going to cancel them later and to make sure that it is clear how we sort out conflict.

Those are the main concerns that I have with the bill. I would be happy to answer any questions people have.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting listening to the debate on what I would have thought was fairly straightforward legislation or definitely the principles of it. I do not necessarily agree with the official opposition, but I understand what it is saying. The legislation also has a very significant contribution toward reconciliation with call to action 79. From what I can tell, many of the discussions that have been coming forward could easily be dealt with at committee stage. My concern is to what degree the Conservative Party would like to see the bill passed. Is there an interest on its part to see it passed? As I said, it would be nice to see it passed before the end of the year.

Could the hon. member just provide her perspective, given the importance of the principles of the legislation, on when it could go to committee?

• (1750)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely would like to see this bill passed, but the reason we have to raise our concerns in the House at second reading is that my experience at committee has been that the Liberal government pays no attention to comments raised at committee.

Many committees are not televised, so the public will never know what the concerns are with the bill. We need to get them on the record today, and then the government has time to think about what the solutions are, to take my great suggestions, to put them in place and to get ready for committee.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in her speech, my colleague talked a lot about resource development. I would like to remind members of something interesting that my colleague from Terrebonne said when she spoke to this bill earlier.

Private Members' Business

She reminded the House that there is a wonderful agreement between the Government of Quebec and indigenous peoples when it comes to the development of resources in Quebec, and that is the peace of the braves. That was made possible through nation-to-nation dialogue. We need to be careful. Not all indigenous people are in favour of every development project. They are also concerned about the environment and the impact that these projects will have on future generations of their people.

Above all else, the message that I want to send is the importance of nation-to-nation dialogue to ensure that we hear their opinions and concerns regarding the environment. It is important to not necessarily invest only in resources that will further damage their planet, which is also that of their children.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, yes, it is very important to have discussions with the first nations, between nations. It is very good that Quebec has an agreement that allows for these discussions, but the other provinces and territories do not have such agreements.

I do not think it is a win if the government announces that we can designate historic sites, but there is no money to put measures in place. I worry that this will exacerbate the situation.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to remark that this is the second speech I have heard today on national historic sites that mentioned the Trans Mountain pipeline. I know there are a lot of people out there who cannot wait for this project to be history. What really got me going was when the member brought up the gatekeeper aspect and mentioned that birds were the gatekeepers. It is the first time I have heard people blame birds for these things.

I am just wondering, similarly to the previous question, if the member would rather get rid of the Migratory Birds Convention Act, get rid of the Fisheries Act and let these developments happen willy-nilly. Is this what she really wants?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, I care about the species. I care about the environment.

What I do not like is those who are in power using excuses, such as designating a heritage site that may be just conveniently a heritage site because it is in the way of a natural resources project that is going to be built. Perhaps those in power pick that one bird that could only be in that one place in order to prevent something from going forward. That is the kind of abuse of power we do not want to see. That is why we need protections in this bill to prevent it.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment to get on the record, and I would like to see if the hon. member agrees.

I have the Old Durham Road Black pioneer cemetery located in my riding. It is near the terminus of the Underground Railroad. It has been recognized by Ontario, for over 30 years now, as an important historic site for the Province of Ontario. However, it has been rejected in getting national historic recognition, partly because of unique things under the act tied to cemeteries.

I am hoping that during this debate, we would be able to get it amended and have this important Black history site in my riding recognized in the future. Would the member agree?

● (1755)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from February 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons), be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-241, which seeks to amend the Income Tax Act to allow tradespersons and indentured apprentices to deduct from their income amounts expended for travelling where they were employed in a construction activity at a job site that is located at least 120 kilometres away from their ordinary place of residence.

As the granddaughter of a mason and niece, sister and sister-in-law of carpenters, this is a sector of our economy that I am rather familiar with.

From the outset I would like to say that the Bloc Québécois is voting in favour of Bill C-241 and I will be talking about it today first from the perspective of the construction industry, then from the perspective of the current economic context and finally in the context of the labour shortage.

First, let us not forget that this is about one of the recommendations from Canada's trade unions that represent more than half a million construction workers in Canada who are members of 14 international unions. These people work in more than 60 trades and professions and generate 6% of the country's gross domestic product.

Salespeople, professionals and various other workers in different sectors can already claim a tax deduction for the cost of their travel, meals and accommodation. It stands to reason that these expenses could be claimed by skilled workers whose job sites are located in a different region or province from their primary residence. It is a question of fairness.

Growth rates and infrastructure investment often vary from one region to the next, and this results in labour shortages. The labour shortage is one of the main impediments to economic recovery. One way to address rising prices is to tackle this shortage.

Private Members' Business

When expenses are not covered by the employer, workers must pay out of pocket. For workers with a family, additional expenses for travel can be very high and can impede the worker's mobility.

This tax deduction is a concrete and effective means of enhancing the mobility of construction workers.

In addition, according to calculations, this would save the federal government approximately \$347 million. Other countries, such as the United States, allow a similar tax deduction for skilled labour under the Internal Revenue Code. These employees can deduct the cost of meals, travel and lodging for temporary work away from their place of residence. This type of measure would promote return to work and address labour shortages at the same time. It would also reduce reliance on government programs, such as employment insurance.

As mentioned earlier, the costs associated with travelling to a job site far from home can impact a worker's decision to accept that contract.

Coming back to inflation, it reached 6.8% in 2022, the highest it has been since 1982, when it hit 10.9%. It bears mentioning, however, that the inflationary surge appears to be coming to an end. After peaking in June at 8.1%, it stabilized for a few months and then fell 0.6% to 6.3% on an annualized basis in December.

Price increases have been uneven. In 12 months, food prices rose 9.8%, gas prices rose 28% and the consumer price index, excluding gas and food, rose 5.3%. Since essentials like housing, food and gas have increased the most, low-income earners have suffered the most.

Two weeks ago, the Bank of Canada announced its eighth rate hike, increasing it to 4.5% from 0.5% a year earlier. Higher interest rates benefit those with savings, but cost those with debt. Young homeowners who bought their first home in the midst of the real estate price boom are likely to have some challenges. Since they are usually the ones who take out variable rate mortgages, they will quickly see rising rates on their mortgage payments.

Inflation is a major concern for consumers and cannot be ignored. A Scotiabank survey conducted in December shows that the rising cost of living tops the list of financial concerns for 50% of Quebecers.

That is why the Bloc Québécois introduced a bill, in May 2021, to help attract new graduates to the regions and encourage them to stay there. With that in mind, it is important to implement measures that protect the population in general, particularly the most vulnerable, such as seniors. When it comes to seniors, the Bloc Québécois is still calling for the government to increase old age security by \$110 a month for all seniors aged 65 and over.

Like all other workers, skilled workers are facing higher costs on everything. I will come back to that. According to a recent poll by Canada's Building Trades Unions, 75% of skilled trades workers agree that a tax deduction will give them access to more job opportunities. With inflation the way it is, the time is right to implement a tax deduction to help ease the pressure on some workers' wallets.

• (1800)

At the top of the list of costs that might stop workers from agreeing to travel far for work is the cost of gas. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has pushed the price of oil to levels not seen in eight years. Even though the price of gas is coming back down, its current volatility and unpredictability are enough to dissuade workers from going too far from home to work. It becomes unfair.

What is more, this tax deduction can certainly help deal with the labour shortage in one sector in particular. The pandemic forced many people out of the labour market for health reasons and it exacerbated the labour shortage in certain sectors. It is important to act quickly to support the sectors that have been hard hit by this labour shortage.

This shortage is a significant impediment to economic recovery. It results in forced closures, the loss of contracts, the cancellation of investments in our businesses and overworked employees. It can even limit opportunities to improve the working conditions of current employees. The pressures related to the shortage of workers will be felt until at least 2030 in Quebec especially because of the aging population. The Bloc Québécois is proposing a suite of measures to alleviate labour shortages across Quebec. In its 2021 spring budget, the government promised to create at least one million jobs. Creating jobs when there is a shortage of workers really makes sense.

The Bloc Québécois was already concerned about the labour shortage. It made some good proposals during the 2021 election campaign. We proposed seven concrete measures to help fix the problem. First we must value experienced workers and increase, from \$5,000 to \$6,500, the amount of employment or self-employment income that is exempt when calculating the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS. That is in the bill that I introduced last week. I look forward to debating it here in the House with the other parties.

The GIS is intended for people aged 65 and over with relatively low incomes. It complements old age security, but the GIS decreases rapidly as income increases. The first \$5,000 earned, however, does not affect GIS amounts. We propose to increase this exemption by \$1,500.

The temporary foreign worker program must also be handed over to Quebec. The Bloc Québécois is calling for the program to be repatriated to Quebec, which is in a better position than anyone else to identify the specific labour needs of businesses within its borders.

Private Members' Business

Another trend that is emerging in Quebec is the digital shift. Businesses are increasing their efforts to accelerate the digital shift. This is one way to increase productivity and get around the problem of the labour shortage. This is another area that needs to be addressed. We need to support and assist SMEs in that shift. It is about competitiveness.

Tax credits for research and development also need to be improved to stimulate innovation. We are also suggesting creating a new tax credit of up to \$3,000 per year for recent graduates in the regions, to a maximum cumulative amount of \$8,000 for recent graduates working in designated regions.

In closing, I want to present some figures on Quebec's construction industry, which is very lucrative but has labour shortage issues. That is why the Bloc was quick to propose several solutions, because there is no magic bullet for solving the labour shortage. We need to approach the problem from various angles. The importance of Quebec's construction industry cannot be understated. This is as true from an economic point of view as it is from a job creation point of view. We are talking about investments of nearly \$53 billion in 2019. We are also talking about 264,600 direct jobs generated per month, on average, or one out of every 20 jobs in Quebec. It also generates thousands of other jobs in other sectors.

To conclude, the Bloc made an intervention through my colleague from Joliette at the Standing Committee on Finance during debate on this bill. My colleague pointed out to the government that, since this is a private member's bill, the government tends not to propose any amendments, particularly in terms of including safeguards for certain provisions and thus reassuring the parties on the interpretation or application of a given bill. In the end, no amendments were proposed, and the bill passed without amendment on division in only about 15 minutes.

I want to say one last thing in closing. As members can see, this bill reflects the current context in which the construction industry is facing many challenges. Given how important this industry is to the economy, we need to look into this problem and help the industry find solutions to the labour shortage. This bill is one of those solutions.

• (1805)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the statements the member has made, there are some aspects I agree with, and others I disagree with. When we talk about Bill C-241 itself, there are issues with tax fairness within the legislation. There is a lack of safeguards within the legislation that the member talks about supporting. There are some technical deficiencies within the legislation.

I think that, if we take a look, if I may, at Bill C-19, which was the federal legislation that was brought forward, we would see that, in moving forward with the labour mobility tax credit, it does allow for workers in the building and construction trades to deduct up to \$4,000 in eligible travel and temporary relocation expenses, giving them a tax credit of up to \$600 a year.

The labour mobility tax credit goes a long way in being supportive of an industry. The member made reference to the construction industry in the province of Quebec, and the construction industry in the province of Quebec is, in fact, very important to the government. We recognize that there are many ways and many areas in which, throughout the country, we can look at how we can further enhance and support the construction industry. There is a labour shortage. The member made reference to the kind of actions, and the number of jobs the government created. I think it is worthy of note.

Do members know that over 800,000 jobs have been created if we look at the number of jobs in Canada prepandemic? We can take a look at the number from before the pandemic started, and we can add about 825,000 or 830,000 new jobs since that time. I would ultimately argue that the government has been very successful at ensuring that Canada is in a great position to come back in a better and healthier way when it comes to the whole issue of jobs.

Yes, there is a huge demand for employees in the different regions of the country. There are certain sectors, and the construction area is one of them. That is one of the reasons why we look at other mechanisms we could put into place to support. Whether it is forgiving the interest for apprentices on federal loans, the enhancement of the labour mobility tax credit, or other initiatives, I believe that it is contributing and making a difference.

We also recognize that immigration can play a critical role in meeting our labour demands, not only for today but also into the future. Further to that, I have always argued that, if we look outside Canada to supply workers, we should also, at the same time, look at ways we can enable those workers to become landed immigrants to Canada. That is something that has been very important to the government.

We have been looking at ways in which we can add to the workforce by bringing in international students. This has had a positive impact in Canada, in many different ways, not only filling literally tens of thousands of jobs, but also adding to the social fabric in which we all live in and have grown to appreciate.

The numbers of, and I use this as an example, international students today, compared to what it was seven, eight years ago, have multiplied significantly, from the 35,000 or 40,000 to closer to 350,000. There are significant numbers of international students who are studying a wide spectrum of issues. The member spoke prior talked about construction jobs, and many of students are taking those types of construction jobs. They are getting an education at our colleges and, in some cases, universities, to work either directly or indirectly in the construction industry.

Private Members' Business

• (1810)

We are looking at ways to further enhance opportunities for those who want to enter the occupation. There are many examples of low-income families working in the industry. I am very pleased with the fact that we have the federal refund tax credit for the Canada workers benefit program. Tens of thousands of Canadians are directly benefiting from that credit. It is significant. An individual receives just over \$1,400 and a family unit receives up to \$2,400 to assist workers with a lower income.

We can look at the basic tax exemption. I talk about this because taxation policy does matter and does make a difference. The government has looked at the labour mobility tax credit within Bill C-19 and has addressed many of the shortcomings I pointed out in regard to Bill C-241. I had the opportunity to look into what Bill C-241 is proposing, and I would suggest there are too many technical deficiencies. There is an issue of taxation fairness in some of the areas. There is, in fact, a lack of safeguards, as I pointed out. The sponsor of the legislation can maybe sit down with ministers or others and expand on some of those points.

When it comes to apprenticeship programs and ways we can support labour enhancement, the government has been very progressive in trying to deal with that and enhance it. I have been with the Prime Minister in Manitoba on one or two occasions to look at how we can contribute to enhancing trade and labour in the province of Manitoba. We have wonderful organizations out there that are developing programs.

Earlier today we heard the Conservatives finally get on board with the idea of national opportunities for individuals to be recognized in health care professions and have mobility rights across Canada. They refer to it as a “blue seal”. I suspect they are taking that idea in part from the Red Seal program, which is for tradespeople. Whether it is someone international or someone who takes culinary arts to achieve the Red Seal, it has a profoundly positive impact for that individual.

When we look at the construction industry, there is potential growth in that area with regard to getting recognition from a national perspective. The government, through taxation policies, has been there and continues to be there for the construction industry in particular, but also, as I pointed out, for those who are on the low-income scale. Not all construction workers are able to collect the annual money necessary to provide for a full family or even themselves. That is why we have provided the enhancement of the Canada workers benefit program.

I believe it is important that we use our taxation policy as a mechanism to support families and individuals in different situations. One of those situations is looking at ways we can enhance our labour market and support the people who are working so hard to get ahead in life, particularly by upgrading their skills. Apprenticeship programs are an excellent example of that.

• (1815)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate here this evening. Bill C-241, sponsored by the member for Essex, is an excellent bill that the NDP will be supporting. I am also pleased to be in the same area as the member, and I think it is a good example of how we can bring forth responsi-

ble and solid legislation that not only reflects on our area, but also impacts the rest of the country.

Unfortunately, I cannot get the last 10 minutes back from the previous speaker, but I can say that the member sponsoring the bill has been open to meeting with the government and ministers on an open basis. He has approached the Liberals very responsibly, trying to get them to come on board. Quite frankly, I think the only reason the Liberals do not support it is because it is not their idea. It is as simple as that.

I am going to go through the specifics of why the bill is important, but a lot of people would see this as a housekeeping bill in many respects. I want to point out that this is a modest tax credit and a piece of legislation with an approach that should be, in a minority Parliament, a bipartisan way to get some stuff done for Canada. I commend the member for coming forth with the bill right away. He was selected high in the order, and we only get a certain amount of opportunities and time. It is like winning the lottery.

This is not a going-through-the-motions type of bill; it is going to provide a tax credit. We know there are many tax credits out there for other individuals and corporations. It is unfortunate that we do not have this one, which is to allow for travel-related expenses for work done at least 120 kilometres away from a skilled trades member's place of residence. In Windsor and Essex County, which includes LaSalle, Tecumseh and Kingsville, even the Chatham-Kent area in southern Ontario, there are often different times where we might have a flux of employment in the auto industry, or other types of trades that go up and down. We also have many workers who will fly out to Alberta, to the oil sands, or fly out to other places to do skilled trades work. This is a modest tax credit to help them in that process.

These individuals are self-employed in many respects, although they often belong to unions, like LiUNA, which is a very good union, and Unifor, which is another good union. At times, they are individually contracted to go out to different places, and the cost can be quite significant. The previous speaker from the Bloc mentioned a really good point on the inflationary costs that have gone up for travel, and other things of that nature. I think that is an excellent point. This keeps people working all the time and stops them from having to go on unemployment. It also encourages young people to have more stability. It is a challenge to work abroad. There is a lot of stress when it comes to family and raising young children.

Private Members' Business

These measures are controllable. The person has to provide receipts. There is full accountability for the expenses taking place. I looked at some of the other tax havens, the types of taxes and tax credits we have for people. I will focus on a couple of them to show how unfair it is for these workers to not be able to write off a few business-related expenses for their travel when it is helpful for our country. We have a corporate dividend tax credit, a tax credit for the oil and gas industry, and a stock option deduction for taxes. We have a number of different businesses taxes that businesses can write off, which even include private boxes for sports tickets, concerts, vacations, office parties, and deductions for executive pay. If members can believe it, all those things are a tax deduction, but they are not for skilled trades workers.

We are also trying to get more women and diversity into our skilled trades, but they cannot get the same deductions we can for an office party. It is outrageous. For the government to complicate this, or make it more difficult than it seems, is irresponsible. I do not know why the Liberals cannot just get behind the bill. It is unfortunate. The bill has a history in this House. Former New Democrats for Hamilton Centre have brought this forth, including past members Chris Charlton, David Christopherson and Wayne Marsden. Now our current member for Hamilton Centre, who is doing an excellent job on this, and the member for Essex have pulled this together, and I think it is worthy of being brought forth on its merit alone.

● (1820)

We have done this before. In the last Parliament, I worked with the member from Saskatoon when I had a private member's bill on single-event sports betting, and because he got selected higher, I took it off the Order Paper and gave it to him. He took it and did a wonderful job, and the legislation got passed. It affected the reduction of organized crime, and now we have an accountable process. It is a good example of making Parliament work. I think the bill before us should be seen with the same type of lens.

I do not know why government members would want to oppose this legislation. Some of them argue it is redundant. Some of them argue it is not good enough. It is ridiculous. Those arguments are shallow and vain, quite frankly, because if there is still a problem, it can go to the Senate for some amendments. Members can be creative and suggest something or show something that is wrong with it in a concrete way, rather than just trying to wind the clock down on the process.

When we get an opportunity in the House of Commons, it is like winning the lottery. For people who do not know, we are like ping-pong balls in many respects. The process is that we get drawn randomly, and if a member gets selected in the top 40, they at least have some hope of actually getting their bill through the entire process in a regular Parliament. However, in a minority Parliament, it is even more shallow, because if we do not have a five-year term, if it is a shorter term, a member would not be able to get their bill through. Even the last bill I did, again with the member from Saskatoon, who did an excellent job of working on the bill with me and others, came into effect within only a couple of days of the election, because the Prime Minister refused to do it. It took outside lobbying efforts to get him to finally officially authorize it and

bring the legislation into force, a couple of days before the last election.

It is hard enough, and my point is that we all have a collective responsibility to use these opportunities as best we can. The member did not choose something like "happy groundhog month" or something very shallow like that. This legislation is well thought out. It is legislation that has been in the House before. It is not going to break the Bank of Canada. In fact, it passed the test of mettle in being proper and with due diligence, by the Speaker's ruling. This is one of the things that should be noted. We actually have unions behind the bill as well. Canada's Building Trade Unions has been supporting this tax deduction for a long time. Operably, it is really good. I mentioned LiUNA and Unifor as well.

Again, what we are talking about here is for a long period of travel, 120 kilometres, where a worker would be able to deduct a little bit of that cost. We have all seen, in the last number of months, and the last couple of years really, the rate of inflation going up. I could not think of anything that had more appropriate timing than this. In fact, it merits the government stealing the legislation if it wants to actually impress upon getting something done for workers at this particular time.

If the government is saying that we cannot afford this for skilled trade workers, then why would we not stop letting people write off private boxes, and stop corporations from deducting office parties and other nonsense like that? This is something that could go right to the worker.

Again, it would go through our accounting process, which is already established, and so the legislation would not create another bureaucratic arm or process. It would actually be an amendment to our current tax code, which is commendable in the approach it is taking. It is responsible and could actually be triggered right away.

I feel passionately about this. There are two things that are behind the bill. First and foremost is that a member has sincerely brought forth legislation, which has had a number of versions in the House in the past and is very much amenable to a bipartisan approach and working together. Second, it is very effective for tradespeople. It has a direct correlation to the economy and how we can actually protect workers and enhance opportunities for them and their families, and it has a social justice element as well.

To conclude, there are a lot of other tax things out there that are a bunch of nonsense and that really should be reviewed, eliminated or at least discussed, whereas this is extremely responsible. I hope the bill before us receives the proper weight or at least the government looking at what it can do, and that we can move it to the Senate and go from there.

Private Members' Business

• (1825)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise in support of this excellent piece of legislation from my colleague from Essex, which is a great part of Canada. The good people of southwestern Ontario have gotten behind this hon. member, and our leader, the new leader of the Conservative Party, visited that part of the world. There are lots of skilled trades workers in southwestern Ontario, and a massive rally came together for our leader's visit there. Over 1,500 people came out to hear the positive Conservative message about making sure that work always pays. There are so many people in this country right now working so hard, juggling different jobs, often more than one job, trying to pick up extra shifts and always looking for new ways to earn a little more.

People will always want to do better for their families. People will always want to leave more for their children and give their children the types of things they never had when they were growing up. That is a pretty standard, constant human emotion, especially here in Canada, but with the inflation crisis that the Liberals have created, the need to pick up extra shifts and to have a little more money at the end of every day is even more pronounced, because the dollars people are earning are not going far enough anymore. As the Prime Minister devalues the value of the paycheques people bring home, more and more Canadians are forced to work more, for longer and longer hours, and work harder and harder at their jobs.

Construction workers and skilled tradespersons often have extra costs that office workers do not. We all know that people in the skilled trades have to spend a lot of money on tools, for example, and various governments understand that. The previous Conservative government wanted to recognize that cost for skilled trades workers and brought in special tax measures for tools that skilled trades workers have to spend their money on.

This bill, though, would not be a tax credit. This bill would be a great way to recognize the costs that are often associated with travelling to work by allowing those workers to deduct those costs from their income altogether. If someone goes to a restaurant and pays for a burger, maybe it costs five dollars. We know that the restaurant owner does not have to pay tax on the full five dollars, because that five dollars of revenue first has to go to pay the cost. It has to pay the cost of the meat that is in the burger, the bun and the worker who cooked it and put it together, so the business owner has to pay tax only on the profit from that five-dollar cheeseburger. We are kind of applying the same logic to the skilled trades here. When workers have to travel a long distance, the payment for that work should not ignore the reality that the workers had to pay money out of their own pocket to get where they had to go.

A great example is in the province of Saskatchewan, which I am so proud to represent. We have lots of large-scale infrastructure projects, mining projects and natural resource projects that take place far away from large urban centres. We have potash mines where big companies are investing big dollars. They are desperate for workers to fill those jobs, and there are workers who would love to go and work there, but they cannot relocate their families for a short period of time. They do not want to pull their kids out of school, sell their house and move to, in some cases, a very small town that may not even have housing available to them, so what do

they do? They commute. They might rent a place nearby or they might literally drive there and back every day, and they are doing that to work. They are doing that to fill a need in our economy, like a project or a job that needs to get done, and they are doing it for themselves, but their paycheque and the taxes that are charged on that should reflect the cost they had to spend to do the very job they are qualified to do.

This, by the way, happens in the corporate world. Companies that have to spend money on transportation to fly their staff to various parts of the country or to transport materials are allowed to deduct those costs against their revenues and pay tax only on the difference.

I view this measure as tax fairness for skilled trades workers. One point of differentiation between the Liberals and the Conservatives is that every time we hear the Liberals talk about tax fairness, we can be sure of one thing: They are raising taxes. That is literally the only way the Liberals know how to even think about tax fairness.

• (1830)

When the Conservatives think about tax fairness, we think about lowering taxes and getting government out of the way. One thing that has been so inspiring to watch is how the leader of our party is showing Canadians how many barriers and obstacles to growth and prosperity exist all around the country.

We just had a fantastic announcement. The Leader of the Conservative Party announced that a Conservative government would bring in what is called a blue seal program. It would allow highly skilled, trained medical professionals to travel from one province to another, or move from one province to another, to fill a need. For people who have credentials from outside of Canada, credentials would be recognized so they could fill badly needed positions in our health care sector all across the country.

This type of initiative builds on that. This type of initiative to encourage workers to go to where the work is, removing the impediment, the obstacle to prosperity, is an incredible method to get people working and to get big projects built again. This initiative is needed, because the investments that go into a lot of these large-scale construction projects are cyclical. If we build a bridge, we do not need to build another bridge for many years, but another municipality might need a bridge. Our skilled workforce has had to become very mobile and very flexible. Workers need to be able to go to where the work is.

Let us take mining companies, for example. They can only do so much exploration every year. They can only do so much drilling. They can only do so much infrastructure building because of their equipment barriers. They tend to rotate and move around where they focus their investment. One year it might be in Saskatchewan and the next year it might be in British Columbia.

Private Members' Business

We need to ensure that our workforce can be flexible too and that we remove this barrier. If we do not, there may be a job that goes unfilled. There may be a worker who could do it, but with the salary offered for it, they think that by the time they fly in and out several times a year or drive the long hours, their costs will become more and more significant, as the Liberal carbon tax makes the cost of fuel go up. The worker might say they are not that much better off if they take the job. At the end of the day, by the time they pay for all those out-of-pocket expenses and pay their taxes on the money they have earned, they are not even further ahead, even though they have done all this work and spent all this time away from their family.

This bill removes that barrier, that obstacle, and makes it that much easier for a worker to say, yes, they will take the job and take the skills they have learned over the years and apply them to the job that needs to be done. Everybody wins. The worker wins, our overall economy wins and Canadian pension holders win as Canadian companies do better and better. My colleague from Essex has found a win-win-win solution to help all aspects of our economy with this great initiative.

I cannot say how shocked I am that the Liberals are going to vote against it. I say that and then I realize that I should not be shocked at the hypocrisy. When the Liberals say one thing and do another, it is more disappointing than shocking because we see it all the time. They talk a good game. They like to make announcements. They like to go to conventions full of workers whose votes they are trying to win over. They like to have fancy meetings with the heads of some of the unions. However, when it comes time to actually do something and deliver, the Liberals say no.

The Liberal excuse for saying no is so flimsy. They claim they have another type of solution, but it is not going to benefit workers in the same way this bill would. Because of how my colleague from Essex has designed this bill, it would allow workers to deduct expenses right off the top and would be a massive tax savings for them. However, overall, it would not be that much of a cost to the economy. Instead of looking at it as a reduction of revenue for the government, we should be looking at this as an expansion of the work that is going to be done all over the country. That economic activity is going to lead to even more economic activity.

Once again, I am disappointed but not shocked that the Liberals have said one thing during an election and done another thing after the votes were counted. That has been the story of the Prime Minister and the government. However, the Conservatives have shown the way again. We are showing how we are going to bring home better jobs and better paycheques, and the money left over in Canadians' pockets will go farther when the Leader of the Opposition becomes Prime Minister of Canada.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are here this evening to debate Bill C-241, an act to amend the Income Tax Act with regard to deduction of travel expenses for tradespersons.

Bill C-241, which is sponsored by the member from the Ontario riding of Essex, is at third reading stage. It seeks to amend “the In-

come Tax Act to allow tradespersons and indentured apprentices to deduct from their income amounts expended for travelling where they were employed in a construction activity at a job site that is located at least 120 km away from their ordinary place of residence.”

From the outset, I want to say that the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this small but extremely worthwhile initiative. In my opinion, most members agree on this bill. We could settle this this evening by taking a vote by a show of hands. Honestly, I find this a bit tough from a procedural perspective. We know that everyone will vote in favour of the bill, but there is a process to follow, even though we know the outcome will be the same at the end of it.

The tax benefit being introduced by Bill C-241 responds to a request made by Canada's Building Trades Unions, which represent more than half a million construction workers across the country. These people work in more than 60 trades and professions and generate 6% of Canada's GDP. That is significant.

As we know, in Quebec, the construction industry is an extremely important sector of activity. We are talking about investments of nearly \$53 million in 2019. We are also talking about 264,600 direct jobs generated per month, on average, or one out of every 20 jobs in Quebec.

In Canada, salespeople, professionals and various other workers in different sectors can already claim a tax deduction for the cost of their travel, meals and accommodation. I believe and the Bloc believes that it stands to reason that these expenses could be claimed by skilled workers whose job sites are far from their primary residence. It is simply a question of fairness.

The scope of Bill C-241 is essentially fiscal, but it is also economic, because it addresses labour shortages and, by extension, inflation. When expenses are not covered by the employer, workers must cover them themselves. With a family to support, additional expenses for travel can obviously become quite burdensome and undermine a worker's incentive to accept certain contracts from time to time.

Inflation was 6.8% in 2022, the highest since 1982. In 1982 it was 10.9%. We need only think of the extreme volatility of gas prices. The price of a litre of gas in Quebec last June was \$2.20, enough to bankrupt any family that has to travel a lot for work.

As I was saying, the tax deduction introduced by Bill C-241 is a concrete and effective measure to encourage the mobility of workers in the construction sector. It is an incentive to return to work. We believe that.

According to a recent poll by Canada's Building Trades Unions, 75% of skilled trades workers say that a tax deduction will give them access to more job opportunities.

Private Members' Business

Given the current inflation, this is the right time to bring in this tax deduction that will help alleviate the financial burden for tradespeople. This tax incentive promises to provide a solution to the labour shortage, and therefore reduce Quebecers' and Canadians' dependence on government programs such as employment insurance.

• (1840)

Calculations have shown that Bill C-241 could save the federal government approximately \$347 million.

I want to make it clear that we are not reinventing the wheel with Bill C-241. Other countries, such as the United States, have had a similar tax deduction for quite some time. In short, it is a targeted, relevant and timely measure that has been proven to work on the other side of the border. It would be difficult for all parties here in the House to oppose this bill.

I made a correlation earlier between the tax deduction proposed in Bill C-241, the job shortage and inflation. The Bloc Québécois members believe that addressing the labour shortage will help ease the inflation that is increasingly affecting and worrying our constituents.

The pandemic forced many people out of the workforce for health reasons and exacerbated the labour shortage in some sectors, including the construction trades. This shortage is hindering the economic recovery, because it results in forced closures, lost contracts, significantly reduced investment in our businesses and overworked employees.

Today's inflation stems in part from an imbalance between supply and demand: Supply is limited because of the labour shortage, but demand is stable and growing. Reducing the labour shortage in a specific sector, as Bill C-241 seeks to do, could potentially fix the imbalance between supply and demand, in addition to reducing inflation as I was saying earlier.

Consequently, in my opinion, it was ill-advised and counterproductive of the Liberal government to try to create one million jobs in budget 2021 without including effective mechanisms to deal with the labour shortage.

The Bloc Québécois has been taking the labour shortage seriously for a long time now. During the last election campaign, we proposed plenty of solutions: recognizing experienced workers; transferring the temporary foreign workers program to Quebec; investing in research and development; investing in the digital transformation; and creating tax credits for new graduates who move to the regions for work.

In summary, the Bloc Québécois has always been an ally of tradespersons who make an essential and invaluable contribution to Quebec's economic prosperity. Bill C-241 introduces a targeted and appropriate tax measure that will ease the financial burden of tradespersons while addressing the labour shortage and inflation.

For all of these reasons, once again, the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-241.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Essex has the floor for his right of reply.

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they say it is a marathon, not a race. Tonight, I think we got halfway through the marathon. Tomorrow could be a really monumental day for skilled trades across Canada. If the bill is passed in the House, it will go to the Senate. People will be one step closer to building Canada, the economy, and quite frankly, their own careers.

First and foremost, Bill C-241 is a common bill for the common people. It makes common sense, something that does not happen a lot in this House.

I want to thank God because without him, this opportunity would never have existed. I thank him so much for this opportunity.

I want to give my thanks to the Bloc Québécois for their amazing remarks this evening and to the member for Windsor West for really understanding this bill and what it can do for skilled trades across Canada. My thanks to those members.

I want to thank Tomi Hulkkonen from the carpenters union, who was down from Windsor. Truthfully, he is one of the curators of this bill. He was here this evening. I got a chance to speak to him before this. I really want to say thanks to him and Karl Lovett from the IBEW, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; really, really awesome. Nancy Jahn helped me get to this spot as well; she knows who she is. I thank all the various trades across Canada that I have spoken to over the last year or so while scripting and tweaking this bill, ensuring that it is actually doing the work that it is designed to do. To each and every one of them, I send my thanks.

I am not one who says anything other than let us get the darn job done and fast forward this as much as we possibly can.

This afternoon, I had a chance to speak with our leader. I filled him in. I really want to give my thanks to the leader of the official opposition for being very influential on this bill. I know that back when he was the shadow minister for finance, I went to him for his thoughts. He said to make darn sure that it is a tax deduction and there is no limit on this, so that folks, workers and skilled trades across Canada do not have a limit on how many hours they should be working per year.

I guess the question in the House now is: Why does the Liberal Party not support skilled trades? I do not understand, to save my soul, why it would not support them, but apparently it does not. Tomorrow is a fresh, new day.

It has only ever been and will only ever be about the people. One can have the greatest widget in the world, but one will not build or sell it unless one is surrounded by the greatest people. Our skilled trades are exactly who will build this amazing country called Canada. Equally, however, they need our support.

Adjournment Proceedings

I truly do not care who gets the credit. If the government wants to take my bill, Bill C-241, and put in the legislation tomorrow, I am good with that as long as our skilled trades get the support they deserve and need.

Again, it is a marathon; it is not a race. My phone is on, and my door is open. If the government will reach out to me and have a conversation about how to enhance this, perhaps in the Senate when it goes there tomorrow thanks to the amazing Bloc and NDP support, I am all ears. Let us just support our skilled trades.

In closing, I will say this one more time: It has only ever been about the people. Unless we support the ones who fix our bridges, build our roads and keep our electrical system going, we have nothing.

• (1845)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

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

Mr. Chris Lewis: Mr. Speaker, we would request a recorded division, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, 2022, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 22, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1850)

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to the government's relationship with McKinsey in a follow-up to a question I had asked. This has been an important issue for me and an important issue for the opposition.

Why is it important? Well, there are a number of reasons. First, the government has spent over \$100 million on contracts for McKinsey, work that public servants have told the media that, in many cases, could have been done inside the public service.

More broadly, we are seeing a significant increase in spending on outside consultants by the government at the same time as we are seeing growth in the public service. The government is spending more inside the public service, and it is spending more to contract out activities as well, so there is a basic fiscal probity question at play here, but there are also some other issues that I think are very important as we look at the government's relationship with McKinsey.

One is that Dominic Barton, the managing partner of McKinsey, was leading the Prime Minister's growth council, having special access through that growth council to ministers and the government at the same time that McKinsey was pitching services for sale to the government. We know from emails that a Mr. Pickersgill, who was working for McKinsey, was supplying analysts for the growth council at the same time as he was sending emails to the government requesting work. We have seen those emails, so, very clearly, there are questions of conflict of interest.

There are other issues of conflict of interest. The fact that the Minister of Defence, yesterday, at the operations committee, was asked if it is acceptable for McKinsey to do work for the Canadian Department of Defence at the same time as it is potentially working for other departments of defence for hostile actors around the world and learning things from our Department of Defence that it may be using in those other interactions.

The Minister of National Defence did not know, or was not willing or able to tell the committee, which other departments of defence around the world McKinsey was working for, but we were told by the deputy minister not to worry because the information and the issues that McKinsey are working on are not that secret. Really, they are just talking about operational structural details, which it is not getting access to national security. They are just operational aspects of the work of government and so forth.

On the other hand, the minister was unwilling to provide basic information about these contracts to the committee unredacted. What we heard from the Minister of National Defence and her department was effectively that the information is not so secret that we need to worry about what McKinsey may be learning and using in its engagements with other hostile powers, but at the same time, the information is so secret that it could not even be shared with members of a parliamentary committee, despite the order to produce that content.

A final issue I will raise tonight is the fact that McKinsey worked for Purdue Pharma and gave them advice specifically on how to supercharge opioid sales. That is not an issue of something happening beyond our borders. The opioid crisis has affected so many Canadians. I think that every family has, in some way, been touched by the opioid crisis.

McKinsey specifically advised Purdue Pharma on how to turbocharge its sales engine. That advice included, for instance, how to circumvent traditional pharmacies by operating mail-in pharmacies to circumvent the controls that were being put in place in traditional pharmacies. That advice included paying bonuses for overdoses that occurred. This was advice that McKinsey provided to Purdue Pharma at the same time that McKinsey was working for the Government of Canada, and at the same time that Dominic Barton was leading McKinsey and leading the Prime Minister's growth council.

Adjournment Proceedings

Why is the government willing to do business with McKinsey? Why is it comfortable with the risks this poses in fundamental ethics, the opioid crisis issues, as well as the conflict of interest issues?

We have repeatedly raised the broader question of all the money that is being spent on these outside consultants. The government's relation with McKinsey stinks, and it needs to be addressed.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to spar with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who is definitely one of my favourite members to talk to in the House.

Let me start by referencing one of the things that the hon. member said in questioning our minister. He said, “The Prime Minister is a very close personal friend of Dominic Barton, who is the managing partner of McKinsey.” As we know, Dominic Barton has not been the managing partner of McKinsey for the last five years and he is not a very close personal friend to the Prime Minister.

In fact, when we had Dominic Barton before our committee, I had a chance to ask Mr. Barton some questions. I asked if he was one of the Prime Minister's five best friends. He said no. I asked if the Prime Minister was one of his 10 best friends. He said no. I asked if the Prime Minister was one of his 25 best friends. He said no. I asked if the Prime Minister was one of his 50 best friends. He said no.

I asked if he had the Prime Minister's phone number. He said no. I asked if he ever had dinner with the Prime Minister. He said no. I asked if the Prime Minister's wife and his wife ever socialized. He said no. I asked if he considered the Prime Minister to be a friend. He said no. I asked if he ever worked out with the Prime Minister. He said no. One of the things I do with my friends is work out. We play tennis, we swim and we run. In any case, I do not think that Dominic Barton is a close personal friend to the Prime Minister.

Another thing that has been referenced again today is that, “Dominic Barton was running a government advisory body while at the same time his company was collecting over \$100 million in contracts on the side.” That is also not true. Almost all of the contracts that went to McKinsey, and we are talking about \$115 million in contracts, of which about \$104 million from our department, Public Services and Procurement Canada, came after Dominic Barton was no longer the managing partner at McKinsey.

Whatever shares he had with McKinsey were divested the moment he left McKinsey. He clarified at committee, and my dear friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was at committee, that he had zero financial interest left in McKinsey and did not have any financial interest at the time that 99% of these agreements were actually entered into with the government.

What we are seeing are two very important issues. There is the question of whether we should be reducing the amount of outsourcing in the federal public service. As we know, federal public servants themselves determine when outsourcing is needed, such as when there is a surge capacity required or when there is work that is outside the core mandate of the federal civil service.

However, that does not mean we should not look and see if we need policies that will further reduce the number of times we outsource, because of course there is an added cost when we outsource. The minister has been tasked, along with the president of the Treasury Board, to look into this specific question.

My hon. friend and I share a very strong commitment to human rights-related foreign policy. One of the things we should be looking at, which we are looking at and I hope the OGGO committee will focus on, is what changes to the integrity regime should disqualify companies from bidding on business from the Government of Canada.

Unfortunately, what has happened is that this has become entangled in a question about McKinsey. There has been a political narrative some people have tried to build that somehow McKinsey is close, personal friends with the government and getting contracts in an untoward manner, which is not the case.

We have unfortunately moved away from the large policy questions we should be focused on, which I think Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats and Bloc members could perhaps all agree on. Let us get to an OGGO report and let us stop having meetings about McKinsey.

● (1855)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, on the all-important question of whether the Prime Minister and Dominic Barton ever worked out together, I think this is a bit of an exercise in absurdity.

What we know, factually, is that Dominic Barton has basically told the committee, “This Prime Minister guy, we are not friends. We barely know each other. I did not recognize him in an elevator once.” The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister have said precisely the opposite over and over again.

In fact, there are various clips I have shared, and others have shared, where the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister have spoken very specifically about how accessible Dominic Barton is and about how they have a connection. In fact, to the issue of who has whose phone number, the Deputy Prime Minister said, at the time that Dominic Barton was appointed ambassador, that we need an ambassador who can call the Prime Minister at any time on the phone. This is a connection that Dominic Barton has with the Prime Minister that has been built up over time.

Who is telling the truth, the government or Dominic Barton? It is clear that there is a cushy relationship, that McKinsey has, through “pro bono” work, sought to integrate itself into government and use that integration to push its business forward. That is the problem. Over \$100 million of contracts have come out of this close integration of relationships and it needs to be scrutinized.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Mr. Speaker, I would disagree with my hon. friend about whether working out is a way to bond or not. I invite him to come run with me; if you want to join, Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to have you and the hon. member for Winnipeg North as well.

Adjournment Proceedings

In the end result, the committee should be focused on the big picture questions of whether we should outsource as much as we do and whether the integrity regime needs to be changed. The question of whether McKinsey got contracts is not the issue. Moreover, if it indeed got contracts in the way my hon. colleague is suggesting, it has done a terrible job because it has way fewer contracts than comparable companies do. Almost all of them are from after Dominic Barton left. The issue is not whether our federal public service has appropriately given contracts to McKinsey. It is a question of the large policy issues.

I share the hon. member's objective. Hopefully, we can co-operate in getting to a better place.

• (1900)

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my constituents and all Canadians who want the truth about the extent of the Communist interference in our elections. The truth is out there. It is not even that far: It lies just across Wellington Street in the Prime Minister's Office. That is why Conservatives are asking for the Prime Minister's chief of staff to appear before committee. It is also why the Liberals are filibustering. We want the truth, and the Liberals are desperate to prevent it from coming out.

The facts, as they stand, are damning. The Liberal Party was warned about the Communists funnelling cash to candidates, but the Prime Minister's Office was informed of CSIS's concerns about the member for Don Valley North. The Prime Minister's refusal to answer is an answer in and of itself. The government knew and did nothing. The only matter left in question is why.

The best case scenario is that Liberals thought informing Canadians would make them look bad. Many of them still blame the RCMP for announcing an investigation into their finance minister during the 2006 election. It is a comforting fantasy Liberals tell themselves so that they do not have to admit that the Liberal government had funnelled money to ad agencies for little or no work, other than to pass the cash back to the Liberal Party. Of course, the Liberals do not want to admit that they put their partisan interests ahead of national interests. The worst case scenario is that they put the interests of an authoritarian Communist regime ahead of our national interests. The truth lies somewhere between the two.

Having the Prime Minister's chief of staff testify is both imperative and insufficient. We have seen from the Liberals' filibuster that they really do not want the whole truth revealed. We can only get at the truth with an independent public inquiry led by someone all parties agree to.

In a minute, the parliamentary secretary is going to rise and respond with a series of talking points prepared by the Prime Minister's Office. He will claim the government has launched multiple avenues of investigation to get at the truth. Only the Liberals are questioning the actions of CSIS, and just in case there was a risk that NSIRA could reveal any uncomfortable truths, the government ordered NSIRA to investigate the Canada Revenue Agency for alleged anti-Muslim bigotry. They did this based on documents the RCMP claims are fake.

Next, the parliamentary secretary will point to the Prime Minister's secret committee of parliamentarians. Unfortunately for the government, Global News has already reported on a redacted document produced by the secret committee. It confirms that the government was aware of the Communist funding and did nothing. The secret committee already reviewed the matter, reported to the Prime Minister that there was a Communist network funding Liberals and recommended he take actions. Those recommendations were ignored. Reports, warnings and red flashing lights were ignored.

Canadians want the truth, and we will not be ignored.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to my friend across the way, speaking notes are not required here. I can assure the member that what I am sharing with her now is strictly what I personally believe. At the end of the day, we need to put things into the proper perspective.

Foreign interference in elections is not new. It has been happening for many years. In fact, it was first really brought to the attention of the government when Stephen Harper was the Prime Minister of Canada and when the current leader of the Conservative Party of Canada was the minister responsible for democratic reform. Imagine the current leader and this information being brought to his attention. What did he actually do? The simple and factual answer is he did nothing. Stephen Harper and the government just ignored the issue completely.

Contrast this lack of action with what we have done. Virtually from day one, we have made changes. We can talk about the establishment of the parliamentary committee that joined the other four eyes of the Five Eyes countries to ensure members of Parliament on all sides of the House could hear the most secretive information our security agencies have. That was something we put in place months after taking the reins of power in Canada.

We have heard from numerous security agencies and civil servants about the issue of foreign election interference. Yesterday, I made reference to the ambassador of the United States to Canada. All of them have said that the allegations of foreign interference we hear about did not, and I underline the word "not", impact the outcome of the last federal election.

This is an issue where partisan politics should be taken to the side, as election interference affects the fundamental principles of our democracy. I do not think any member in the chamber should be accused of not protecting Canada's interests on that file.

Adjournment Proceedings

Not only have significant actions been taken by this government, many of which were initiated by this government, but we have had overtures of ensuring we will continue. The biggest one that comes to my mind is the special rapporteur. A Conservative Party-appointed Governor General, Mr. Johnston, is now charged with the responsibility of looking into the matter and reporting back on his recommendations, which could include a public inquiry in the future. Why do the Conservatives not have confidence in our civil service and in a former appointment made by Stephen Harper?

• (1905)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary opened up with a whataboutism. He deflected, saying that foreign interference is not anything new.

David Johnston was one of Canada's best governor generals, and incredibly, the Prime Minister made David look even better in retrospect when compared to his predecessor. If one looks up eminent Canadian in the dictionary, one will see a picture of David Johnston, which is why it is all the more disappointing that he would take this position, given the real perception of conflicts of interest from his time with the Trudeau Foundation and his role leading the controversial Leaders' Debates Commission.

Should David Johnston return anything less than a recommendation for an open and transparent public independent inquiry led by someone agreed to by all parties, it will be completely reasonable for Canadians to ask if the fix was in. That would be an unfortunate eulogy for a distinguished career in public service. Canadians deserve better.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, if we think about it, it is a threat to the Hon. David Johnston, someone who has been an incredible Canadian. The threat is that he had better come with a public inquiry recommendation or they are going to sandbag him at every opportunity. How disrespectful to a true Canadian, someone who has served our country in many different ways. It shows the degree to which the Conservative Party is prepared to be partisan on this issue.

Foreign interference is nothing new. Not only has it happened in Canada before, but it has happened to many of our allied countries. We have a government that has been aggressively pursuing the issue. We now have an appointment of a Canadian with exceptional credentials. I find it unfortunate that the Conservative Party would sandbag such an incredible individual.

• (1910)

FINANCE

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this evening to talk about the struggles that Canadians are facing with affordability.

We know that to be able to afford to feed their families, heat their homes and put gas in the car to get to work, Canadians need to have a job. We start out at a point where, after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister, four in 10 Canadians are actively afraid they are going to lose their job, and 50% of Canadians are on the brink of insolvency. After eight years of the Prime Minister, the average price of groceries for a family is up around 15% on a week-by-

week basis. Canadians are spending thousands more on groceries this year than they did last year.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, there is no relief in sight. When Canadians look down the road and look at what is to come on the calendar, they see tax increases: tax increases on April 1, and more tax increases when the Liberals plan to triple their carbon tax on everything.

In my office, I regularly receive a particular type of correspondence from Canadians. Actually, at church two Sundays ago, Chuck wanted to share with me his natural gas bill. I just cannot believe the tax that he is paying on top of the tax that he is paying. He is wondering if it is legal that the government is charging tax on tax. What everyone is wondering, when they are looking at these bills that they are sending to my office, asking what we can do to help them, is how they are going to be able to get through another year.

We have presented the government with several options it could choose from that would help make life more affordable for Canadians. Scrapping the carbon tax on everything is the first and best way for the government to have a positive impact on the affordability crisis that is facing Canadians. The price of homes has doubled under the government. The Liberals will say that no one has spent more, but no one has spent more to achieve less than the Liberal government has. It is a devastating picture when we look at the impact of the policies of the Liberal government.

The prescription is clear: The government could cap new spending and it could cut taxes, starting with scrapping the carbon tax. That is what we are asking. That is what we are asking the government to do, and it is what Canadians are asking of it. Canadians need a break. It is time to bring those savings, that relief, that affordability home for Canadians. That is what Canada's Conservatives are offering, and that is the bare minimum that we expect from the Liberal government.

With that, I think my time has expired. I look forward to the response from the government.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in tonight's debate about affordability as well as fiscal responsibility in Canada. I share the concern that many Canadians are struggling to make ends meet in this period of elevated global inflation and the fact that the high cost of food and housing, in particular, is having significant economic repercussions.

We have disagreed significantly on the cause of inflation, and that has led to significantly different policy outcomes. While the Conservatives have made proposals such as cutting seniors' pensions and reducing employment insurance, we have put forward an affordability plan with measures to support Canadians, such as increased retirement security as well as inexpensive access to child care and dental care.

Adjournment Proceedings

Thankfully, we continue to see a gradual decrease in inflation, and the OECD predicts that we will return to target by 2024. Last June, inflation in Canada was at 8.1% and, as we heard earlier today, it is down to 5.2%. That is still much too high, but it is lower than what we are seeing in peer economies. For example, in Europe, inflation is at 8.5% and in the U.K. it is at 10.1%. In fact, Canada is facing global economic headwinds from a position of fundamental economic strength.

In the member's opening statement, he spoke of worrying about Canadians losing their jobs, while Canadians have actually created more than 800,000 new jobs since the pandemic. This represents a 126% recovery rate from jobs lost due to COVID, compared to just 114% in the United States. In fact, the unemployment rate in Canada remains at historic lows. Also, the International Monetary Fund projects that Canada will have the strongest annual growth in the G7 by the fourth quarter of this year.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, our government provided over \$119 billion of support, which benefited 8.9 million Canadians through the CERB and over 900,000 small business owners through the CEBA. This allowed our most vulnerable families to put food on the table, and it helped to keep small business owners from going bankrupt. It is always difficult to demonstrate counterfactual arguments or, in other words, what would have happened if we had not stepped up to support Canadians during the pandemic. However, it is fair to say that our recovery would have been significantly worse and that thousands of businesses, whose doors are still open, would not have survived.

The Conservatives have criticized us by saying that not all of these funds went to their intended recipients. However, the Conservatives also know that we are continuing to audit and cost-recover those specific cases. Further, it was actually the Conservatives who put forward and passed a motion to stop auditing businesses that claimed the wage subsidy.

As we prepare for budget 2023, I would like to reaffirm our government's continued commitment to prudent fiscal management. We continue to enjoy a AAA credit rating as well as the lowest deficit and lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. This allows us to continue to support our most vulnerable citizens who are struggling with elevated levels of inflation.

It includes \$2.5 billion for 11 million Canadians with low and modest incomes through the special GST credit payment. It is spending that was supported by the Conservatives, including the member opposite. I thank the member opposite for his support because it benefited over 50% of seniors. We are also providing dental care for 230,000 children under the age of 12 and providing af-

fordable child care so that working parents can re-enter the workforce more easily.

We will continue to invest in our economy to provide opportunities for middle-class Canadians, while making life more affordable and getting inflation under control.

● (1915)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals checked with their friends around the world and they have decided that Canadians have never had it so good. With respect to the inflation rate at 8.5% in Europe or 10.1% in the U.K., as the parliamentary secretary offered, those numbers and those words do nothing to fill the bellies of hungry Canadians, who cannot afford to eat because they are being crushed by the inflationary policies that have come to pass after eight years of the Liberal Prime Minister.

Canadians are looking for relief and the Liberals can offer it to them. Their carbon tax is not lowering emissions, but it is lowering Canadians' prosperity. I caution people against diminishing the concern that 40% of Canadians have about losing their job. "Lots of jobs were created", the Liberals reply. The uncertainty, the concern and the inability to meet their financial commitments have Canadians up at night because they are concerned. They are looking for a government that is responsive to those fears and those concerns, and this carbon tax is not helping Canadians get ahead. It is not helping to provide a cleaner environment. The government needs to scrap its carbon tax.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, our government understands that inflation and affordability are important issues for many Canadians, and that is why we are working hard to help Canadian families who need it the most. Our plan is simple. We are making life more affordable for Canadians while continuing to build an economy that works for everyone, and that includes the carbon price.

As the member knows, the climate incentive program and carbon pricing are making life more affordable for eight out ten families in his riding. If we cancelled it, it would make life less affordable. Why he would advocate to make life less affordable for Canadians at this time of elevated global inflation is beyond me, but I am sure we will have more opportunities to debate it.

● (1920)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1 p.m. pursuant to an order made on Friday, March 10.

(The House adjourned at 7:20 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise

Mr. Virani 12313

Business of the House

Mrs. DeBellefeuille 12313

Motion 12313

(Motion agreed to) 12313

Committees of the House

International Trade

Mr. Seeback 12313

Motion for concurrence 12313

Mr. Lamoureux 12315

Mrs. Vignola 12315

Mr. Angus 12315

Mr. Genuis 12315

Mr. Virani 12317

Mr. Lemire 12317

Mr. Angus 12317

Mr. Virani 12318

Mr. Seeback 12321

Ms. Pauzé 12321

Mr. Angus 12322

Mrs. Vignola 12322

Mr. Kmiec 12322

Mr. Savard-Tremblay 12323

Mr. Virani 12325

Mr. Kmiec 12325

Mr. Angus 12326

Ms. Chabot 12326

Mr. Angus 12326

Mr. Virani 12328

Mr. Villemure 12328

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12329

Mr. Masse 12329

Mr. Lamoureux 12330

Mr. Baldinelli 12330

Mr. Lemire 12331

Mr. Lamoureux 12331

Mr. Seeback 12333

Mrs. Vignola 12333

Mr. Virani 12334

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12334

Mr. Viersen 12334

Mr. Kmiec 12334

Mr. Lamoureux 12336

Mr. Angus 12336

Mr. Seeback 12336

Mrs. Vignola 12337

Mr. Chong 12337

Mr. Lamoureux 12338

Ms. Pauzé 12338

Mr. Masse 12339

Mr. Viersen 12339

Division on motion deferred 12339

Petitions

Baldwin East Aerodrome

Mr. Davidson 12339

Hazaras

Mr. Kmiec 12340

Corporate Social Responsibility

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12340

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lamoureux 12340

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Historic Places of Canada Act

Bill C-23. Second reading 12340

Mr. Lamoureux 12340

Mr. Seeback 12342

Ms. Pauzé 12343

Mr. Julian 12343

Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) 12343

Mr. Lake 12344

Mrs. Vignola 12345

Mr. Julian 12345

Mr. Seeback 12345

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

International Women's Day

Ms. Diab 12347

Pelham Citizen of the Year

Mr. Allison 12347

World Down Syndrome Day

Mrs. Valdez 12347

Bocuse d'Or First Prize Winner

Mr. Lemire 12347

Canadian Cancer Society Relay for Life

Mr. Schiefke 12348

Democratic Institutions

Mr. Arnold 12348

Nowruz

Mr. Noormohamed 12348

Greek Independence Day

Ms. Koutrakis 12348

Housing	
Mr. Ruff	12349
New Waterford Coal Bowl Classic	
Mr. Battiste	12349
Government Policies	
Mrs. Wagantall	12349
Taxation	
Mr. Soroka	12349
The Francophonie	
Mrs. Lalonde	12350
International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	
Mr. Green	12350
Claude Fournier	
Mr. Champoux	12350
Carbon Tax	
Mr. Dowdall	12350
Greek Independence Day	
Ms. Lambropoulos	12351

ORAL QUESTIONS

Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Poilievre	12351
Mr. Trudeau	12351
Mr. Poilievre	12351
Mr. Trudeau	12351
Carbon Pricing	
Mr. Poilievre	12351
Mr. Trudeau	12351
Mr. Poilievre	12352
Mr. Trudeau	12352
Mr. Poilievre	12352
Mr. Trudeau	12352
Democratic Institutions	
Mr. Blanchet	12352
Mr. Trudeau	12352
Mr. Blanchet	12352
Mr. Trudeau	12352
Mr. Singh	12353
Mr. Trudeau	12353
Mr. Singh	12353
Mr. Trudeau	12353
Mr. Chong	12353
Mr. Mendicino	12353
Mr. Chong	12353
Mr. LeBlanc	12354
Mr. Cooper	12354
Mr. Mendicino	12354
Mr. Cooper	12354
Mr. LeBlanc	12354
Mr. Berthold	12354

Mr. LeBlanc	12354
Mr. Berthold	12354
Mr. LeBlanc	12354
Mr. Villemure	12355
Mr. Holland	12355
Mr. Villemure	12355
Mr. Rodriguez	12355
Mr. Trudel	12355
Ms. Joly	12355
Mr. Brock	12355
Mr. Mendicino	12355
Mr. Brock	12355
Mr. Mendicino	12356
Mrs. Thomas	12356
Mr. Mendicino	12356
Mr. Paul-Hus	12356
Mr. LeBlanc	12356
Grocery Industry	
Mr. Blaikie	12356
Mr. Boissonnault	12356
Oil and Gas Industry	
Ms. Collins (Victoria)	12356
Ms. Dabrusin	12357
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Baker	12357
Ms. Anand	12357
Carbon Pricing	
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	12357
Mr. Wilkinson	12357
Mrs. Kramp-Neuman	12357
Ms. Khera	12357
The Economy	
Mr. Lawrence	12357
Ms. Gould	12358
Mr. Lawrence	12358
Mrs. St-Onge	12358
Health	
Mr. Simard	12358
Mr. Duclos	12358
Mr. Simard	12358
Mr. Duclos	12358
Taxation	
Mr. Williams	12358
Mr. Boissonnault	12359
Ms. Rood	12359
Mr. Boissonnault	12359
Mr. Martel	12359
Mr. Boissonnault	12359
Health	
Mr. Scarpaleggia	12359
Mr. Duclos	12359
Mr. Ellis	12359
Mr. Duclos	12359
Mr. Ellis	12359

Mr. Duclos	12360
Passports	
Mr. Godin	12360
Ms. Gould	12360
Canadian Heritage	
Ms. Khalid	12360
Mr. Rodriguez	12360
Air Transportation	
Mr. Bachrach	12360
Mr. Alghabra	12360
Indigenous Affairs	
Ms. Ashton	12360
Ms. Hajdu	12361

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Business of Supply

Opposition Motion—Instruction to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

Motion	12361
Motion negatived	12362

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Committees of the House

International Trade

Motion for concurrence	12362
Motion agreed to	12363

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Historic Places of Canada Act

Bill C-23. Second reading	12364
Mrs. Gill	12364
Mr. Lamoureux	12365
Ms. Gladu	12365
Mr. Johns	12365
Ms. Sinclair-Desgagné	12366
Mr. Lauzon	12367
Mr. Garrison	12367
Ms. Gladu	12367
Mr. Lamoureux	12367
Mr. Deltell	12368
Mr. Lamoureux	12369
Mr. Desilets	12369

Mr. Cannings	12369
Mr. McLean	12370
Mr. Lauzon	12371
Mr. Trudel	12372
Mr. Bachrach	12372
Mr. Genuis	12372
Mr. Lauzon	12375
Ms. Larouche	12375
Mr. Johns	12376
Mr. Trudel	12376
Mr. Lauzon	12376
Ms. Gladu	12377
Ms. Larouche	12377
Mr. Cannings	12378
Mr. Bachrach	12378
Ms. Gladu	12379
Mr. Trudel	12379
Mr. Cannings	12380
Ms. Gladu	12380
Mr. Lamoureux	12381
Ms. Larouche	12381
Mr. Cannings	12382
Mr. Ruff	12382

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Income Tax Act

Bill C-241. Third reading	12382
Ms. Larouche	12382
Mr. Lamoureux	12384
Mr. Masse	12385
Mr. Scheer	12387
Mr. Desilets	12388
Mr. Lewis (Essex)	12389
Division on motion deferred	12390

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Public Services and Procurement

Mr. Genuis	12390
Mr. Housefather	12391

Democratic Institutions

Mrs. Gallant	12392
Mr. Lamoureux	12392

Finance

Mr. Barrett	12393
Mr. Beech	12393

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>