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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 24, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulou, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-254, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today, I have the honour to introduce a bill to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Official Languages Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act so that federally regulated businesses in Quebec respect the Charter of the French Language and implement measures to promote the use of French as the main language at work.

This is a matter of respect for one of Canada's founding peoples and a way to promote one of the things that makes Quebec unique. No one can deny that what makes Paris unique is the fact that people are welcomed there and able to work there in French. It only makes sense that such should also be the case in Quebec, the last great bastion of the French language in North America. We should be proud of this language and do everything possible to positively promote it every day.

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

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be presenting three petitions in the House today.

The first petition deals with the government's bill, Bill C-7, which is currently before the justice committee. The petitioners are calling for amendments to the legislation that would leave in place reasonable safeguards. Those amendments have been proposed, but

the government has continually rejected these very reasonable amendments.

Amendments that the petition specifically references are for the 10-day reflection period. The petitioners want that left in place. They recognize that already the 10-day reflection period can be waived with the consent of the doctors involved.

The petitioners highlight their concerns with respect to Bill C-7 and the need for amendments to protect vulnerable people, which is what the committee has been hearing from experts and disability advocates.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the human rights situation of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China. It particularly calls for the government to go from words to actions.

Recognizing that words and statements are not enough, the petitioners call on the government to use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law) and sanction those who are responsible for heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is in support of Bill S-204, currently before the Senate. This petition would make it a criminal offence for a person to go abroad and receive an organ that has been harvested or trafficked without the consent of the person involved.

I commend these three petitions to the consideration of the House.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise on behalf of Canadians today who are petitioning the government in regard to Bill C-7, which is currently before the justice committee.

The petitioners are concerned about the safeguards that would be removed from that legislation, including the mandatory 10-day reflection period and the number of witnesses required for it to be carried out. The removal of the second requirement of independent witnesses would reduce the oversight of the procedure, leaving vulnerable persons at risk.

Routine Proceedings

Therefore, the petitioners are asking the House of Commons to immediately discontinue the removal of safeguards for people requesting euthanasia and put additional measures in the bill, which is being proposed and amended at the justice committee.

• (1010)

FIREARMS

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present two petitions this morning.

The first petition calls upon the House of Commons to stop plans to implement a ban on handguns in Canada and instead focus on increasing punishment for violent gun criminals and urban gangs.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the House of Commons to amend the new veterans charter, the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act and implement changes that would ensure injured veterans receive benefits equivalent to or greater than those granted prior to 2006.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here on behalf of many Canadians who are very concerned with Bill C-7 and the safeguards that would be removed in the legislation. It is very important for the government to understand that the concerns, such as a 10-day waiting period as well as the number of witnesses who need to be there to designate this as medical assistance in dying, are really important for all Canadians. The petitioners say that we should ensure we do our best to save those who are vulnerable and disabled and ensure that they understand their lives matter too.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House today.

The first petition is on the systematic persecution of Uighur Muslims in China. These Canadians call upon the Government of Canada to formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are being subject to genocide and use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act (Sergei Magnitsky Law) and sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I table today on behalf of more Canadians is on sex-selective abortion. The petitioners, the close 300 who have signed this petition, call upon Canada to pass the Criminal Code prohibition against sex-selective abortion.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition in which a number of people throughout the country are profoundly concerned about some of the safeguards that are being removed in the current iteration of the legislation on medical assistance in dying, especially the disability community.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table today.

The first petition focuses on Bill C-7. The petitioners are urging the House of Commons to maintain the safeguards to protect people who request euthanasia. They call on the House of Commons and the Government of Canada to maintain the 10-day reflection period as well as the second independent witness.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition focuses on the persecution of Uighurs by the Communist Party in China.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are subject to genocide. They call on the Government of Canada to use the Magnitsky act to sanction those who are responsible for these crimes.

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members presenting petitions in person today to bring their petitions to the table.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Lethbridge.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand here today on behalf of Canadians who are very concerned about legislation that is currently before the justice committee, Bill C-7, which has to do with medical assistance in dying.

The legislation would unnecessarily expand the definition. It would take away the need for a 10-day reflection period and would also make it so that only one witness would need to be present when an individual requests euthanasia. This is of concern to a growing population in Canada, particularly those who live with a disability, because it puts them at risk and makes them vulnerable.

In this place, we have a responsibility to stand on behalf of the vulnerable. It is the government's primary responsibility to look after the safety and security of its citizens. Therefore, I call upon the government, along with those signed this petition, to do that.

* * *

• (1015)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

DIGITAL CHARTER IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.) moved that Bill C-11, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to discuss Bill C-11, the digital charter implementation act, 2020.

As members know, data and digital transformation is completely changing the way we access information, buy goods and services, connect with each other and live in our communities and cities. This digital transformation has been accelerated by the pandemic, and we are seeing more Canadians moving their activities online. Canadians are using more digital services and sharing more data online than ever before. They want to know that their personal information will be safe and that they are protected.

Recently, the Privacy Commissioner surveyed Canadians and found that the vast majority of Canadians, 92% of them, are concerned about the protection of their privacy, so this is an important issue to many Canadians. That is one of the reasons why last year I launched the digital charter, a set of 10 principles that lay down the foundation that will allow us to build an innovative, digital economy that is inclusive, people-centric and built on trust.

[Translation]

The principles of Canada's digital charter give Canadians more control over their data while helping Canadian companies innovate, grow and create quality jobs for middle-class Canadians across the country.

[English]

I would like to take this opportunity to remind members that the principles of the digital charter were very clear, and they focused on control and consent. Canadians will have control over what data they are sharing and who is using their personal data and for what purposes, and will know that their privacy is protected. This is one of the key principles we laid out in the digital charter.

[Translation]

Transparency, portability and interoperability will enable Canadians to easily manage access to their personal data and to transfer it without undue burden.

[English]

Data and digital for good is another principle that was laid out in the digital charter. The Government of Canada will ensure the ethical use of data to create value, promote openness and improve the lives of people at home and around the world. How can we harness data to solve problems?

Another key element was strong enforcement and real accountability. There will be clear, meaningful penalties for violations of

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the law and regulations that support these principles so that Canadians can rest assured that their privacy will be protected.

As members will see, the principles of the digital charter are firmly embedded in the legislation before us today. On top of this foundation sits three pillars: consumer control, responsible innovation and a strong enforcement and oversight mechanism.

Let me begin with outlining how Bill C-11 would give Canadians more control and greater transparency in the manner in which companies handle their information. It would do this by introducing important rules for consent, the right to delete information, data mobility and algorithmic transparency.

With regard to consent, Bill C-11 would enhance consumer control by requiring organizations to get meaningful consent from Canadians. This means individuals would get specific information in plain, simple language, not the 30-page legal document that no one reads. This, in turn, would allow individuals to make meaningful choices about the use of their personal information.

• (1020)

To make consent more meaningful and move away from lengthy agreements that, as I said, no one reads, we are introducing a new exception to consent for the collection and use of information for standard business activities that would be reasonably anticipated by individuals.

[Translation]

Here is an example in plain language. When a customer buys something from a company and gives that company their address, the company can give that address to a delivery company so the customer can get the product they paid for.

[English]

Under the law, that company would need to be transparent about how it uses personal information so that consumers are made aware of this and that the Office of the Privacy Commissioner can review these practices.

The second element I want to talk about is the right to delete information. Bill C-11 would allow Canadians to withdraw their consent and demand that data be deleted. When individuals no longer want to do business with an organization, that organization must stop using their information and must delete it permanently if it is asked by individuals. This would, for example, allow a Canadian to demand that a social media site delete their profile. It is very simple, but very powerful.

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The next area the bill highlights is data mobility. To improve their control further, individuals would also have the right to direct and transfer their data and information from one organization or entity to another organization or entity in a very secure manner. Bill C-11 would do this by enabling regulations that establish frameworks for secure transfer and interoperability. This approach would support innovation in areas like open banking, where a common technical approach could allow Canadians to take advantage of the consumer-directed financial marketplace in a more secure way.

Another area the bill touches on, which was highlighted through extensive consultations, is algorithmic transparency. In the area of consumer control, Bill C-11 would improve transparency around the use of automated decision-making systems, such as algorithms and AI technologies, which are becoming more pervasive in the digital economy.

Under Bill C-11, organizations must be transparent that they are using automated systems to make significant decisions or predictions about someone. It would also give individuals the right to an explanation of a prediction or decision made by these systems: How is the data collected and how is the data used?

This is a brief summary of what is found in the first pillar of this legislation under more consumer control.

The second pillar of Bill C-11 is enabling responsible innovation.

[*Translation*]

The digital economy creates significant opportunities for Canadian businesses. Digital activity accounts for 4.8% of Canada's GDP, and when it comes to research and development in this country, no other private sector industry outperforms Canada's information and communications technology sector.

● (1025)

[*English*]

Investment in data has climbed as high as \$40 billion. Across the economy, Canadian companies' data is worth as much as all other intangible assets, such as software, research and development, and mineral exploration rights combined. Therefore, we can see the potential of data not only today, but going forward.

Globally, we are seeing unprecedented growth in the technology sector, growth that is only going to pick up as artificial intelligence continues to grow and have a more meaningful impact in our lives. According to some estimates, AI is going to contribute an additional \$13.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030.

[*Translation*]

The government also understands the importance of giving companies clear rules that enable them to innovate while still protecting Canadians' privacy.

Trust is the cornerstone of economic growth and innovation. When Canadians are assured that their data and privacy are safe and protected, it creates space for the kind of innovation that benefits everyone.

[*English*]

Our government believes that greater trust and certainty in the digital marketplace will empower small businesses and entrepreneurs to create new jobs and opportunities, expand their operations and better access the global marketplace.

It is also important to note that the new legislation would help small businesses prosper as well by ensuring that rules for data and privacy are fair, clear, enforced and flexible enough to meet the needs of smaller organizations.

One area that does that is the codes of practice and certification systems. To enable responsible innovation, Bill C-11 would create a framework to recognize the use of codes of practice and certification systems. This would help organizations both comply with the law and demonstrate their compliance, which, in turn, would support innovation and provide an important balance to a strengthened enforcement regime.

Organizations would be able to apply to the Privacy Commissioner to approve a code of practice outlining how the act's general requirements apply in a particular sector or activity. This would give businesses some certainty that if they are following the code they are in compliance.

I also want to highlight de-identified information. Bill C-11 would also clarify how organizations are to handle de-identified personal information. This would enable an important mechanism for both privacy protection and innovative uses of data, which would benefit many small businesses.

Lastly is data for good. In this area, it is important to note that under the second pillar of enabling responsible innovation, Bill C-11 would recognize an exception to consent for socially beneficial purposes in order to clearly allow organizations to support innovative data initiatives such as data trust, which is pursued by a range of public institutions, including hospitals, universities and libraries. There is so much potential with data trust because it can enable us to unlock some of the opportunities that exist to solve some problems across our society.

The next element I want to talk about is strong enforcement. Perhaps more importantly, the proposal would significantly strengthen the enforcement and oversight regime. This is critical.

[*Translation*]

With this proposal, we will have some of the toughest financial penalties in the world for violating our laws.

[English]

Currently, the Privacy Commissioner has little ability to enforce his recommendations on organizations that are non-compliant, other than seeking a hearing by the federal court. Under Bill C-11 this would change. The legislation would introduce a strengthened privacy regime that would be overseen by a more powerful Privacy Commissioner, with appropriate checks and balances in place.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner would have broad order-making power, including the power to force an organization to stop collecting or using information and delete it. If the Office of the Privacy Commissioner found out that data was collected without appropriate consent, he would have the ability to do this.

As well, the Privacy Commissioner would make sure there is strong and meaningful consequences for organizations that do not comply with the law. The Privacy Commissioner would have the power to recommend administrative monetary penalties of up to \$10 million, or 3% of global revenues, whichever is higher. The range of serious criminal offences would also be expanded, with a new maximum fine of up to \$25 million, or 5% of global revenues, whichever is higher.

• (1030)

The legislation would introduce the new personal information and data protection tribunal, which would review appeals of the commissioner's orders and levy penalties.

[Translation]

This new administrative tribunal will help ensure procedural fairness in how the commissioner applies the new and enhanced enforcement powers. It will provide individuals and organizations with easier access to justice through a less formal mechanism for appealing decisions.

[English]

This enforcement regime would recognize that early compliance with the act remains critical and that is the key part. Early compliance will remain critical for the protection of Canadian privacy. We need to build on the commissioner's existing abilities to secure early resolution through compliance agreements. We want to make sure that Canadian companies actually comply with the legislation.

This new regime would see stronger collaboration between the Privacy Commissioner, stakeholders and implicated institutions, including federal organizations. When the commissioner is developing that guidance, it is important to have that level of collaboration. This will ensure there is a strong alignment between the law and how it is explained and enforced, and help avoid confusion for those trying to follow it. Again, this will provide further clarity.

To summarize, the third pillar of Bill C-11, strong enforcement and oversight, would introduce an escalating model that provides incentives for organizations to comply early. The focus is on compliance. Strong penalties will exist if they do not follow through. There will be a new tribunal to ensure the process will be fair, transparent and accessible for businesses of all sizes.

The three pillars of Bill C-11 work together to provide what Canadians need to engage in the digital economy: strong and en-

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forceable protections for personal information, along with clear rules for businesses to follow as they innovate and deliver new products and services.

It is also important to note that the legislation would help protect the privacy of Canadians, while strengthening the ability of Canadian businesses to compete globally. This positions Canada to succeed internationally.

When PIPEDA was introduced in 2000, it was considered a global leader among data protection laws. In 2002, the European Commission found that PIPEDA provided adequate protection relative to EU law. The finding of adequacy gave us an international edge by allowing us to have free flow of data between Canadian and EU companies.

More recently in 2018, the EU brought into force its GDPR, the general data protection regulation. Since then, the EU has been reviewing Canada's adequacy against the GDPR. They have made it clear that we must reform our privacy regimes in order to maintain our advantage when it comes to this status. I believe the legislation would achieve GDPR adequacy while maintaining the made-in-Canada approach.

Lastly, I want to conclude by mentioning stakeholder reactions. This approach reflects years of public study, consultations and collaboration. It builds upon the fundamental work of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, as well as important deliberations in the other place.

I can tell members the legislation has gained support from a wide range of stakeholders. Goldy Hyder, the president and CEO of the Business Council of Canada, spoke positively about this. Michael Geist, who is well recognized in this area of expertise, said this is "Canada's Biggest Privacy Overhaul in Decades". OpenMedia calls Bill C-11 "a big win for privacy in Canada."

• (1035)

[Translation]

We know that Canadians will continue to use digital services that require the use of their personal data, and we know there is no turning back.

[English]

I will conclude with this last remark.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to increase our reliance on the digital economy, Bill C-11 will help Canadians embrace this new world, knowing that their personal information is protected and safe.

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Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I saw from the stakeholders that big business certainly likes the bill, but I want to talk about small businesses, like insurance companies, for example. The minister talked about data portability and open banking. Currently, in Canada the insurance arms of banking companies are not allowed to share that information with their mother company, the bank. This creates a competitive playing field for small and medium-sized insurance companies.

I wonder if he can address the concerns of small and medium-sized insurance companies that their business will be severely disadvantaged by the legislation and tell us what efforts the government will take to help those companies.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, as I highlighted in my remarks, the legislation is good for small businesses. It would provide them the ability to work with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner to create codes of conduct to enable them to be compliant with the act. The tribunal process is also less expensive and onerous for small businesses, particularly when we compare it with the lengthy processes they may have had to pursue in the past in the courts.

More importantly, I think the legislation gives control to Canadians, particularly in the area of portability, as the member opposite highlighted, by enabling small businesses to be able to take advantage of the fact that Canadians can now move their personal data from one organization to another. That creates more competition and more choice, which will have a positive impact on small businesses.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the hon. minister.

Quebec is currently giving this careful consideration. Personal information belongs to individuals and is a provincial responsibility under the Constitution. The provinces are responsible for property and civil law. Quebec is in the process of modernizing its own legislation.

Knowing that, how do you see the two pieces of legislation eventually harmonizing?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member that he is to address his questions and comments to the Chair and not directly to the minister.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. He is right. Privacy is essential for all Canadians.

[*English*]

That is why we introduced this legislation, to make sure it is adequate with respect to the GDPR, but will also respect provincial legislation. This law demonstrates national leadership in an area where it is important to have clear rules to protect Canadians, their privacy and their data, and it will respect provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for introducing the bill and for recognizing the work of the Standing Committee on Access

to Information, Privacy and Ethics, which brought forward a number of these recommendations. It is essential that we move on this legislation.

I have some concerns when I look at the legislation. One of the key concerns I have is that the government has opted to ignore the need to bring political parties and third-party political operators under some form of privacy regime. I am sorry, but a pinkie swear from a party staffer that there is a privacy code does not cut it, not after what we have seen with the Cambridge Analytica scandal and the big data wars going on with political campaigns in the United States. We need to have political parties under some kind of regime.

Is the government willing to put this under a regime if we bring forward amendments?

• (1040)

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his active role in this area. I know that the ethics committee has done tremendous work in terms of providing recommendations that have been incorporated into the legislation.

With regard to political parties, it is important to note, as the member has indicated, that the legislation is focused on commercial activities. We are looking at not non-commercial activities but commercial activities, to strengthen the privacy in this area and to make sure that Canadians have more control, not less control, and that there is greater transparency, greater accountability and meaningful fines that will make sure organizations comply with the law. That is the object.

Again, the legislation is focused on commercial activities, not non-commercial activities.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to congratulate my friend on being featured in this year's LinkedIn Top Voices profile. I offer congratulations on that.

I would like to ask the minister about data mobility and how the bill would assist Canadians and Canadian businesses. Data mobility is an issue that we have heard a great deal about over the years.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his friendship and support. I have sought his counsel on numerous occasions to get his advice on issues he had heard about from his constituents.

He made it very clear that Canadians should have more control over their data and that Canadians should have greater privacy online. As he reminded me, particularly in this pandemic, more Canadians are learning online, working online and accessing information online.

One area we targeted and honed in on to provide greater control for Canadians was around data portability. This will enable, as the member clearly highlighted, the ability for individuals to transfer their data from one entity to another. This will create an enormous amount of activity online. It will empower Canadians, and it will create opportunities in many areas, including, as I mentioned, in the financial sector, with open banking for example.

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to talk about data portability and privacy, but it does not matter if Canadians do not have access.

In the connect to innovate program, the government spent a lot of money, but it did not spend a single penny in southwestern Ontario to connect businesses, residences and Canadians with the Internet in order to give them proper service. This area represents 20% of Canada's economic output. In my own area of Norfolk County, over 30% are still underserved. There is no indication of a carve-out in the new program for funding. However, there are parts built in for financing that would only benefit the big players.

If the minister is serious about his commitment to small business, will the new program be modified to support small business ISP providers and to provide service to southwestern Ontario so that everyone could enjoy the new freedoms and protections that the minister is speaking about today?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for her very thoughtful question and for her advocacy on the issue around connectivity. As a minister who served in the previous Harper government, she knows personally very well the importance of broadband connectivity.

If we look at the digital charter, the first principle talks about access. It is an important principle that we put forward in the digital charter, and it highlights the commitment that we recently made with regard to building on the work of the connect to innovate program through the universal broadband fund, as well as looking at low-earth orbit satellite technologies to provide that high-speed Internet connectivity for rural and remote communities.

From our perspective, it is all about more competition, which would provide more choice to Internet service providers, particularly the smaller ones, which would then enable prices to go down and would provide options to many Canadians, including those living in southwestern Ontario.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-11 will not protect personal data under the federal government's own jurisdiction. We saw what happened at the Canada Revenue Agency and how easy it is to steal a person's identity for all sorts of reasons. These are outdated tools when it comes to identity and security.

Why are there no rigorous standards set out for government agencies?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

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I understand that there are currently a lot of problems with data breaches. I hope that we can work together to come up with solutions for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I am rising on Bill C-11, an act to implement a digital charter for government. This is an auspicious moment for Canada, because we are well under way in the digital age, and the need for clarity and concrete action to protect Canadians' privacy is a paramount need. While it is critically important, we also have to remember the need to protect small and medium-sized enterprises and to ensure that Canada can remain globally competitive as a jurisdiction for technology, data and innovation. I am concerned by some of the trends we have seen over the past few years, with Canada falling behind our global competitors, and I am concerned that some parts of this legislation could put us behind.

I am also concerned that we are falling behind when it comes to security. It is great to talk about protecting Canadians' privacy and putting in consent-based rules, but in an age of quantum decryption and computers that can break 120-bit encryption, if our security cannot be protected, then all the consent laws and privacy protections in the world are not going to mean much.

I want to break down this bill into simple terms. They talk about plain language in the bill, and so I am going to try to speak in as plain a language as I can, when dealing with a matter of this technical nature. I want to talk about some of the challenges and, I will grant the government, some of the opportunities that we foresee with this legislation. I want to also thank and recognize the work of the ethics and privacy committee in the previous Parliament, under the able chairmanship of my colleague from Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies. Many of the recommendations we have seen in this legislation come from the committee's report, so I think that shows Canadians that committees really do matter in the House, and that they can make a positive impact.

As I said, one of my chief concerns with this bill is its impact on small and medium-sized enterprises. It has been said for a number of years that data is the new oil. For many emerging enterprises, access to data and the ability to use this data will be the determining factor in whether they are successful or not. I do not need to say, but I will, that small and medium-sized enterprises are the lifeblood of our communities, and increasingly we are seeing how vulnerable they are, especially during the pandemic.

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We have to consider the context of this legislation within the economy and the economic structures that the Liberal government has created over the past five years. We have seen an unrelenting attack on small and medium-sized enterprises, starting with hikes to Canada pension plan premiums. These hikes will continue even this January, in the midst of a pandemic. When companies are closing their doors and laying off workers, the government is looking at increasing costs even further for employers and employees. It is just not acceptable.

The Liberals in the past accused business people of being tax cheats when they utilized exemptions under the tax code. They decided to take it one step further by hiking taxes and removing these exemptions for many family-owned businesses, including for a lot of businesses and farm families in my riding. With this legislation, they are adding yet another layer of red tape that will force many onerous requirements on small businesses. I recognize that many of these requirements will be very helpful when we are talking about large businesses, and they have the resources to maintain these privacy requirements. I found it interesting that the minister was talking about the right to delete oneself. On many social media platforms that has been the case for a number of years, so it feels like with this legislation the government is trying to catch up to what businesses are already largely doing. However, we see that small enterprises are increasingly reliant on technology and data.

● (1050)

In this legislation, there are a number of new requirements. There is a certification requirement and a requirement for businesses to designate somebody in their business to be the privacy watchdog. Businesses have to maintain databases and be ready to respond to customer requests or investigations. When we talk about very small businesses, which could have only two or three staff or maybe a sole proprietor, to add this new layer of red tape is really going to create a lot of challenges for them.

Ironically, it would actually benefit big businesses because when small businesses have more red tape, they might decide to no longer stay in business. Therefore, we will see even more consolidation among the big players: the Amazons, the Walmarts and companies that are large collectors of personal data. Our thriving, innovative start-up economy will start to be strangled under this legislation.

I hope that when the government is considering amendments at committee, it consults with small businesses. I encourage it to consult with the CFIB to look at the challenges small businesses are going to face, and to try to come up with some sort of threshold to ensure that small businesses are not unduly burdened.

I appreciate that this bill is largely targeted at major corporations and tech giants that use massive amounts of personal data for everyday business. We know that these companies have the capacity to do better in protecting our privacy. I hope that this legislation can spur further commitments to protect Canadians' privacy. However, as I said, it concerns me that these large corporations largely have already implemented a lot of the things that the government is talking about. They have the human resources, legal departments and the endless ability to tap debt markets, bond markets and stock markets to finance these changes. Frankly, small businesses do not.

I asked the minister a question, which he really did not answer, about data portability and the impact on small and medium-sized enterprises. The minister couches it in terms of consumers having the right to ask for their data to be moved from one organization to another. It seems like a really great thing, but I cannot think of too many situations in which a regular Canadian would be the person initiating that conversation. However, I can see where a bank would, for example, when dealing with its insurance arm. Many large Canadian banks also have insurance companies.

There has been a fence put around these companies to ensure they do not become too big and anti-competitive. Information cannot currently be shared between insurance companies and banks owned by the same company, but through this legislation, the insurance company just needs to provide a plain-language document asking clients if they want their information to be shared with its banking arm. With the massive amount of data that insurance companies and banks have on Canadians, we can see how quickly they could possibly use this as a predatory practice to increase, consolidate and suck customers away from small and medium-sized insurance companies.

When I drive through my riding of Sturgeon River—Parkland, I am proud to see about a dozen small and medium-sized insurance businesses for auto, home and life insurance. There are tens of thousands of Canadians employed in this important industry, and they are not all working for the big banks. I really am concerned that this legislation could make our marketplace much less competitive, so I hope the government considers that impact as well.

My next point is about enforcement. I am really skeptical about the government's ability to deliver for Canadians. We see, in spam legislation and other legislation, that a lot of words are not being put into action and there are consequences for actions that are not being followed through on.

Similarly, this legislation packs a lot of firepower. It talks about threatening \$10 million in fines, or up to 3% of global revenues. It is the toughest in the G7, as the government has said, but I wonder what power the government really has to compel payment. When we talk about potential serial abusers of our private data, we are talking about massive multinational corporations with billions in revenues.

● (1055)

I wonder if we can anticipate similar challenges as those faced by France when it attempted to collect taxes on digital giants from the United States. These included a challenge at the World Trade Organization and retaliatory tariffs on French products.

I wonder if the Liberals have given any thought to the potential consequences of trying to collect large fines from these companies. Does the government anticipate that our trade competitors are going to let these challenges go unanswered when we try to collect? Have the Liberals considered the consequences that this could have on the Canadian economy, and are they ready to be open about this very real threat? I am not saying that this is not something they should pursue, but we need to know what the potential consequences are before moving too quickly on this.

Canadian innovators are at the forefront of technological advancement, and I think that is something we can all be proud of. However, a concern that has been brought to my attention is the protection of proprietary algorithms by start-up tech companies that rely on data. Some of the provisions in the bill would enforce algorithmic transparency, which sounds great for consumers, but I see that it could be used by business competitors to expose sensitive, confidential and proprietary information.

Has the government considered the consequence of what these actions would do to our start-up companies that want to keep their algorithms proprietary and confidential? A company may be in a situation where it is looking for a buyout at a later date and needs to build up to the point where it can really get the value it believes the company is worth, but if this algorithmic transparency could be used by its competitors to investigate the use of its algorithms, it could possibly be used to steal things that are patent-pending or as leverage in a negotiation for a buyout. I would like to see more stringent protections for our nascent technological sector, to prevent their algorithms from being exposed.

Next, in the bill, the minister sort of alluded to the exemption for socially beneficial purposes. We need to drill down and explore the idea. The minister provided some examples: government, health care agencies and education. I do not think many Canadians could really object to these organizations being exempted, but one point named organizations that exist to promote environmental protection.

We believe in strong environmental protection, but are we possibly talking about environmental charities that may have a political arm or an agenda in an election? Are they going to be exempted to use Canadians' data in any way they see fit? What potential consequences could this have on keeping our elections free from foreign influence or ensuring transparency in political communications? I would really like to get a clearer idea of what the government means when it is talking about socially beneficial purposes, because we are living in an age, as the member for Timmins—James Bay said, when there are data wars. If organizations are misappropriating this data, using it to influence our elections and our democratic process and being provided an exemption, we really need to explore that.

Next I want to talk about the 10 pillars of the digital charter that the government has brought forward. We know that a charter, as

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any statement of values, is really only as good as the resources and enforcement behind it, so I want to highlight a few of these pillars and address some concerns that I have.

Pillar 1 talks about universal access: “All Canadians will have equal opportunity to participate in the digital world and the necessary tools to do so, including access, connectivity, literacy and skills.” As my colleague for Haldimand—Norfolk was saying, too many Canadians, the fourth coast as some would say, even in relatively urban areas, say that we are far from accessing high-speed and reliable broadband services.

● (1100)

For years, successive governments have pocketed billions and billions of dollars from spectrum auctions. They have been announcing and reannouncing, and in some cases reannouncing a re-announcement, on enhanced rural broadband. The Liberals have promised the universal broadband fund as their solution. They even claimed that they topped it up by another \$750 million a few weeks ago, but communities in my riding who recently applied for the universal broadband fund were told that they did not qualify.

I come from a fairly rural riding, and people were basically told that, according to the data, the Internet in their communities is fast enough. That is not acceptable. They should try explaining that to farming families in Sturgeon or Parkland County, or try telling that to people living in Stony Plain, Gibbons and Morinville.

We still have movie rental stores in my riding. I asked somebody how these movie rental stores stay in business, and the fact is, the Internet is so bad, the only way for people to watch movies is to go to their local movie store because they cannot access Netflix and all these other great things.

We are talking about a pandemic right now, and increasingly parents are wanting to supplement their children's education at home. They cannot access their education. A principal of my local high school, Onoway Junior/Senior High School, lives less than one mile away from the high school. The high school has high-speed Internet that is connected by the Alberta SuperNet, but less than a mile away the principal cannot get any Internet services.

The government is saying their Internet is fast enough, and that they do not qualify for the universal broadband fund, but, if we do not qualify, then I do not know who qualifies. This is unacceptable. It is time for the Liberals to put real funds behind real action to deliver broadband access to Canadians in rural and remote areas.

Pillar two of the digital charter is safety and security. It reads, “Canadians will be able to rely on the integrity, authenticity and security of the services they use and should feel safe online”. This is yet another great promise that the Liberals have failed to deliver upon.

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I remember over the summer, when scammers used Canadians' personal information on the Canada Revenue Agency website to access CERB payments. These were not foreign actors we were talking about. These were private actors using information that they could get their hands on to breach Canadians' accounts, and this breach was so bad that it even forced the CRA and the Service Canada websites to shut down.

Thousands of Canadians who wanted to were unable to access the CERB, and all the useful services on those websites, because the government has not put security as a priority. Security must be central to digital government and to our digital economy. I appreciate that the government wanted to get those programs out quickly, but we are increasingly seeing the consequences of not building in security from the foundation up.

It was not just the CERB program that was hacked. In February, news broke that the National Research Council systems were hacked, mainly the health research databases. This cyber-attack was caused by ransomware. The hackers used the ransomware to try to extract payment from the government. Every year the National Research Council collects information on more than 25 million health care consumers across the U.S. and Canada. The National Research Council was also hacked in 2017 by state actors.

This continues to be quite a substantial threat. Hospitals and other information technology services are increasingly being targeted by these kinds of crimes. Since 2016, according to a cyber-threat assessment, there have been 172 attacks on individual health care organizations with costs topping \$160 million. Those are just the attacks that are known about. It causes one to wonder how many attacks have not even been discovered yet.

It gets worse. Despite the multiple data breaches, the protection on critical infrastructure plan has not been updated in this country since 2009, despite major technological advancements. I alluded earlier to the Manhattan project of data decryption and quantum computing, which we are seeing out of countries like China. They threaten to blow open all of our current encryption technologies. It shows us that the plan is even more critical.

• (1105)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I object to a number of the comments the member made at the beginning of his speech. He tried to give a false impression that the government has not been there for small businesses, which is really quite inaccurate.

We can see the many ways that this government, virtually from day one back in 2015, has recognized the importance of small businesses as the backbone of our economy through tax cuts. Today we continue to provide wage subsidies, rent subsidies and so forth during this very difficult time.

Having said all of that, my question is with respect to the bill. We recognize that it is going to allow for additional regulation. The member seems to be in opposition to the need for regulation. I am not 100% clear whether the Conservative Party recognizes that

there is a need for government regulation to protect the interests of our businesses and consumers.

Could the member just provide his thoughts on whether the Conservative Party will be voting in favour of recommending the legislation to committee?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, the hon. member sort of reminds me of the character of Cam Brady in the movie *The Campaign* when he talks about small businesses being the backbone of our economy. They are, but the Liberal government does not seem to recognize that the policies it has put in place have really undermined small businesses. However, I will get to the question.

There is a necessity for regulation, but we need to recognize that one-size-fits-all regulations, which are mostly targeted at large corporations while still applying to small businesses, really put small businesses at a significant disadvantage. We are not saying no to regulation. We are saying that we need to put exemptions in, and we need to look at what the consequences really are for small businesses and address their concerns.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

This is for private businesses, and I understand that my colleague may have a problem with that.

However, during the pandemic we have seen that the federal government itself had problems verifying people's identity. In my riding, some people received the CERB under a name other than their own. These people were on social assistance. They were not entitled to the CERB, received it anyway and will have to repay it when they file their income tax return. That is a serious problem.

I would like to know whether my hon. colleague thinks that we could have applied the provisions of this bill to the federal government itself.

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, I appreciate what the member is saying. I have a story from my riding: A couple come to me who had used a third party tax service to apply for their CERB money. The tax service charged them \$300 per CERB application, which is absolutely absurd when someone can just go to the CRA website and click a few buttons to access the money.

It just goes to show that sometimes when the government constructs something and does not think through all of the angles while trying to get the money out the door, there are people who will be hurt by that legislation. When I raised that to the government, its response was that it is not illegal. That is not acceptable.

I think absolutely that the government needs to be held accountable. We always need to do better. We as the opposition are always going to fight to make sure that the government does a better job for Canadians.

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• (1110)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member's comments are very enlightening. He talked a little bit about his concerns for small businesses and the red tape that would be associated with them. Can he discuss a little bit, in detail, the provisions in particular that he thinks would put too much of a burden on small businesses?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, there is a provision in the bill that says a small business has to designate a specific person responsible for maintaining these privacy databases. When we are talking about a small business with just a few employees, oftentimes a sole proprietor may be running the books, sales or the website, and they are now being told that they have to also be the designated privacy CO of their company. That is adding red tape for a small business. For a big business, it is not that big, as it probably already has those positions laid out.

Small businesses trying to maintain those databases and having the ability to keep all the data they are collecting, so as to be ready to comply with requests from the consumer and Privacy Commissioner to hand over the data at any time, creates a ton of paperwork for small businesses. We need to look at a better way to do this to ensure that we can protect the privacy of Canadians, but not put too many onerous requirements on small businesses.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend mentioned the dynamics of rural Canada and the challenges it faces with access to something as simple as the Internet. These increase the challenges of small and medium-sized enterprises, whether it is a farmer trying to access the most up-to-date equipment for their farm operation and the increasing data requirements surrounding that, the local insurance companies the member mentioned, or the many other small and medium-sized businesses that exist across rural Canada. It is important that a rural lens is applied to something as important as this legislation.

I am wondering if my hon. friend would be able to provide further comments on the impact this would have on rural Canada.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, it is already hard enough for rural Canadian business people to access the growing digital economy, as I alluded to in my speech when I spoke about the lack of access to high-speed Internet. The hon. member who asked the question is a farmer, and we know agriculture is undergoing a massive shift to data.

I do not think there is anything in this bill that would necessarily impact the farmers themselves, but when we are talking about relations between fertilizer companies, suppliers and transportation logistics, we could be talking about a number of new requirements. The farmers I know just want to farm. They do not want to haggle over data and be purveyors of data, so yes, we have to consider those challenges as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member did not answer the question regarding the Conservative Party's position on the legislation. I understand the member, as being part of the official opposition, has concerns. I can appreciate that.

I have two questions. One, do the Conservatives see amendments coming forward at second reading? Second, and most importantly,

do Conservatives support this legislation ultimately going to second reading, or in other words, will they support it going to committee?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for giving me a second opportunity to finally answer his question. We do have concerns about the bill, as I said. However, I think I can freely speak for our caucus and say we will be supporting this going to committee.

We will be looking at putting forward some common sense amendments to protect small businesses and ensure this is the best possible legislation. The fact is that it has been too many years since we have had an overhaul. A lot has changed in our society, and we do need to update this legislation.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I see in the legislation that there would be some exceptions to the consent of an individual's data and whether that information would be available to them, or if it would be in the public interest.

Who would make that determination? Is the bill clear on that determination and who would make it, and are there any concerns around that particular provision?

• (1115)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Madam Speaker, that is a question we are going to be fighting to get the answer to at committee. When we are talking about public interest, it is not necessarily just for the government to decide what that public interest is.

At the same time, we need to ensure this is not blown open to any and all organizations that could be using and abusing this data in ways we cannot know. Obviously we need to put some parameters around this and find a good balance.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be the first in my party to speak, since this is a topic the Bloc Québécois has been looking at in response to a number of identity theft issues.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge my colleagues who have been with me from the beginning of the first session of the 43rd Parliament. We immediately started looking into the matter of privacy breaches and fraud. The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology unanimously agreed to take into account the previous work done to study what action we should urgently take to prevent the kind of situation we are in now.

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I salute my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, and I also want to point out that I very much look forward to studying this bill in committee. We had already unanimously adopted a motion to study privacy matters, and today a bill has been introduced. We spent a long time in committee looking into conflicts of interest. I had 40 hours, during which it was difficult to vote on a motion in committee.

That being said, prorogation did not do us any good. If Parliament had not been prorogued, we would not be where we are today. We would already be at the forefront when it comes to protecting our people from fraud and identity theft. I know that this happened to some people who work for the House of Commons. This is a complex and troubling issue. As the Privacy Commissioner said, the accounts of no less than 30 million out of 37 million Canadians were affected.

I would like to tell everyone here and the people watching us at home that their personal information was used. We are talking about a privacy breach. What happens when our personal information is not protected? Obviously, the first thing that comes to mind is the possibility of fraud. The way things stand, fraudsters have quite the opportunity to use the personal information of others.

Madam Speaker, I am sorry. This is my first time without a written speech in front of me and I feel like I could keep talking for an hour. I would like to ask for the consent of the House to share my time with the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask for those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement. Accordingly, all those opposed to what the hon. member is proposing, namely, sharing her time with the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, will please say nay.

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

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

● (1120)

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I provided a brief overview of this issue because safeguards have already been implemented in over 30 countries. Our friends in the European Union have been taking the bull by the horns since 2016, and I think we should follow their example.

I applaud the introduction of this bill. It was about time. I would also like to talk about a few things that I look forward to studying as soon as possible at the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

It was proposed that the commissioner be given additional powers. This bill proves that this proposal was taken into account. The commissioner will be able to impose major penalties. Currently, as all those who grabbed the bull by the horns know full well, businesses are responsible for protecting personal information or face penalties, which vary from one country to another. This bill introduces a 3% penalty, which means businesses such as Facebook, a company worth several billion, could pay up to \$10 million if they do not properly protect personal information.

I am also very happy with another part of this bill, which came up earlier, about consent to use and transfer our data. Businesses and organizations that have our data must always have our consent. That is crucial, and I am happy about it.

Once again, I congratulate the government on giving the commissioner the power to issue orders.

However, there is one thing I am very concerned about, and it has to do with organizations such as banks that are under federal jurisdiction. I think that if there is one organization that should lead by example and demonstrate that it is protecting data and working to prevent fraud, it should be the government.

The first time I read the bill, I did not see anything about the government fulfilling its obligations. My hon. colleague talked about this earlier. Many people in Laurentides—Labelle have told me they are worried about finding out at tax time that someone claimed CERB using their name. People have even told me they tested it. They applied, and their application was approved. These are people who are receiving employment insurance benefits.

There are also those who, upon opening their account, discovered that they were victims of fraud. These people have followed up and filed a complaint. Unfortunately, it takes a long time for them to hear back, and some people never hear back. I feel that this bill should also include a requirement to support those who have been victims of fraud and help them through the process.

Right now, it is about prevention and punishment. Let me explain prevention, which is very simple. Prevention is making sure all the necessary elements are in place to validate a person's identity.

● (1125)

However, this bill does not propose a complete reform of the ID authentication processes for individuals through organizations or the government.

Several countries have already taken action and instituted two ID authentication processes. The first involves confirming what the person knows. However, if an individual's personal information is known and their data are open, anyone can immediately commit fraud using their name.

The second involves confirming what the person has using various tools. Some apps already use text message authentication, for example. Sometimes the person has to place a call from their home. This is another important authentication process.

Several countries use other authentication processes based on even more personal information, such as voice recognition or fingerprints. Close attention will have to be paid to facial authentication to ensure that all rules are followed.

I look forward to taking part in the committee deliberations. I welcome this bill, but it needs to be amended properly.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just listening to the member's comments on the bill, I suspect the Bloc will be supporting the legislation at least going to committee. It is important for us to recognize the role of the Privacy Commissioner and that it has been incorporated to provide additional support. It will provide more confidence in cybersecurity and show how important data is.

Could the member provide a confirmation of the Bloc's position on seeing the bill go to committee? Does the member have anything else she would like to talk about in regard to the important role the Privacy Commissioner plays in general for Canadians and small businesses?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The Bloc Québécois is obviously in favour of a bill to protect the fundamental rights of Quebeckers and Canadians.

That said, it is important that several proposals be presented in committee. While we are at it, we will ensure that nothing is missing. That will surprise no one. Although the commissioner may be very pleased to hear that penalties can be imposed, he is also very aware of what might be missing from this bill.

With respect to personal information, we really have a lot of ground to cover quickly, because Canada is lagging behind in the eyes of the international community. We will have to make quick adjustments to protect our fundamental rights, as 30-plus other countries around the world have done.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, since there are no other questions and comments, I believe that shows that my colleague was very clear. I will try to be clear as well. The bar is high, but I will try to meet it.

Generally speaking, as my colleague said, this bill represents a step forward and addresses several of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada's requests. Quebeckers were profoundly shocked by the Desjardins data breach. It was a very significant event. However, it was not the only one. Similar incidents occurred in 2017 and 2018, and there have probably been dozens more that we are not aware of. In fact, when a bank's data is stolen, the bank is required to inform the police and the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, but it is not required to inform the public or even its customers.

We like this bill because it sets out a series of principles relating to the collection and sharing of personal information by companies: free and informed consent for the collection and use of data; the

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ability to allow or deny the transfer of data to another company, such as between two financial institutions; the ability to withdraw consent or request that data be deleted; transparency about the use of algorithms that use personal data; and stricter criteria for the use of de-identified data. This bill also gives real powers to Canada's Privacy Commissioner, sets out significant penalties for non-compliance, and creates the personal information and data protection tribunal. All of that is great.

Unfortunately, the problem is that the bill omits one extremely important element, and that is protecting people's identity online to prevent fraud due to identity theft, especially during financial transactions. We know that Europe has brought in a whole suite of regulations to force financial institutions to verify a person's identity before authorizing a transaction. There is nothing like that in Canada, and this bill does not have anything of the kind either.

The federal government is not properly verifying individuals' identity before authorizing electronic transactions. We know that the challenge is to prevent data from being stolen and used to commit fraud. Having personal data stolen is unpleasant enough, so all measures must be taken to ensure that the data are not then used for fraud.

The debate in Ottawa over the massive data breach at Desjardins mainly revolved around social insurance numbers. We know that several people would like to change their social insurance numbers, but under the current system, they cannot do so unless they become a victim of fraud resulting from identity theft.

In addition, the federal government has received a number of requests to redesign the social insurance card to make it harder to counterfeit, similar to what Ottawa did with passports after the September 11, 2001, attacks, at the request of the United States.

These two requests are perfectly reasonable. The Bloc fully agrees and is asking Ottawa to follow up. However, that alone will not stop fraud.

The best way to prevent identity theft is to make sure that the person who is making the transaction is indeed who they claim to be. This goes without saying. There are three ways to verify a person's identity.

First, a person can be identified based on what they know, namely personal information such as their name, address or social insurance number. However, as cases of identity theft are on the rise, it is getting harder and harder to accurately identify someone. In other words, our private information is no longer private when everyone can find out almost everything about us. Fraudsters can simply use this information to create a fake ID, and they are set.

Second, a person can be identified based on what they have, such as their computer's IP address, which the institution can recognize if the transaction is being conducted from the person's home, or their cellphone, to which the institution can send a secret code via text message.

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Third, a person can be identified based on who they are. The institution can use technologies that recognize a person's physical characteristics, such as their voice, their facial features, through the use of facial recognition, their digital fingerprints, which are increasingly being used by cellphones, or their handwritten signature.

● (1130)

Europe adopted regulations in 2016 requiring financial institutions to use at least two of these three ways to identify someone before authorizing a transaction. Banks in Canada are under no such obligation. If they believe that the control mechanisms will cost more than the losses they are currently incurring in fraud, they are better off doing nothing. The banks will not pay for controls that would be more costly than the fraud. That is simply profit-driven logic.

Many members have probably had the experience of having a store issue a credit card on the spot, based solely on the personal information we provide. We just have to give our phone number, address, and so on, and that is all it takes. This practice really opens the door to fraud, and it has to stop.

We believe that the banks must be forced to tackle fraud. That is the solution that we are advocating. We are going to propose possible approaches. As my colleague was saying, we are going to support the bill, but we will be bringing forward amendments. We will have concrete, constructive and coherent proposals when the time comes to study the bill in detail.

We will propose ways to combat identity theft, such as by drawing on the European regulations I was talking about, in order to force the banks to bring in robust processes to verify people's identity before authorizing a financial transaction. We will also propose to increase fines in order to encourage banks to better protect their customers' personal information. We will propose that banks be required to submit a detailed report, as part of their annual reporting, on the number of identity thefts and the resulting losses.

We will also propose a requirement to contact any person whose identity has been fraudulently used within the organization, regardless of whether an account was opened or not. As I said earlier, there is no such obligation in place and it must be brought in. There is also an obligation to cover the costs paid by victims to recover their identity. These costs must be covered by the banks, which are rolling in a lot more money than individuals and most of their customers.

There also need to be anonymous tip lines for employees who are aware of unreported identity theft, as well as protection for whistleblowers. There is currently a void when it comes to whistleblower protection, as in virtually all areas. I am getting a little off topic, but the House will have to deal with this issue as well.

Ottawa also has to look in its own backyard. Beyond the banks, the same anti-fraud controls need to be imposed on the federal government itself. Bill C-11 applies only to private businesses. It does not apply to the federal government. Currently, Ottawa's online identity controls are clearly inadequate. Before authorizing a transaction, the government does not take all the necessary steps to ensure that a claimant is who they say they are.

Since last spring, there have been numerous cases of identity theft. These include Canada emergency response benefit claims made in other people's names and tax refunds being redirected to other accounts. Some people will not find out that they have been victims of identity theft until they file their income tax returns. It has not yet happened yet, but it will soon. In a few months, many people will discover that they have been victims of fraud. Right now, they have no idea. This is absurd, and it is unacceptable.

Again this fall, thousands of taxpayers lost access to their Service Canada account, which prevented them from applying for employment insurance even though they lost their jobs because their region was going back into the red zone.

It is all well and good to introduce a bill on the management of personal data by private companies. I want to stress that we agree on this bill and that we will vote in favour of it. That part is settled.

However, Ottawa needs to clean up its own backyard as soon as possible and take immediate action to combat identity theft. We are saying yes to regulating private businesses, but we are also saying yes to regulating Ottawa and the banking industry.

● (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned that the government should be looking to include identity theft in the legislation. I agree with him that it should be included, but this is the government that brought in the Phoenix pay system, and we know how much of a fiasco that was.

What would he propose the government do to prevent something like the Phoenix pay system if it were to bring this type of legislation into its own house?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, the Phoenix pay system is indeed a fiasco, a complete disaster. I completely agree with my colleague, who I want thank for his kind words about my speech.

This is a big problem, but the bill that is before us deals with identity theft. The Phoenix pay system is another issue, but we completely agree that something needs to be done ASAP, as they say.

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[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it should be noted that it was actually the Conservative government that brought in the Phoenix payroll system. We did flip the switch on it, but it was fairly well established under the previous administration.

Having said that, the member, as well as his colleague, made reference to individuals who collected the CERB but who should not have been collecting the CERB. In hindsight, would the member have any recommendations or suggestions for how the government could have done things differently to avoid that?

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his question.

I think that I answered that question in my speech. Stricter oversight and monitoring mechanisms like the ones I suggested are the answer to that question.

We could also review the whole matter of the CERB. We warned the government many times from the beginning about the monitoring that should be done and the formula itself. I could talk about those mechanisms again, but I do not really have time. I made suggestions to that effect in my speech.

Looking back, the government should have monitored this more closely in every respect.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his intervention today. It was very interesting.

Cybersecurity, of course, is a very important issue. As we know, in Canada there are too many victims of cybercrime each year. However, I feel it is not a problem that a privacy law would solve.

I am wondering if the member could speak a bit about why he is bringing forward a criminal law issue that would put more burden on Quebec and some of the other provincial jurisdictions at this time. I would like a few comments on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, if I understood my colleague's question about criminal law, the bill in this current form suggests penalties for companies that break the law. That would involve criminal law.

If I understood the question properly, that is the response I have for my colleague.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I can always count on my Bloc colleagues to explore the relationship between the federal government and the provincial governments.

I am wondering if the member has any comments on concerns he might have regarding the bill and provincial jurisdiction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I will try to be brief, although I know that is not my strong suit.

The Government of Quebec is currently in the process of modernizing its legislation on this. There is a stereotype about Quebec and I believe it is founded: Quebec generally does very good work and often, or in most cases, does a much better job than Ottawa.

Of course, we also think that the governments have to agree. We hope that this new legislation will not encroach on provincial jurisdictions. Earlier I asked the hon. Minister of Industry that question and he said that would not be the case.

Time will tell.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate from my office in this important debate on Canadian privacy. The bill would enact the consumer privacy protection act and the personal information and data protection tribunal act. It would also make consequential amendments to other acts. We are debating a fairly complicated subject, but one that has been warranted for many years.

The New Democrats have been calling for a modernization of our privacy laws and our consumer protection laws for about a decade. Most recently, our efforts have resulted in a digital bill of rights' discussion across Canada in which we have been at the forefront and have pushed hard to have some of these rights discussed, not only in the public forum but also in the chambers of Parliament.

We have witnessed the world move on. We have seen the Privacy Commissioner identify Canada as backwater when it comes to protecting privacy and the capabilities of the modern world. With COVID-19, we see further online activity among Canadians and further vulnerabilities for not only individuals but for our families, schools, businesses and even Parliament.

The New Democrats have a different position from other political parties. We believe that people's human rights are connected to their digital rights. People's online presence and the digital footprint they leave in the wake of the business they have to do is just as important as their physically enshrined rights as a human being.

When we look at what is taking place, even with COVID, and the ability of people to participate online, we have seen the failings of two decades of Liberals and Conservatives to connect Canadians, all the way from Maxime Bernier's program, launched as a Conservative minister, to most recently where we are struggling and scrambling to get Canadians connected.

Government Orders

One of the other things the New Democrats talk about is the affordability of participating in this democracy and not only with respect to one's participation on a regular social basis. As governments have moved more and more services away from brick and mortar to online, we have seen the exposure of Canadian privacy. We have seen that even within government resources, everything from social insurance numbers to other types of breaches that have taken place. We have seen this in the private sector as well.

Canada has often lagged in the private sector, not only in oversight but also in the punishment of those who take advantage of people in the new digital age. In our digital bill of rights, which we presented more than two years ago, we talked about not only personal data being protected, but also how people were being manipulated through the services provided online. For years and years our philosophy has been net neutrality. I will highlight a few new problems with the bill which could derail that type of philosophy and could stream Canadians to more vulnerabilities.

There are all kinds of examples of how Canadians have been abused. Whether it be Yahoo, Ticketmaster, Marriott or Equifax, the list goes on and on. Most recently, a heightened example of this, which created a lot of attention across the world, was Facebook and the outright manipulation of people's personal data. People were being used as pawns without even knowing what their rights were or being protected from that.

Again, Canada's laws do not allow our Privacy Commissioner to come down hard on some of these giants. Governments in the past have been too close with the web giants and have not allowed Canadians to have the proper recourse when data breaches have taken place.

• (1145)

The personal information and data production tribunal act being proposed by the government would create a number of potential false promises for accountability. It has a low threshold of involvement of those who would be appointed to the tribunal.

First, we have to get past the notion that these types of political appointments will be free and clear of all political and business-type leverages to select the tribunal. Second, we have to assume the tribunal can be fair, quick and just in its cases. Third, baked-in problems with regard to the role of the tribunal create some concerns. The first is that the tribunal could overturn the Privacy Commissioner in many respects and it would go to a judicial process, which could take years and years to settle cases that may no longer be relevant to Canadians.

There is also a low threshold for the inclusion of some of the appointments. There is no requirement for a Superior Court judge and only one judge is allowed in maybe a one-to-three-member panel or a one-to-six-member panel. These things need to be fixed.

Something I want to further explore is more powers for the Privacy Commissioner. The Privacy Commissioner has been very clear in asking for more resources and supports over the last number of years to deal with privacy breaches that have occurred and also to bring in more accountability. It is in our business interests, not only our interests as individuals, families and all of the institutions but in business interests, to have a clear process so the bad ac-

tors in this environment that are doing harm to Canadians and other businesses are not rewarded.

One thing I am most proud of accomplishing as a member of Parliament was ending the tax deductibility of corporate fines and penalties. That was about 15 years ago. In the past, if a business was caught doing something illegal, it was able to write off part of the government fine as a business-related expense. I was able to champion a change to that.

Businesses that were doing illegal activity and influencing competition were using it as a loss leader. They would essentially get millions of dollars in fines and penalties, everything from drug companies to those getting environmental fines and penalties, and they would apply for that money back at tax time. It was a way for them to undercut the competition that was doing the right thing. That is what I am concerned about with the tribunal. It would have the capability to influence market stability to some degree with regard to penalties and fines for the bad actors.

If it does not work right, if it is not seen as credible and if it does not flow the way it should, it can be an encouragement for some of those committing the breaches to be sloppy with personal information, disrespectful and also manipulative in taking information from Canadians, steering them to different purchases and activities, exposing them and then beating some of the competition. For some young entrepreneurs who have to go up against some of these established giants, it is very difficult for them to get a toehold.

A number of factors are in place, even in our general market economy, for young people and entrepreneurs to get busy and to compete. One most recently was in the retail sector. Businesses are being charged extra to get floor space in the real world. Amazon and other players have also used manipulative practices to steer consumers to particular products and services from preferred customers. That defeats our philosophy of net neutrality. It could also direct people and their families to making purchases or viewing activity with the time they have into different market conditions as opposed to exploring in a free and open Internet society.

Another thing is that Canadian federal political parties are exempt from oversight. We do not understand why the Liberals would allow this to take place. It should be clear and proper that their data and personal information be open and accountable in political parties as well. We will be looking at amendments to this activity because we strongly believe they should be accountable.

Government Orders

To bring faith and accountability to our democracy requires transparency. We have seen the sensationalism that has taken place in political advertising in the last number of campaigns and the favouritism that has been seen online. We have also seen the giant data assembly that has taken place which can manipulate voting and steer people to different discussion points.

● (1150)

The personal privacy information collected by political parties should also be clear. This way there will be more faith in the information that political parties get. More important, our democracy will be strengthened by privacy protection, not weakened or exempted with regard to the model being presented by the government right now.

We also want to be more technical and continue to have commercial activity defined under PIPEDA. This is more related to the business section aspect for fair and open transparency.

We want to deal with a particular issue in regard to algorithmic transparency. Algorithms can help direct purchasing and activity and can also manipulate someone. It will just get stronger because artificial intelligence is being introduced more and more into society in regard to all our products and services. This includes search engine searches, the types of purchases made with different corporations and a number of different activities that take place. It is important there be accountability and oversight for that.

A number of different things have been going on with regard to Canadians and their privacy. There is no doubt there will be more challenges with this bill. We want to go back to a number of different structures that take place with respect to this. Again, the New Democrats championed a digital bill of rights for many years. I want to highlight a few important things.

If we cannot have a fair, open and just society with regard to our digital footprint, we believe our democracy is threatened, our economy is threatened and, more important, investments into this country will be threatened. We will not have the same oversight that Europe or the United States have. That is very important to ensure that investment in Canada will take place.

It is important to note that if we are working toward things like access to telecommunication services all across Canada and we are investing in this, we need to think about the billions of dollars already spent on this, along with the additional money to be spent. We want this to be done right and proper, especially with COVID-19.

Over the years, as we have gone to more online services and invested in this, we have had opportunities. When we think about how we use this space for ourselves, whether it be commercial activity, entertainment or business, we sell off the spectrum. The spectrum is the infrastructure we can use. It is above us. It is the radio and capacity to move, most recently, the 5G network. We will see a spectrum auction.

In the past 20 years, \$22 billion of revenue has come into the public coffers with spectrum auctions. We have seen a patchwork of activity take place all across the country.

I previously mentioned Maxime Bernier, with the Conservatives, and most recently the Liberals. Several plans have emerged that are more a hodgepodge of applications. It is one program after another that is sought out. They are also providing massive subsidizations for those markets, which costs billions of dollars. Even the CRTC has a fund.

I can list a series of them, but the point is that if we are going through all this trouble and investment to create a society space for our digital world and economy and we are heavily investing in this, then we need to do it right, especially with a geography like Canada, which is so large. This can be a challenge, but given our population size and the fact that we have dense populations along the border and other places, we can turn this into an advantage for business investment as well.

The New Democrats believe this is part of our human right with respect to how people are treated online. This includes accountability from companies with regard to cyberbullying, privacy protection, speeds and affordability. They are combined. If we do not have this type of approach as a philosophical one, we leave ourselves open to having more winners than losers. It would be no different than having lost education opportunities for people and a requirement for the government to come in and do the right thing, which is to make things more affordable.

I mentioned the concentration of our population. It is important we tie this into the bill as we finally expand to rural and remote locations, and the security and accountability for that information.

● (1155)

We have talked a lot about preserving different cultures and providing business opportunities for areas that have been weakened because of their geography or lack of connectivity to large populations, but if we do not put a rules-based system in place that allows them to compete fairly, then they will fall to the wayside. Specifically, we could have a number of opportunities for smaller businesses to evolve, some scale-ups to take place, communities that could actually have some empowerment in getting to new markets and keeping the community stronger and together, but if it is not done in a way to have online privacy protection and so that businesses can compete in a fair way, then it is going to be lost.

One of the concerns we have in general, not only with regards to ourselves as a country but also the rest of the world with some of the web giants, is the consolidation of services and how online services are used. In Canada, our competition has not been the strongest at some points, but there is an opportunity as we do this, which is why this legislation is so important.

Government Orders

With the spectrum auction coming up, New Democrats have argued that charging as much money as we can to the telcos coming in and then seeing how things go results in what we have right now: less competition and higher prices, and prices that, quite frankly, limit people's participation in the digital world. This is a concern that we have, and so we have suggested to turn the spectrum auction around, like many other countries have done, and use it as a way to connect at lower costs by putting out expectations, such as an RFP-type model. When the bidding comes in, we may get a little less money coming in the front door, but the expectations are going to be higher and the requirements to connect rural or remote communities will be there. The telcos will use it or lose it. That is one of the things we believe could be a real benefit to move along the different programs.

Basically, what we have now is a series of programs out there where communities almost have to go on bended knee to get access, to get support to actually lower the price points to make things more competitive and attractive. Our model would have a reverse role. The business community would already have the expectation that the spectrum is less, but the time frame to connect Canadians is high, with the expectation that they use it or lose it, for those things to happen relatively quickly. In fact, industry has indicated that the NDP plan could take place and connect Canada within four years: 98% in three years and the last little part in the last year, because it is more difficult in some locations.

This is important and critical, because this potential law would lay out the framework on how that activity takes place. It is one of the reasons we believe this tribunal is one of the more interesting curiosities, and there are other things to talk about regarding that. However, if we spend all of this money, time and public policy and then do not get it right, we would have a weak and irresponsible approach to oversight in making sure that Canada does not have problems with regards to this. It is already going to create a skew in the public policy laws that we have. I fear that the bill, in its current form, if it does not sharpen up on those points, would create a skewed market for some years to come.

Parliament most likely will not deal with this again any time soon. It has taken far too long to get to this point. We have to get this through a minority Parliament, we have to get it through the Senate and we have to get it signed off by the Prime Minister at the end of the day. That is going to take some time and commitment, which we have with the New Democrats. We want to improve the bill, we want to make sure that it is stronger, but if we do not get these points right, we are going to undermine things. This is why, when we think about how important this is with our current public policy and our resources, everybody out there has been concerned about COVID-19 and the effects upon the broadband and the experience for education, involvement and commitment.

To conclude, the difference for New Democrats is that we believe that our human rights and digital rights are enshrined just as our physical rights. As we move to this type of engagement, as we see hybrids take place within workplaces, schools and other types of activity, this bill is a step forward, but it needs to be strengthened, and we can be counted on to do that. It is our intent to make Parliament work, but, more importantly, to make sure that we have laws that are going to work to protect Canadians.

• (1200)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the enforcement mechanism in the bill, which would be the establishment of a new tribunal that would be accessible and able to impose significant fines on those who violate the act. I want to take issue with appointments. As a government, since we took over we put in a very robust appointment process that is merit-based and represents the breadth of this country.

I want my friend to comment on what specific issues he has with such an accessible tribunal, which I believe is warranted in this situation.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I believe the vast majority of appointments, even when controversial ones have popped up, have been good people doing good things for Canadians. However, that type of appointment process lends itself to some degree of political meddling, corruption and also influence from the outside.

I have been in Ottawa for almost 19 years now, and I have seen a number of different stories played out over the years that give me concern. It is a legitimate concern in this bill, and it also can change with the governments that handle the appointment process. It is something of concern worth talking about.

With regard to who is on those committees and tribunals, it is about the length of time and the types of people on it. Only one of three to six tribunal members would need to have privacy law experience, and that is one specific example of my concern. These are very technical things to deal with.

• (1205)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns I have, being from a large rural constituency, is the interplay of this bill and the effect it may have on rural Canada, specifically small and medium-sized enterprises within rural and remote parts of Canada. I am wondering if the member would have comments on that.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, it is one of the key components of what we need to do to get right. As we are expanding into rural and remote Canada, we want to make sure there is even more confidence for the personal protection of privacy. Also, there is a bit of cultural change. So many of us in urban centres who have had access to high-speed Internet and other types of services have been used to some of that abuse, whereas we want to put in protections for small and medium-sized enterprises.

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Again, there are a number of different things. Net neutrality is a good example, but there are also algorithms and how they direct traffic and different businesses in different ways. When we see there is abuse taking place, it can also come at the expense of small and medium-sized businesses. One of the changes we are looking for is greater accountability to those formats because people literally put their whole life and efforts into small businesses. It was hard enough as it was before COVID-19, and now it is even worse.

As well, businesses are paying for the connections to be able to compete. Things we need to bring to account are things like the algorithms.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a leader within our caucus and is very well informed on this file and very knowledgeable about this very complex issue.

As he knows, I have been working on the heritage committee. We have also been looking at Facebook and the web giants and that cozy relationship the Liberals have with the web giants. We have seen that lobbying over the last few years tripled since the Liberals became the government.

In terms of personal privacy, I am wondering if the member could talk a bit about what he would like to see improved in this bill to make sure that cozy relationship does not get any sort of prevalence.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona for her hard work on this, and also for reinforcing the protection and strengthening of the Privacy Commissioner. That office has done wonders for this country. I have seen about four privacy commissioners in my tenure in Parliament, and they have all been strong. I have not always agreed with some of their decisions, but they certainly have been at the forefront of accountability in public policy in pushing for greater protection for Canadians. The U.S. does not have this. This is one of our moments of strength that we as a country have in a structure. The member is absolutely correct. We need to make sure the Privacy Commissioner's office is strengthened and remains independent because it has been an asset, not only for personal information but also for our businesses across this country.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Windsor West for his detailed assessment of Bill C-11. It is the first opportunity for me to speak to the bill. I certainly plan to vote for it at second reading to get to committee.

An amendment I hope to pursue at committee is an issue that the hon. member discussed. That is getting the PIPEDA framework in Canada to apply to political parties. Here in British Columbia at the provincial level, political parties have to meet privacy requirements. I commend the member for raising it early in debate, and ask if the New Democratic Party will also support amendments in committee?

Mr. Brian Masse: Yes, Mr. Speaker, New Democrats support amendments and we will be proposing several. There is no doubt about it.

I would like to acknowledge that British Columbia's privacy protection for decades has been recognized across North America and different parts of the world. There is no doubt that British Columbia will provide good opportunity for some lessons to strengthen our own Privacy Commissioner as well. That is key.

New Democrats support these changes. We have amendments prepared already, and we will be adding more amendments. We have to get this right. There is only going to be one chance at this in the near future as we are building out and doing things more online than before. We have to enshrine the philosophy that our human rights are connected here. If we do not enshrine that human rights are connected with regard to this, that one's digital rights are like one's physical rights, then we will be lost; and, we cannot do that. We have to win.

● (1210)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member for further comments in regard to the tribunal because that is a critical component here. The member has expressed great concern in terms of the timeliness of decisions being made by the tribunal. I wonder if he could just provide some further thoughts on how that issue could be best addressed. As opposed to focusing his attention on the appointments, are there mechanisms that he could see being put into place that would ensure a more timely response once issues have been raised?

Mr. Brian Masse: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the tribunal will be subject to a judicial review, and it could be challenged. The challenge that we are going to be faced with is that decisions could be pushed off down the line. For example, it could take a long time for CRTC decisions to come back and it is one of the most frustrating things. I give credit to our incumbents where they need to be given credit, as they have actually had to deal with a broken system, with CRTC not having the resources and the capabilities to get back in a timely manner. Therefore, the tribunal is going to be critical for that.

Having judicial experience added to it that is stronger than what is currently there and also making sure that some of the powers it has cannot overturn the Privacy Commissioner are some of the things I would like to see advanced in this bill.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Willowdale.

We increasingly live our lives online and our laws need to reflect that reality. Privacy is a human right and it is inextricably connected to our personal autonomy.

The Council of Europe's Convention 108 states, "The purpose of this Convention is to protect every individual, whatever his or her nationality or residence, with regard to the processing of their personal data, thereby contributing to respect for his or her human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in particular the right to privacy." The GDPR states, "This Regulation protects fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons and in particular their right to the protection of personal data."

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The incredible scale of data collection can be a powerful force, both for good and bad, so we need strong privacy and digital rights and a strong regulator to enforce them.

There is much in our government's Bill C-11, which is a serious reform of PIPEDA and certainly long overdue. I remember in June 2018, I introduced legislation simply to give the Privacy Commissioner new powers, which our privacy committee had twice unanimously recommended. We have come a long way since then with this substantive bill. OpenMedia said, "Bill C-11 is a big win for privacy in Canada."

While I have heard some reflections from experts and certainly from some parliamentary colleagues already about how the bill can potentially be improved, or some open questions about what might need to be fixed, it is certainly deserving of our support at second reading. I look forward to working with colleagues across party lines to improve the legislation at committee where we can.

At this point, to work at committee across party lines something of a detour is required. I want to specifically commend my Conservative Party colleagues from Prince George and Thornhill, my NDP colleague from Timmins—James Bay and my Liberal colleague from Kitchener Centre. We worked very long and hard on privacy issues in the last Parliament. We helped found the International Grand Committee, comprised of over 10 countries, to discuss these issues. We hosted the second meeting of the IGC in Ottawa. We tabled the report "Towards Privacy by Design" in February of 2018.

When we as parliamentarians talk about committee work and often the overlooked nature of the committee work, we do not always see that committee work turn into legislation. In this instance we have.

We recommended stronger consent rules and we see stronger rules in Bill C-11. We recommended algorithmic transparency and we see in Bill C-11 a commitment on transparency where systems are used to make predictions, recommendations or decisions about consumers. We recommended data portability and interoperability. We see those commitments in Bill C-11.

We see stronger powers for the Privacy Commissioner. I mentioned that need for a strong regulator, including order-making, auditing and the ability to levy fines. We see order-making powers. We see the ability to audit. We see a new tribunal, and while I understand some of the caution or questions members are raising in respect of this design, it is consistent with the competition commissioner and tribunal operations and worth looking at more seriously to see if it can be approved. However, through the tribunal, we see the ability to levy significant fines, in the magnitude of \$10 million to a maximum of \$25 million for more serious fines.

In terms of the course of that committee work, I want to reflect on a couple of stories about why this kind of legislation is so important and critical.

I think it was in the fall of 2017, when we were in the midst of the study on PIPEDA reform, that the member for Thornhill, the former member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, I believe I am getting that right, and I went down to Washington and met with other elected representatives there. We witnessed some of the hearings in rela-

tion to the Equifax breach, but we also met with Facebook officials. At that time, when a question was put by I think the member for Thornhill as to what Facebook's views were on the potential new regulations, they said absolutely no new regulations were required in Canada due to the strong framework through PIPEDA and, if there were new rules, that might affect Facebook's willingness and interest in investing in Canada. Certainly, we have come a long way since those kinds of conversations and push-back by big tech companies against stronger privacy rules.

• (1215)

We saw that Mark Zuckerberg unfortunately did not attend before the IGC, though he said he would like to work with parliamentarians around the world, but we can certainly say that the days of self-regulation are over and asking for regulation. Here is that kind of regulation in Canada.

On consent, I have to tell one other story that happened at committee. Again, we had Facebook officials there. We were in the midst of going down the rabbit hole of the Cambridge Analytica scandal and the Canadian context of that third-party app, which had shared so much information. I think it was under 300 Canadians who had used the app, but thousands of Canadians had their information shared. I put to Facebook at the time, "How is it that on the basis of meaningful consent thousands of Canadians could have agreed that their friends share their information through this third-party app and then share it with Cambridge Analytica?" With a straight face somehow, a Facebook representative said to me that it was in their terms and conditions.

That speaks to the problematic nature of consent in the existing law and the lack of meaningful consent. Thankfully, our Privacy Commissioner, despite his current lack of meaningful powers, pursued that line of inquiry and found that Facebook violated our current laws and took the matter to court. We know that with stronger consent rules, there would have been no ability for a Facebook representative to say with a straight face that there was meaningful consent.

Government Orders

Plain language is important. I would go further, though, and say that as we think about consent, particularly in a consumer context, I think we ought to be more wary of privacy by default. We have to be more concerned about privacy by default. Where there is a reasonable expectation of the consumer that information is going to be shared and used in a particular way, then explicit consent, obviously, ought not need to be required, but where there are secondary uses, where there are uses beyond a reasonable expectation of that consumer then, certainly, we need explicit opt-in consent. It needs to be very clear to consumers how their information is to be used, if at all.

I want to emphasize the consumer context because it is a curiosity of privacy legislation and a curiosity of consumer protection legislation that when I purchase my phone I do not have to read the terms and conditions. There is no expectation by government that I read the terms and conditions, yet I am protected. There are implied warranties pursuant to consumer protection legislation. I do not need to read those terms and conditions in order for my rights to be protected as a consumer, yet there is an expectation when I download any app on my phone that I read the terms and conditions. That cannot be a tenable state of affairs if we want to protect consumers. We cannot expect consumers to read every term and condition, and every consumer contract in the course of downloading applications, and in the course of living their lives, as I said, increasingly online. Our laws need to reflect that reality.

There are obviously some straightforward fixes for this legislation. The membership of the tribunal should obviously have greater privacy expertise. I think that is a no-brainer. We do have to think more deeply through some of these consent rules and how we can strengthen them potentially further. I would like to see us go beyond algorithmic explainability to some kind of algorithmic accountability.

I know that others have mentioned political parties being left out. I do not know that political parties need to be subject to PIPEDA specifically, but they ought to be subject to privacy legislation. If there is no further effort under way by the government, then I think PIPEDA may well be the place to do that.

Lastly, I think we have to focus on children, in particular, when we look at consent rules and protecting kids on the Internet. Previously, I have written and spoken publicly about my support for our right to be forgotten, but I do think we have to be more focused on our rules and protection for kids as they grow up with the Internet and live their entire lives online.

I will close by simply saying that this is a big bill. This is second reading and, certainly, all of us ought to support this in principle. I look forward to working with experts and colleagues to strengthen the bill at committee and get into the details.

• (1220)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one concern that has been highlighted by a number of other colleagues in this place is the fact that the bill may have the unintended consequence of creating an unlevel playing field for small and medium-sized enterprises, versus the big players. The big players have teams of lawyers and departments to deal with this sort of thing, as opposed to the small and medium-sized enterprises that

are going to have to grapple with the consequences of this sort of legislation.

Would the member be able to provide some context about any safeguards that may exist or any suggestions that he would have to ensure that there is in fact a level playing field in that regard?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would say a few things. First, the concept of proportionality is really important in this regard. Second, it is a live concern that should be addressed by the committee in some respect, but I would also note and would present some caution in response that there are some small companies that collect mountains of personal information. It is not necessarily the size of the company but the activities of the company that we ought to be most concerned about.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for an excellent speech. I felt I should have written it with him at some points, because we spent so much time together studying this and pushing the government for action. There are some key elements in this legislation that certainly come from our work together on the ethics committee.

I am interested in the issue of algorithmic accountability. I think that is something the ethics committee was way out front on. When I look at the other legislation, about having Facebook and Google under the CRTC, I feel it was the best idea for the 1990s. When we are dealing with algorithmic powers that are pushing extremist content, that are pushing Holocaust denial, and when we have seen how that is the real driver on the big social media platforms, and the inability of parliamentarians to actually look inside that black box, I would like to ask my hon. colleague how he would suggest we actually get some stronger accountability mechanisms on the algorithms that are pushing the content and driving people to certain sites and certain conversations.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to getting back to the ethics committee to work with the member for Timmins—James Bay on these issues.

When we look at the use of algorithms and the use of algorithms combined with just the scale of data collection that we see today, we can narrowly focus in on consumer privacy on the one hand, but on the other hand there are bigger conversations about how that information is used to target messages to us and the implications for our democracy. There is a reason, when we hosted that meeting in Ottawa for the IGC, that it was on big data, privacy and democracy.

In terms of algorithmic accountability specifically, I would say I am not certain yet what the perfect solution looks like, but I have always been interested in the work of the Treasury Board in respect of algorithmic impact assessments. It is clear enough, and I am glad to see in Bill C-11 that there is a commitment to algorithmic transparency.

Going further and having some body, potentially the Privacy Commissioner, able to look under the hood and audit algorithms and their potential positive and negative impacts is important. We need to figure out a way to do just that.

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• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the phenomenal amount of work that the standing committee did in order to help facilitate the recommendations.

Could the member provide some of his thoughts in regard to the pre-presentation work involved in the legislation? Does he have any closing thoughts on that?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would just say very quickly that this is one of the few examples I have seen in this Parliament, at this scale at least, where parliamentarians from all parties worked constructively and collegially. No one would have been able to tell which member of which party was asking questions of Facebook officials, Google officials and various representatives and other experts.

When we made those recommendations in February 2018, I do not think people were particularly seized with this issue. Then we went down the rabbit hole of Cambridge Analytica and really continued the examination of these issues and this work. Out of that work, I can see our committee work reflected in the legislation. I think members of all parties ought to be proud of that. We ought to now take that and work even more to improve the legislation going forward.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in speaking to the digital charter implementation act, 2020.

In today's ever-changing digital environment, Canadians have demanded better protection of their personal information. They have also demanded that organizations be held accountable for misusing their information. Stakeholders have told us that they want flexibility to innovate responsibly and want consistency with privacy rules everywhere else in other jurisdictions.

I am proud to say that the digital charter implementation act, which would enact the consumer privacy protection act, or CPPA, represents the most ambitious overhaul of Canada's private sector privacy regime since PIPEDA was first introduced, in 2000. CPPA would introduce significant changes to better protect the personal information of Canadians in the way they have been demanding, including, of course, with strong financial consequences for those who do not follow the law.

Prior to PIPEDA, in the 1990s, other countries around the globe introduced new laws to ensure that privacy was protected and that the opportunities afforded by e-commerce and the flow of information around the globe flourished. In particular, the EU introduced a privacy directive for its member countries to implement into their national laws.

Inspired by the EU law, Quebec introduced the first private sector privacy law in Canada in 1994. This was an important step forward, but it also raised the potential and, of course, the prospect for a patchwork of provincial privacy laws. With the prospect of multiple, possibly conflicting, rules and gaps in privacy protection that

could harm Canadians, the federal government needed to act. Canada required a national privacy standard to ensure consumer confidence and regulatory certainty for businesses.

At the outset of the new millennium, PIPEDA was created to address the privacy concerns arising from a period of technological disruption fuelled by the rise of the Internet. It provided a framework with robust privacy protections and the flexibility to support the legitimate needs of businesses to use personal information. It also provided a mechanism by which the provincial private sector privacy laws could be considered substantially similar. This meant that where such a law is accorded that designation, PIPEDA does not apply to an organization's activities within a province.

In 2004, Alberta and British Columbia passed private sector privacy laws that are considered substantially similar, as is Quebec's law. A number of newer provincial health information laws have also passed, since 2005, that have been appropriately designated as substantially similar.

PIPEDA would continue, however, to apply to the federally regulated sector in a province and to any personal information collected, used or disclosed in the course of commercial activities across provincial borders. This provided a stable regulatory environment and flexibility for the provinces, and supported Canada's trade interests for many years.

However, today we are faced with a changed environment. Today, in many ways, history is repeating itself, but the risks have evolved. The role of digital technologies is considerably more central to our lives than it was 20 years ago. Just consider our experience in recent months with the pandemic. To harness all that the modern digital world has to offer, we clearly needed to modernize our federal private sector privacy law.

In a globally connected economy, our laws needed to be consistent with those of other jurisdictions. Internationally agreed privacy rules, such as the OECD privacy guidelines, first introduced in 1980, were updated in 2013. So too, I might add, more recently, was the APEC privacy framework. Indeed, privacy laws based on these international norms have been changing and advancing in Europe, Japan, South America and New Zealand.

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• (1230)

What have these changes entailed? Core privacy principles have remained, though some have been expanded, such as accountability and breach reporting. New elements, such as enhancing rights of erasure and mobility rights, a greater emphasis on transparency, more certainty for businesses and consumers through codes certification and stronger consequences for non-compliance, have been the principal hallmarks of many of these evolving changes.

Closer to home, this summer, Quebec introduced amendments to its private sector privacy law, and B.C. recently conducted a study on its own laws. Ontario too is considering introducing a new private sector privacy law. Stakeholders have told us they are worried about the burden of multiple laws with different requirements. They demanded harmonization here at home.

There is a clear need for the progress and reforms included in the digital charter implementation act, 2020. If we do not act, there is a risk of further fragmentation of privacy rules across the country. We need to keep up with changing technology and business practices, and incorporate the best international practices, protocols and safeguards in our own domestic laws. We also need to set a common standard for privacy protection for the private sector across Canada.

Like the current PIPEDA, the new CPPA would be grounded in the federal trade and commerce powers. It recognizes the very importance of doing business on a national basis and in an economy that must work across provincial boundaries. Also, like PIPEDA, it would provide for a mechanism to recognize provincial laws that are substantially similar. These regulations would set out the criteria and process for such recognition or for reconsideration of it, and would continue to provide the provincial flexibility that has been important to PIPEDA's success. CPPA, like its predecessor, would maintain the Privacy Commissioner's ability to collaborate and cooperate with his or her provincial counterparts, an important tool to ensure consistency.

As the minister emphasized earlier today, the focus should always be on compliance. Some ask why we cannot have just one national law. The answer, of course, is that Canada is a federation; there is a division of powers. Indeed, the provinces provide important coverage that a national law cannot, under our Constitution.

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the international context.

We live in an interconnected world. Data are constantly flowing across borders. In 2002, the European Commission recognized PIPEDA as providing adequate protection relative to EU law, allowing for the free flow of personal information between Canadian and European businesses. However, in 2018, a new EU regulation came into effect: the General Data Protection Regulation. It updated many of the existing requirements and added strong financial penalties for contraventions. The EU is currently reviewing its existing adequacy decisions, including the one applying to Canada.

That is why the government launched Canada's digital charter in 2019. Its 10 guiding principles offer a firm foundation on which to build an innovative and inclusive digital and data economy. The principles of ensuring interoperability, a level playing field, strong

enforcement and real accountability are clearly reflected in the digital charter implementation act.

I want to thank members for their attention today, and I can assure them that our approach to privacy protection respects the privacy rights of Canadians. It is pragmatic, principled, meets our trading needs and provides a consistent, coherent framework that Canadians and stakeholders can rely on.

With Bill C-11, we will continue to encourage trade and investment and grow an economy that extends across provincial and international borders alike.

• (1235)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bill seems to nibble around the edges of, but is never really clear on, the issue of classifying individual sites and social media networks by whether they are content curators or publishers. This is an important aspect. A regular newspaper is held to account by our libel laws, yet many of our online content curators are not.

I am wondering if the member feels this is an appropriate place to answer that question or if it should be decided somewhere else.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, as I tried to highlight in my remarks, we recognize that it is incredibly important to look at the practices of the provinces and look at the legal regimes and frameworks that have been adopted in other jurisdictions around the world. There are many scenarios in which we had to ensure the bill would provide a fair and stable legal framework for everyone operating within the ambit of the law. We went over many scenarios, and I can assure the member that the result, which is this legislation, has considered them. It has looked at practices in other jurisdictions, and I think we can all be incredibly proud that we will have a privacy law that is the gold standard for the world.

• (1240)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments. They were very interesting.

I know this has been brought up already today, but I want to hear from the member about it. We know that Bill C-11 does not explicitly deal with political parties, and we have heard members within the government and from the opposition parties ask that it be included.

If the member could comment on why this was not included in Bill C-11, that would be great.

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Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague that this question has arisen on quite a few occasions since this legislation was first tabled by the minister. What I can say is that the pith and substance of this legislation deals with commercial activities. That is the first thing we should all bear in mind.

However, the member raised an incredibly important issue. We should make sure our political parties are acting in a responsible fashion. That is precisely why, as the member is well aware, we recently updated the Elections Modernization Act to ensure that political parties are acting in a responsible fashion.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I read the legislation with interest. There is one aspect of things that happen online that concerns me, and I am wondering if it will or has come up in conversations. It is the sneaky little personality tests that we see that ask someone to answer questions or enter their birth date. We learned from the analysis of Cambridge Analytica that this is a way it gathered thousands of data points on a huge population. It is a form of privacy invasion, and it is very insidious. It looks like a fun little game, yet people are taking it, scraping it and using it for a commercial advantage.

I am wondering if this is an issue we will consider.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Mr. Speaker, as we heard earlier, in the first part we had members of Parliament look into the various machinations that can be found online, and the ethics committee did an incredible job. It looked at Cambridge Analytica and other issues that were of concern to all of us and made some recommendations. In addition to that, as I noted, we looked at the best practices of other jurisdictions as well. We fully came to realize, as the member rightly pointed out, that if a company is to collect data, it is imperative that there be meaningful consent. This is really at the core of the legislation that was tabled by the minister last week.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise again today to address Bill C-11. This bill, when printed, is nearly an inch thick. It is a monster bill for around here. It is a timely bill, as well. I am looking forward to delving into it. I have not had the opportunity to read through it in great detail to this point, but I want to speak to it.

This is a top-of-mind issue for many Canadians. One of the things I want to point out right off the top is that when someone is online and a virtual persona, if they think they are getting a free product, they are actually the product. That is the thing to remember and many folks do not seem to realize that. That is something I have not seen in this bill, which is important. I think it is missing from this bill, although this bill may not be seeking to address that specifically.

There could be some sort of public awareness campaign, much the same as we have done with cigarettes. In the past, the public was trained that if someone smoked cigarettes, they would get cancer. We could do this for online profiles and show the dangers and what is going on out there.

As well, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam mentioned what is actually happening with our data. We think we are filling out a fun game or personality test, but we are actually giving away data. It can be harvested commercially to send advertisements and promote certain products.

We continue to see more invasion of our privacy. I do not know about other members, but the thing that jumped out at me, during my first cursory read of this bill, was the term “algorithm transparency”. That is something I am really fascinated by.

On the weekend, my friend was telling me that he took his phone, laid it on the table and he and his friends talked about white rabbits for three to four minutes. They just said the words “white rabbits” often. Then they opened up his phone, went to Facebook and the advertisements he was getting were about white rabbits. Our phones are listening to us and there are algorithms that are promoting certain things.

We can probably turn that feature off and mute the microphones on our phones all the time if we know how to do that, if we care enough about it or are concerned about that kind of thing. There is a joke that the Chinese are listening to us. It is just an assumption that is being made. I do not think there is actually somebody listening on the other end, but there is an algorithm that is obviously listening to what we are saying and trying push products toward us that we are interested in.

The white rabbit story is interesting. It is not necessarily something that would come up in day-to-day discussions. However, I know that if we connect to someone else's WiFi then suddenly we start getting different advertisements. My cousin has a CNC plasma cutting table for cutting metal. It is really cool, but what is interesting is that when I go to his house and connect to his WiFi, which is also connected to that CNC plasma table, I start getting advertisements for CNC cutting tables. That is wild and fascinating. The algorithm transparency piece is one of the most fascinating pieces of this law.

Sometimes on Facebook, we get ads. We can click on the “X” to get rid of the ad. When an ad comes up, one wonders why they are seeing it. If I could get an answer for that, that would be amazing.

• (1245)

I am interested in that. What is being fed into the system that is promoting this particular ad to me? That is something I am really interested in knowing. At this point, there seems to be no recourse whatsoever to know why these ads show up. In my virtual personality that lives out on the Internet and in the data collected on me, what recent actions in particular have I undertaken that have driven this particular ad into my feed? I am fascinated to see if we are going to be able to bring that transparency with this bill. I am not necessarily convinced we will be able to do it, but I am fascinated by it.

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The other piece I do not think this bill addresses at all is the question of social media platforms or Internet platforms being message boards or publishers. This continues to be a sticking point. There have been committee hearings with the major social media platforms, and we have seen countries around the world seek to grapple with this issue. This is precisely what governments ought to be doing.

What it means to govern and to legislate is to come up with a system that balances the interests of all people in a way of our choosing. That is what it means to be in a democracy. That is what it means to be governed by ourselves, so to speak. In many cases we see effective lobbying efforts by organized groups, and in particular commercial interests, that do not necessarily allow the government to get that balance right.

We see in the news how we grapple to enable this. Some large social media platforms have amassed a wealth that exceeds that of many nations. Some of the largest nations in the world are able to compete with this, but many smaller nations do not have the resource capacity many of these large media companies do, so there is tension there. I compliment this bill in that it is attempting to have that discussion.

Do I trust the Liberals to get it right? No, typically not, but I commend them for bringing this forward and beginning the conversation. This is going to be a long conversation. Like I said before, this bill is an inch thick.

The member for Scarborough—Rouge Park just made a comment. I do not quite know what he said, but I am sure he was complimenting me on my speech. I thank him and appreciate that.

Around algorithmic transparency, the piece that is really important, and that I do not think this bill quite grasps, is whether platforms are curating content, publishing it or choosing winners and losers. The algorithmic transparency of that is a big concern for me, and I know it is a big concern for many people across the country. It is interesting this is a concern for people both on the right and the left. It is a concern for all the political parties. It is a concern for ideological differences, and in general for what is curated and what is deemed to be on the platform.

This is also a concern for the platforms themselves, in that one particular message that comes from a platform can then become part of a mob mentality. People could then really go after it.

● (1250)

There is no protection, necessarily, for platforms because there is ambiguity about whether they are responsible for messages on the message board and, if they are, whether they are liable as a newspaper would be. That is the major challenge.

While I am not convinced, at this point, that we will get algorithmic transparency in that sense, it is important to be able to tell people, “This is our algorithm, this is how messages get on the board. We are not responsible for the messages and, therefore, this is how the system works.” There is no human input. It is just a sophisticated method of getting messages in front of people that they want to see, that they think are interesting and that they find helpful.

For the most part, I would say we are getting that right. Where there is some concern is about political messaging. We have already seen that Facebook has worked hard on that, but there is always a spectrum, I would say, of political messaging. There is explicit party messaging, which is relatively easy to monitor and manage, but then there is political messaging that goes farther afield. When it is a random, individual Canadian doing political messaging, how is that managed? That is when it will be really important for us to get the algorithmic transparency piece right.

There is another thing I am interested in seeing and have not seen. Part of the government's rollout on this bill has been pushing freedom from hate and from violent extremism. That is important to me. The managing of the Internet and platforms around violent and degrading sexually explicit material has been something I have worked on in this place. It was in 2017 that the House unanimously passed a motion for the government to study the impacts of violent and degrading sexually explicit material.

This was something that had not been studied since 1985. I was not even born in 1985, so that tells us it was a long time ago. The member for Fleetwood—Port Kells is shaking his head at me. I am not sure what that belies about me or him, but it was a while back, before I was born and before the Internet existed.

A study on the impacts of violent and degrading sexually explicit material was done in 1985. I remember distinctly, in 1991, going to my uncle's house. He had gotten the Internet. I had heard about it and said I wanted to see the Internet, so he showed me where the phone line plugged into the wall. I asked if that was it and he said we should look at it. He turned his computer on. It had a giant monitor and a big tower beside his desk that hummed. Members may remember the sound coming through the speaker of dial-up Internet. I remember, for the first time ever, seeing the Internet. We went to dogpile.com, which was an early search engine. That was the beginning of the Internet for me, in 1991.

Here we are nearly 30 years later, and we are still grappling with how to manage this. It is a public information highway. There are public highways all over the country, and the government manages a licensing system for folks who get to use the public highways and roads. There is no controversy around that. It seems like an effective way to manage it. Given that it is tangible and we can see it in front of us, that is a manageable thing. In reality, we are dealing with the information highway. Up to this point, there has been very little direction on the role of the government in managing the expectations of Canadians.

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• (1255)

Many parents who I have talked to are looking for tools they can use to protect their children online, and they are not satisfied with being told they should just be better parents. They say they want help from the Internet service providers. They want help from their government. They want the ability to have some recourse with these large platforms. I am interested to see that.

The government says the Internet should be free from hate and violent extremism. That is something that I support notionally. Video imaging is the area where I am most concerned. In the other direction, I am concerned about free speech, and particularly the use of words and typed messaging. That, I guess, is a little harder to manage. However, particularly with images and video content, I think there is a lot of room for the government to operate in, especially with the violent and extremely degrading sexually explicit material that we have seen since 2007.

Since then, we can chart the impacts of those on Canadian society on a number of different indicators, and they have gotten worse. We see this particularly with our children in terms of the loneliness index going up and the isolation index going up. All of these things are exacerbated by the COVID lockdowns.

These are all things that we need to ensure come into this. Freedom from hate and violent extremism is necessary, and we have to get that right. This is what governments are built for. This is what we need to do, and we have to get it right, so I am looking forward to continuing debate around that.

The last thing I want to point out, which I find to be a little interesting, and I am hoping for some answers on from the government side, is this bill, the procedure of the House and how this bill will roll out over time. I must say this bill was unceremoniously dumped on Parliament. I was not anticipating it. I have been working on these issues for a while, and it was not something that was clearly on my radar.

I had written to the Minister of Canadian Heritage around this issue, and I was wondering how he was going to manage it, because I do remember seeing in his mandate letter that he was to try to remove hate and violent extremism from Canada through the Internet. I had some ideas and concerns around that, so I had written to him about it. I did not receive any feedback back saying the bill is coming, so I was a little surprised that this bill came when it did.

The other thing that I am really looking for an answer on is why the rumour around here is that this bill will be going to the ethics committee. I am wondering why the bill is going to the ethics committee. This seems like a bill built for the industry committee. That is typically where this would be dealt with, so I am left wondering. The ethics committee is seized with a number of other issues, and I am wondering why this bill would be rumoured to be headed toward the ethics committee, when industry seems like the committee that would be more in tune with where we would like to go with this particular bill.

I am going to be continuing to monitor the debate around this bill. I am looking forward to having a robust debate. I know that, given the size of the bill, we will be discussing it for a while,

whether in this place, in the other place or in the committee, as well as out there in the general public.

• (1300)

I know that this will be a hot topic of discussion. I look forward to continuing that debate, and I look forward to the questions.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Peace River—Westlock and I have worked together for a number of years. In fact, I was complimenting him when he was speaking, as he said some decent things about the government, which is quite unusual. In any event, I want to thank the member for his walking us through, essentially, the history of technology to where we are today.

In terms of the enforcement mechanisms built into this piece of legislation, could the member comment on its effects and what elements could strengthen that piece? I believe this is a very important tool. Any legislation without proper enforcement would be a failure, but in this case, we have a very robust system in place.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, the jury is still out on the enforcement piece, given this is a brand new piece of legislation and the enforcement tools would be brand new.

I work a lot in the area of human trafficking and around multi-jurisdictional cases, where many of these players are headquartered in other countries. These multi-jurisdictional cases tend to get very slippery.

I have concerns, and I am sure the member shares those concerns. While this is a good first attempt, I think we will be constantly updating these particular privacy laws to continue to get the results we are looking for, in both directions, whether it is in overly aggressive fines, or where clear perpetrators are just getting away with it. I think we will be fine-tuning this over the long term.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question to the member who just spoke.

My colleague said that he has numerous concerns that are not being addressed by the bill in its essence. If we take the bill for what it is, and not what it is not, we can see that its provisions currently do not apply to the government. As we have seen, the government has not taken all the necessary steps to protect the identity of people making requests.

What does my colleague think of that?

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, the question is in regard to folks who request their data to be turned over, to be able to see what data a particular company has on them. I think that is a good start.

In terms of the government, I do believe, if my memory serves me well, that that has been a long-standing process for quite a while already. People can request that information from the government and learn what data the government holds.

If the member is talking about political parties, that has not been the case. I do not think the bill is dealing with political parties at all. We deal with that in the Elections Act. I think there is an ongoing discussion with the Elections Act around data and data management there. In terms of the spam legislation that was brought in a number of years ago, there are special provisions for political parties there as well, most of which I agree with.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to hear some of my colleague from Alberta's stories.

There has been some discussion today about new categories of data being exempt from privacy protections. I am wondering if the members feel that is a worrying step, considering that it gives the opportunity for a Liberal government to give away to big tech giants, which we have already seen it is potentially too close to.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member put her finger right on the issue, which is that the coziness between particular governments and particular media platforms is a concern. I talked about that in my speech as well, saying this is something that is not an ideology from the left or the right.

We see it happening with governments, in particular when they are in power, having a cozy relationship with a particular platform, and how that can sway public opinion on things. I share her concern on that. I think that if she continues to hold her finger on that particular issue, all the rest of the stuff might be spinning around, but that is the crux of the matter.

● (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just because Google and Facebook exist and are on the Internet, one should not make the assumption that there is this wonderful cozy relationship. Whether it is coming from the Conservatives, New Democrats or the Bloc, it is as if they are trying to say that the government of the day is in the pockets of these groups. I find this interesting, as nothing could be further from the truth. We all know that. That is a reality, and one of the reasons we have the legislation that we have before us. There was a great deal of effort to get here.

I wonder if my friend across the way would provide his thoughts in regard to some of the work that was done prior? It was done in an apolitical fashion at the standing committee, where there were members from all political parties actually contributing to what we have here today.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the member listened to a word of my speech prior to his question, but I would like to point out that Facebook has met with the government over 140 times. This has been widely consulted, as he says, and widely lobbied on as well. He will have to forgive me for doubting his intervention there.

I know that in some cases a large media company's value can outstrip a nation's value. This is something that we need to manage. In my speech I pointed out that the exact thing the government is in charge of is managing the relationship of its citizens. Corporations

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are another citizen, and we need to manage the relationships between citizens. I think this is a noble attempt.

I know that this will be an ongoing conversation. I look forward to seeing where that takes us.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask my colleague a question regarding the interplay of public and private data in agricultural circumstances. One of the challenges that I see with this bill is the disparity that exists between urban and rural Canada.

I would be curious to know if my friend has considered aspects of the bill, specifically in regard to the private and public data that is used in modern agriculture for small and medium-sized enterprises associated with the developing industry of our egg producers.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, agriculture and data is a growing area of expertise. I would just point out that if someone goes to a John Deere dealership today, one of the things they will see there is a dirt probe. I used to think that John Deere just sold tractors, but today they sell a moisture probe with a weather station on top of it. They will set that up in the field so that a person, via satellite and cellphone, will get real-time information about the soil conditions, soil nutrients and weather conditions of the fields, which may be scattered around the country.

Martin Deerline, the John Deere dealer in my area, has a whole suite of those data collection agencies. People have to pay a particular monthly fee for that service. Where that data goes and how it is all managed, I am sure, is covered by this bill.

I look forward to hearing from them at committee.

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that I will be splitting my time with the member for Richmond Hill.

I am speaking here on the traditional unceded lands of the Algonquin people.

At the outset, I want to thank the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and his team for bringing forward Bill C-11, an act to enact the consumer privacy protection act, CPPA, and the personal information and data protection tribunal act. These are important aspects as we, as a country, address the issues of privacy in relation to the enormous amount of information that is constantly gathered, and exists about all of us.

We are in an age when with a cellphone we have more information at our disposal than several libraries put together. We are able to access personal information about virtually anyone who has a public profile, and certainly about anyone who has created a profile in one of the major platforms, whether it be Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok or LinkedIn, and the list goes on.

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These have posed obvious questions for all of us as policy-makers or even as individual consumers in terms of how this information is used, how it is reproduced, copied and misused. We have seen the worst of it over the years in platforms like Facebook where information may have been reused over and over again.

At the centre of this legislation are three major aspects. First and foremost is consumer control over individuals' personal information that is out there.

Second, it is about innovation. I know the previous speaker spoke about the balancing act that we need in order to ensure free speech and privacy.

The third element is to make sure that innovation continues. Innovation is absolutely important for a country like Canada. I know many innovators in my community who have done exceptionally well. I have spoken about many of them here. The University of Toronto Scarborough campus has a hub in which many local innovators have come forward and have developed in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park.

Members may know of the company, Knowledgehook. It is a company founded by my good friend Travis Ratnam. The company was just given additional funding of \$20 million to expand the program. It is a platform that allows students and teachers to work together to use AI, devise curriculum and make sure that the weaknesses of each student are highlighted to the teachers so that the teachers can respond.

In all of these new forms of technology, there are questions of privacy. We worry about the relationship between, for example, companies gathering data for the purpose of insurance, whether health, life, or auto insurance, and the data that sometimes is readily captured in our day-to-day use.

All of these issues have become pronounced during COVID. We see that education, for example, is now online for many students whose parents choose to have their kids study from home via the Internet; or for many post-secondary students who are studying virtually. I always go back to the University of Toronto Scarborough campus, which is located in my riding, but there is also Centennial College, where most of the students are learning virtually. These again have complicated the challenges for ensuring that privacy is maintained.

● (1315)

The digital charter that is before us does really allow for consumers to have control over their personal information, and it allows for innovation and a strong enforcement oversight. Sadly, the enforcement aspect has been quite weak in Canada over the years. We do not have adequate enforcement. In fact, technology itself is hard to enforce, whether in Canada or other parts of the world.

The enforcement mechanism that is built into this legislation is critically important for us to look at. It is what makes this legislation accessible to individuals who may have a complaint. The enforcement mechanism looks to have individuals appointed through the order in council process.

I want to speak about the way our government, since taking office in 2015, has managed to put together proper processes to ap-

point individuals to these important bodies, including judiciary and administrative tribunals, but also other bodies that make critical decisions.

We are focused on ensuring a merit-based system that ensures the individual is fully qualified to make decisions on a particular issue. For me, my work on the Standing Committee on Immigration and Refugees was a great learning experience. I saw first-hand how the IRB was transformed from a patronage-based appointment process to one that is merit-based. We see decisions coming out of the IRB that are fully reflective of the quality of candidates we put on those boards.

When we look at appointments, it is meritocracy, but also diversity. We note that in previous governments, judicial appointments have often been focused on men. In fact, in the last several years, we have now achieved gender parity. We are looking at enhancing that and we are working toward greater diversity among other groups in Canada, including people with disabilities. I believe the enforcement mechanism is critical and we have taken concrete steps in that regard.

To note, there are monetary penalties that this tribunal could issue. For example, there is a penalty of 3% of global revenue or \$10 million for non-compliant organizations. For a company like Facebook, Google or one of the major outfits, 3% of their global revenues is significant. The maximum penalty is 5% of global revenue or \$25 million for certain types of contraventions.

The government and the Minister of Innovation have brought forward a very important piece of legislation. It appears to have the support of all parties. I am particularly impressed with the data protection tribunal act that is built into this bill and the mechanisms that allow for individuals to access the type of redress that is required.

I look forward to questions from my friends opposite.

● (1320)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting piece of legislation. One of the questions that was posed earlier in the debate had to do with the fact that political parties are omitted from this legislation and that their use of personal information is not considered. The response provided by the Minister of Industry earlier was that the bill really deals with commercial uses of data, yet I read in the index of the legislation that it also deals with “statistical or scholarly study or research”, “Records of historic or archival importance”, and “artistic or literary purposes”. These are clearly not commercial uses.

Does the member agree that it is an omission that political parties are not dealt with by the bill?

Government Orders

• (1325)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I think many of us have been watching elections overseas in the last several weeks, and I am quite impressed with our Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Canada, which is an independent body that regulates elections. I believe that Elections Canada is well suited to be the arbiter of these issues, particularly with respect to elections. It is definitely an area that our Elections Commissioner will take note of in the coming years.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to pick up on that point, whether it is Elections Canada or the commissioner, there is opportunity to ensure that these lists are protected, and there are instructions given out to parties, candidates and people who are recipients of the data.

I do not know, but this may be a better question to ask to the members who put forward the question, whether or not Elections Canada has actually solicited this sort of a recommendation. I am not necessarily aware of it, but I would be very much interested if in fact members of the New Democrats or the Bloc, who have raised this issue, have been in talks with Elections Canada. This is more of a comment than anything else.

My question to my colleague is more in terms of getting this type of legislation forward and how it would help individual Canadians and businesses going forward, because through this legislation, we would see new regulations to protect our interests. Would he not see that as a very strong positive for all of us?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, every candidate who puts forward their name signs a declaration with Elections Canada about privacy and on the information that we receive from Elections Canada, and so I think that there are mechanisms in place with Elections Canada to address some of the privacy concerns.

Obviously, with respect to this particular piece of legislation, I do want to reiterate the enforcement mechanism, which is critical, but enforcement sometimes is inaccessible to the average Canadian. I believe that the tribunal process that is set up here would allow individual Canadians to access some closure and support for challenges that they may have with a breach of privacy.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting point that was raised about Elections Canada.

I believe that Elections Canada has strong rules around the use of the voters list, but, of course, political parties collect personal information using so many other means. It is the regulation of that other information that is particularly germane and could be covered under this piece of legislation, which is something that we have been pushing for.

Could the member comment on the omission of any treatment of that kind of information?

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree: Mr. Speaker, I believe these are the types of questions that ought to be brought up at committee, and I do think that it is a valid concern. Again, back to Elections Canada, when we look at the governance of political parties, at third-party advertising and all the different measures that our government in

the last Parliament and previously has put forward, I do think that Elections Canada is best equipped to address the issues of privacy, which are absolutely valid. I appreciate the question, but I do think it should be within that purview.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak about the digital charter implementation act, 2020. I want to talk specifically about the balanced approach to the compliance and enforcement set out in the consumer privacy protection act, also known as the CPPA.

Canadians have told us they want to see strong consequences for those who mishandle their personal information. Financial consequences can be an important tool in protecting Canadians' privacy, but so is helping organizations comply with the law at the outset.

I am pleased to say that the CPPA takes a very balanced approach to compliance and enforcement. It would help companies get privacy right from the ground up, and takes a phased approach to enforcement to correct problems as soon as they are discovered. The CPPA would incentivize organizations to get their practices right from the start, and the Privacy Commissioner would have a prominent role in supporting these organizations.

Under the CPPA, businesses would be able to approach the Privacy Commissioner for a no-risk review of their privacy management program and help them comply with the law. The commissioner could also ask to review their business programs, without using what he finds in an enforcement action. This is a very important step in early correction of problems. Under the current privacy regime, companies subject to the law are already required to establish a privacy management program, which would be maintained in the CPPA.

Privacy management programs can cover a wide range of issues, such as how companies handle service providers or third parties that support their businesses, how they respond to security breaches, privacy risk assessments, mitigation measures undertaken, and so on.

However, what is new is enabling the Privacy Commissioner to have a look at these policies and practices outside of an investigation. This would provide a safe space in which the commissioner could provide advice and companies could quickly take action. At the same time, the commissioner would benefit from examples of the challenges organizations are facing and their needs in the privacy space.

We know Canadian companies, especially smaller ones and those starting out, will be very interested in these changes.

Government Orders

The CPPA would also recognize not all organizations are the same. Some deal with minimal amounts of personal information, and for others it is central to their business model. Therefore, the CPPA would allow organizations to develop their programs according to the volume and sensitivity of the personal information they handle, as well as a company's revenues.

The Privacy Commissioner has had a long-standing role in undertaking research and publishing guidance. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry has also long had the ability to ask the commissioner to conduct research on privacy issues. This ability would remain in the CPPA. However, the minister would now be able to ask the commissioner to conduct research into the implementation or operation of the act. This would help the government know how well the law is functioning.

The Privacy Commissioner has prepared a lot of guidance materials over the years. We support this vital role. We want to reinforce a long-standing practice of the Privacy Commissioner to consult with stakeholders in guidance development. This practice would now exist in law so that guidance can be informed by what is happening on the ground.

The Privacy Commissioner would also consult with government institutions where relevant. There may be times when government policy may be implicated, such as with trade policies or public health.

These past months have shown us how vital it is for federal organizations to have a unified response on our most pressing challenges. By legislating, we are providing certainty to Canadians that guidance has been discussed with those on the ground.

I have stated how the bill would ensure organizations build privacy considerations from the start. Working with organizations and giving guidance individually is a fundamental role of the Privacy Commissioner. We want to avoid any problems, but there will be organizations that do not get things right.

- (1330)

The law provides individuals with the right to challenge an organization's compliance with the law, and it allows them to file complaints with the Privacy Commissioner. This is an important exercise of their privacy rights, and the Privacy Commissioner retains his ability to initiate a complaint investigation where there are reasonable grounds to do so. The CPPA would also encourage the resolution of problems as early in the process as possible, and the bill would provide for dispute resolution.

Compliance agreements, a new tool introduced under PIPEDA, would remain in the CPPA. Companies are encouraged to come to the table to work out an agreement with the commissioner, without resorting to more formal measures such as orders. If no resolution is possible under PIPEDA, the commissioner would make recommendations at the end of an investigation and the matter may go to court. The court would then start again, with a new proceeding, and maybe it would issue an order. Few cases have gone that route, however.

Under the CPPA, the commissioner would be able to issue orders as well. To ensure fairness, a new process, called an inquiry, inter-

nal to the Privacy Commissioner's office, would be introduced prior to issuing orders. Once the inquiry is over, the commissioner would issue his findings and decisions and may make orders to an organization to change its practices to bring it into compliance.

The Privacy Commissioner may also recommend administrative monetary penalties, or AMPs, to a new tribunal for certain contraventions of the CPPA. The personal information and data protection tribunal would hear any appeals of the commissioner's decision and, if required, would decide whether to issue an AMP and, if so, the amount.

In our consultations, many industry stakeholders expressed concern over AMPs, which have the potential to significantly affect an organization's bottom line and even put smaller companies out of business altogether. By introducing an inquiry phase before issuing orders, and by separating the imposition of AMPs from the commissioner's other responsibilities, the CPPA would support additional due diligence in decisions to impose AMPs.

We anticipate that some organizations will challenge the commissioner's orders and recommendations. We do not wish to burden the courts. This is another reason for introducing a new tribunal. It is intended to be less formal than the court and ease access to justice for organizations and individuals. After the tribunal issues a decision, if an organization or individual wants to, they could proceed to federal court and request judicial review.

As my colleagues can see, overall this is a very balanced and phased approach. The CPPA would place strong emphasis on proactive compliance activities, such as reviews of the privacy management programs, guidance development and consultation. When there are possible contraventions, the goal is resolution. If that cannot be achieved, matters would become more formal. This graduated approach to enforcement is built on the foundations of fairness, transparency and meaningful opportunities on all sides to achieve compliance, which is what we know Canadians want.

Many have said that Canada's private sector privacy law needs more teeth. The digital charter implementation act, 2020, would give it that, and it would do it in a way that organizations that want to do the right thing have the incentive to do so from the start.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak about how this important bill works to address Canadians' concerns in a measured way.

Government Orders

• (1335)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to my friend about the enforcement mechanisms. What are the major aspects of them that would allow individual consumers to get results through a complaint process?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the member for sharing his time with me and for his great intervention earlier.

I noticed the member talked extensively about enforcement. He highlighted that the legislation would provide administrative monetary penalties of up to 3% of global revenue or \$10 million for non-compliant organizations. Also, it contains an expanded range of offences for certain serious contraventions of the law, subject to the maximum of 5% of global revenue or \$25 million.

These are some of the enforcement mechanisms that will be accessible once the process has been completed.

• (1340)

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the member believe there has been adequate consultation regarding this legislation, particularly with the provinces that have their own privacy acts covered under PIPEDA?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, I believe that yes, there has been sufficient consultation. The genesis of the bill goes back to 2000, and through the progress of time, there have been a number of consultations, in 2017 and 2019.

As the member is quite aware, a number of provinces have legislation equivalent to PIPEDA or the CPPA. The most important thing is that all levels of government are working together to ensure that the privacy of individuals' personal information is protected.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the same question I previously asked another hon. member. It is about data security.

The bill targets private companies. With the CERB, we recently saw that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people were victims of fraud. When they receive their notice of assessment in April or May, they will learn that they owe money because they did not qualify for the CERB and collected it illegally.

If the government is working on cleaning up privacy laws in the private sector, why not put its own data protection system in order?

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question for many Canadians, as news continuously provides updates on non-compliance. There are a number of individuals who are non-compliant.

I believe the initial rollout of the program was related to data that needed privacy protection from various government levels. This is a great opportunity for us to explore other dimensions of government bodies that are dealing with the privacy of information and how they will manage it. I am looking forward to hearing testimony about this at committee.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill C-11.

We are surrounded by data that seems to be out of control, lost by corporations, sometimes stolen from governments. Data that we voluntarily give up about ourselves is being collected billions of bytes at a colossal rate. It has a tremendous impact on our privacy and what is being calculated or inferred about us in our daily lives, such if we have a good credit rating, or if we can buy a car or when we go for drinks with a colleague. All of this is very much apparent today, particularly during this health crisis when people are definitely at home and using the Internet to a greater extent.

Everything we do today has some impact on data. Whether we take an Uber or order a meal, that data is collected. Quite frankly, we need to ensure people's privacy is protected.

Why does privacy matter? It is a question that has arisen in the context of this global debate, made worse by this pandemic, where millions around the world have come to rely on computers to carry out a function for their very lives. When we hear arguments about Internet privacy. A lot of what we hear about this mass surveillance is that there is no real harm due to this large-scale invasion, that people have nothing to hide. Those engaging in bad acts have a reason to want to hide and care about their privacy.

This is presupposed on the assumption that there are good and bad people in the world. Bad people who plot to take down governments and plan public attacks are the people who have reason to care about their privacy. By contrast, there are good people, people who go to work, pay taxes, care for their children and use the Internet, not to plot civil destruction but to read the news and find recipes. These people are doing nothing wrong and have no reason to hide.

In a 2009 interview of the long-time CEO of Google, Eric Schmidt, when asked about the different ways his company was causing the invasion of privacy for hundreds of millions of people around the world, he said, "If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place." There are many issues with this statement, one being that this is the very Eric Schmidt who blocked his employees at Google from speaking with the online Internet magazine CNET after it published an article full of personal private information, which was obtained exclusively through Google search and Google products.

Government Orders

A few short decades of the Internet, once held as an unparalleled tool of democracy liberalization, have been converted into an unparalleled zone of mass indiscriminate collection. Enter 2018, when the EU has set the global standard for privacy regulation with the flagship general data protection regulations, known as GDPR, signalling to Canada that our 1990s era of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act did not have the teeth to take on big tech.

Bill C-11 would bring in additional privacy regulations. Replacing PIPEDA with CCPA would provide an opportunity for greater detail within the law rather than just relying on the interpretations of the Privacy Commissioner. This is a good thing.

The structure will include a personal information and data protection tribunal that will play a key enforcement role by reviewing all commissioner decisions and issue penalties for non-compliance. There will be an expert tribunal composed of three to six members, but interestingly enough it says there may be only one expert, which may be a deficiency in the act.

What are these new privacy rights? One is data mobility. Subject to regulations, on the request of an individual, an organization must, as soon as feasible, disclose the personal information that is collected from an individual and to an organization designated by the individual. Data mobility is a fact of life and this is a good thing. What format that data will be transferred in will need to be discussed.

On algorithmic transparency, if the organization has used an automated decision process to make a prediction or recommendation, then the organization must, on the request of an individual, provide an explanation of the prediction, recommendation or decision and the personal information that was used to make the prediction. It seems like a reasonable intent and is something it should be able to do without giving up the code.

• (1345)

With respect to de-identification, the bill states:

An organization that de-identifies personal information must ensure that any technical and administrative measures applied to the information are proportionate to the purpose for which the information is de-identified...

Then there is the new enforcement. The Privacy Commissioner of Canada will have the order-making power that will enable the office to order compliance with the law and recommend significant penalties.

I should mention I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Centre.

In some cases, the recommended penalties are the highest in the G7, so they are significant. The expanded range of offences for contraventions of the law are a maximum fine of 5% for a global revenue of \$25 million. There are administrative penalties as well.

One of the issues I see with this is that the legislation and penalties invoke fear, but there will be a question of whether there is adequate teeth for enforcement.

The law includes whistleblowing provisions that protect those who have disclosed alleged privacy non-compliance and a private

right of action that will allow individuals to seek damages for loss or injury suffered through privacy violations.

There are new standards of consent. This has been a big issue for individuals. How many people have signed up to a site, with three pages of disclosure to which they are supposed to consent? I would argue that very few people will actually read that kind of detail. Therefore, there is an attempt within the legislation to use clear language and simplified consent. Given the depth of the legislation, that may be a difficult thing to achieve, but is a worthwhile goal.

Deceptive practices to obtain consent with false or misleading information renders the consent invalid and individuals can withdraw their consent at any time. There is the question of whether people are providing consent for multiple activities or just an individual activity. That should be clarified.

The realm of data is largely uncharted territory and we find ourselves asking the question of who owns our data. Our opinion is that people own their data and they should own their data.

The word “consent” is mentioned 108 times in the GDPR. In the first reading of Bill C-11, it was mentioned 118 times. This sounds great. Who could possibly be against the consent of data? Challenging consent seems counterintuitive in the world of privacy because it is so linked to us and our autonomy. However, it is both impractical and undesirable and serves to explain why our privacy law is in such a sorry state. It is imperative the legislation is written with as little room for interpretation as possible.

There are some standards within that bill. It states:

An organization may collect or use an individual’s personal information without their knowledge or consent if the collection or use is made for a business activity described in subsection (2)...

Under that subsection, it states:

(a) a reasonable person would expect such a collection or use for that activity; and

(b) the personal information is not collected or used for the purpose of influencing the individual’s behaviour or decisions.

The issue is this. If that is subject to interpretation, we could have a pretty broad interpretation of what it says. Hopefully this act, with the regulations that follow, will clearly define what is in and what is out.

At the end of the day, if we are using services, many services are disrupting, shaping and helping our lives in ways we could not have possibly imagined mere decades ago. Whether we like it or not, it is big tech that has provided these realities for us and the government should, as with any other key stakeholder, create meaningful, effective and collaborative policy but require consultation. It is one thing to consult in front, but now that we have legislation, we need to ensure we get it right. We need to ensure that industry, particularly small businesses, remain competitive. The bill is being sent for review to the privacy and ethics committee. There is a strong argument that industry committee should have a look at this bill as well.

Therefore, proper consultation must happen. There is nothing wrong with doing that. I hope the government will ensure the bill is properly consulted on.

• (1350)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the issue of enforcement. Could the member talk to us about the elements of the bill that are critically focused on enforcement and what, if any, changes could we look at to strengthen it? It is a very strong starting point, one that will make complaints accessible to the average consumer. I would like my friend's comments on that.

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Speaker, what is in the act, with the increased fines, certainly provides somewhat of a deterrent. People are going to look at those fines. Then it becomes the reality of how do we ensure we enforce those fines. This is a new system with this tribunal. It looks like there is the potential for it to have more lay persons on it than actual experts in the field, which concerns me. I am concerned that this is the fear of enforcement to try and derive the result needed. There have to be adequate provisions within this act to ensure bad players are held accountable.

• (1355)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the regulation-making power we give the government through legislation, in some sense, requires us to trust the government to put those regulations in place in a way that respects the public interest. The challenge we have when it comes to privacy is that the government does not have a great track record with respect to its own actions and its respect for privacy. This raises some concerns about whether we trust the government to enact these regulations in an effective way and properly enforce them.

Does the member have further comments on that?

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Speaker, I have the same concerns. The track record is not there with the government as it relates to privacy. We have seen this in a variety of different areas where it has not taken this sort of thing serious. That is all the more reason the bill needs significant review to ensure we get it right.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on that particular point, I would remind the member opposite that the legislation before us today went through a lengthy process of having all forms of consultations with many different stake-

holders, industry leaders and even our standing committee, which has also incorporated many thoughts within the legislation.

I have heard that in the last two years information on the Internet has almost doubled. We can only imagine what it will be two or three years from now. This type of legislation is badly needed and it is a good starting point at the very least. Would the member not agree?

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, it is valuable, but it really raises the question about why the Liberals would prorogue Parliament. Why would we not get on with these things? This is the kind of legislation that has been delayed. The government has been studying it. It is one thing to take consultation before developing legislation, but it one's interpretation of what was heard from the consultation. Until we actually hear from people on what they think, now that they see this legislation in writing, we cannot necessarily determine if it will get to the goals to which we aspire.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, another concern I hear from Canadians is about threats to their privacy from foreign actors, perhaps foreign state actors, and the need for the government to respond to that threat.

Does the member have a comment on how the legislation would impact concerns about foreign threats to our privacy?

Mr. James Cumming: Mr. Speaker, there are no specifics in this particular act that would deal with that directly. That is all the more reason this particular piece of legislation needs more study.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

UIGHUR MUSLIMS IN CHINA

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise the plight of over three million Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims who are interned in concentration camps in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China. The Chinese government continues to subject them and other Turkic Muslims to forced labour, physical and psychological torture, and forced organ harvesting. Uighur women suffer forcible sterilization.

The Chinese government's method of political and anti-religious indoctrination, destruction of cultural sites and forcing Uighurs to denounce themselves as Muslims is akin to cultural genocide. I call on all our allies and partners to demand the closure of the concentration camps and the release of all detainees. I urge the passage of Bill S-204, which would criminalize organ trafficking and make it a punishable offence for Canadians to partake in transplant tourism.

Statements by Members

● (1400)

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the world grapples with the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19, young people are demonstrating their continued leadership.

In my riding, one of those leaders is Owen Durk. He is a grade seven student from Sir Isaac Brock Public School who safely organized a neighbourhood food drive this past week in support of the Guelph Food Bank. In just one day, Owen and his family collected over 325 pounds of food that will help people in our community to overcome hunger during this holiday season.

I want to thank Owen for the care and kindness he has shown for others. I encourage all Canadians who can to support their local food banks. I congratulate Owen and ask him to keep up the great work.

* * *

EDWARD HUMENIUK

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember Edward Humeniuk.

Edward was a true pioneer of the Alberta oil sands. As an inventor, Edward played a significant role in developing state-of-the-art technology crucial to separating waste from bitumen. This technology has helped shape the oil sands refining process, and this process is still utilized today.

Alberta oil sands are the cornerstone of the Canadian economy. Every year, they generate billions in revenue for the government and create tens of thousands of jobs across our country. The oil produced is used to heat our homes, power our cars and create products we use every single day.

Like many others of his generation, Edward Humeniuk's work was an integral part of getting our province and our country to where it is today.

* * *

[Translation]

SUDBURY

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians, including my constituents in Sudbury, deserve a safe and affordable home. That is why the Government of Canada is working with the City of Greater Sudbury to redevelop a former Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachment into affordable housing.

Yesterday, on behalf of the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, I joined Brian Bigger, the mayor of Greater Sudbury, to announce that the federal government is spending \$566,000 to acquire the building on Sparks Street. The city will build a community housing building with 14 affordable housing units.

[English]

Last year, again on behalf of CMHC, I announced a \$1.36-billion investment in the Wade Hampton House in Sudbury. Operated by March of Dimes Canada, it provides affordable and supportive

homes to at least 12 individuals with moderate to severe brain injury.

As we know, Canada's new rapid housing initiative will keep some of Canada's most vulnerable people and families safe, including many in Sudbury. That is why we will continue making these historic investments in affordable housing across the country.

* * *

[Translation]

TWELVE DAYS OF ACTION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from tomorrow until December 6, we will be observing the 12 days of action to end violence against women. This year, the campaign is running against the backdrop of the pandemic.

The lockdown has made things even more difficult for victims of domestic violence, and the Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes, which represents women's shelters across Quebec, has launched an appeal aimed directly at men. The Fédération is urging men to speak out if they witness violence happening in the workplace, to a friend or family member, or in public, or if they witness unacceptable behaviour such as sexist or violent jokes.

Men are also encouraged to sign an online pledge to end violence against women and to share the campaign handouts challenging other men to get involved.

Manon Monastesse, the director of the Fédération, said, "It is important for men to get involved. We will never be able to end violence against women without men. They need to model good behaviour for young men."

I encourage everyone to don a white ribbon, the universal symbol for this campaign, because everyone needs to know that violence may not always leave a mark, but it always hurts. Now is the time to act.

* * *

[English]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has embarked on a campaign to reset our economic system. He parrots the language used by global elites, telling Canadians that he needs to use this pandemic in order to build back better. The problem with this radical agenda, however, is that it leaves Canadians in the lurch.

Sadly, the criteria for the Prime Minister's better future is purposefully killing off industries that do not resonate with his reimagined envisioned world. Supporting the Canadian energy sector will not get him into the suave parties held in Davos or a seat on the UN Security Council, so in his mind the industry is not worth investing in. As a proclaimed environmentalist, his anti-energy campaign is dumbfounding because Canada's oil and gas industry actually has some of the highest environmental standards in the world. By restricting Canada's energy he is indirectly boosting production in other countries where environmental protections do not exist and where human rights atrocities happen daily.

The Prime Minister would rather have unethical blood oil shipped into our country, rather than have ethically produced oil shipped out. If the Prime Minister truly wants to build back better for Canadians, he must change his tune and he must start supporting this local industry.

* * *

• (1405)

IRAN

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, exactly one year ago, thousands of Iranians exercised their fundamental right to peaceful protest following an abrupt increase in the price of fuel. These peaceful protests were met by a brutal government crackdown, leading to the death of over 300 innocent civilians and dozens upon dozens of arbitrary arrests. Two months later, Flight 752, carrying 176 passengers and crew, was mercilessly shot down over the skies of Tehran by two missiles fired by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

This abhorrent pattern of behaviour is further reflected in the unjust treatment of the iconic Nasrin Sotoudeh, the human rights lawyer, and the horrific execution of Navid Afkari, a 27-year-old wrestling champion. These atrocities by the Iranian regime should not be ignored. No Iranian deserves to live amidst constant repression day after day, week after week and year after year.

For all these reasons, I would like to thank our government for sponsoring a resolution at the United Nations condemning the flagrant disregard for human rights by the Iranian regime. The international community should never look the other way. We must continue to hold the Iranian government to account and demand that it immediately end terrorizing its own people.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the pandemic has hit the air industry hard and we stand ready to deliver financial assistance and other supports. As the Minister of Transport previously announced, our government is developing a package of assistance to Canadian airlines, airports and the aerospace sector.

However, I have heard from many constituents who have been negatively affected by airline refund policies related to COVID. Many are frustrated that they are stuck with vouchers for trips that they cannot even take due to COVID. They are essentially provid-

Statements by Members

ing interest-free loans in the thousands of dollars to the airline industry and that is just not right.

I am pleased that the minister indicated that no taxpayer money will be going to the airline until we receive a commitment around refunds and until we can ensure continued regional connectivity. As a government, we must protect important industries as well as all Canadians and their interests. That is exactly what we shall do.

* * *

GLOBAL NEXUS FOR PANDEMICS

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has opened our eyes to the impact infectious disease can have on our population, society and economy. These diseases pose an existential threat to Canada.

Before COVID-19, there was H1N1, SARS, Norwalk, West Nile, Ebola, measles and polio all within the last 50 years. Although the next biological threat is inevitable, the ability to cause human and economic devastation is not. For that reason, McMaster University recently announced the timely launch of the Global Nexus for Pandemics and Biological Threats in Hamilton, Ontario.

The Global Nexus brings together leaders from a multitude of disciplines all devoted to one goal: preventing future pandemics and mitigating global health threats. Along with the David Braley Centre for Antibiotic Discovery, the Global Nexus will build on McMaster's record of being a leader in comprehensive infectious disease research.

We know the threats and solutions to serious health challenges are often found outside the lab. The work of McMaster's Global Nexus will create a bulwark against future biological threats to protect Canada and the world.

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[Translation]

MAX GROS-LOUIS

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Thursday was the final day of funeral ceremonies in Wendake to honour Grand Chief Max Oné Onti Gros-Louis of the Huron-Wendat Nation. For three days, hundreds of people came to pay their respects and honour his memory. I know that there have been many tributes to him in the House, but I humbly wanted to add my own.

Statements by Members

Since I come from Sainte-Foy and I represent the riding of Louis-Hébert, which is part of the Nionwentsio, the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat Nation, it is important for me to pay one last tribute to this charismatic, rugged man who governed his nation for more than 30 years and helped unite the first nations peoples, whom he spent his whole life proudly and honourably defending both in Quebec and in Canada, as well as on the world stage.

It is a duty that he always fulfilled with wisdom and simplicity. His life was a shining example, an inspiration to guide others. He was the type of man who had a sense of history and his place in the hereafter.

Grand Chief Gros-Louis, *tiawenhk*.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

ISRAEL

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations rejected the preamble to the first resolution in this year's annual barrage of one-sided, prejudicial, anti-Israel resolutions sponsored by countries properly characterized as jackals of the world's body, but directed by the Liberal government, he voted for it.

Canada's leading Jewish organizations had pleaded before the vote to withhold support for regimes focused not on peaceful pursuit of a two-state solution but on demonizing and delegitimizing the state of Israel.

The Deputy Prime Minister tried to justify the vote, proclaiming "Canada will always stand with Israel," but she also suggested obliquely that Canada's side-taking was really a vote against populism, authoritarianism and rights abuse.

Really? Canada broke with long-standing policy again to vote against Israel and support a resolution sponsored by Venezuela, Syria and North Korea.

* * *

LOBSTER FISHERY

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the small, beautiful fishing villages that dot West Nova from Lower East Pubnico to Digby are getting ready to head back to the sea for the all-important District 34 lobster season.

When bigger boats are tying up for the winter, Canada's most important fishery gets under way. Fishers have worked hard to provide a moderate living for their families, and they once again brave the cold, and sometimes angry, North Atlantic.

To add to the normal anxiety that a new season brings, these fishers find themselves in the middle of a fishing crisis created by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans' inaction. The crisis has taken disproportionate turns. Violence took the dialogue space and is still a constant threat between commercial and indigenous fishers.

I flagged this very important and sensitive issue to the minister months ago, so commercial and indigenous fishers could continue

to work together safely and with understanding. We are still waiting for answers, and the minister's lack of leadership is unacceptable and shameful.

I want to reiterate my support for all fishers in West Nova who are deeply affected by this crisis, and I continue my work to ensure that it comes to an end quickly and peacefully. Good luck to all the fishers with their upcoming fishing season, and please stay safe.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with COVID-19 rates skyrocketing, the stress on young people and recent graduates is incredible. They lost their summer employment, they have few job options, and those available are often low-paying and put them at risk for COVID-19.

Recent graduates from the University of Alberta, King's University and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, all post-secondary institutions in my riding, are struggling to get by. By rushing to give almost \$1 billion that was supposed to go to students to their well-connected friends, the Liberal government has left students and recent graduates in the lurch.

At the urging of the NDP, the government implemented a moratorium on student loan repayments in the spring to give some relief to recent graduates. However, as of September 30, the student loan moratorium ended, despite Canada's descent into a second wave. Extending the interest-free moratorium on student loan repayments could make the difference recent graduates need to get through the winter. Canadians can count on New Democrats to fight for young people, pausing loan payments and getting rid of interest on student loans altogether.

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[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today the appeal court began hearing the challenge to Quebec's Bill 99 on its right to self-determination.

The Bloc Québécois would like to reiterate that the Quebec people have an inalienable right to self-determination. We want to reiterate that democracy means 50% of the votes plus one vote. We want to reiterate that the Quebec people are the only masters of their future, which will be decided in the National Assembly and not here. We strongly condemn the federal government's participation in this attack on Quebecers' freedom of choice. We denounce the Government of Canada for participating in a course of action that is tantamount to authoritarianism. We denounce the fact that, once again, Ottawa is using Quebec taxpayers' money to fund its bid to violate their rights.

I will close by quoting staunch federalist Robert Bourassa, who said that no matter what anyone says or does, Quebec is and always will be a distinct and free society capable of taking charge of its own destiny.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, history will judge the Prime Minister on his treatment of both female cabinet ministers and MPs during his tenure. It is easy to say the right words and throw the feminism label around, but it is actions that tell the story.

It is now clear that an internal pattern of behaviour is extending into the Liberals' approach to governing. Not only did the Liberals ignore the Wet'suwet'en elected chiefs when they negotiated the memorandum of understanding, they completely disregarded the Wet'suwet'en Matriarchal Coalition. These women simply wanted jobs for their people. They were stripped of their hereditary titles by male chiefs who then gave the titles to men who opposed the GasLink project. This has forced them to go to the Canadian and B.C. human rights tribunals.

Disregarding these female leaders is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to stand. It is time for the Prime Minister to walk the talk and stop ignoring those who deserve to be at the negotiating table.

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NATIONAL HOUSING DAY

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday marked National Housing Day in Canada, and a time to reflect on where we are in our mission to reduce homelessness and provide all Canadians with a safe and affordable place to call home.

Our Liberal government has invested across Canada to increase access and affordability to housing through the recent launch of the billion-dollar rapid housing initiative, the \$105 million investment in our reaching home program, the increased funding for on-reserve housing, the launch of the first-ever, 10-year Inuit housing investment fund and the increased federal transfers to provinces and territories. We have stepped up, and we continue to create solutions to homelessness and housing affordability. Our national housing strategy is a 10-year plan that helped 530,000 families find safe, affordable housing and reduce homelessness.

Reducing homelessness and providing Canadians with affordable housing is a priority for our government, and we are going to continue to work hard to ensure that every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home.

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DIABETES AWARENESS MONTH

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November is Diabetes Awareness Month, and I want to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of supporting Canadians living with diabetes.

Oral Questions

This month I had the pleasure of meeting Raina, a young Orleans constituent with type 1 diabetes, and the delegate for JDRF. I was quite impressed with her presentation as part of JDRF's awareness campaign, and I congratulate her for her commitment to helping those suffering from juvenile diabetes.

As co-chair of the all-party caucus on juvenile diabetes, I support the work of JDRF Canada in partnership with CIHR. Their professionalism and stewardship led to many advancements, giving Canadians living with type 1 diabetes a better quality of life.

This year, as we celebrate 100 years of insulin, thanks to Canadian scientists Banting and Best, we are reminded that insulin is no cure, and that only by supporting research can we get closer to eliminating juvenile diabetes.

The Speaker: Before moving on, I just want to remind the hon. members that S.O. 31s are 60 seconds long. I noticed they went over, and they are good messages so I did not want to interrupt. Unfortunately, we do not want to postpone question period because everyone is looking forward to it.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government always claims to stand with our long-time ally Israel, until it matters. Once again the Liberals voted against Israel at the United Nations. When asked to explain her vote, the Deputy Prime Minister compared Israel to authoritarian regimes.

Will the Prime Minister demand an apology for the Deputy Prime Minister's insult of an ally of Canada?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a strong ally and a close friend of Israel. We are committed to the goal of a lasting peace in the Middle East, including the creation of a Palestinian state peacefully side by side with Israel. We are consistent with the Canadian position long held by governments of all political stripes. Canada's vote was a reflection of our long-standing commitment to the right of self-determination for both the Palestinian people and for Israelis.

Oral Questions

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is consistent in disappointing our allies. The Liberals voted against Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. Even Michael Levitt, who was a Liberal MP, just weeks ago criticized the vote and said that it demonizes Israel. Maybe that is why he left this chamber. Now Mr. Levitt's former colleagues are comparing Israel to an authoritarian regime.

Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to publicly disavow the comments from the Deputy Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a government we have consistently stood up in support of Israel, in defence of our friend and ally, and we will continue to. We have stood up consistently against the illegitimate singling-out of Israel through one-sided votes at the United Nations. We have continued to do that, but we also recognize the right of Palestinian self-determination, which is something we recognized in that recent vote, while at the same time oppose the broad efforts to single out and delegitimize Israel.

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HEALTH

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told the House that Canadians would be the first in line to receive the vaccine. Today, he admitted we are going to be behind many countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. Reuters is even reporting that Mexico will receive a vaccine before Canadians.

How many more months will it take to flatten the curve because the Prime Minister has been unable to rapidly secure a vaccine?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition might not have been following this too closely, but Canada is actually being lauded as one of the countries that has achieved the best and largest portfolio of potential vaccines for its citizens. We are not certain yet which vaccines from which companies are going to be most effective or are going to arrive first, so Canada stepped up and has secured millions of doses of vaccines for Canadians that will be arriving in the coming months.

We are going to continue to ensure that Canadians get the protection they need so we can get through this pandemic together.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for weeks now, the Conservatives have been sounding the alarm that this government sent us to the back of the line for vaccines. Today, the Prime Minister admitted that Canada is behind the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and others.

How much longer will Canadians have to wait because this slow government put us at the back of the line?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): The opposite is true, Mr. Speaker.

Since the beginning, we have been negotiating and signing contracts with a record number of companies that could produce a vaccine, because we know that we need to make sure Canadians have

access to millions of doses of the vaccine and we do not know exactly which company will produce which vaccine quickly and most efficiently. That is why we created one of the best portfolios of potential vaccines in the world. As I said, we will be able to deliver vaccines to Canadians in early 2021.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 30, the Prime Minister promised the House that Canada would be the first country to get a vaccine.

Two months later, he is admitting that he was wrong. He does not have priority access to the vaccine. We are still at the back of the line. The first Americans will be vaccinated in a few weeks.

When will Canadians be able to get vaccinated?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely understand why Canadians want to know when the vaccines will arrive.

It is because we are all very eager to turn the page on this pandemic. That is why it is so important to keep distancing. That is why the federal government is working with the provinces so that they can impose restrictions that will help flatten the curve, and that is why Canada made sure to secure more vaccines per capita than any other country. It is because our government has demonstrated that we are able to manage this pandemic and help Canadians.

● (1425)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, none of the Prime Minister's answers to my esteemed colleague's questions are even remotely valid.

Allow me to summarize: Canadians and Quebeckers will not be getting the vaccines at the same time as other western powers, period. The health of thousands of people is at stake. Let's face facts: The longer we wait, the more lives will be at stake. The Prime Minister is making up excuses for the inexcusable.

Will the Prime Minister fix his mistake and immediately enter into negotiations to ensure that Canadians and Quebeckers get the vaccine at the same time as the Germans, the Americans and the Brits?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we knew from the beginning that we would have challenges because, unlike the Germans, the Americans and the Brits, we do not have the capacity for mass vaccine production in Canada.

We therefore had to secure larger quantities of vaccines than those other countries, and that is exactly what we did. We were even criticized by the international media for the quantity of vaccines we managed to secure. We have the best portfolio of vaccines of many countries around the world.

We have done our job to ensure that Canadians receive vaccines quickly and with certainty, even in these extremely uncertain times—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beloil—Chambly.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, quantity is not the issue. The issue is when, and when is a major problem.

By waffling, hinting and leaving things unsaid, the Prime Minister is letting us know that Quebeckers and Canadians will have to wait, they will have to be sick, and in some cases, things will get worse.

He is blaming it on the pharmaceutical industry, but why was Canada's pharmaceutical industry not in the race? Maybe the Liberals should be asking themselves that question.

Who negotiated those bad agreements? Was it the same people who go around thinking they can lecture everyone else, including the provinces?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not here to lecture the provinces. We are here to work with the provinces. That is why we delivered record amounts of PPE and a record number of tests. That is also why we transferred \$25 billion to the provinces to help get kids back to school and ensure a safe reopening.

We will be there to work closely with the provinces and to help businesses and people as we go through this process. We have a plan and an approach. We have promised to always be there for Canadians.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the number of COVID-19 cases is on the rise. People are worried about their families and about their health. The U.S. and England have announced a plan to distribute a vaccine as early as next week.

Why is the Prime Minister making Canadians wait? What is Canada's game plan? When will Canadians have a vaccine?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have secured access to more vaccines than any other country.

We have the best portfolio of vaccines and we have purchased up to millions and hundreds of millions of doses of potential vaccines. We need to do everything we can to flatten the curve and reduce the number of cases in order to protect Canadians.

That is why we are also working to ensure that the provinces have rapid tests, that we have PPE and that Canadians and Canadian businesses everywhere have the support they need.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 cases are on the rise. People across the country are afraid. Communities are afraid, communities like Nunavut, where under-resourcing puts people at an extreme risk. The United States and England have announced plans to roll out vaccines as early as next week.

What is the plan in Canada? Can the Prime Minister let Canadians know what the plan is? When will Canada receive the vaccine?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, Canada has successfully signed contracts to have the best portfolio of potential vaccines of

Oral Questions

any of our peer countries around the world. We have done this to ensure that Canadians have access to a vaccine regardless of which vaccine companies land first or which vaccine companies have the best vaccine. We needed to make sure that Canadians would have access to these vaccines. That is exactly what we have done.

We are working with partners, including the provinces and territories, to ensure that vaccine distribution will be rapid and seamless, and as I have said a number of times before, the vaccine will be entirely free.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the House of Commons passed our Conservative motion asking the government for a robust plan to, among other things, combat Communist China's growing foreign operations here in Canada and its increasing intimidation of Canadians. The Liberals are clearly scared and intimidated by the CCP, and they voted against it.

Yesterday when we asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to say if he will respect the democratic will of Parliament, he gave no answer, so I am going to ask the Prime Minister this: Will he show some intestinal fortitude and, after five years, present a plan to deal with the threat of the Chinese Communist Party?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to foreign policy, there should be much political debate. I answered, yesterday morning, over two hours of questions, more questions than any minister has ever answered on China.

Our policy is very simple: to be firm and smart. That is what we have done when it comes to the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor and obtaining consular access to them. That is what we did, being firm and smart, when it came to Hong Kong and standing up for the freedoms and liberties of the people of Hong Kong. If the Leader of the Opposition would speak to them, he would see that Canada was at the forefront of defending the freedoms and liberties of the people of Hong Kong.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of yesterday, to add insult to injury, the foreign affairs minister said that Canadians who feel intimidated or threatened by bad CCP actors should simply call their local police. At the very same time, right now there are 19 public servants working to help Bill Morneau get his OECD soft-landing seat, but the Liberals refuse to put any effort, resources or political capital into protecting Canadians who are threatened by the CCP.

Why is the Prime Minister so afraid to stand up to the Communist government in China?

Oral Questions

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should look at the international community and see that Canada has been at the forefront of the response when it comes to the Uighurs, when it comes to Hong Kong, when it comes to standing up. Being firm and smart is what Canadians at home want us to do.

When the member asked about Canadians wanting to lead international organizations, we should all be proud that Canadians are putting themselves forward to lead international organizations. We are doing everything in accordance with Treasury Board guidelines and in accordance with precedents that have been set by this government when it wants Canadians to sit on the boards of international organizations.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Well, Mr. Speaker, we can see exactly where these Liberals' priorities are and it is to help their friends get soft landings.

When over 300,000 Canadians in Hong Kong were threatened by the Chinese ambassador, the Prime Minister said and did nothing. Yesterday, the foreign affairs minister suggested to these Canadians at home and abroad that they should listen to themselves and call their local police. Not only is this outrageous, it is cowardly.

Instead of assigning 19 bureaucrats to work on Bill Morneau's OECD seat, will the Prime Minister get his priorities straight and take real action to protect Canadians at home and abroad from Communist China?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me set the record straight for Canadians who are watching at home. Canada was the first country in the world to suspend its extradition treaty with Hong Kong. That is leadership. That is Canada. That is being firm and smart. That is what Canadians watching at home want from this government and from all parliamentarians when it comes to foreign policy. We have no lessons to take from the Conservatives. We will be firm and we will be smart. That is what Canadians expect from us.

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HEALTH

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, based on the Prime Minister's response to the Leader of the Opposition, I want to clarify that Mexicans will be getting the COVID vaccine before Canadians.

• (1435)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has robust experience in delivering vaccinations and the distinct advantage of a public health care system that builds on strong provincial and territorial expertise and relationships.

We have procured a diverse portfolio of vaccines, as the member opposite knows, more per capita than any other country. Canada is well positioned to successfully vaccinate Canadians against COVID-19.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the minister is saying is that Mexicans will get vaccinated before Canadians.

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is putting words in my mouth.

In fact what I am saying is that Canada is a world leader in vaccination, and has delivered massive vaccination campaigns before. Building on that expertise and leadership, working with provinces and territories, we are very confident that we will be able to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to Canadians.

We have the most diverse portfolio in the world. We have options for more per capita than any other country in the world.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Reuters reported today that Mexicans will be vaccinated in December. The Prime Minister cannot give a date for when Canadians will be vaccinated.

If the health minister will not answer that question, what about this one? The procurement minister says that Mexicans will be vaccinated before Canadians because the health minister cannot get her department together on approvals, but then the Prime Minister is saying that it is actually the procurement minister, because she did not negotiate contracts that allowed for domestic manufacturing capacity.

What is the reason why Mexicans will be vaccinated before Canadians?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of government is working together, hand in glove, right now to ensure that we have access to vaccines for Canada, and in fact our work has proven to be very fruitful.

We have options on seven promising candidates, three of which are in regulatory review already as we speak, those three showing tremendous promise in their opportunity to protect people against COVID-19. We are working with provinces and territories on a deployment plan, building on the expertise that Canada already has in vaccinating massive numbers of Canadians every single year.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all parties in the House have recognized that French is in decline in Quebec.

Now is the time to walk the talk. This morning, the Bloc Québécois introduced Bill C-254 to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses. The Government of Quebec, with robust support in the National Assembly, has called for this.

Now that the government admits that French is in decline in Quebec, will it listen to Quebec and support our bill?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure my colleague that I have been in contact with my Quebec counterpart, Simon Jolin-Barrette. We spoke recently, actually.

Oral Questions

We have been in constant communication because we both want to protect French in Quebec, while respecting the English-speaking minority. As a result, our government will respect Quebec's jurisdictions, in addition to our own, because we also want to protect the one million French-speaking people outside Quebec.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that he supports Bill 101.

Now he must prove it. This is not the first time that the issue of applying Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses has come up. Quebec has been calling for this for a long time, as its current government is doing. We told everyone that we were going to introduce a bill to address this issue.

Will the government stop dithering and tell us, yes or no, if it will support our bill?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a wonder why the Bloc Québécois is looking for a fight at any cost when the fact is that we agree on protecting the French language. We want to work together to do just that.

I am saying to my colleagues that we should work together. We are reaching out. Let us ensure that the importance of French is recognized in Quebec.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Official Languages would like Canadians to believe that the French language is important.

Can she explain why her Liberal colleagues are obstructing and paralyzing the Standing Committee on Official Languages? This has prevented us from introducing a motion calling on the minister to introduce her bill on the modernization of the Official Languages Act before Christmas.

Does this mean that the bill is not yet ready even though they promised it five years ago?

• (1440)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague of certain facts. I believe that my colleague is new to the official languages file and has just demonstrated a certain interest in the issue.

For the first time ever, we recognized the need to protect the French language in the throne speech because French is a minority language in Canada. We are also the first government to recognize that we must do more to protect our French language.

In the circumstances, yes, we will modernize the Official Languages Act, but we are also waiting with great interest for what the Conservatives will do on this file because, quite frankly, they have no credibility when it comes to protecting the French language.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the work of the Standing Committee on Official Languages has been at a complete standstill for the past five meetings. Recently, we were not able to move a motion. We are wasting time with the Liberals. The Senate, the Commissioner of Official Languages and the organizations all agree that the Official Languages Act needs to be reformed.

What is stopping the minister from introducing her bill before the holidays?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, committees are independent. I encourage my colleagues who sit on the committee to continue to work hard on official languages and their significance.

One thing is clear. We have a common desire to do more for the French language. We really need to be able to look at what we can do to mitigate the linguistic insecurity that we are seeing in our country and to ensure that we are able to talk to each other in our beautiful French language today and for generations to come.

I will be pleased to work on modernizing the Official Languages Act.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, the Liberals have been blocking the work of the committee for weeks, and we have been waiting for years for a law to modernize the Official Languages Act. Could the truth be that, much like the member for Saint-Laurent and the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada, the Liberals do not believe that the decline of French in Quebec and elsewhere in the country is real?

If such is not the case, can the minister tell us why the government does not support the Government of Quebec's desire to apply Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that one is either for or against a strong francophonie in Canada. It would be inconceivable to look at Quebec alone without looking at all francophones across the country. We cannot say one thing to Quebecers and the opposite to everyone outside Quebec. I am tired of hearing the Conservatives' double-talk.

What are they doing not only to protect the French language and recognize the decline of French in Montreal, but also to protect Campus Saint-Jean in Alberta?

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to wave her arms in the air and lecture everyone.

I sent her a letter talking about the urgent need for action to modernize the Official Languages Act. That is what all the representatives of organizations across the country are asking for, and they want it introduced before the holidays. Consultations have been held. Reports have been submitted and recommendations tabled.

If French is so important to her, can the minister commit to introducing the bill to modernize the Official Languages Act before Christmas, as everyone is calling for, yes or no?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did receive my colleague's letter.

It was the first time in five years, since I took over the official languages file, that I finally received something ostensibly concrete.

Oral Questions

That said, I look forward to working with my colleague. We like taking a co-operative approach. I have said this to my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I will say it again to my Conservative colleagues: Let us work together to make sure that we protect the French language and all linguistic minorities in this country.

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[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Max Johnson is an amazing local artist in Bella Bella. When I first met him two summers ago, he was painting artwork on the front of the new big house in his community. It was heartbreaking to later hear that he and his granddaughter had been racially profiled by BMO staff in Vancouver and had been handcuffed by police for trying to open a bank account.

Now we have learned it was Indigenous Services Canada who told the bank manager they should call the police. Will this minister apologize, and inform this House of the steps he has taken to investigate this situation and ensure that it never happens again?

● (1445)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, incidents like this should never happen again. The incident in question was exceedingly alarming.

I would invite the member opposite, and indeed all Canadians, to review the 911 transcript. It is unclear at this time, but if there is any trace that Indigenous Services Canada, or any part of the Government of Canada, was involved in that type of advice, as well as what information was conveyed when they relayed what was alleged, we will get to it. We will take responsibility for that action, apologize, move forward and ensure that status cards are respected by all Canadians within this country.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the airport in Windsor has become a success story after 20 years of investment by the municipality, but now the privatized NAV Canada is threatening the public achievement and safety record by putting Windsor in a study to remove the air traffic control tower, making it an uncontrolled airport.

An uncontrolled airport would eliminate commercial passenger air travel and create significant safety problems for cargo and private planes due to a complex airspace that has five airports in the area, including public and private, and those of the U.S. National Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Will the Minister of Transport stop this nonsense that is threatening jobs, business, investments and public safety?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that there will never be a compromise with the safety of air passengers.

As we know, the number of passengers has dramatically reduced by about 90%, and that includes many fewer aircraft in the air at the moment. Nav Canada, which is our air traffic controller, is examin-

ing that situation. It has an enviable safety record, and it is reviewing certain requirements with respect to service needs. Let me just be very clear that Transport Canada will work with Nav Canada to ensure that safety remains uppermost for all Canadians.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the Filipino community in my riding of Surrey Centre and communities across the country are extremely concerned and worried about loved ones after two typhoons hit the Philippines this month.

Super typhoon Goni hit the Bicol region in early November, leaving people dead, injured and displaced. In its wake, Goni was followed by typhoon Vamco, whose destructive winds and torrential rainfall triggered extensive flooding in several areas, including metro Manila.

Can the Minister of International Development inform members of the Filipino community how our government has responded to these tragedies?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Surrey Centre for raising this important issue and for his tireless advocacy for the communities in his riding.

Our government has responded to both typhoons, Goni and Vamco, through Canada's emergency disaster assistance fund by providing the Canadian Red Cross with \$240,000 for relief operations and to help meet the emergency health, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene needs, as well as focusing on disaster risk reduction, community engagement, protection and gender inclusion services.

When typhoon Vamco hit land almost two weeks later, we quickly responded with another \$40,000 contribution to the International Federation of the Red Cross's relief operations to help provide—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

* * *

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals announced a big, new program to supposedly rescue the jobs of employees of large employers. With the relief program, we assumed they might want to help the airline workers, 20,000 of whom have lost their jobs; the countless hotel workers who no longer have a paycheque; or, God forbid, the hundreds of thousands of energy workers out west who are now jobless. None of them got help.

Oral Questions

Who got the biggest chunk of cash from that program? It was consultants and insiders. The firm Lazard Frères & Co. was the largest recipient with \$3.6 million, and another \$22,000 went to two former PMO staff. Why is it only Liberal insiders that enrich themselves off these programs?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with the hon. member that the premise underlying his question is false. In fact, more support has gone to businesses that are keeping workers employed than has gone to help set up the programs.

The contracts the member is referring to simply establish the Crown corporation to administer the program and put integrity measures in place, so that we know the money is going to workers. If he does not think this actually benefits Canadians, I would ask him to talk to his members from places such as Orillia, Abbotsford or Sarnia who are still on the payroll today because of the program that is supporting them.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is actually Liberal middlemen who are getting rich off the program because, again, this program, the LEEFF program, has furnished the largest sum of money to Liberal financial insiders. Now we are starting to get a sense of where all this money is going.

We have a \$380-billion deficit, but only \$175 billion has gone to CERB, wage subsidies and CEBA loans for small businesses. Is it not becoming clear that Liberals saw this pandemic as an opportunity not to save the livelihoods and lives of Canadians, but to enrich Liberal insiders with political influence?

• (1450)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question is absolutely ridiculous. I remember being on the phone through the middle of the night early in the spring talking to workers who did not know where their next paycheque was coming from and businesses owners who did not know whether they would be able to keep workers on the payroll.

We have advanced programs such as the wage subsidy. Three million Canadians are still going to work as a result of that program. The CERB kept food on the table for nine million Canadians, and the Canada emergency business account has provided direct support to over 700,000 businesses.

We are going to continue to listen to Canadians. I would urge the member to take part and be helpful in providing advice on the basis of what he is hearing, but if he does not want to, then we will go through this without him.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have, from the very beginning, supported the basic programs to save jobs and provide incomes to people for whom lockdowns have cost their paycheques, but those programs only account for \$175 billion of the \$380-billion deficit, a deficit which equals \$40,000 for the average family of four. Nobody knows of a single family that has received \$40,000 from this government since the March pandemic outbreak.

Is it not becoming increasingly clear that the bulk of the cash is going to Liberal cronies and insiders who have stepped in between the government and Canadians?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the member is putting forward falsehoods in an attempt to spin a political narrative that suits his interests, rather than the interests of Canadians. The reality is that he says now that he supports some of these programs. At the outset of this pandemic, he said that the Conservatives would never support big fat government programs to get Canadians through this pandemic. His leader, more recently, has described CERB as being completely messed up.

The reality is that it is not a leader who waits to find out whether something is popular before he or she decides to support it, it is an opportunist. We need more leadership to get us through this pandemic and less political opportunism.

* * *

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it really says something when the best attribute the member can ascribe to his program administration is that they are big and fat. We want programs that are effective in helping Canadians. They want fat for their friends, and that is exactly what they have delivered.

Speaking of the upcoming fiscal update, the finance minister has said that her government will impose limits upon itself to avoid the brutal external restraints of international capital markets.

Will the government tell us exactly what limits it will impose on the new debt it is piling on the shoulders of Canadians?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was Oscar Wilde who described a cynic as someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. We value, on this side of the House, keeping food on the table for nine million Canadian households. We value keeping three million Canadian workers on the payroll. We value supporting over 700,000 Canadian businesses to help them keep the lights on.

I look forward to November 30, when the minister will present the fall economic statement to this House to identify for Canadians how we will continue to support them to get them through this pandemic, and ensure that the recovery is inclusive, prosperous and sustainable for all.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our farmers cannot count on the federal government. It promised them it would protect supply management, but it sacrificed them for three agreements in a row. Then it promised full compensation for their losses. The dairy sector got a cheque in 2019, but there has been nothing since.

The government is presenting its economic update on Monday. Will it reveal the details of compensation for all supply-managed producers and for processors?

Most importantly, this time will it budget money now for future years?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that we understand the supply management system very well and that we are protecting it. We protected it from Donald Trump, who wanted to dismantle it.

In the summer of 2019, we announced \$1.75 billion for dairy producers. Less than a year ago, we sent \$345 million in initial compensation to 11,000 producers. We will keep our promises.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we want details and a timeline. Farmers cannot count on the federal government. That is why we need to make supply management inviolable so it will never again be used as a bargaining chip for trade agreements.

The Bloc Québécois introduced a bill to prevent any further attacks on supply management. Today the Union des producteurs agricoles asked all parties to vote in favour of that bill.

Will the federal government prove its support for supply management and support our bill?

• (1455)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the supply management system is essential. It is extremely important for the vitality of our regions and our family farms. We stood up for them against Donald Trump, who wanted the system dismantled. Less than a year ago, we paid the first instalment of compensation of \$345 million to our 11,000 producers and we kept going.

In fact, we also just protected the supply management system during our negotiations with the United Kingdom.

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after trading away access to Canada's dairy market, our farmers and processors are still waiting on the Liberal government to honour its commitment on trade compensation payments.

We want the date. When will the compensation be delivered to Canadian farmers and processors?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, supply management is very important for agriculture in Canada. It is very important for our rural vi-

tality. It is important to protect our family farms. Less than a year ago, 11,000 dairy farmers received \$345 million. We will follow through on our commitment.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will give the Minister of Agriculture another chance to respond to a very simple question: When will compensation go out to farmers, and particularly dairy farmers? They have written to us, and I have a Zoom meeting scheduled with them tomorrow evening in the hopes of being able to give them some good news.

I will give the minister a chance to respond. When will the next round of compensation for dairy farmers be paid? I think that is an extremely simple and clear question.

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I would remind hon. members that in July last year we announced \$1.75 billion over eight years to our dairy farmers as compensation for the Europe and trans-Pacific deals.

Less than a year ago we paid the first instalment of compensation of \$345 million to our 11,000 dairy farmers and I assure the House that we will respect our commitment.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, dairy farmers have been anxiously awaiting the money the Liberal government promised them to compensate for the market share they lost after free trade agreements were signed with our trade partners.

Will the government act to establish some predictability and do so before December 31, 2020? Can the Minister of Agriculture confirm that?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assure you that the supply management system and all of our dairy, poultry and egg producers are very important to the Canadian economy, to Canada's agriculture sector, to the vitality of our regions and to protecting our family farms.

That is why we are protecting the system. That is also why we have committed to compensating our farmers and processors in response to various new agreements. It has been less than a year since we paid out the first round of compensation, and I assure the House that we will keep our promise.

Oral Questions

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS**HEALTH**

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have changed their ways of life to keep each other safe. I am especially proud of my constituents in Cape Breton—Canso for all their efforts. In Nova Scotia, we have seen a surge in cases and that is cause for great concern. We need everyone to do their part to help stop the spread of COVID—19, and downloading the COVID Alert app is a great way to do that. Given the increase in cases, I am very pleased the COVID Alert app is available in my home province of Nova Scotia.

Could the Minister of Health inform Canadians of the importance of the COVID Alert app and how it will keep us safe?

• (1500)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his great work on the Standing Committee on Health.

The COVID Alert app is indeed an important public health tool that will help Canadians identify if they have been exposed to COVID—19. Over 5.4 million Canadians have downloaded the app to protect themselves, their friends and their families. The app protects the privacy of users, but also helps alert users if they have come into close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID—19. It is an extra layer of protection for users and a way to help our hard-working public health workers across the country. I encourage all Canadians to download the COVID Alert app today.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the immigration minister recently said, “it has never been easier for families to reunite.” Meanwhile, hundreds of families have been unable to reunite since the onset of the pandemic. The Liberals promised these families would be reunited with a new 14-day processing deadline back in October, but hundreds of cases missed that deadline.

Graeme in Calgary is eager to reunite with his American fiancée Courtney. The last time they saw each other was five months ago when she gave birth to their son. Apart from a bizarre request to provide proof of their relationship, they have not heard anything in over a month. Maybe the baby would be proof enough of that relationship. I am not sure.

Why did the Liberals break their promise to separated families?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, far from breaking that promise, we are living up to it every day, and that includes in meeting the service standard with regard to reuniting families. We are prioritizing and accelerating spousal applications. We have allocated 40,000 spaces under the parent and grandparent program. This is a government that is committed to reuniting families, while at the same time protecting the health and safety of all Canadians.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians do not have access to reliable high-speed Internet. Due to the lack of service, thousands of residents in Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte cannot work, learn or connect with loved ones during this pandemic. Rural Canadians feel like they are intentionally being left behind. The universal broadband fund was announced in March 2019. In June, we were promised help was on the way. Finally, 150 days later, applications are open.

How can the residents in my riding be assured this will at long last result in real change for under-served communities?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because of our government's investments, tens of thousands of households over the next month will be connected to this essential service, because of the universal broadband fund and everybody who worked so hard to develop the program. Canadians like those in my hon. colleague's community can reach out to us and can figure out which program works best for them. Is it the rapid response stream? Is it the core stream? Whatever supports they need, we are here to support them.

If my colleague wants to reach out to my team, that would be a good first step. We are here to help.

* * *

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, experts and leaders from the disability community have been overwhelming in their call for reasonable amendments to Bill C-7: Leave in place the 10-day waiting period, which can already be waived; ensure that people will actually be consulted on the requested date and still be free to withdraw consent and change their minds; and ensure that people do not have death pushed on them by someone else.

These are reasonable modest amendments to support autonomy while protecting the vulnerable. Why will the government not support these reasonable amendments?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, medical assistance in dying is a complex, difficult issue, and it is deeply personal. Canadians have diverse and evolving views and we took care to consult with Canadians across Canada. There were over 300,000 participants in our online survey as well as round tables from coast to coast to coast.

Oral Questions

What we heard about the 10-day waiting period was univocal. It caused suffering in people. It caused people not to take their pain medication in order to be capable of maintaining that final consent. Their decision was made before that 10-day period started, so we are removing it.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, energy efficiency is one of the quickest and cheapest ways of meeting our climate change commitments.

It is also an excellent way to reduce energy costs for Canadians. In the 2019 budget, our government invested an additional \$950 million in the green municipal fund, or GMF.

Can the parliamentary secretary tell us how energy efficiency helps our economy, the environment and all Canadians?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for her hard work.

Energy efficiency is a hidden fuel. It is good for the climate, good for the pocketbook and good for job creation. Since the GMF was created 20 years ago, it has provided funding for 1,360 projects and prevented 2.7 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, the equivalent of taking 600,000 cars off the road. Other major efforts are under way to make homes, buildings and industrial processes more energy efficient.

I would like to invite members to read the green municipal fund's annual report and the report to Parliament under the Energy Efficiency Act for 2018-19, which was tabled in the House.

* * *

● (1505)

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs Canada began calling veterans last week who were eligible for and already receiving the diminished earning capacity determination and telling them that they suddenly were not eligible. Injured veterans rely on this benefit to support their families, but VAC only gave them days to prove their continued eligibility or lose their income.

If the government has lost proof of eligibility for any program, that is its problem. Now we are going into the holidays. Can the minister commit to fixing this and not asking our veterans to prove their eligibility again?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague's question and know that she cares. I will look into this situation and address it promptly to make sure that the veterans receive the benefits they should receive in a timely manner. That is what we will do.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, both Liberal and Conservative governments have negotiated trade deals that fail to uphold Canadian values and protect Canadian interests. These deals have deepened our trade relations with anti-democratic regimes, with countries where freedom of speech is stifled and journalists are jailed. We sell arms to countries with horrendous track records on human rights.

Will the government learn from past mistakes, like the disastrous Canada-China FIPA, and prioritize environmental, democratic and human rights standards in our trade relations?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all agree that trade needs to represent the values and interests of Canadians, and let me be clear about what those values are. We believe human rights are at the very core of our international policy. We believe the economy and the environment can go hand in hand and are mutually beneficial. We believe that everyone should benefit from trade, including women, LGBTQ2 businesses and indigenous peoples.

I can assure my hon. colleague and all Canadians that our trade policy will always be motivated by what is in the interests of Canadians.

[Translation]

The Speaker: That is all the time we have.

We have several points of order. We will start with the member for Salaberry—Suroît.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during statements by members, the hon. members for Orléans and Labrador were not wearing their headsets, which meant that the interpretation in French was inadequate. As my party's whip, I would ask you to remind all hon. members of the importance of wearing their headset so that everyone can hear what parliamentarians are saying here in the House in both official languages.

The Speaker: I would like to remind hon. members that when they are not in the House, they have to wear the headset with microphone issued by the House. It is very important to use it for two reasons. The first is so that people in the chamber can hear them. The second is so that the interpreters can properly understand what is being said in order to interpret for the people in the House who speak the other official language, whether English or French.

I thank the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît for her point of order. This is something that is very important and gives us all the same opportunity to do our work.

* * *

[*English*]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you will find unanimous support for the following motion.

I move:

That the House recognize the significant financial hardship that COVID-19 has caused to post-secondary students across Canada and, in an effort to alleviate such hardship, call on the Government to extend the moratorium on repaying student loans to cover October 1, 2020 through May 31, 2021.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask for those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion please say nay. Hearing no opposition, it is agreed.

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

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1510)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie also on a point of order.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That the House call on the government to recognize that French is the official language of Quebec and commit to working with the Government of Quebec to ensure that the Charter of the French Language is applied to federally regulated businesses operating in Quebec.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask for those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to moving the motion please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Oral Questions

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to give the Minister of Official Languages the opportunity to retract what she said in answer to my question. She misled all parliamentarians and Canadians by insinuating that the Conservatives have not sent any letters over the past five years, which is completely untrue.

The Speaker: I would like to remind members that it is not up to the Chair to decide what is true or not true. The Chair's role is purely to ensure that the rules are followed.

I would ask members who are rising on a point of order to indicate which particular Standing Order they believe has been breached.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I do not know which one it is, but I believe there is a fundamental Standing Order that requires members to speak the truth. If there is evidence to the contrary, members must rise and draw the attention of the House to the misrepresentation.

That is exactly what the member for Richmond—Arthabaska did. The minister made a statement, and the member for Richmond—Arthabaska said that the minister misrepresented the facts. He has compelling evidence.

In this case, it is not a matter of debate; it is a matter of the truth.

The Speaker: I will take that under advisement and come back to the House with a ruling as soon as possible.

I do want to remind members that someone may say something with which they do not agree. That is a matter of debate between two people with different perspectives.

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek the unanimous consent of the House to table evidence showing that the Conservative Party has sent a number of letters to the minister regarding improvements to the Official Languages Act.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask for those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to moving the motion please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, with respect to what happened a few minutes ago in the House, you said that it was a matter of debate. I want to be very clear with you that this is not a matter of debate, it is a matter of facts. It is not as though the government were claiming that it is good and we were saying that it is bad. That would be a matter of debate.

Government Orders

The government is stating that there have been no fundamental changes with respect to official languages for five years, whereas the member for Richmond—Arthabaska has real, compelling evidence showing that certain steps were taken. That is not an opinion, it is a fact.

Facts are facts in the House, and I am again asking for unanimous consent to table these documents.

The Speaker: This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will ask for only those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member's request please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1515)

[English]

DIGITAL CHARTER IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to give my input on Bill C-11, the digital charter implementation bill. I am happy to give this input. It is a timely bill for Canadians because this bill is about access to people's information and, more important, how that information is monetized by others. At a time when big corporations around the world are earning billions of dollars very quickly from information, getting in front of this issue right now for Canadians is very important.

What is being sold? Canadian information is being sold. What do Canadians privately own of their own data? This is the question that should be addressed in this bill. The converse of this, of course, is the targeted marketing and what Canadians get from the fact that they are giving away their information so they are getting back more services that might be tailor-made to them. It is one of those areas where the intent of Canadians not to give away their data and the result of that data that they willingly gave away, in many instances can be very contradictory. Let us tell Canadians first, as my colleague said here earlier, that they are the product.

Phones are listening to us. Computers are listening to us. Sometimes, computers are watching us. Sometimes, when my sons at home have Siri on, they say, "Siri, turn on". Siri comes on and I tell them, "Siri was listening the whole time because it just turned on when you told it to turn on." A lot of information is being culled. We do not know which of that is resting with us, and which of that is public information to be monetized by somebody else.

When I read this bill, I saw a bureaucratic solution designed by bureaucrats for use by bureaucrats, with what will be minor effect for the Canadian population in general. As much as we would like

to make sure that we actually do deal with the issue around Canadians' private information that is provided online, we do need to make sure that it applies consistently across our country. It is a bubble created by a bureaucracy, and that bubble is lacking any consequences for mistakes and those mistakes will happen within the bureaucracies of the Government of Canada. In essence, from the Government of Canada's level, everything in this bill shows a complete lack of accountability for the government about how it might misplace or misuse Canadians' data.

I recall, years ago, the government's approach to what was the no-call list. There was a lot of telemarketing going on at the time and the government came out with a solution. If people registered their phone number it would ensure they did not receive telemarketing. We all jumped on that because on our land lines at the time we were getting a lot of telemarketing. When that registration came up, of course my land line was registered and it said to put in my cellphone number too. I put in my cellphone number, and the next day I started receiving telemarketing on my cellphone where I never had before. What apparently happened is the Canadian government's site had been hacked and all that information was sold to telemarketers. It is a shame because it got no money for it. My information was given away for free and a whole bunch of telemarketers got something from the Government of Canada that was literally stolen from Canadians. Therefore, my data was somebody else's, without my consent, as a result of my contribution to the Government of Canada.

Consumer pricing protection is something that would fall in the same type of realm. How do we make the Government of Canada accountable for what might happen with the data that we willingly give the Government of Canada? Will there be fines? Do we actually tell the Government of Canada that if it does not protect this information the Canadian government is going to fine the Canadian government and therefore the taxpayers are going to have to contribute to the government's fining itself? It is a bit of an around-the-world kind of trip, much like quantitative easing.

The problem is, who has this information about me? I do not know, but the party I am forced to disclose the most information to, that I know about, is the Government of Canada.

• (1520)

Let us discuss how stopping that government body in charge of the information I provide is mishandled. That would be the Canada Revenue Agency more than anybody else. It has my financial information, all kinds of dates and my social insurance number. Frankly, having dealt with it for years, it is a disaster of an organization. It has the wrong information. It processes information badly. It is the worst organization to try and fix bad information. That is the Canadian government.

Government Orders

Let us look at what happened in the last handful of months here with the CERB. Data was pilfered and Canadian payments during a pandemic were misdirected. How much of the \$400 billion spent is legitimate and how much is as a result of data hacks that went to the wrong entities? Canadians are paying for these mistakes. Canadians are paying now and Canadians are going to continue paying for generations.

The legislation looks like it is designed for large organizations. Let us start with banks. Banks are another organization that we provide a lot of information to and they have a lot of information about us because they handle our financial information. They know how much we are worth, they know how much we have on deposit and they know how much we owe on our mortgages. They are pretty deep as far as what they understand about us.

There are all kinds of small businesses here, as well, that we need to apply. I want to read from this legislation something that should scare any small business person. This is about privacy management programs as required under this legislation. It states:

Every organization must implement a privacy management program that includes the organization's policies, practices and procedures

It further states:

the organization must take into account the volume and sensitivity of the personal information under its control.

What does that mean and how do we interpret that? Further, an organization:

must ensure, by contract or otherwise, that the service provider provides substantially the same protection

They have to ensure something nebulous is provided by their service provider when forwarding information.

Let us get on the ground here. Someone can walk into a pharmacy and that pharmacy wants the Alberta health care number, which is private government information. The retailers want that information so they can continue to track certain things someone does. They know how much of a person's spending they have and they know how much they can market other products to that person if getting some kind of prescription. Government data is quickly translating over into retail data. That is not exactly something we want to provide.

I will go further here because seniors are the people most affected by this. There are so many seniors who are bearing the brunt of the pandemic. There are issues we go through as we age, including financial institutions, insurance companies and all service providers. Many take advantage of seniors in many respects because things get very complex. We want to make sure our seniors are taken care of in a system that continuously evolves, advances and gets more complex. That is something this legislation should take care of more than anything else.

I do not like being just critical. There are also good things in this legislation and I am going to point them out. The purposes of this legislation are that an organization must determine:

each of the purposes for which the information is to be collected, used or disclosed and record those purposes.

The information for consent is also required. Forms of consent are also defined within. The withdrawal of consent is there, as is the disclosure to cease that actual consent.

Another good thing is there is a period for retention and disposal of data that we provide organizations. An organization must not retain personal information for a period longer than necessary. These are very good advances in the legislation. I thank the drafters of the legislation for that.

● (1525)

I have questions on some of the other parts of this legislation as well. On the transfer of information to service providers, organizations may transfer an individual's information to a service provider without the client's knowledge or consent. They would still be monetizing data that gets collected by one retailer or provider and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, time is up. I have been giving the member a bit of leeway.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am encouraged that the Conservative Party has seen the value of the legislation to the extent that it wants the bill to go to committee, at which I anticipate amendments will be brought forward.

Could the member provide further thought about the implications that have been suggested with respect to the Government of Canada. Does he feel there needs to be specific amendments related to the Government of Canada? Does he want the Privacy Commissioner to do more? What specifically is he thinking about? He referenced programs like the CERB and so forth.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, there are significant penalties in the bill, such as \$20-million, \$25-million or \$30-million fines or 3%, 4% or 5% of global revenue from an organization. These are going to be pretty significant organizations if we are talking about global revenue. To this point in time, I have not seen how the government calculates global revenue, but I am curious. These types of things do not apply to ma and pa shops and people on the ground collecting information. It is geared toward large organizations.

A question arises from that. We are talking 3% or 5% of global revenue that would flow to the Government of Canada for a transgression as opposed to an individual who lost data. Who still owns the data would be the big question.

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[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member to present his conclusion. I would like to give him that opportunity, so he can tell us more about the enforcement powers he would give the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I have no specific recommendations on that topic at this time. However, I thank my colleague from Quebec for his question.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate some of the thoughtful things the member brought forward about small business, but also, like me, he has raised serious concerns about big banks and how they have not done their part during the COVID crisis.

The Conservatives, like the New Democrats, have been rightly concerned about privacy, especially when the COVID-19 app rolled out and what it meant for privacy. The Conservatives have asked tough questions of government, like we have, that concern privacy remaining ineffective. Could the member talk about how there is no need for a trade-off between privacy rights and other priorities?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, when we talk about a trade-off, we talk about enforcement more than anything else. If we think about banks, which people often think about when they come to a conclusion about all the disclosure, particularly financial disclosure, they have been under compliance regimes for decades. In effect, when we get down to the ground and the people fulfilling those compliance regimes, we find that it gets watered down to the point where they do not understand those compliance regimes.

Therefore, something that happens at a high bureaucratic level does not necessarily get translated down to the customer level. Getting a real piece of legislation like this down to the level of the clerk and the customer is a monumental task and will not happen overnight.

• (1530)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Willowdale.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was listening very intently and I am grateful the member has acknowledged that the bill has great improvements and would allow Canadians to feel more secure.

When it comes to the role of government, would the member not agree with me that the Privacy Act does apply to the government that may have some information on Canadians? Obviously that regime is robust—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do have to allow the member to answer. We are running out of time. When I say a brief question, I would ask members not to provide a speech.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre, a brief answer, please.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, what I saw in the legislation did not indicate any penalties to the government for citizens whose privacy had been breached. I think for most Canadians, their number one provision of data is to the government, the party they trust the most. That is the party that should probably be the most liable to Canadians for any breach of data, yet there is nothing in the legislation that says that the government owes this duty of trust to Canadians.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Pontiac.

I am pleased to rise today to speak about the digital charter implementation act, 2020.

Digital technology is changing our economy and our society. Data is now a resource that companies can use to be more productive, to develop better products and services, which has unleashed a digital revolution around the world and which is even more evident during this time of COVID-19.

At the same time, the rapid growth of data-driven industries and technologies is opening the doors to the potential of new and innovative uses of data to support the public good. Data drives the development of many of the algorithms and protected models that are key to our understanding of societal challenges. Examples include the use of data to support sound public health outcomes; enable smart city technologies, such as dynamic traffic management; and promote greater energy efficiency and sustainability through smart grid technologies.

In Canada, public discussions around socially beneficial uses of data have focused on the emerging concept of the smart city in light of waterfront Toronto development proposals and other smart city initiatives considered by federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has recentred the discussion on the role of private sector data and innovation in supporting public health objectives. We are witnessing the central role that data is playing in managing the pandemic. Not only is data critical for tracking current outbreaks or predicting future outbreaks, it has also been used to inform how our health professionals manage critical supplies and ensure they are deployed where they are most needed.

While data has proven to be of vital importance, stakeholders have identified the need for greater clarity around the legal frameworks governing data sharing between businesses and public sector institutions in the context of smart cities and public health.

[*Translation*]

At the same time, Canadians' concerns over the protection of privacy and democratic responsibility underscore the importance of defining the conditions necessary to establish a certain level of confidence in any new framework. Data sharing can lead to innovative solutions that benefit society.

However, Canadians need assurance that their privacy will be respected and that their data will not be misused. That is why the act to enact the consumer privacy protection act introduces a clear framework for privacy protection in data sharing for socially beneficial purposes.

Under Bill C-11, organizations will also be obliged to obtain consent before disclosing personal information to other organizations. This is in line with the existing act and with most of the legislation on privacy protection in the private sector.

However, in order to support responsible innovation, the bill makes one exception that will allow private sector organizations to disclose de-identified information to certain types of Canadian public institutions for socially beneficial purposes, without consent. This guarantees that businesses will be given the opportunity to participate in public sector initiatives that use data to contribute to the public good.

In addition, by abiding by this framework, private sector organizations can take part in these data sharing activities with full confidence that they are complying with the bill. At the same time, the bill underscores the importance of oversight by democratically responsible public authorities.

● (1535)

[*English*]

As I mentioned, information that is disclosed in this manner would have to be de-identified, ensuring that individuals' privacy is completely protected. What is more, the act would prohibit using that information later to try to reidentify the individual. This prohibition would be tied to significant fines.

This framework would allow Canadians to participate in initiatives directed at socially beneficial purposes without compromising their privacy. It would also ensure that Canadians benefit from the full power of data to create better solutions to some of the most complex policy challenges of our time.

The scope of socially beneficial purposes would focus on areas of public interest that provide broad public benefits supported by use cases and lessons learned that have been identified through years of engagement between government, business stakeholders and civil society organizations.

For example, ride-sharing and transportation service companies could potentially disclose de-identified aggregate data on the movement of their users to municipal authorities as modelling traffic patterns to help improve traffic flow, plan for better public transit initiatives and to improve road user safety.

The law would set clear parameters on which public institutions could receive information under the new consent exception, such as health care bodies, post-secondary institutions, public libraries and

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other public institutions or private organizations with the mandate to carry out a socially beneficial purpose. Many of these public institutions already have robust data governance systems in place to ensure the integrity of information and protection of privacy and would be ready to take on new responsibilities that would be in the public interest.

The framework for socially beneficial purposes would also cover situations where different levels of government direct public institutions or certain private sector partners to carry out data initiatives. As highlighted in the reports of our colleagues on the policy implications of connected and automated vehicles, this type of public-private sharing of information would be critical to ensuring the safety and security of technologies that would bring incredible benefits to all Canadians.

The approach proposed in the bill would ensure that the law would be adaptable as new use cases emerge and pave the way for innovative new uses of data that could provide broad public benefit while retaining trust and accountability.

[*Translation*]

Canadians can also rest assured that the new act will protect their information before and after they communicate with these institutions. All personal information transferred will first be de-identified, which will ensure that privacy is protected in these data sharing activities. The consumer privacy protection act also contains clear rules that will prevent the identification of this information, as well as severe penalties for organizations that break these rules.

The framework for socially beneficial purposes will allow innovative Canadian businesses and public organizations to take part in resolving the greatest social challenges in areas such as health and environmental protection. This could improve research on the pandemic, enhance environmental sustainability and conservation efforts, and make our roads safer for users.

These actions will be based on clear democratic responsibility and the protection of Canadians' privacy, and will maintain the flexibility needed for future innovative uses of data for socially beneficial purposes.

● (1540)

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend from Vaughan—Woodbridge. I am very happy to see that his French is getting better every month.

Here is the full title of Bill C-11: an act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts.

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It is a long title, and I would like to ask my colleague a question. In connection with this bill, does he think his government needs to take rapid, if not immediate, action to stop fraud and identity theft?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for his question.

[*English*]

COVID-19 has brought many things to the forefront, and data protection and identity protection are first and foremost. What Bill C-11 brings forth is the idea of consent and also the idea of data destruction. If someone is moving their information from one provider to another, they would be able to indicate to the first provider that they wished to have their data and personal information destroyed so it would not be leaked or hacked.

There are several protections built into this. Consent is one of them, and I am happy to see this. I am happy to see the update to a number of laws within Bill C-11 for the protection of data and information for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know that since the government was elected in 2015 tech giants have tripled their lobbying efforts. Google and Facebook account for half of the increase in terms of the lobbying efforts. We know privacy rights are an important part of life, especially in the digital age. However, when they are violated, individuals need to be compensated.

During the government's time in office, there have been many data breaches, including at Equifax. In the United States, victims of the Equifax data breach were compensated \$425 million as part of the settlement. In Canada, for the same breach, consumers were not awarded anything.

This bill has no provisions to take notice of settlements in the United States to ensure there is parity in the treatment of victims on either side of the border. Should this bill be amended to make sure Canadians are treated equally for the same violation that is happening in the United States?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I hope to see Bill C-11 come to committee in an appropriate fashion. We are having a vigorous debate here in the House on the merits of the bill, and when it comes to committee suggestions can be put forward.

What I am very happy to see in the current form of the bill is that we would have some of the highest fines in the G7 under the CPPA, which would be introduced with this bill and ensure organizations are maintaining and controlling the data of Canadians in an appropriate and safe manner. It is great to see the bill has highlighted the fines and penalties that could be instituted on organizations if they fail to do so.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, there are much-needed updates to the privacy legislation in this bill. In particular, I like the right to erasure, which would allow consumers to demand that organizations delete information about them.

The Greens believe this privacy legislation should apply to political parties, as it does in the B.C. legislation. I am wondering

whether the hon. member would support an amendment to that effect.

• (1545)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I hope to see this legislation brought forth to, I believe, the ethics committee, where it would be sent from the House and we would see a vigorous debate on the bill.

I am very happy that for the first time since 2001, when PIPEDA was introduced, we are seeing the modernization of our privacy act, if I can use those terms. It is great to see because we know data, technology and the importance of data have grown exponentially throughout the years and even more so in our daily lives. We need to ensure laws are updated and revamped to protect Canadians. That is what we are doing with Bill C-11. I will be happy to see it go to committee, and as a member of that committee I will be involved in that vigorous debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this Bill on consumer privacy protection.

The bill, which will replace the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, makes consumer protection a top priority to ensure that Canadians have confidence in the digital marketplace and trust that their personal data will be managed responsibly by the private sector.

[*English*]

It is so important, in an era of global online commerce, for Canada to be putting in place a privacy standard that offers consumers increased control over their personal information as they participate in the modern digital marketplace. The act also includes several important changes to enable and support innovation in an increasingly digital marketplace.

I am going to speak today about how our government is supporting business and protecting Canadians' privacy as they actively participate in the digital economy. Our government is working to establish an enhanced privacy framework where consumer protection is strengthened and where businesses are supported in their efforts to innovate in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Bill C-11 marks all sorts of important changes to the privacy framework for Canadians, and it is long overdue. It sets out enhanced measures for Canadians to ensure that their personal information is protected, and it establishes new roles and new mechanisms for industry in a way that promotes innovation in a digital world.

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[*Translation*]

We understand the need to ensure that Canadians' privacy is protected. We must also ensure that Canadian businesses have access to the support they need to grow and compete in a global marketplace based on digital technologies and data.

These changes are taking place at a time of great upheaval, namely the rapid evolution of digital technologies. They are also taking place at a critical time for businesses, which must adapt and innovate in a digital world.

The current pandemic has made digital solutions essential to everyday life. At a time when physical distancing is so important, consumers want solutions that give them access to the products and services they need. Moreover, companies must continue to do business and develop. Digital solutions have helped many of them stay afloat.

However, we all recognize that new technologies provide businesses with huge amounts of personal information, the kind of data they need to make business decisions and offer clients new services.

[*English*]

We know that innovation and growth are critical, but we have to stand up for Canadians and ensure that this innovation in a digital world happens in a responsible way. Today I am going to outline some of the key elements of Bill C-11 that enable responsible innovation: innovation that is done right in a Canadian way.

One of the goals of our current law, PIPEDA, which Bill C-11 would supersede, has been ensuring that companies are able to handle personal information to meet their own legitimate business ends. The other is to ensure that companies do this in a privacy-protective way. To achieve this dual objective, PIPEDA's framework is principles-based and technology-neutral. The framework ensures that this law continues to apply, even as technology has undergone rapid change.

Bill C-11, the CPPA, retains this approach, continuing the success of a flexible and adaptive privacy law in the Canadian private sector context, but we have to recognize that "the times they are a-changin'." To better reflect the realities of the digital economy, and the continued emergence of new big-data technologies and artificial intelligence, the CPPA would allow for a number of provisions that support industry going forward.

The bill would create a level playing field for companies of all sizes by reducing administrative burdens, which is critical for the vast number of small and medium-sized enterprises in Canada. It would introduce a new framework for personal information that is de-identified. It would establish new mechanisms, such as codes of practice and certification, with independent oversight by the office of the Privacy Commissioner, and it would address data for research purposes or purposes deemed to be socially beneficial.

I will outline how the bill would do all this.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

The bill before us today includes a new exception to the requirement for consent regarding certain business activities. The objective is to allow Canadians to give meaningful consent by limiting it to specific activities that involve real choice. This is essential to prevent the use of blanket consent and lengthy contracts that—let us be honest—no one reads.

This will also reduce the administrative burden on businesses in cases where an individual's consent may be less relevant. Let's consider the example of a third-party service provider that ships various goods. The customer wants the goods shipped, and the business should be able to meet that need. The bill should not add to the burden of providing that service.

[*English*]

The bill would provide for new regulations to be developed for prescribed business activities and would introduce the concept of legitimate interests in Canada's privacy framework. This is something that industry has asked for, we have consulted about and the government has answered in Bill C-11.

Second, we are better defining and clarifying how companies are to handle de-identified personal information: personal information that has been processed and altered to prevent any identification of a particular individual. The bill would allow organizations to de-identify personal information and use it for new research and development purposes. Businesses must undertake research and development to improve their products and offer customers the new and leading-edge services they are looking for. This provision would give businesses the flexibility they need to use de-identified data for these purposes, which would add value for customers and businesses alike.

The law would also allow organizations to use data for purposes of serving the public good, specifically by allowing companies to disclose de-identified data to public entities. Such disclosures would only be allowed when the personal information could not be traced back to particular individuals and when there was a socially beneficial purpose; that is, a purpose related to health, public infrastructure or even environmental protection. This kind of provision would protect individuals while ensuring we use all the tools at our disposal to address the biggest challenges of our time.

Included in the bill is a clear set of parameters for institutions, such as hospitals, universities and even libraries that would seek to receive personal information for a socially beneficial purpose. These parameters would help clarify the rules of the road in new and important fields.

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These provisions would also permit organizations to share more data in a trustworthy fashion. They would allow the private sector to work with different levels of government and public institutions to carry out data-based initiatives in a privacy-protecting fashion. By taking this approach, the bill would accommodate emerging situations where collaboration between public and private sectors could have broad public benefits, while at the same time maintaining the trust and accountability that Canadians demand and deserve.

Third, the bill would provide the framework for codes of practice so businesses, especially those in specific industries or sectors of the economy, could proactively demonstrate compliance with the law. The bill would do this by introducing co-regulatory mechanisms into Canada's privacy landscape that would have businesses and the Privacy Commissioner working together. For example, there could be a code for de-identification.

I recognize my time is running short so I will simply mention that I would open the door to talking about the process the bill would provide for certification and certification bodies. I think this would be a very important provision that businesses across Canada would use regularly and that the Privacy Commissioner would have the opportunity to work on with businesses.

With that, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-11. I look forward to taking the questions of my hon. colleagues.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Bill C-11 seems to apply only to private businesses, not to the federal government. We all saw many examples of this during the pandemic. I imagine that all members were informed of the cases of victims of fraud or identity theft reported to their riding offices.

It therefore seems to me that this bill could also be applied to the federal government. Before imposing these sorts of measures, which I agree are desperately needed, on private businesses, perhaps the government should have a look in its own backyard.

I would like my colleague to tell me whether his government plans to do that.

Mr. William Amos: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Bill C-11 certainly focuses more on commercial activities. That is where there is a real interest, and it is the stakeholders in that area that we have been consulting for several months, and even years, to find solutions that will not only protect consumers but also benefit businesses and SME development across Canada.

That said, with regard to the federal government's work on modernization and the protection of individuals, we have already included protections in the Elections Modernization Act during the previous Parliament and so I think we have made progress on both sides. This time, we are focusing on commercial activities.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

My question is a fundamental one, to my mind. Our data and personal information are invaluable to the web giants. They use this information for marketing and targeted advertising. They use it to direct users to websites or places where they can purchase and consume products. One of the fundamental aspects of that process is that companies can exchange and sell personal data, even if that data is separated from the person's information and packaged in a set of metadata. Companies rely heavily on selling and exchanging personal data.

Will the government commit to putting an end to this practice, which turns consumers into mere numbers, into merchandise to be exchanged by big companies?

Mr. William Amos: Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague from Rosemont.

We are well aware that Canadian consumers want more protections. They want to consent to the use of their information, and they want that consent to be informed and to be freely and clearly given. That desire for better control over their personal information is central to this bill. It is very important that people have the right to request that their personal information be destroyed. There are also circumstances where the consumer may want to transfer their data to other organizations.

There are several organizations, and I think our government has tried to find a middle ground and balance public and private interests in this very complex area. We will be pleased to discuss potential amendments to this bill in committee.

• (1600)

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when Canada's anti-spam legislation was first brought forward, I was president of a chamber of commerce. I was dealing with the issues, in business, of all the requirements and hurdles that had to be dealt with. They were designed around email spam. We are now into the next generation of spam, and information is shared digitally in different ways other than email.

Could the member describe how this legislation builds on previous legislation such as Canada's anti-spam legislation?

Mr. William Amos: Madam Speaker, that is a great question because privacy law needs to evolve. The spam issue came from an email generation. Now we are into the big data and social media generation. It all fundamentally starts with a better consent regime. It goes to transparency. It goes to a more informed consumer of data.

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I am looking forward to the improvements to this privacy regime as the bill passes through Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Today we are discussing Bill C-11, an act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other acts, which received first reading in the House on November 17.

I am aware of the importance of the issue addressed in the bill. It is 2020. Who would have thought that, in 2020, we would have to come to grips with technology in such a hurry because of a pandemic?

Technology was already evolving at a fast pace, but I can say that we have had to increase our knowledge at great speed. If someone had asked me three months ago if I was comfortable with teleconferencing, I would have said no, but today it is an everyday occurrence. It is important to address this issue.

I would like to remind the House that I represent the fantastic riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier in Quebec. In 2019, the personal data of 2.9 million Desjardins members were leaked. They were victims of identity theft. Their data were resold to people who wanted to use them to do business in the financial sector. Although the leak did not involve banking information, it still exposed the affected customers to identity theft.

On June 20, 2019, Desjardins revealed that the personal information of 40% of its members had been illegally shared outside the organization by an employee, who had since been fired, of course. On July 8, Quebec's Commission d'accès à l'information and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada announced that they were launching investigations. On July 15, Desjardins broadened its identity theft protection and offered protection to more than 4.2 million individual members and 300,000 corporate members. On November 1, it announced that all 4.2 million individual members had been affected by the data leak. About 173 of the 350,000 corporate members were also affected.

I will reveal that I am a Desjardins customer and that I was part of this group. Even before the pandemic, digital transactions were commonplace. The current context is speeding things up.

Today's bill comes from a good place, because we do need to keep up with the times, but will we be able to apply and enforce it? Are we not putting the cart before the horse? That is the problem with this bill.

Examples in my riding make me wonder. The government is trying to bring in legislation that would impose astronomical fines on non-compliant companies. The government is puffing out its chest, bragging that our country will be giving the biggest, juiciest, harshest and most lucrative fines, but will we be able to collect?

What do we want? We want to protect Canadians and provide them with the necessary tools. Would it not make more sense to in-

vest in a service that gives these tools to our businesses, so they can help Canadians and consumers?

I have mixed feelings about this bill. It obviously comes from a good place, but are we taking the best possible measures to ensure solutions for the coming days, weeks and months? We need something concrete.

My constituents often tell me that I must find it hard to be a parliamentarian, because I am pragmatic. We need concrete solutions. The goal is laudable, but are we taking the right measures? I am not sure.

I hear from many businesses and citizens. They are still calling me to tell me they are having problems with Phoenix. They are federal employees who are having problems with their pay because of Phoenix. Phoenix is a problem that was never fixed. It has been around since the Liberal government's first term in 2015. It is now 2020, and nothing has been resolved.

• (1605)

I agree that we need to enact a law to protect personal information, but there may be other priorities. We are seeing it now with the Canada Revenue Agency. I have constituents calling my office to ask if I can help them, because the CRA is claiming it sent them money that they never received, which is a sign that they are victims of fraud and their identity has been stolen.

Should we be enacting a law to punish large companies when we cannot even solve the problem in our own backyard? I am aware of the importance of this bill, but I wonder whether we are taking the right measures.

I mentioned this earlier, but it is worth repeating: I am the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, which is in the province of Quebec. Quebec has a program to help people who have a baby: The mother or the father is entitled to parental leave.

Here is another example that boggles the mind. One of my constituents meets all of the EI eligibility criteria, but his claim is being reviewed because there seems to be some problem factoring in the parental leave he took in 2019 and the Canada child benefit claim he submitted during the pandemic interfered with processing his claim.

That only happens in Quebec. The Liberal government seems unaware of the existence of provincial programs, and its Canada-wide employment insurance system prevents it from fixing the problem. In this case, is it because it is a Quebecker? Is it because he is a father? I am asking because I want to stress the importance of finding concrete solutions to systems before we consider a bill that will punish big corporations.

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I completely agree that those who are at fault should be held responsible, should accept the consequences and should pay if they break the law. I completely agree with my colleagues on that point. However, I wanted to show how bizarre this situation is, a situation that puzzles me.

Clearly, we need to reflect on this and update the legislation, but is the version being introduced today the best one? I think we need to send this bill to committee for further study and consultation with specialists and experts. We did actually notice that there is only one expert regarding the tribunal.

I do not pretend to be such an expert. I am not computer savvy and, as I said six months or a year ago, I was unaware of my skills and adaptability to technology. Many members here in Parliament have managed to learn quickly, at lightning speed.

That is why we need to think about this bill and, as I said in my speech, not put the cart before the horse. We need to do things right to make sure that the bill really meets Canadians' needs. At the end of the day, the goal is the same: to protect society's interests and ensure that Canadians are respected and protected. We are all working toward this goal.

I will now happily answer my colleagues' questions. On that note, let us be vigilant, because fraud is always lurking around the corner.

• (1610)

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, big corporate data breaches are becoming more and more common. Canadians are concerned about how big tech giants, like Facebook and others, are using their data.

Privacy rights are so important in this day and age. We have to be clear on where we stand. We need stronger policies than some of the policies presented in this bill on compensation, enforcement and data collection.

Does the member agree that we should not be making it easier for the Facebooks and the Googles of the world to use Canadians' personal information in ways that have nothing to do with their services, in the guise of helping small business? Is that really the right place to stand?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Victoria for her question, which is very relevant.

I would not even break it down by category. As I mentioned at the end of my presentation, Canadians must be protected. We could include the banking sector, e-commerce companies, Facebook and all organizations. I say organizations, because there is also fraud in other organizations. That is why I am taking this opportunity to say that the government should ban Huawei from 5G. I am talking about organizations and all businesses that could benefit from exploiting Canadians.

My colleague is perfectly correct: We need a stronger act to protect Canadians, and it must cover all users and possible scammers.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize what the legislation is doing. At the end of the day, we can take a look at our digital environment and the degree to which there has been an explosion of activity on the Internet, and we can see that in the last couple of years we have probably seen more data put into the Internet than we saw in the previous 10 years. One can only imagine what it will be like two years from now.

It appears as if all parties want to see the bill sent to committee. Does the member have some specific amendments today that he would like to see made to the legislation, or is he more content to wait until it gets to committee and then have the discussion at that point in time?

• (1615)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

In my speech, I raised certain questions. I think that we must act and that the intent of the legislation is positive. Having said that, I will not pretend to present any facts today. I want to hear from computer experts in the field. I think that we need to send this bill to committee in order to study it and to get it right.

The bottom line of my speech today is that we need to get it right in order to protect Canadians in the technological world. That is how I would put it. As my colleague said, we need to take a comprehensive look at the bill.

I fully agree with him; we need to take a comprehensive look at it in order to protect Canadians.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

A bill on the same subject is currently working its way through the Quebec National Assembly: Bill 64. It provides fairly significant penalties for organizations that fail to meet their privacy obligations.

Does my hon. colleague think that this bill is strong enough in terms of penalties?

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

I would rather not see stiffer penalties and fines as a way to get results. I think that we have to be smart and strategic about it. We need to think carefully and pass legislation that will yield concrete results and protect Canadians.

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, citizens are increasingly concerned with the information that is being collected about them, how that information is stored and how that information is used. When they like or dislike something on Facebook, where is that information stored and how is it utilized? When the bank asks them three important questions, to which they provide a security answer, where is that information stored and who has access to it?

As the digital world has advanced and expanded exponentially, regulations and oversight, unfortunately, have been rather lax. Now Canada is in a position where it needs to play catch-up. Like an untamed beast, bad actors have been given access to our information and now we are having to pull back in an effort to protect Canadians.

The digital charter implementation act, which seeks to protect the country's aging privacy regime or bring it up to international standards, is much needed and I commend the government for that. However, there are a number of concerns I wish to address as we bring this to a vote. Of course, my hope is that appropriate amendments are made once this gets to the committee stage.

Technology provides us with incredible opportunities for connectivity, influence and prosperity. However, in the midst of all of these positive components, there is also a dark side. By not seriously enforcing transparency and security measures, we run the risk of perpetuating our nation's technological vulnerabilities and we fail to protect our citizens' privacy.

I want to commend the government for acting on this file and crafting legislation that attempts to right some of these wrongs. It is unfortunate, however, that it took five years to bring this time-sensitive bill forward, but it is definitely a step in the right direction. The Privacy Commissioner has been calling for many of these changes, but the Privacy Commissioner would also urge the House to go further. It is no secret that Canada is lagging behind other countries and we need to get going.

If we want Canada to be a leader in technology and artificial intelligence, it is important that we invest the time and resources to get this right. While some measures in the bill meet international standards, others are lacking. Therefore, it is absolutely vital that we do not just pass legislation that checks off a few boxes and makes a few provisions, and then pat ourselves on the back as if we accomplished something great. What we are dealing with is very complex, sometimes confusing and merits keen attention, as well as bringing all the experts to the table.

Jim Balsillie, the founder of Centre for International Governance Innovation and an expert in the realm of digital privacy, has rightfully flagged this for us. He has flagged the call for algorithmic transparency in the bill as something that is inadequate and ineffective in addressing the real problem. We do not just need transparency. He is saying that we need to go a step further. We also need full access to the information and an understanding of what it means, as well as teeth in the event that something needs to be done about it.

In order to better understand the problem, let me take one moment to talk about algorithms. In simple terms, an algorithm is a set

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of codified instructions followed by our computing devices, whether that is our smart phone or television, etc. Basically, it instructs the device or the site that we are on to do something that the creator would desire it to do in order to anticipate our digital decisions and to direct us to the places it would like to direct us to go.

We know that algorithms are being used especially on social media platforms to affect our shopping habits, as well as our human behaviour. They are used to evoke strong, primarily negative emotions from the platform user, which produce harmful results both mentally and emotionally. Algorithms determine what is shown on our Facebook timelines or Instagram feeds and the advertisements that come up on the pages we look at. Companies and organizations use patented algorithms to push their agendas, whether that is to boost sales or to elicit support for a specific cause. They study us, they follow us and they direct us.

As we navigate online, our behaviour is constantly monitored. The data is stored, commodified and then it is even monetized, often without our consent. That information is then used to manipulate and control future behaviours through other algorithms. This pattern is particularly harmful to young children, as well as young adults, who are susceptible to these tactics.

Algorithms are now using artificial intelligence, which means that they are in some ways scarier than ever. They can learn how to trigger negative emotions and keep the user online for hours upon hours by targeting them with enticing images, stories or videos, things that would be of interest to them, because, remember, these individuals have been preyed upon and studied for many years.

• (1620)

The legislation before the House would give Canadians a right to transparency, but it fails to provide a mechanism for action. It is like being able to see that someone is harming a child but not actually being able to take any action. Again, transparency is there, but what is the good of transparency if the wrong cannot be righted?

Robert Mazzolin is the chief cybersecurity strategist for the RHEA Group. He explained that legislators must insist that AI systems are made comprehensible to humans. In other words, make them understandable. He went on to say, "Enhanced transparency is a precondition for the acceptance of AI systems, particularly in mission-critical applications impacting life and death". Algorithmic transparency is not enough. Canadians must be able to access not only the algorithms that are being used but what the code actually means. They must also be able to act when the algorithms are being used in a harmful manner.

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Furthermore, when it comes to requesting information about the algorithms that are being used, the bill actually fails to legislate or give direction as to how the contact information for companies can be easily accessed. This might seem simple, but when was the last time members were able to just phone Google or contact it to inquire about something? It is not very easy. When was the last time members were able to get a hold of customer service at Facebook? Again, it is not very easy.

There is an opportunity within this legislation, a bare minimum within regulation, to tell companies where the information needs to be located and how it needs to be accessible to the Canadian public. For example, make it so that it has to be accessible on the home page, that it has to be size 12 font, that it has to be a certain type of font or that it has to be a certain colour of font. Make it so that the phone number, email and mailing address have to be listed. Make sure that we are caring for the consumer if this legislation is truly about Canadians.

If we want to keep children safe on their way to school, we do not just reduce speed limits in the area. We put in a crosswalk, lights, signs and crossing guards. We issue speeding tickets and we might even have police control. The objective here is to protect the kids, not just put up a speed limit sign. It is imperative that we take a very comprehensive approach to protecting Canadians' privacy, their digital safety and their security. It is not just about transparency. It is about so much more.

If the bill were to pass today, it would already be out of date. We are seriously behind in protecting Canadians' data, and foreign countries are certainly aware of that. By only addressing certain aspects of digital privacy and ignoring others, the government is leaving Canadians vulnerable and putting our national security at risk. AI technology is upending the international balance of power and shaping the geopolitical competition between nation-states. It would be naive for us to assume that foreign governments are not looking at Canada's vulnerabilities as an opportunity to upset information systems from within. This is extremely alarming and deserves for our attention.

For example, there is Huawei. Countries like China are seeking to obtain information superiority by acquiring massive amounts of data and using it to their advantage. The Chinese Communist Party has been pushing for greater civil-military fusion, as it calls it, which is evident in numerous sectors but especially in telecoms and data harvesting. The Chinese president has stated that AI, big data, cloud storage, cyberspace and quantum communications were among "the liveliest and most promising areas for civil-military fusion".

It is perplexing then why this government has not yet taken steps to limit the impact that Huawei can have on our nation. In fact, we are the only country out of the Five Eyes alliance that has not limited Huawei or banned it altogether. This is perplexing and troubling.

The legislation is akin to building a security wall around a city, but only one section of the wall is built high enough to keep enemies out. Meanwhile, the rest of the wall is only built maybe a few feet high. If enemies are looking at the part of the wall that is actually built to the correct height, they are intimidated by it and stay out, but the moment they take a peek around the corner and realize that

the rest of the wall is only built a few feet high, they are in. That is what the legislation is like. It means well, but it is not nearly as comprehensive as it needs to be.

In closing, I am asking for an opportunity to work across party lines to address the concerns of Canadians to adequately serve their safety needs.

• (1625)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that the member across the way has lots of concerns with this legislation. I certainly do. They are about the creation of a whole bunch of new categories for data exemption from those privacy protections. I am a bit concerned about that.

I am wondering if she could address the concerns that this giveaway to big tech giants, which the Liberals have been accused of being far too close to, are also worrying. What does she see as something that could fix that within the legislation?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I think one of the things that has come to our attention over the years is just how buddy-buddy the current government is with, let us say, Facebook. We know the rules are bent. We know that provisions are made. We see evidence of leniencies being granted, and at the end of the day the rules should be applied equally across the spectrum of organizations and businesses.

Certainly, there is a greater need for accountability within this piece of legislation. When it comes to exemptions, that must be thought through very carefully.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, in her speech, my colleague said that she had some suggestions to improve Bill C-11. This is also the case for the Bloc Québécois.

On our side, we are very concerned about the issue of identity theft. There are ways to verify someone's identity. In Europe, mechanisms have been put in place. Here, however, the banks have no such obligations and, if it costs too much, they do nothing. We would like to see stricter regulations for banks and greater transparency.

Does the hon. member agree with what we are calling for?

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, within the context of this bill, in which we are talking about the protection of privacy and the safety of Canadians, we are really talking about consumer rights and provisions.

When we are talking about identity theft and how our information is being used by organizations or businesses, of course the most stringent rules should be put in place. As I said in my speech, transparency must be granted. That is one thing, but the other is that, in addition to transparency, there has to be teeth.

If our information is being misused, then we must have the right to know that. We must also have the right to hold those organizations accountable for their misuse. As well, it is important to note that misuse is not just what they do with our data. It is also how they are managing it, in terms of keeping it secure.

That is exactly the hon. member's point, and it certainly deserves thorough thought.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

One very interesting element of the bill we are debating is the potential for the legislation to cover artificial intelligence and algorithms, which are used by many companies, including Facebook and other such social networks. I am interested in my colleague's views on these algorithms and the applicable provisions.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, the question was with regard to algorithms, which I went into quite extensively in my speech.

Again, I would certainly applaud the government for taking responsibility and putting within the bill the need for transparency around algorithms, but here is the deal: if, as a consumer or as a user, I ask for the algorithms that are being used when I am on a certain website, and those algorithms come back to me as numerous pages of scattered numbers and letters, what does that mean to me? What good is that to me?

Therefore, in this legislation, we actually need to make sure it is not just the transparency of the information being used and the algorithms being used. We also have to make it accessible to Canadians. They have to understand what is actually being done. They need transparency, and to know, when algorithms are being misused, if they will have the opportunity to take action and to seek justice.

This legislation falls short. It does not provide that for Canadians.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, during the debates on November 24, and November 26, 2020 on the Business of Supply pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair and, within each 15-minute period, each party may allocate time to one or more of its Members for speeches or for questions and answers, provided that, in the case of questions and answers, the Minister's answer approximately reflect the time taken by the question, and provided that, in the case of speeches, Members of the party to which the period is allocated may speak one after the other.

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask those who are opposed to the request to express their disagreement.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, all those opposed to moving the motion please say nay.

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

[*English*]

There being no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

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DIGITAL CHARTER IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Egmont.

[*Translation*]

It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to speak to the consumer privacy protection act and explain why this reform is important for enhancing the protection of our personal information.

When we talk about consumers, we are talking about all of us. All Canadians deserve the peace of mind of knowing that their personal information is protected.

As the Privacy Commissioner of Canada has said, the pandemic has accelerated the digitization of our lives, which inevitably increases risks to our privacy and the security of our data. This has raised serious concerns about our personal freedoms, our societal values, the public good, and the compliance and oversight measures required to manage this public health crisis.

Clearly, this crisis has laid bare the need for a certain use of available data, including personal information. In this context, we have seen many different approaches around the world. Different countries have deployed an array of technologies to support their efforts.

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In some cases, their approach has focused on collecting location data for contact tracing or population monitoring or even for tracking an individual's movements. In other cases, telecom service providers have given the government location data from their network. On that, let me make it clear that our approach, Canada's approach, does not use those types of technologies.

● (1635)

[*English*]

This federal government will always defend our privacy and our personal data. Many stakeholders and experts have noted the potential impacts on the right to privacy arising from technologies being used elsewhere around the world. We heard those concerns, and that is why our Canadian approach does not involve these types of technologies.

For example, in the case of the COVID Alert app, our government worked with a variety of partners to support public health efforts to limit the spread of the virus, while also making sure we protected Canadians' privacy. The application was designed with this very objective in mind. As we have said before, the app has no way of knowing one's location, name, address, contacts or other information. In fact, following a review of the app, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner fully supported it.

I hope that this dispels any lingering myths about the app, and as we are very much still in the midst of this pandemic with rising community cases throughout the country, I would like to take this moment to encourage everybody to download the COVID Alert app.

Bill C-11, before us today, would create a strong framework for the protection of personal information in the private sector. The new consumer privacy protection act would impose requirements for obtaining individuals' consent to collect and use their data. Consent must be granted prior to data collection, and consent forms must be written in plain language that absolutely everybody can understand.

While this is extremely important, I know from my own experience, the experience of my friends and speaking to my constituents, and surely this is the case for many Canadians across the country, that not everybody reads the disclosure and consent page before clicking "I agree". That is why we have proposed in this bill to legislate that organizations can only seek consent for data that are strictly necessary for their purposes. They can collect credit card information if they are selling something; they can collect an address if they will be delivering something.

Critically, this bill also would further empower consumers. It would give us the unfettered right to ask what information has been collected about us, how it has been used, whether it has been shared, and whether it has been sold. We, as consumers, would have the right to access the information that an organization might have on us and request its immediate deletion.

Another groundbreaking provision involves AI and algorithmic transparency. We are all familiar with these algorithms which make predictions and recommendations with the aim of influencing and impacting our decisions. Whether our experience is seeing advertising on Facebook or Google, which, very strangely, resembles some

searches we recently did, or recommendations of videos on YouTube, for example, Canadians are constantly being fed information and suggested purchases based on algorithms that we know very little about.

Without going on too much of a tangent, I watched a few weeks ago a documentary called *The Social Dilemma*. I imagine many of us in this House who are interested in the topic of privacy protection and the Internet are familiar with the documentary. Let me say it scared the you-know-what out of me.

This bill would make it mandatory for companies to provide answers and an explanation, upon request, about how any predictions or recommendations targeted toward us were obtained. Legislating that right, providing that opportunity for consumers, is itself a deterrent for companies seeking to make use of algorithms for nefarious purposes. This is a critical step forward.

[*Translation*]

This bill deals with a very complex issue for individuals and consumers and for businesses. It recognizes individuals' right to privacy as well as the need of organizations to collect, use or disclose personal information in the course of reasonable commercial activities.

Our privacy bill is flexible enough to allow companies to apply the general requirements to practices specific to their sector. However, I want to make it very clear that good intentions on the part of private-sector organizations are not enough.

● (1640)

We know that for the new protections included in the legislation to really be implemented, we need binding and effective mechanisms to protect the rights of Canadian consumers. That is why this bill includes serious penalties for those who try to get around it. We are talking about monetary penalties of up to \$10 million, or 3% of global revenues, for large corporations that break the law. For more serious offences, fines up can go up to \$25 million, or 5% of global revenues.

These measures would be among the toughest in the G7. Our government takes the privacy of Canadians very seriously, and the web giants must do the same. We have seen major innovations and digital solutions that not only serve the public interest, but also protect the privacy of our citizens.

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The legislation would allow companies to innovate in a responsible manner and enable Canadians to have more control over their personal information. It is true that the digital environment presents many challenges, but we must not let that stop us. There are tremendous opportunities. Back home in Montreal, I am seeing the potential of AI and responsible data usage. I am thinking about Mila, Element AI, Hopper, AlayaCare and all the start-ups and small businesses that are opening every day in Mile End and Mile Ex. We must continue to encourage the development of this sector while ensuring that the public has confidence in the regulatory and legal framework governing these companies.

As legislators, we must give Canadians our assurance that their data is safe and their privacy is respected. This assurance is necessary not just to foster creativity and innovation, which are essential ingredients for building a strong economy, but also to give us all peace of mind.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague's speech and I saw that the government did its homework by looking at what is being done elsewhere in the world and learning from the experience before legislating on this issue.

It is a good idea to see what other countries are doing wrong so as not to make the same mistakes, but it is also a good idea to look at what other countries are doing right. The Europeans implemented a whole set of regulations to force financial institutions to verify people's identity before authorizing transactions. That is missing from this bill, so we are failing to protect our constituents. I will repeat that we work for them. This does not protect them from fraud.

Does my hon. colleague not agree that this is a weakness of the bill?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I think what we have before us is fairly comprehensive.

We do need to look at what is being done right elsewhere, but we have also created a whole framework. We have also created a tribunal where consumers can file complaints and appeal their case. I believe that what we are presenting today is quite substantial, but I am of course very open to looking at what other countries are doing if my colleague wants to present specific amendments in committee.

• (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have had a lot of time to talk about the current situation of privacy in Canada. As the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier mentioned, there are many situations in Canada where privacy has already been a problem. I wonder what the member's thoughts are on this. We are like a sinking ship. We have many holes in the Canadian privacy ship. Meanwhile, the government is talking about a scheme that would make it perfect. Why not just plug the big holes, such as the infiltration by Russia, Iran, or even China through Huawei's 5G network? To me that is not the wisest way to handle our current situation.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I did have the opportunity to rise on the Conservative motion with respect to Huawei. As

I made clear at that time, there are no providers in Canada at the moment that are using Huawei's 5G infrastructure.

I would also take issue, perhaps, with the word "scheme". What is presented here in the bill before the House is a very serious framework for the protection of personal information and data on behalf of all Canadians. It is certainly something that I am looking forward to debating more fully today and in the future. If there are specific amendments, as I said, I think we are open to them, but at its core, we have a very sound structure that we are presenting in Bill C-11.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, when Canadians' privacy rights are violated, they should be compensated. We have already heard stories about consumers in the U.S. receiving compensation, when Canadians in the same circumstances received no compensation. I think that is a gap in this bill.

I am curious about going a step farther. I am wondering if the member could comment on the idea of consumers being compensated for the data that they are giving, and having more choice around which data and which personal information is going to these big web tech giants.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Madam Speaker, I detailed, in my speech earlier, the very significant fines that companies would suffer for any contravention to this law.

I understand that what my colleague is asking for is compensation directly to consumers. As a former commercial litigator, I think there are serious issues with identifying what appropriate damages would ensue from what kinds of data breaches.

What I find so interesting about many of the provisions in this legislation is that it provides deterrence for companies not to engage in this behaviour. It would actually eliminate the behaviour that we want to discourage rather than compensating consumers after the fact.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ORDER PAPER QUESTION NO. 97

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising to respond to a question of privilege raised by the member for Peace River—Westlock concerning the government's response to Order Paper question No. 97.

Members well know that there are many precedents that support the notion that the Speaker is limited in his or her ability to judge the quality of the response to an oral question or a written question.

I can say with absolute certainty that the Standing Orders have been respected in the case before the House. The government tabled an answer to Order Paper question No. 97 within the time provided under our rules.

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On November 27, 2018, the Speaker ruled on a similar situation:

Any dispute regarding the accuracy or appropriateness of this response is a matter of debate. It is not something upon which the Speaker is permitted to pass judgment.

This is precisely the situation with this matter. While I maintain that this does not constitute a *prima facie* question of privilege, the government is of the view that accurate information is to be provided to members who make such requests.

I would note that in the future when a member feels that information provided through other means does not completely align with the information provided through an Order Paper question, that the appropriate course of action might be to raise this issue with the parliamentary secretary or minister who provided the response.

The Conservatives are right to talk about the sanctity of this House and the great responsibility placed on members to respect the traditions and practices of this august Chamber. Surely no member would want to diminish the respect for this House by deliberately weaponizing questions of privilege and points of order to score political points.

If the member opposite really believes that his privilege has been abused, he could have simply raised this matter with the minister who provided the response. That did not happen. It rarely does happen, and that is unfortunate.

That said, I do believe that all members ought to have easy access to precise, relevant and complete information. As a result, I have asked the parliamentary secretary who provided the response to ensure that the member for Peace River—Westlock has the information he requested. His privileges rest on his ability to receive the information he has requested, not his ability to bring into question the government's motives.

I thank the members of the House for their indulgence in allowing the government to respond to this matter.

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do appreciate the additional information that the parliamentary secretary has provided to the question of privilege. I am sure that the member for Peace River—Westlock will appreciate the information from the parliamentary secretary. I will take all of the information under advisement, and will come back to the House should I need to respond.

[*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 Mégantic—L'Érable, Official Languages; the hon. member for Saskatoon West; The Environment; the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni; COVID-19 Emergency Response.

* * *

[*English*]

DIGITAL CHARTER IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2020

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-11, An Act to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act and the Per-

sonal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to stand and resume debate on Bill C-11, now at second reading, on the consumer privacy protection act.

This act, which replaces private sector privacy protections under the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, PIPEDA, places consumer protection at the forefront in order to ensure Canadians have confidence in the digital marketplace and can trust that businesses are handling their personal data responsibly.

It is important in an era of global online commerce for Canada to put in place a privacy standard that offers consumers increased control over their personal information as they participate in a modern digital marketplace. The act also includes important changes to enable and support innovation in an increasingly digital marketplace.

Today I will be speaking about how our government is supporting business and protecting Canadians' privacy as they actively participate in the digital economy. Our government is working to establish an enhanced privacy framework where consumer protection is strong and where businesses are supported in their efforts to innovate in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Bill C-11 makes important changes to the privacy framework for Canadians. It sets out enhanced measures for Canadians to ensure their personal information is protected and it enables new rules and mechanisms for industry in a way that promotes innovation in a digital world.

We understand the need to ensure the privacy of Canadians is protected. There is also a need to ensure that Canadian businesses have the supports they need to grow and prosper in a global marketplace that runs on digital technologies and data. These changes come at a time of great change, not only in terms of rapid advances in digital technologies, but also at a time that is critical for business to adopt and innovate in a digital world.

The need for digital solutions in our daily lives has become essential in the current pandemic environment. In a time when physical distancing has been so important, consumers want solutions that give them access to the products and services they need and firms need to keep doing business and set themselves up to grow.

For many, digital solutions have been the answer. However, we all recognize that new technologies are providing companies with vast amounts of personal information, data that is essential to making business decisions and offering new services to customers.

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Innovation and growth are critical, but we must stand up for Canadians and ensure that this innovation happens in a responsible way. Today, I will be outlining the key elements of Bill C-11 that enable responsible innovation done right in the Canadian way.

One of the goals of PIPEDA, our current law, has been to ensure companies are able to handle personal information to meet their legitimate business needs and do this in a privacy-protected way. To achieve this dual objective, PIPEDA's framework is principles-based and technology neutral. This framework ensures that the law continues to apply even as technology has undergone rapid change. The CPPA retains this approach, continuing the success of a flexible and adaptable privacy law in the Canadian private sector context. We all recognize that times are changing rapidly.

To better reflect the realities of the digital economy and to continue the emergence of the new big data technologies and artificial intelligence, the CPPA has a number of provisions that support industry moving forward. The bill would create a level playing field for companies of all sizes. It does this by reducing administrative burdens, critical for the vast number of small and medium-sized enterprises in Canada so essential to our economy.

It introduces a new framework for personal information that is de-identified. It establishes new mechanisms like codes of practice and certification with independent oversight by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner. It addresses data for research purposes or purposes deemed to be socially beneficial.

I will outline how the bill would do it all. The bill before us today includes a new exception which is consent to cover specified business activities. The goal here is to allow Canadians to provide meaningful consent by focusing on specific activities that involve real choice. This is critical to avoid blanket consent agreements or the long, multi-page contracts that no one reads.

It would also reduce the administrative burden on the business in situations where an individual's consent may be less relevant, such as a company's choice of a third-party service provider for shipping goods. The customer wants goods shipped and the company should have the ability to make this happen. The law should not add extra burden to fulfilling the service.

• (1655)

Therefore, the bill provides for new regulations to be developed for prescribed business activities, and that introduces the concept of legitimate interest in Canada's privacy framework. This is something that industry has asked for and the government has answered in Bill C-11.

Second, we are better defining and clarifying how companies are to handle de-identified personal information, that is, personal information that has been processed and altered to prevent any identification of a particular individual. The bill would allow organizations to de-identify personal information and use it for new research and development purposes. Businesses must undertake R and D to improve their products and to offer customers the new and leading-edge services that they are looking for. This provision would give businesses the flexibility to use de-identified data for those purposes, adding value for customers and firms alike.

The law would also allow organizations to use data for purposes of the public good, specifically by allowing companies to disclose de-identified data to public entities. Such disclosures are only allowed where the personal information cannot be traced back to a particular individual and there is a socially beneficial purpose, that is, a purpose related to health, public infrastructure or even environmental protections. This kind of provision would protect individuals while ensuring that we use all the tools at our disposal to address the biggest challenges of our time.

Included in the bill is a clear set of parameters for institutions, such as hospitals, universities and even libraries, that would seek to receive personal information for a socially beneficial purpose. These parameters would help to clarify the rules of the road in a new and important field.

These new provisions would also permit organizations to share more data in a trustworthy manner. This would allow the private sector to work with different levels of government and public institutions to carry out data-based initiatives in a privacy-protecting manner. By taking this approach, the bill accommodates emerging situations where collaboration between public and private sectors can provide broad public benefits, while at the same time retaining the trust and accountability we demand and deserve.

Third, the bill would provide a framework for codes of practice so that businesses, especially those in specific industries or sectors of the economy, can proactively demonstrate their compliance with the law. The bill would do this by introducing coregulatory mechanisms into Canada's privacy landscape that would have businesses and the Privacy Commissioner working together. For example, companies operating a specific type of business could develop a code of practice that demonstrates compliance with a specific part of the law, and the Privacy Commissioner could formally recognize the code. For instance, there could be a code for de-identification.

Lastly, the bill provides for certification and certification bodies. Such bodies could use codes of practice to certify businesses compliance with some or all of the law. This is a useful tool for companies, especially small and medium-sized identities, and would be backed up by oversight by the Privacy Commissioner. This means that the Privacy Commissioner would have the option to decline to investigate a privacy complaint when a company has obtained a certification related to the complaint. This is not only efficient, but also provides an additional layer of certainty for business and consumers alike.

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Recognized practices, codes and certifications would make it easier for business to comply with the law and for individuals to understand how they are protected. Bill C-11 would not only help keep the personal information of Canadians safe, but enable tomorrow's innovators by supporting Canadian businesses in every corner of the digital economy.

With the bill, the government has made innovation and economic growth a top priority. It is a major step forward.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for all his clarifications on Bill C-11.

However, I would like to take him in another direction. Quebec is also currently studying proposed legislation, Bill 64, which would provide increased protection for personal information and is heavily based on European law.

I am wondering if the government considered how these two laws will work together, to avoid the confusion that any overlap would cause for the consumer.

[English]

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Speaker, crafting legislation is obviously complex, and governments reach out to various jurisdictions in analyzing similar legislation to adapt best practices that occur elsewhere. Certainly, as the bill moves through the parliamentary process and gets analysis and debate at various stages including committee, I am sure all those best practices will be brought forward and included in any amendments that may make the bill stronger, better and less confusing for consumers, as the hon. member pointed out.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard something from an organization a few years ago. It was talking about providing individuals with the ability to give their consent for the use of their information and allowing for companies to compensate them directly.

Considering this has been out there for quite a while, I wonder why the government did not put it forward in the legislation and what the member would think about that as an amendment.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Speaker, the complexity of the question lies in the definition or interpretation of consent by the individual who is giving it. That is why legislation in most cases is broad and can be broadly applied, as my hon. colleague pointed out. She used a specific reference, but in this case it is about incorporating an individual's or a business's idea of consent into legislation so that it respects the many definitions of consent across the country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could my hon. colleague provide his thoughts as to why it is so important that we bring forward legislation of this nature? I have not had this factually substantiated, but one thing I was told is that the amount of information that has been put on the Internet in the last two years is greater than the amount of information that has

been put on the Internet for decades. One can only imagine what it is going to be like two years from now.

Could my colleague provide his thoughts on why it is important that we bring forth this legislation?

• (1705)

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Speaker, as my colleague is a long-time parliamentarian, he would understand that in the last five to 10 years, the world economy has expanded and changed so rapidly, especially on the data side and in the technology base, that we are really running to catch up. If we look at businesses in the past, we see change occurred slowly and businesses, especially small businesses, could adapt to it in a meaningful way.

At the heart of this legislation is the idea of providing certainty in an uncertain world to small and medium-sized businesses, which really are the foundation of Canada's economy. The government should be able to provide certainty to small and medium-sized businesses, as it is a key economic driver in the country.

I am excited about this legislation, as it provides for a certain world in a very dramatically changing data period. That is why the bill is important. It will require amendments, though, as it goes down the road, because we will be playing catch-up for some time.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be sharing my time with the member for Terrebonne.

I am pleased to rise to speak to the fundamental issue of the protection of privacy.

Since March 2020, Quebec business owners have been hard hit by the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, namely the lockdown, the closures, the health measures, the labour shortage and the drop in consumption.

SMEs in Quebec have received assistance in the form of tax credits from the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada to help mitigate these negative economic impacts. Now more than ever, SMEs are struggling under a burden of debt and many of them may never recover. At this difficult time for Quebec's social and economic life, I am worried about Quebec's SMEs, and particularly the small business owners who do not have the time or money to get bogged down in a data protection program that, in some cases, will have to take into account a number of Quebec and Canada laws.

By amending the Privacy Act, the Government of Canada is creating a number of problems for Quebec's SMEs because of legislation adopted by two governments, the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada. Depending on whether their economic activities extend beyond Quebec's borders, it is very likely that Quebec's SMEs will not know which law governs their data protection plan.

The new federal law proposed in Bill C-11 will have real teeth, which means that Quebec's SMEs are likely to suffer, unfortunately. I am scared to think how this bill will affect Quebec's SMEs.

The pandemic is forcing many retailers to shift to online sales, the kind of electronic commerce referred to in the bill. In his speech to the House this morning, the Minister of Industry acknowledged that the protection of personal information is essentially a provincial responsibility and a matter of civil law. He said his bill respects provincial jurisdiction, but a closer look at the text reveals that to be not quite the case.

It is true that Bill C-11 applies to all federally regulated businesses. However, businesses that are not federally regulated, which describes the vast majority of companies and virtually all SMEs, are not really excluded from the scope of the bill.

The minister can exclude them if the province has substantially similar legislation, as is the case in Quebec, but he cannot exclude them entirely. In fact, he can exclude them only “in respect of the collection, use or disclosure of personal information that occurs within that province”.

Imagine the mess: a Quebec SME will have to comply with the Quebec law if the information does not leave Quebec, but it will have to comply with the federal law if the information does leave Quebec. Information collected from one customer will be subject to two different laws.

Which law do Visa card payments fall under? Does it depend on which territory the Visa server is located in? This seems unenforceable to me. If a business is covered by the Quebec legislation on data protection, that should apply to all its activities, not just half of them, as it would under the bill as currently worded.

Furthermore, Quebec laws are also adapting to the reality. We must recognize that the federal government's bill represents a step forward, because the current legislation has no teeth. Under Bill C-11, a privacy commissioner could establish the specific practices to be adopted in accordance with the principles set out in the legislation. A privacy commissioner would have order-making powers to force organizations to comply with those principles.

Under Bill C-11, a citizen could file a complaint with a tribunal. The privacy tribunal will also be able to impose significant penalties of up to 3% of a multinational's global revenue for non-compliance. In short, the major difference between the law and the bill we are debating, is that the bill's mechanisms are more favourable to citizens when faced with an organization that misuses digital data.

This bill fails to address the important issue of online identity protection to prevent fraud through identity theft, especially when Canadians engage in financial transactions. Bill C-11 does nothing to ensure that financial institutions in Canada verify someone's identity before authorizing a transaction, which exposes Canadians to fraud. Even the federal government has failed to properly verify a person's identity before authorizing an electronic transaction.

I would like to share an unfortunate incident that happened to one of my constituents. This summer, a young man was a victim of identity theft and wound up having to defend his reputation to the Canada Revenue Agency and another financial institution. It was my own office manager who, while talking to a federal official on the phone, realized that fraud had taken place. My office manager took charge of the case and helped my young constituent navigate the unpleasant process that lasted weeks. There was a police invest-

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igation and all kinds of documentation. There were numerous discussions with a financial institution and government officials. He had to go to great lengths just to prove that a fraudster had stolen his identity and to defend his reputation to a financial institution and the Canada Revenue Agency.

• (1710)

It was weeks before this young man was able to access the Canada emergency student benefit he very much needed. That is not exactly the kind of introduction a young adult should have to dealing with banks and governments. This whole situation happened because the government did not take the time to verify the identity of the CERB applicant.

The government needs to set an example and take immediate action to combat identity theft. This is a serious problem. Bill C-11 contains some privacy mechanisms, but there is no mechanism to verify the identity of users or consumers to protect their personal information.

I remind members that private information falls under the umbrella of property and civil rights, which is a provincial jurisdiction, as set out in the Constitution. Quebec is in the process of modernizing its act. Unfortunately, it is difficult to assess right now how the federal act and the Quebec act will interface.

However, the Bloc Québécois foresees some problems, and we do not want these problems to affect small businesses in Quebec, which, I remind members, are struggling as a result of the economic issues associated with the COVID-19 crisis.

SMEs carry a heavy debt load at times. Any additional weight on the shoulders of Quebec entrepreneurs is becoming harder and harder to bear. Considering the potential administrative nightmare that could result from how the federal legislation intersects with the Quebec legislation, I would ask that Quebec SMEs be exempt from Bill C-11.

Simon Marchand, chief fraud prevention officer at Nuance Communications, is a certified fraud examiner, a certified administrator and an expert in biometrics and security. He appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology on May 20. We were discussing fraud-related topics. He mentioned that in the context of COVID-19, telework was a risk factor. This is especially true when it comes to customer service.

All customer service agents who normally work in call centres now work from home, in an unsupervised environment. These agents have limited resources, but now have the opportunity to access sensitive consumer information, whether it is data on their assets or information that could be used by anyone to impersonate someone else.

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A second factor is the socio-economic reality, which will no doubt put pressure on many households. When it comes to internal fraud, we know that pressure and opportunity are the two basic factors that drive an employee to go against their employer's interests and commit fraud.

Some areas have seen a 600% increase in the number of phishing scams involving COVID-19; attachments, links to websites and other methods are being used to lure victims. Fraudsters will be able to get their hands on vast amounts of consumer information, which they will not use in the next few weeks. Rather, they will wait six to 18 months before opening up accounts, taking out financial products and acquiring products from telecommunications carriers. That is what this bill is all about. It provides a modicum of protection, which is a good thing.

In terms of accountability, Simon Marchand said:

I think, though, the focus should be on accountability and the responsibility companies have in relation to the information they use to deliver services.... it calls into question the bank's responsibility, which is protecting that information.

The first benefit of accountability will be to give the government a clear picture of the situation. It will know exactly how many victims there are, and it will be able to direct measures accordingly to strengthen security, particularly in banks and telecommunications companies.

This will put a burden on businesses, which will have to file reports, but this burden is not unreasonable, since the data they have is already known. All they will have to do is provide them to law-makers or to a government-supervised body that can present these data more broadly and anonymously so that members of Parliament can access that information and know exactly what is going on in Canada.

This is an important step, because if there is a leak, companies must tell individuals what information was exposed and the risk of harm from the leak. That is what the bill does, and it is absolutely fundamental, because that is a risk that we run.

In conclusion, the lack of accountability for federally regulated businesses is a problem with the current legislation. There is currently no overall picture of how many people are actually victimized by having their identity used once it has been stolen. I am therefore pleased that the federal government is taking greater responsibility and beginning to act by introducing this legislation.

• (1715)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when we talk about the legislation, even some of its limitations, and how it could be complemented by working with other jurisdictions, it is important that we recognize the role provinces can play through provincial legislation, which could complement it or even be a leading force. We previously have seen this with other administrations.

For me, the overriding concern has to be the privacy and protection of Canadians and consumers. That is the most important aspect going forward when we deal with legislation of this nature. Could

the member provide his thoughts on how important it is to protect the information of individuals that gets onto the Internet via one way or another?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his excellent question.

I agree with him. The best way to thwart identity theft is to ensure that the person who wants to conduct a transaction is who they say they are. People can be identified based on what they know, what they have and who they are, through personal information. A person's name and address are part of what they know. The IP address of their computer or a cellphone number where an institution can send a text message are part of what they have, and finally, facial recognition, their handwriting or their digital fingerprints are part of who they are. These are ways to fight fraud.

In the European Union, two of these three ways must be used to identify a person. Why does Canada not do the same? These control mechanisms will not cost more than fraud will if nothing is done.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we know identity theft is a crime. We saw what happened with LifeLabs; over 15 million people's data was stolen. An employee at Desjardins stole the personal data of four million people and affected 173,000 businesses.

We are not discussing the Criminal Code today, but maybe the member could talk about what changes he would propose in dealing with those issues to ensure there are steep penalties so that does not happen again.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, and I want to take this opportunity to talk about crisis management.

In my opinion, Desjardins' response is the gold standard. It acknowledged the thefts and sent a personal letter to its clients or, specifically, to the clients that had been affected. As a result, they were able to act very quickly.

There have been other situations. Equifax chose to cover up what happened to protect its reputation. The Bank of Montreal and CIBC did the same until the hackers themselves put a message online. There are dozens of similar examples.

Desjardins knows its clients. In all likelihood, it is other financial institutions, and not banks, that fall under federal jurisdiction. Once we identify the problem we can find a solution. The first solution is transparency.

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• (1720)

[English]

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question that relates to applicability, which was mentioned by my colleague.

In my previous job as a software development professional, I learned that the European general data protection regulation was applicable to anyone who provided goods and services. Our company, even though we registered it in Canada, does business there as well. Therefore, I imagine many of the businesses in Quebec would also do business in Europe, and the GDPR would be applicable.

Could he comment on that?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague, and I would even add that this should apply to the federal government.

The government does not verify identities online, and any verifications that do exist are cursory ones. I should say that the government is not doing what it needs to do to ensure that an applicant is actually who they claim they are. As we have seen with the CERB, this can really open the system up to risks like identity theft, which have serious consequences for Quebecers and Canadians.

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure to speak to Bill C-11 today.

This is an extremely important subject that concerns the security and protection of all citizens' personal information. As my colleague already clearly stated, over the past 10 years and during the current pandemic, there have been a multitude of phishing scams via telephone, the Internet and online shopping platforms, which are increasingly popular.

I believe that Bill C-11 is timely and will correct major problems that we have been seeing for some time in different areas. For example, there have been cases of bank fraud, notably at Desjardins, and the federal government has also been affected. I know that the bill does not apply to the federal government, but this issue remains a very serious concern.

Take, for example, a situation that has occurred in my riding of Terrebonne. For the past month or so, we have been seeing a whole host of complaints related to the Canada Revenue Agency, from people whose identities were stolen by fraudsters who claimed CERB cheques in their name. This shows that there is a gap at the government level, which is very interesting.

I understand that we need to look at what requirements should be established for banks and e-commerce, but I think that there may be some aspects of the bill that we could rework. We are only at debate at second reading for this bill, which means that the bill could be amended and improved to give it more teeth, make it more robust and ensure that it is more responsive to the various threats that could arise in the future. Since we are essentially talking about technology here, the new law should be able to adapt its mechanisms to the changes in technology that will occur in the coming years.

However, there are a number of troubling issues that the bill does not address. For instance, metadata is not included in the bill. I am not an IT expert, but metadata is something that we see regularly. For example, if we spend a few minutes on the Internet searching for a camp chair, it is not unusual to then see ads for various types of camping equipment.

That is worrisome because metadata can be used to target specific individuals. When a group of individuals is targeted, there is a risk of more targeted threats or cyber-attacks. That is why I think it would be a good idea to improve the bill by addressing the issue of metadata.

The federal government, and the Canada Revenue Agency in particular, has quite a lot of work to do on matters of identity theft. The CRA's mandate is to manage revenues on behalf of the Canadian government.

However, what happens in the case of computer fraud as a result of identity theft? In that case, it becomes more a matter of public safety and national security. In many cases, fraud and identity theft, particularly in the banking sector, are committed from abroad using fairly sophisticated electronic means.

Once again, I am not familiar with the mechanisms used to investigate these predominantly computer-based threats or to protect us from them.

I am also referring to the recent debate we had—and I do think this is related—on 5G networks in Canada, in terms of the technological means that will be deployed over the next few years to protect the IT infrastructure itself from all threats and foreign influences.

In some cases, the threat might involve political or public influence. In other cases, it could literally be individual hackers from around the world who use technology, including 5G networks, to circumvent security mechanisms and break into various systems to steal identities and the personal data of the various citizens that we are meant to protect.

• (1725)

It seems to me that the general intent behind Bill C-11 is a worthwhile one, crucial even, as I said in my opening remarks. However, we also need to tackle the technical side. I get the sense that some issues were not considered from all angles so as to ensure that the bill reinforces the back door as much as it does the front door.

Once again, protecting online identity is the most tenuous aspect, and we are trying to rectify that here. I am concerned about a number of aspects of the authentication mechanisms, because that is really what this is about. Currently, many banks, institutions and businesses use a variety of platforms to secure and protect the identity of online customers and consumers.

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As a few minutes on the Internet will show, private online commerce companies use many different authentication platforms and mechanisms. It might be a good idea to consider using the bill to standardize those online transaction authentication mechanisms, but the government seems unwilling to do that in the current version of Bill C-11.

The government wants to have companies and financial institutions take on more of the control, responsibility and obligations of protecting personal information. The government should, however, set out some very specific measures in the bill to ensure that all companies can shoulder this responsibility. Not every company has the financial means to set up robust data protection mechanisms. I therefore think that the government needs to set some statutory requirements.

As my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue pointed out earlier, a lot of small merchants and businesses do not have the financial means to improve or modernize their technology infrastructure. This issue may also need to be addressed in the comprehensive approach we are advocating today.

There is the whole issue of jurisdictions. Quebec's jurisdiction over civil law and consumer protection plays an extremely important role. We know that the laws are confined to the jurisdictions for which they were written. This is not just a Quebec and Canadian problem, but also an international one. By the way, I think it will be necessary for the government to define very clearly these famous control mechanisms and make solid political and governmental choices in connection with the new information technologies that will crop up here at home.

That is essentially where this will play out. We cannot give a foreign government control over telecommunications and computer infrastructure. It is extremely important. We are wading into another field, but to be able to protect our constituents we have to ensure that our infrastructure is not threatened by other countries or by foreign nationals, such as the hackers I mentioned earlier.

Then we have to find some form of standardization to help ensure that clients or consumers are protected during online transactions. Let's not forget the entire issue of metadata, which are a formidable tool for any bad actor wanting to target and attack groups that are more privileged or more vulnerable.

In conclusion, the federal government must ensure that Canadians can be guaranteed, in all circumstances, that a consistent international standard will be rigorously applied, and that it will be possible to efficiently identify any and all fraudsters. Identifying fraudsters has always been a problem, and the Canada Revenue Agency could speak at length about this in committee.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ACT

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ) moved that Bill C-216, An Act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management), be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on International Trade.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that we have heard about supply management in the House. Every time that a motion is introduced on the issue, there is a unanimous vote and it seems that the matter is settled.

In fact, the House has already unanimously adopted three motions calling on the federal government to fully protect supply management. By all accounts, however, Liberal and Conservative governments were not bound by their commitment when they signed the last three free trade agreements, those with the European union, Asia-Pacific and the United States and Mexico. These agreements and the concessions that were made to reach them were catastrophic for supply-managed agricultural producers. Their revenues dropped by more than 8.4%.

Supply management has always been a key issue for the Bloc Québécois. This system was established in 1970 to stabilize the price of agricultural products and, at the same time, ensure a decent and predictable income for dairy farmers, table and hatching egg producers and poultry producers, including turkey and of course chicken.

During the time that the Bloc enjoyed a greater presence in the House of Commons and was strongly pushing for full respect for supply management, all free trade agreements with 16 different countries fully protected the supply management system. The strong pressure and numerous interventions by the Bloc made a difference.

The World Trade Organization, or WTO, was established with the goal of eliminating all tariff barriers, and the WTO considered supply management to be one of them. Protecting supply management became an even greater priority for the Bloc Québécois after the federal election that followed the system's creation in June 1977, as any occasion the WTO had to talk about it turned into a direct attack.

The Bloc Québécois was the first party to demand that the three pillars of supply management be maintained, in a motion moved by the former member for Richmond—Arthabaska, André Bellavance, in November 2005. I remind members that the House unanimously passed this motion. All parties in the House adopted André Bellavance's motion, which read as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should give its negotiators a mandate during the negotiations at the World Trade Organization so that, at the end of the current round of negotiations, Canada obtains results that ensure that the supply management sectors are subject to no reduction in over-quota tariffs and no increase in tariff quotas, so that these sectors can continue to provide producers with a fair and equitable income.

This motion did not have unanimous support when it was moved, but it passed unanimously at the end of the day, after different groups of producers put pressure on their members of Parliament throughout the day.

Today the Bloc wants to go further than a motion and insert protection of supply management into legislation. We want to go further because the major Canadian parties in power do not seem to feel bound by the commitment that a motion represents. I suppose they think of it as more of a wish. We want protection of supply management inserted in a statute so that it is given force of law.

Then the governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, could no longer ignore their commitments to agriculture and the producers could see who really has their interest at heart. It is important to remember that in Quebec alone, dairy, egg and poultry producers represent 6,000 farms and 86,000 jobs.

● (1735)

With the exception of Ontario and Alberta, all of the other provinces have supply-managed producers so it would be disastrous if supply management disappeared.

I would like to talk about the bill that I am introducing on behalf of the Bloc Québécois. It is very simple. It amends the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act to make the protection of the supply management system a responsibility of the minister. It adds supply management to the list of directives that the minister must take into account when conducting Canadian external affairs, particularly in the area of international trade.

Once the bill is fully implemented, the minister responsible for international trade will have to stand up to our trade partners and protect supply-managed farmers. The bill will make it part of the minister's mandate to negotiate without chipping away at the system, as he did when the three biggest international trade agreements of the past decade were signed. Of course, I am talking about the agreements with Europe, Asia-Pacific and the United States and Mexico.

Supply management is a Canada-wide risk management tool that is designed to protect agricultural markets from price fluctuations. By doing so, it guarantees a fair and stable income for farmers in exchange for their work and their products.

In Canada, only the markets for dairy, table eggs, hatching eggs, and poultry, meaning chicken and turkey, are under supply management. The system is based on three basic principles, often known as the three pillars. Dairy farmers used to give their elected representatives a little three-legged stool like the ones used for milking cows years ago. If an MP displayed that symbol on their desk, it meant they supported supply management.

The first pillar is production control via a quota system. Based on research about consumption, meaning consumer demand for dairy products, the Canadian Dairy Commission distributes quotas to each province, whose marketing boards or what are known as producer associations sell quotas to their own farmers. That ensures production is aligned with domestic demand.

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The second pillar is price regulation through the establishment of a minimum price and a maximum price, so that each link in the supply chain gets its fair share.

The third pillar is border control. Obviously, if we do not skew the global market, we cannot allow other countries to skew our market. That is why we use border controls to set very high tariffs and purchasing quotas to prevent foreign products or by-products from flooding our market.

For instance, there might be times when our chicken or egg farmers do not produce enough, and that is when chicken and eggs are allowed in to meet this country's needs and avoid overproduction. The principle of border control is very important and is always the one that comes under attack in international negotiations.

It is this aspect that has been weakened considerably by international agreements. Canada is opening an ever-widening door in our markets for foreign companies to sell their products here. On top of that, international trade standards are constantly seeking to reduce the tariff levels. Our largest trading partners would like to see these tariffs disappear completely, and thus abolish supply management.

● (1740)

For example, without supply management, an American egg producer that produces one million eggs a day could overrun the Canadian market, cut prices and ultimately take control. Border controls are very important, and that is where the government always folds. It caves, often using supply management as a bargaining chip. Since the government is supposed to represent all Canadians and since supply management is a federal program, the Bloc Québécois simply wants the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party to keep the promise they have made more than once to stop making concessions at the expense of supply-managed producers.

On at least 20 occasions over the past 15 years, I have heard a prime minister or an agriculture minister commit to fully defending supply management in future negotiations of a treaty. That is not what happened in the last three agreements. The concessions made in these negotiations instead resulted in income losses for producers in the order of 8.4% to 10%. Some will say that Canada is very vast. That is the argument we are given from time to time. We are told that it is impossible to create effective Canada-wide policies that benefit all the provinces. What is more, some experts believe that applying one standardized program nationwide in agriculture or in other sectors will not stand the test of time and will make it more difficult to resolve regional problems that crop up. That was the main argument we were given for conceding part of supply management.

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The second argument is that supply management does not make a substantial contribution to Canada's gross domestic product. It represents approximately 2%, so that is a good excuse for sacrificing a little bit in every negotiation. This argument fails to consider that this is a very important economic sector for Quebec and Ontario. Supply-managed goods account for about 40% of Quebec's agricultural revenues, or \$3.4 billion out of \$8.9 billion. Quebec's dairy sector has revenues of \$2.4 billion. That is twice the amount of agricultural revenue from the pork sector, which is an excellent export sector and contributes \$1.2 billion a year.

These are different agricultural markets, but the agricultural sector as a whole is very important. The problem also stems from the fact that most supply-managed production occurs in Ontario and Quebec, representing 70%. Crops such as beef, grains and oilseeds are grown for export. The government is always looking to expand markets, but supply management must not be given up in exchange for these markets. That is the problem.

Supply management has survived 16 agreements. It needs to survive any future agreements as well. This system accounts for \$8.7 billion of our GDP and \$2 billion in economic spinoffs. Without this policy, the agricultural sector could lose 58,000 to 80,000 jobs. On top of that, half of this country's dairy exports would be compromised.

In closing, I want to remind members that Canada is currently negotiating with five countries that are part of Mercosur, which also includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela and Bolivia. This bill must be passed before these agreements are concluded. I urge all members to unanimously support this bill, as we did with the previous motions.

• (1745)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, supply management is an issue that the Government of Canada, our Prime Minister, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and so many others have advocated for, not only when we are in government but even in opposition, as it benefits our society to have a healthy supply management sector. In fact, if members go back to the creation of supply management, they will find that it is rooted in a Liberal government's bringing it forward. We recognized how important it was for many different reasons, which I do not think the Speaker will give me enough time to expand on.

I ask my colleague if he would recognize the value of supply management in all the different regions of our country. That is an important component of it: that it is throughout Canada and there is great benefit for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture are regularly reviewing the supply management system, but it seems to me that they sometimes forget about that system during negotiations.

The member asked me whether this is important to all regions of Quebec. Of course it is. In Alberta, for example, there are 1,000

dairy farmers. I remember going to a cocktail party for dairy farmers during their conference in Ottawa, back when the Bloc introduced its motion in 2005. I met farmers from Alberta who came to thank the members of the Bloc for introducing the motion to fully protect the supply management system. Unfortunately, in the last three agreements, the government has made small 3% concessions, which represents about a 10% drop in revenue for all dairy farmers under supply management across Canada.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his presentation.

I would like to remind him that, when the Conservative government was negotiating free trade with our various European and Asian partners, there was a provision to pay \$4.3 billion in compensation to all supply-managed producers. The current Liberal government also made compensating producers an election promise. The producers received a payment, but the rest has still not been paid out. We do not know when that will happen, because the minister is not able to tell us.

• (1750)

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I must tell my hon. colleague that he is absolutely right. I remember very well the \$4.3 billion that the Conservatives promised during the negotiations with Europe. However, they were very slow to table it, and there was a change of government. The government said that it would keep that promise. Again, that is going very slowly. It is more than slow. A first instalment was paid last year, but there was nothing this year. They are now talking about \$1.8 billion instead of \$4.3 billion. We know that supply-managed producers are losing \$450 million per year. The Minister of Agriculture urgently needs to speak with the Minister of Finance.

A budget will be tabled soon; an economic statement is coming on Monday. I hope that they will say something about this promise and that a concrete announcement will be made this year.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, the government announced that it was wrapping up negotiations with the United Kingdom on another free trade agreement. We have yet to see the text of the agreement, but the government tells us that dairy farmers have nothing to worry about. I remember that when CUSMA was negotiated, there were promises up until the last minute that the agreement would not have a negative impact on dairy farmers. Does the member share my doubts about the government's fine words on this issue, and what does he think can dairy farmers expect from this agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom?

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I fully share the member's concerns. For now, the minister is trying to reassure us by saying that supply management is not affected by this agreement with England. Since England was part of the agreement with Europe, it should not get an extra share. England needs to get its share from Europe, nothing more, so that nothing about the Canada-Europe agreement changes. However, I still have doubts, since nothing has been signed yet and all we have is a Liberal Party promise. A little piece of supply management is always affected.

Like him, I am crossing my fingers that this does not happen. What worries me most is the negotiations that are under way with Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela and Bolivia, which are known as the southern countries. Supply management may be affected, particularly poultry and egg producers.

[English]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to bring greetings on behalf of the great people of Kings—Hants, even if it is virtually, but that is the world we are living in.

I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing forward this legislation and giving me the opportunity to speak on the importance of supply management and what it means to rural communities across the country. I was a little disappointed in the member opposite's comments. He mentioned Ontario, Alberta and, of course, Quebec, but he did not mention the importance this has across the country, including the communities that I represent here in Nova Scotia. I look forward, in the next nine and a half minutes, to explaining what this industry means to the people I represent.

I grew up in a region called East Hants in the Kings—Hants area. It has the highest concentration of dairy and poultry supply managed farms east of Quebec, so this is a very important sector for us. It is also a key piece of our identity. Not only is it an economic driver in the sense of jobs and opportunities for producers, it is also a key piece of agricultural communities. This is not just in Kings—Hants. It is across the country. Going to high school, we would see tractors going up and down the road. Some of the students and colleagues that I went to high school with would bring their tractors to prom from whatever farm, but most importantly, from our supply managed sector.

I do not mean to pick on the member opposite because his intentions were good in bringing this to the House, but he mentioned at some point that this is a small percentage of our GDP. That may be the case, but \$22 billion is the figure that I have in front of me, and is what the supply managed sector means to rural Canada. That is larger than the auto sector. That just shows the significance of what this means and the importance of having robust programs in place to support it.

I want to talk about the history of supply management for those who might be watching and may not know, or for some urban colleagues who might not know as much about supply management and its benefits. It was created, as the parliamentary secretary mentioned during questions and comments, in the 1970s by a Liberal government. At the time, there was a massive disconnect between the amount of supply that was being provided in the market and the prices that were being returned to producers. The reason for creat-

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ing rationality was because our supply managed sectors deal with perishable products and producers may not have been able to get them to market in time. This program was put in place to make sure there was an equitable program to support farmers, but also to give the market certainty.

There have been critics. I would be naive to stand in the House, virtually, and suggest that people have not criticized this system and sought an alternative program to move forward, but I want to highlight some of the benefits of supply management. First of all, for me, perhaps most importantly, it allows smaller family farms to still be able to contribute in the marketplace. Whether it is the milk pooling agreements in the dairy sector or otherwise through the SM5, supply management allows farmers that are in more rural and remote parts of the country to have equal access to markets. That is ideologically important to me, and it is important for our economy to create that supply chain throughout rural Canada, from Newfoundland and Labrador, as we heard at the agriculture committee this evening, all the way to Yukon. This is truly a national policy that creates benefits.

I also want to talk about the importance of what this means. Before I was in the House and had the privilege of serving as a member of Parliament, I was an outspoken advocate for this system and what it represents. It truly is the lifeblood of rural communities. It is important that we are able to maintain it and keep it in place to support our farmers. I will relate a quick personal story, if I may.

I was a competitive hockey player. I played junior hockey in a small community called Amherst, Nova Scotia, and had the good fortune to be billeted at a dairy farm just outside of town in Linden, Nova Scotia. I stayed on the farm, played junior hockey and got to see the inner workings of a small family farm in rural Cumberland County. I can attest to the hard work that our farmers put in and the importance of this system, which allows farms like that to exist.

● (1755)

There are critics who would suggest that if we were to get rid of supply management it would actually lead to a reduction in prices at the retail level. I want to challenge some of those assumptions on the record here in the House. The ideology of some of the critics is perhaps conservative and more free-market based.

I am not against free-market principles, but there have been challenges. New Zealand, for example, went with a much more deregulated model. It got rid of some of its supply managed system and saw an increase in price at the retail level for milk supplies. We also talk about the World Trade Organization, and this is one way to support farmers to be able to create an equitable price.

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There are other programs out there, such as the dairy margin protection program in the United States. Maybe some of my colleagues will recall a bipartisan fight in 2012. There was a chance the farm bill would not go through Congress at the time. There was speculation that milk prices would almost double in the United States without the subsidy provided.

In Europe, there is a common agricultural policy that provides billions of dollars every year to producers. Other jurisdictions of the world choose to go about it a different way. When we consider things like the importance of looking at the environment and having sustainable means moving forward, supply management becomes even more in vogue in how important it is to be able to match our domestic demand to supply, and for sustainability and efficiency.

I also want to challenge the notion there is not a competitive model built within the supply managed sector as it relates to the dairy industry. Many critics would suggest it is a system that allows all farmers to benefit and to succeed. It is simply not the case. The way the Canadian Dairy Commission helps set the price of milk, or I should say the kilograms of butterfat in different products, is based on a model that only allows 70% of farmers to break even after their costs of capital are considered.

This means that, for 30% of farms, if one is not good at managing costs, whether a larger farm or a smaller one, it is going to be challenging to get the money to recapitalize infrastructure. It is a myth, and I want to put on the record that there is not a competitive model built within the supply managed system.

I want to turn to why I am proud to be standing with a government that has fought since 1970 for supply management. When we look at CUSMA and what that trade relationship looks like, the president of the United States wanted to use the word dairy. This was important for him politically in being able to get concessions from the Canadian government.

I contrast that with the Conservative government under CETA and the CPTPP. At the time, I believe the member for Abbotsford was the minister responsible for international trade. It was a much different situation, in terms of pressure, and what the relationships of those trade deals meant versus our relationship with the largest trading partner in the world.

Our minister for trade at the time worked extremely hard. We did everything to keep the integrity of supply management in place. I contrast that with two trade deals that of course are important, and I would never suggest they are not, but the pressure to get rid of our supply management, or give concessions, was nowhere near the same.

When I talk with farmers in my riding, they seem to understand the difference and how the government was between a rock and a hard place, including on products and things that matter to the member from the Bloc such as aluminum, for example.

I could highlight the programs we put in place, such as the dairy direct payment program, which is certainly extremely important. It was \$345 million to help compensate for the trade access that was given under the former Conservative government when it signed these, along with COVID supports.

I am proud to be part of a government focused on our supply managed producers. I mentioned dairy a lot, but that is not to say poultry, eggs, broiler hens and turkeys are not important. It is all so important and it all matters to the people I represent. I am pleased to see a piece of legislation in which we can talk about the importance of this system in rural Canada, and I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing this forward.

I really appreciated the time to talk about a system that matters to rural Canadians. As the rural caucus chair for the Liberal Party, I am very pleased to bring some remarks to the House tonight.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is high time we had a man for prime minister who behaves like someone who understands the farming community and especially Canadians from rural areas.

Our message is clear and will remain clear: Canada must restore agriculture to its former glory and give it the recognition it deserves. It is just wrong that neither the current agriculture minister nor her predecessor were directly involved in the negotiations for the trade agreements that became the TPP, CETA and CUSMA.

The future prime minister of Canada, the leader of the Conservative Party, will rectify this situation. We are here tonight to talk about supply management. Before I talk about the Liberals' failures on supply management, of which there are many, I want to clearly state our party's position on supply management.

The Conservative leader made clear commitments during the leadership race. He made it clear and reiterated, in his discussions with the dairy industry, that there will be no further concessions in future trade agreement negotiations. He will protect supply management. He will respect supply management for our dairy and poultry farms and, most importantly, he will make sure that all farm families are involved in trade negotiations, or any other program affecting the sector, through the Minister of Agriculture, who will be at the table, not sitting somewhere else, away from the negotiations. He will allow more flexibility in allocating the management of farm assistance programs. He will not create a milk lottery, as the previous government did. Above all, he pledged to pay out all the promised compensation, while providing flexibility in how it is allocated so it is done in the way producers want.

Much more than that, a Conservative government will raise the possibility and want to renegotiate the overall limits on skim milk powder exports that were given away by the current government. A Conservative government will modernize and improve agricultural risk management programs to help producers deal with all the crises they are currently facing.

A Conservative government, and I think that this is very important right now, will also ask the Competition Bureau to investigate the impacts of abusive trade practices concentrated in the grocery industry. We know about it, and we are hearing about it these days: huge amounts of money are being demanded just to put products on grocery store shelves. This is unacceptable.

• (1805)

[English]

We believe it is very important to protect the food security of Canada and we recognize that supply management is an element that is essential to the success of Canadian agriculture.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, although Bill C-216 sets out to protect supply management in the context of future trade agreements, it could wind up doing the opposite.

First, everyone here in the House knows that any new trade agreement would be the subject of new legislation in which the Liberal government could amend Bill C-216 as it sees fit. That is what happened with the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement. The government proved that when it shamelessly opened up supply management by giving the Americans a say in the tariff schedule and when it shamelessly allowed the United States to limit our exports of skim milk powder.

Second, if this bill passes, we can be sure that potential trade partners will target supply management right off the bat and counter with their own protectionist measures. This is like drawing the other side's attention to a specific negotiation issue that could well force Canada to agree to new concessions, which would be written into a bill approving the framework agreement, and all because we ourselves put the issue on the table.

That is exactly what happened during the latest negotiations for the Canada-United States-Mexico free trade agreement. Members may recall that the United States' first target was Mexico.

[English]

I met with a representative of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee of the U.S. Congress at the beginning of the negotiations. The message they sent us was to stay calm, but then the Prime Minister of Canada got involved.

He wanted an agreement that was progressive and environmentally friendly, and he got the attention of Donald Trump. He gave in on supply management, and Canada had to struggle just to remain in this important agreement for our economy. Dairy, egg and poultry producers paid the price as the Liberals modified the existing laws to be able to give up more of our market to the United States. This is the reality.

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[Translation]

The main purpose of Bill C-216 is to protect supply management. That is also the Conservative Party's goal.

[English]

We do not believe that Bill C-216 is a good bill to protect supply management and Canadian producers.

[Translation]

It is important to protect our family farms because the Liberal Party does not keep its promises and is unreliable when it comes to its relationships with supply-managed farmers, and because farmers were regrettably the only ones who were sacrificed at the negotiating table by the Liberal government's negotiating teams for the new Canada-U.S.-Mexico agreement.

In Quebec, you cannot go one kilometre between two municipalities without seeing farms, dairy farms and all kinds of farms. Farmers reign supreme in Quebec's rural regions. If they were not there to pay taxes, there would be no more rural regions. If they were not there to maintain roads, there would be no more rural regions. We need our farmers.

The Conservative Party of Canada heard the message of producers from all the regions in Quebec. I heard it in Mégantic—L'Érable. Like the majority of my colleagues, I received 50 or so letters from producers in my riding. We have all gotten them. Their message was very clear.

People wrote that Canada's dairy farmers have had to deal with the fact that major concessions were made in recent trade agreements. By 2024, 18% of their domestic dairy production will have been ceded to foreign dairy producers. They are the ones who will provide the milk in dairy products that will end up on the shelves in our grocery stores. The concessions amount to a loss in revenue estimated at \$450 million a year for dairy farmers and their families. That loss has a major and lasting impact on their farms and their communities, including their capacity to plan for the future of their families. For more than two years, and more recently in the Speech from the Throne, dairy farmers have been promised compensation. Dairy farmers were pleased to see that full compensation remains a priority, but actions speak louder than words.

That is where things go sideways in the letter we received.

The letter goes on to say that, in 2019, the government announced compensation spread out over eight years of \$1.75 billion for the CETA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Despite requests for clarification and even though the first year was delivered, the farmers have yet to receive any detail on the balance for the remaining seven years. The uncertainty that comes with such an approach makes it very hard to plan the future of their farms.

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Every member of the House received the same set of letters from dairy farmers across Canada. They are worried.

The letter ends with the statement that farmers believe that a promise made should be a promise kept. The time has come to keep their promises. What are the goods? What will the Liberals deliver? The Liberals' compensation plan was announced just before the 2019 election. They promised to cut a cheque the day after the election. There has been nothing more since the election. There has been total silence. There has not been one word about the seven other years or about compensation for 2020, even though there are fewer than 40 days left in the year. There has been not one word about 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, or 2026. There has not been one word about the next phase of the plan. I am only talking about dairy producers. There has not been one word about egg and poultry producers who were also promised compensation. They have not even seen the shadow of a red cent despite repeated promises by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Dairy processors have been treated to the same worrisome silence by the Liberals, who boast about defending supply management, but only talk about it when an election is on the horizon. We may hear about it because we have a minority government and there could be an election sooner than we think. Again, the Liberals take an interest in dairy producers only when there is an election.

Did I take the time to talk about the agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico? That is the most recent trade agreement where the Liberals caved on supply management. Has anyone heard the Liberal government talking about a compensation plan? Have we heard anything about the full compensation promised by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food that she mentioned again today in the House? Where is their plan? The plan for the agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico simply does not exist because the Liberals are incapable of keeping their promises.

The Liberals are all talk and no action. We cannot trust them. At minimum, farmers should be able to get answers from the government to ensure the economic viability of their farms. That is the top priority for helping them to get through the pandemic.

I would like to end with a quote from the chair of the Producteurs de lait du Québec, who aptly described farmers' immediate needs. He said:

We should not have to fight this battle over again every year to obtain compensation that was already announced! Our farms also have to budget and need to know whether they can count on the money that was promised to them for the next seven years.

● (1810)

The Liberals are incapable of keeping their promises, but the Conservatives will keep their promises to supply-managed farmers.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to have this opportunity to talk about Canada's supply management system and to support a bill that will prevent the government from further undermining the agricultural sector during free trade agreement negotiations.

Supply management is very important to a number of agricultural sectors in Canada. It ensures a decent income for farmers and fair

prices for consumers. It is part of a vision for a more co-operative economy.

Supply management is also part of the NDP way of thinking. A long time ago, the NDP's predecessor, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, included individuals such as Thérèse Casgrain. More recently, former MP Ruth Ellen Brosseau was a staunch defender of the supply management sector, specifically dairy production.

The agricultural sector is a very important sector, but the Canadian government has sold it out repeatedly during international trade agreement negotiations. It happened with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and Europe, or CETA, and again with the recent Canada-United States-Mexico agreement.

The markets in other countries, and especially the dairy market in the United States, are very competitive. The United States would like to see us adopt their dairy market. As a result of all of the concessions that the Canadian government made while negotiating free trade agreements, our industry has been getting more similar to the U.S. market.

Dairy farmers in the U.S. are currently in crisis, and some of them are taking their own lives because their farms are no longer profitable. This is not because they cannot produce enough, but because they produce too much. The economic model would have them produce more and more and try to develop export markets, but that model does not work.

Some Canadian dairy farmers own businesses that are smaller than those in the United States. They have a stable, decent income. They produce all of the dairy products that Canadians need. This system works very well.

The supply management industry is under attack for essentially ideological reasons. The supply management system is important, and we must do more.

Canadian governments of all stripes have consistently failed to properly protect the supply management system.

● (1815)

What can we do?

The government does not give Parliament much space or much of a role in these negotiation processes. We saw this with CUSMA, and we are now seeing it again with the agreement between the United Kingdom and Canada. Parliament often does not get to see the text of these free trade agreements before they are signed. By then, there is very little time left to debate the bill before the components of the agreement are implemented.

When could Parliament have an influence on the negotiating process? It has not been for lack of trying in the past. In five years, I have seen several members ask questions about this issue while negotiations were under way. Once the agreement is signed and provided to Parliament, parliamentarians and Canadians, it is too late, and that is when we see that concessions have been made in the supply-managed sectors.

I think that Bill C-216 is important for defending not only supply management, but also the concept, which I strongly support, that Parliament needs to be more involved in the negotiation process.

I heard my Conservative colleague say that he did not like this bill because if the issue of supply management were put on the table, our free trade partners might target these sectors more. However, I do not think that we can defend supply management by ignoring it. That does not seem to me to be an effective strategy, and it does not inspire much confidence.

If Parliament wants to focus on the supply-managed sectors and do everything it can to defend supply management, given that we have a government that regularly makes promises about supply management and then does not keep them, this bill will allow us to truly say that Parliament supports supply management.

I will once again thank my colleague from Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel for introducing this bill. As I said at the beginning, I am very pleased and proud to support Bill C-216.

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé, I must inform him that he has approximately six minutes remaining before the end of the time provided for private members' business. He will have his remaining time when the House next gets back to debate on the question.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is already a challenge for me to not go over my allotted time. I will try to give my speech in six minutes, knowing that I will have the remaining four minutes another day.

I am going to address everyone. This is the moment of truth. This is the time for action. We are sick of the old promises and old policies. Today, a promise was made to defend supply management. However, the promise was made by members of the political party that made the first concessions, so I have a hard time believing them.

I want my speech to unite people. We need to listen to the farmers who are on the ground, much like we should be listening to members when they are giving speeches. The president of the Union des producteurs agricoles made a public statement this morning, calling on all parties in the House to adopt this bill, because farmers are tired of promises.

On November 18, the chair of the Producteurs de lait du Québec issued a press release. It was not a partisan message urging people to vote for the Bloc Québécois. It simply encouraged members to vote in favour of this fundamental and necessary bill. We do not want to hear that laws can be amended. Come on. We just voted on a bill on training for judges. No one pointed out that a future gov-

ernment could repeal that act. We passed it, and we are moving forward.

Passing legislation would give us uniquely effective ways of protecting the industry. We want concrete action. I may seem angry, but that anger is justified because it is on behalf of farmers and processors. These people are waiting.

As mentioned earlier, we are not just talking about breaches in supply management. In the most recent agreement, the government went so far as to limit our exports to other countries, countries that are not even part of the agreement. That makes no sense whatsoever. What is the next step? This request to limit exports of milk proteins was made because of class 7. The Americans wanted to limit our exports to other countries because of the existence of class 7.

The Government of Canada caved on both fronts. Not only did we lose class 7, but we now have export limits imposed on us. Furthermore, it is unbelievable that the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement, or CUSMA, came into effect on July 1 rather than August 1 like it was supposed to, according to all of the commitments that had been made. It is shameful that we have gotten to this point.

Pierre Falardeau said, "If you lie down, they will stomp on you. If you remain standing and resist, they will hate you, but they will call you 'sir'." In the latest negotiations, the Canadian government chose to lie down. That is a problem. It is time to stand up. We will help the government with this bill. The solution is right here. This is the moment of truth. When the time comes to vote on Bill C-216, we will know who truly stands up for agriculture. This is what the sector wants. People need it. A total of 18% of the dairy market is being given up. For other sectors, it is between 7% and 10%. That is huge. Nobody is keeping promises.

This evening, the Liberals are telling us that we must vote for them, that they are not interested in this legislation, that they will deal with the supply management issue and that they will defend it. How can anyone stand for that yet again? That means nothing to farmers, which is why they are ending their silence today, speaking out about a bill and calling on all parties here to set partisanship aside and work together. Supply management is the lifeblood of our regions. It keeps our rural communities alive.

• (1825)

When we talk about supply management, we often think of farmers. Some might say they have an advantage, because there are quotas. No food is wasted most of the time. Of course, there was a crisis this year under exceptional circumstances. Still, the supply management system has proven its effectiveness, since farmers were able to adjust very quickly. Unlike most other sectors of the economy, they did not ask the government for any assistance. All they want is the compensation that they were promised but that has not been delivered.

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How can we trust a government that tells us not to worry, that it will compensate us, but that has yet to pay out one red cent two years on? The government has delivered only one cheque out of eight in the dairy sector. It has given nothing to egg farmers, nothing to poultry farmers, and nothing to processors. The amounts were determined over a year ago, but nothing is happening. By providing legislative protection for supply management, we are forcing future governments to show some backbone. That is the solution.

How much time do I have left, Mr. Speaker?

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: Unfortunately, the time has expired. I normally indicate how much time is left.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé on a point of order.

Mr. Yves Perron: Mr. Speaker, it is very hard to deliver a speech and follow a written text when so many people are speaking very loudly all around. I have been wanting to say that for a long time. This is a sensitive topic, and that made it even more difficult.

I think this is an important cause, and the fact that people are chatting while we are having this debate speaks to what the other parties really think. I wonder about the lack of respect this shows not just to MPs, but also to the farmers. I just wanted to draw that to the attention of my esteemed colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker: I understand what my colleague, the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé, is saying. He is absolutely right. When an hon. member has the floor, he is the only one allowed to speak. I would appreciate it if the other members recognized this reality in the House.

The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé will have four minutes to conclude his speech when the House resumes debate on this topic.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this evening, I am speaking about a very important subject that I raised during oral question period a while ago.

During the pandemic, we realized that Canadians with very specific needs were struggling to get answers in French from various departments. French also seems to have been dropped at meetings, and that is a serious problem.

We have gotten all kinds of reports showing that during the crisis, it became harder and harder for francophones to receive answers in French and for anglophones in minority situations to receive clear answers in their language.

That is a very serious problem. We informed the President of the Treasury Board and asked him for answers about this. Unfortunately, the answers I was given during oral question period were very vague.

This leads me to a hot topic in the media, namely the importance of the French language for Quebec and, in particular, the position of the Liberal Party of Canada and its members on the notion that French is declining in Quebec.

In a couple of days, we will have an opportunity to hold a very important debate on the decline of French in Montreal. Anyone who has had the opportunity to go to Montreal in recent months—perhaps a little less often in recent weeks because of the pandemic—can attest to how much rarer it is to be addressed in French in the great city of Montreal. It is important for us to recognize this.

We have just one important question for the government and that is the following: Will we get its bill to improve the Official Languages Act before Christmas, yes or no? That is what I asked in oral question period, and I hope that tonight I will finally get the final, clear answer that, yes, the Liberals will introduce their bill before the holidays.

• (1835)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to respond to my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable.

For our government, our two official languages are the greatest expression of our values as a country, our values of collaboration, openness and respect.

It is precisely because of this central role of French and English in our common identity that our government has always taken the necessary measures to support our communities. It is also for these reasons that we have committed to modernizing and strengthening the Official Languages Act so that it may better serve Canadians.

I would remind my colleague that we made historic investments in official languages through our action plan for official languages 2018-2023 entitled "Investing in Our Future". We revised the official languages regulations that govern the delivery of federal services in order to better serve Canadians in the official language of their choice. We also brought back the long form census and added linguistic questions to the 2021 census that will help better enumerate those who are entitled to an education in the minority language.

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Our commitment to better serve Canadians in the official language of their choice has been crystal clear since 2015. We showed this commitment by making it a priority to review the official languages regulations governing the Government of Canada's communications with and services to the public. In doing so, we created the ideal conditions to better serve Canadians in the language of their choice. In the early days of this pandemic, we made sure that critical information was available to Canadians in the official language of their choice, and we are continuing to do so.

We have addressed every situation that could impede information on issues affecting the health of Canadians, and we have taken swift action to support the arts and culture sectors so that our organizations in linguistic minority communities do not suffer too much in this pandemic.

We have received broad support for the assistance we have provided, which even the Commissioner of Official Languages has acknowledged. I might add that, thanks to this emergency support fund for arts and culture, about \$10 million has been directly invested in nearly 500 organizations in official language minority communities.

We agree with the Commissioner of Official Languages. The COVID-19 crisis has shown the importance of communication with the public and the delivery of services to Canadians. That is precisely why we are investing heavily to train our public servants, amend our laws, create the right conditions to support the health and vitality of our official language communities and support official language learning.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her answer.

The Liberals are prepared to amend laws and do a lot of things. Are they prepared to recognize that the Quebec president of the Liberal Party of Canada made a mistake when she said that Bill 101 was oppressive? Are all members from Quebec prepared to say that the member for Saint-Laurent went too far, that she never should have said what she did, and that she is completely out of touch with the reality of the French language in Quebec? As a way for the government to recognize all that, to recognize the mistakes that were made and to make amends, we are asking for one thing and that is that a bill to modernize the Official Languages Act be introduced before Christmas.

My question is simple. Will the government do that, yes or no?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, our government and public servants are taking proactive measures to ensure respect of our two official languages. We react quickly and firmly to compliance issues and remind federal institutions of their official languages obligations. Our government took note of the recommendations made by the Commissioner of Official Languages in his report and we are fully committed to responding to them in a constructive and cooperative manner.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was my privilege to ask a question in the House a few weeks ago

about the trucking industry and how it relates to environmental policy.

One thing that we can all agree on is that most Canadians are at the point where they believe that some plan is needed and that some actions need to be taken to help our environment and to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we have. There may be disagreement on exactly what to do, but people would more or less agree that something needs to be done.

It was interesting to see Bill C-12 introduced by the government, a bill that had no plan and no targets. It was missing a lot of things, including consequences. If there were targets that were missed, there were no consequences for that in the bill. I found it ironic that the government has been unable to achieve the targets that Prime Minister Harper set years ago for 2030. The government is not on track to hit those targets either.

The trucking industry is significant in our country. Transportation accounts for about a quarter of the greenhouse gases produced in Canada, and of that quarter, the trucking industry produces a significant amount. Therefore, the trucking industry is a key player when it comes to reducing greenhouse gases in Canada. Roughly 90% of our goods travel by truck at some point in their lifespan. Ten million trucks cross the border every year between Canada and the United States, so there is a significant number of trucks on the road and they produce a significant amount of greenhouse gases.

As I spoke to members of the trucking industry, they were very much interested in playing a role in looking forward and developing future technologies and future plans to reduce the amount of carbon from trucking in the environment. Decarbonization of the trucking industry is what they would say. They would like to be a part of it. They would like to be at the table discussing plans for this. They know that, for their industry to succeed in the future, they are going to have to make changes and they want to be a part of those discussions. What they are asking for is to have a task force of engine manufacturers, the government, environmental groups, trucking industry players and drivers, all the players together around the table, coming up with a plan and a strategy for how to decarbonize the trucking industry going forward.

A few weeks ago, at the environment committee, I asked Marc D'Iorio, director general of energy and transportation at the Department of the Environment, if there were any plans to have a task force such as this. He said, "I'm not aware of direct work to create a working group. However, there are a number of measures being considered", and he went on basically to say that they are going to come up with a plan and then they will tell others what it is.

I asked him to clarify. I said, "Are you saying that there have been no discussions to create a working group to get industry players in line with this, no efforts to get all of the people at the table to help develop these types of regulation?"

He said, "Not that I'm aware of."

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I asked the same question of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and his answer was that “obviously there is a need for consultation”, but that there was no plan for that.

When we come up with something as important as a plan for reducing carbon in the trucking industry, it is important that all the players have a role to play, that all the players' input is gathered and considered, and that a good plan is developed, because we have to make sure, not only that we reduce greenhouse gases but that the plan is workable. It has to allow industry to survive and produce its service at a price that is going to work and that customers will be able to pay. If government goes in and just creates regulations and dumps it on the industry, that is going to be a problem.

Therefore, I would hope that the government would see this and see the logic of getting all the players at the table up front to develop a plan together, so that everybody has a say in it and a good plan can be developed. Then we will have no need to rework the legislation later.

My question for the government is the same question: Is the government planning to have a task force made up of all these industry players as it develops regulations for the trucking industry?

• (1840)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the hon. member asked us to prepare a response to a question on the air sector and then came with a question on the trucking industry.

I find it ironic that the hon. member wants to talk about the environment. His party has brought no effort to the table to address climate change. I appreciate that he and his party are finally taking an interest in reducing greenhouse gases. He knows we are the party that put a price on carbon pollution. His party wants to make it free to pollute.

I know the transportation industry is eager to move forward to decarbonize, and the minister is more than willing to discuss with all sectors of the industry, from the air sector to the trucking sector, and shipping. We have made announcements across the various areas of transportation and I know that, as a government, we are focused on significant investments. We have invested heavily, as a government, in public transit infrastructure and made historic announcements. The last Parliament alone, there was \$70 billion toward our environment plan.

It is disappointing to see the hon. member talk about the environment. I really hope that he moves forward and he encourages his party and his leader to move forward on a credible plan for the environment, because we have not seen that yet.

I would like to thank the member for the opportunity to speak to the question. As such, we are more than willing to discuss with the trucking industry, and we are more than willing to have discussions on the environment. We have had a credible plan so far. We will continue to move forward and we look forward to working with various sectors of the transportation industry across the board.

• (1845)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member would be disappointed that I would be talking about the

environment. I think the environment is something we care about on all sides of the House, and Conservatives, if members look back in history, have a very strong record on the environment. I also find it ironic that the Liberal government has been unable to put a plan in place to achieve even Prime Minister Harper's standards for 2030, which were set many years ago.

It is an interesting conversation. However, I would reiterate that it is one thing to set a plan and then hope that everybody can achieve it, but it is a far better strategy to get all the players around the table. I would encourage this government to follow through on that, to speak to everybody and get them around the table, so that when plans are developed, they are workable for industry and they achieve the goals that they set out to achieve. It is my insistence that the government look at this task force concept with the trucking industry.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, it is rich that the hon. member talks about meeting targets, when his party has voted against every major effort to meet those targets and develop programs to meet those targets.

Of course, we will meet with industry. Of course, we will look for better ways to meet those targets and exceed those targets. Canadians want clean air and clean water, but one would not know that by looking at the Conservatives' track record.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to rise again, after over 40 times now, to stand up for small businesses, the unsung heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic, which closed their doors to protect public health.

We were glad to see the government finally fix its flawed, broken commercial rent program that was landlord-driven to make it tenant-driven, but we are extremely disappointed that the government will not backdate it to April 1. Many of these businesses are in arrears with their landlords or riddled with debt, yet the government refuses to go backward, even though it knows that most of the businesses are in deep trouble, especially with the second wave. The Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister said the government is moving forward, but that debt is moving forward with small business owners, who did not get any help.

I want to talk about the businesses that were completely left out: start-ups. There is a whole subset of businesses that did their part, started up and closed their doors for public health. However, any of them that opened after March 1 or later and closed their doors for public health, or were ready to open after March 15, were prevented from getting any of the programs. This is totally unacceptable, and I want to talk about a couple of them.

Graham Hafey opened V2V Black Hops Brewing, down in Langford. He is a veteran. He served in the Canadian military and used his life savings to open a for-profit social venture where part of the profits go to helping veterans with PTSD. He has already donated \$6,500, but he has not gotten any help through the commercial rent program or the wage subsidy, and has not been able to access the loan program. His business is looking at going bankrupt. We are in the middle of the second wave and it has closed its doors, because of the health order from Dr. Bonnie Henry, to protect public health. He is getting no help.

Another constituent of mine, Lisa Jaster from Courtenay, owns The Lost Faucet sauna house. She opened in February 2020. She cannot get the CEBA loan and has paid thousands of dollars to contractors. She does not have a fighting chance without any support. She has been completely abandoned by the government.

I am thinking about my colleague from Victoria, who has been fighting really hard for Peter Wood, who owns Bear & Joey Cafe in Victoria. He put his life savings into developing this business. He opened in March and has been doing takeout. He has 30 staff members. Now B.C. is in the second phase of the lockdown and he is paying \$11,500 a month in rent. He cannot get any help from the government. His business has been abandoned, like many businesses across this country.

These businesses actually have the ability to demonstrate that they are genuine and have invested in small business through presenting one or more of the following: proof of loans and financing, proof of long-term leases and contracts for building and construction. They often demonstrate that they are going to be impacted by the second wave by comparing revenue from one period to another, because some of them have been open for several months now. However, with the winter months ahead, they have had to reduce capacity or close their doors. They are demonstrating, post-2020, that they are operating at a loss and are not going to be able to keep their staff.

The sense of urgency for these businesses could not be greater. Why is the government abandoning them? It is unfair. These businesses have invested in our communities in our country and they are job creators. The government needs to step up to the plate. We have solutions and we want to work with the government. We hope it will do something to support these small businesses.

• (1850)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his intervention on behalf of small businesses in Canada.

To break from my prepared remarks for a moment, let me first extend my empathy to the business owners he mentioned who are struggling in his own community. He can rest assured that I am having similar conversations with businesses and have been having them from the outset of this pandemic.

However, the suggestion, implicitly or explicitly, that we have abandoned small businesses is disingenuous in the extreme. The hon. member knows that to help keep Canadians safe, we decided

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to make it more affordable for businesses to do the right thing and shut down or reduce traffic through their premises.

We did through Bill C-9, which just received royal assent a few days ago. It extends the wage subsidy to next summer and, importantly, creates the new Canada emergency rent subsidy. This is going to provide a subsidy of up to 65% to businesses that have lost revenue as a result of this pandemic and up to 90%, with the additional lockdown support, to those that have been ordered to close as a result of a public health order.

With respect to the wage subsidy, it is contributing directly to help 3.8 million Canadian workers stay on the payroll. It does not just help them keep getting paid. It also helps their employers retain and rehire them if they had to furlough them to make ends meet throughout this pandemic.

We have advanced the Canada emergency response benefit, which self-employed people were eligible for. It has helped keep food on the table for nine million Canadians. We have advanced the Canada emergency business account to provide interest-free loans, partially forgivable loans, and we are now increasing them from \$40,000 to \$60,000, up to \$20,000 of which will be forgivable.

The reality is that we have done what we can to meet many needs of many businesses. We have even established the regional relief and recovery fund for businesses that did not qualify for some of the supports I mentioned.

While I appreciate fully that the hon. member has the best of intentions in trying to defend the small businesses in his community, I do not believe it is appropriate, and in fact I think it is ludicrous, to suggest our government has abandoned small businesses, as we have launched more support for them than any other government in the history of our country.

Small businesses should know they have a friend in our government. We have been there for them from day one of this pandemic and we will be there for them until it is over.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the parliamentary secretary, but clearly the government is tone deaf. He did not hear what I had to say. Small businesses that started after March 15 have been abandoned. They have not been able to access the wage subsidy. They have not been able to access the loan program. They have not been able to access the commercial rent program, even the new one. Even Bill C-9 does not help those businesses. They have been completely abandoned. He needs to address what the Liberals are going to do for them.

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We kicked and screamed so the wage subsidy would go from 10% to 75% and so the Liberals would fix the commercial rent program and expand the CEBA program. The member can count on me to be kicking and screaming until they fix their programs to help support the start-ups that have been completely abandoned by the government. I will be back here tomorrow and will be back here the week after. Until the government helps them, the New Democrats will be in their corner.

The Liberals need to stop patting themselves on the back and start doing things to fix these broken programs so the people who need the help the most get it.

• (1855)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, we have been listening to feedback from Canadians from the very beginning. The hon. member drew attention to the fact that when we listened to stakeholders we increased the wage subsidy from 10% to 75%.

With respect to the emergency business account, we have increased the threshold from \$40,000 to \$60,000, and widely expanded eligibility. With respect to the Canada emergency rent subsidy, we have now changed the program to make it tenant-oriented, with a direct application to make it more accessible.

We are going to continue to listen to how these programs can be improved. In fact, we have made adjustments to some of them to help new businesses that initially did not qualify on the basis of a year-to-year comparison so they could compare their revenue with that from earlier months, pre-pandemic, in the same year.

It is a challenging thing to help businesses through the pandemic, but we are going to continue to listen to small business stakeholders so we can implement policies that will save as many businesses as possible and allow many workers to remain on the payroll so they can put food on the table for their families.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Monday, April 20, 2020, and Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to study all votes under Department of Fisheries and Oceans in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

FISHERIES AND OCEANS—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2020-21

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Fisheries and Oceans in the main estimates, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

The Chair: Today's debate is a general one on all votes under Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government, the Bloc

Québécois and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

[Translation]

Pursuant to order made earlier today, within each 15-minute period, each party may allocate time to one or more of its members for speeches or for questions and answers.

In the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allocated may speak one after the other, but the time allocated for speeches must not exceed 10 minutes. The Chair would appreciate it if the first member to speak in each period would indicate how that time will be used, particularly if the time will be shared.

The order also specifies that, when the time is used for questions and answers, the minister's answer should approximately reflect the time taken by the question. I would note here that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will be joining the debate remotely. As such, there will be pauses from time to time for connecting to the debate. In addition, the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

[English]

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, comments should be addressed to the Chair as they always are in normal debates in the chamber. I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all the established standards of decorum, parliamentary language and behaviour.

We will now begin tonight's session.

The House in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Department of Fisheries and Oceans in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Chair, this Parliament has been gripped by the disputes over the fishery in Atlantic Canada and in Nova Scotia. This is important to all Canadians and to rural communities. This is why I am proud that we have chosen the minister to provide direction on what the government is doing to resolve a crisis to provide for an indigenous fishery, but also to ensure that the lifeblood of rural communities in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada are preserved.

I am going to start with a question for the minister.

Every time someone in the House rises, it is a special occasion to represent one's constituents. Perhaps the most special moment for most members is their maiden speech, the first time a new MP gets to speak in the House of Commons and what the member uses that opportunity for.

What was the minister's first speech in the House of Commons as a new MP?

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• (1900)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Chair, when I was first elected in 2015, my maiden speech, I believe, was on how proud I was to represent my community, and that still stands today. As the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, it is extremely important to me and I will continue to do the best I can to represent my community.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, the member's first speech was on the lobster fishery. She said:

The south shore of Nova Scotia is world renowned for the quality of its lobster, and this industry is vitally important to the sustainability of many rural communities, as well as to the greater provincial economy.

What has the minister been doing to sustain the rural fishery in those communities?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition. I am afraid my Internet cut out while he was asking his question and I did not hear it. Is there any way I could have him repeat it, please?

The Chair: Absolutely. I will ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to repeat his question.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: With pleasure, Mr. Chair. It is important for the minister, indeed all members of the government, to reflect on her passion in her first day as a member of Parliament on December 7, 2015.

Part of the minister's remarks then were:

The south shore of Nova Scotia is world renowned for the quality of its lobster, and this industry is vitally important to the sustainability of many rural communities, as well as to the greater provincial economy.

What has the minister done in 15 months to sustain the fishery, the lifeblood of those rural communities?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, there have been a number of measures that we have taken to ensure we are addressing the fishery and to ensure we are sustaining it for the long term.

During COVID-19, we invested close to half a billion dollars in the fish harvester benefit and grant program, which delivered financial support to self-employed harvesters across the country, who have been facing hardships brought on by COVID-19. This special program was initiated to address the needs of harvesters who could not access federal funding. It was actually the only program that was delivered for a specific industry because it was extremely important that fish harvesters had what they needed.

We are also investing in the Atlantic fisheries fund, the Quebec fisheries fund, the B.C. SRIF fund. We are also ensuring that money is available for processors—

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, in her 15 months as minister, how many direct meetings has the minister had with commercial fisheries groups in Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, I continue to meet with commercial harvesters on a regular basis. I have been doing that since I was first appointed as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I will continue to do that.

I have met with harvesters from right across the country, not just in Atlantic Canada. It is an extremely vital role that I have the conversations with commercial harvesters. That is something I continue to do—

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I am looking for the number of meetings with commercial harvesters in rural Nova Scotia.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, I have met continually with harvesters from Atlantic Canada, from rural Nova Scotia, over the last year since I have become the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I will continue to do that. It is vitally important that we hear what their needs are and that we address them.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, “vitally important” are the words she used in her maiden speech. She cannot answer how many meetings she has had, organized by her office as minister, in rural communities in Nova Scotia. I do not mean bumping into her neighbour. How many meetings has she organized in her capacity in rural Nova Scotia?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, as I have said, I have had countless meetings with commercial harvesters since I was first appointed minister and before I was minister. This is something that is important in my riding.

Commercial harvesters play an integral role in our communities and I will continue to meet with them to ensure we address the concerns that I hear from them every day of the year.

• (1905)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Over the same time period, Mr. Chair, how many meetings have there been with indigenous leaders in the community on the fishery?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, once again, I have been meeting with the indigenous communities in Atlantic Canada as well as indigenous people right across the country when it comes to the fishery. That is part of the role of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. They need to be consulted. They need to be heard. That is one of the things I will continue to do.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, how many proactive meetings did the minister organize with indigenous leaders in her 15 months as minister?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, I have had a number of meetings with commercial harvesters as well as with indigenous people and first nations communities. It is imperative that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans continues to have those conversations. That is something I will continue to do.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, will the minister confirm that she only reached out to Chief Mike Sack after reading his comments in the paper about the fishery dispute?

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Hon. Bernadette Jordan: No, Mr. Chair, I had many meetings with Chief Sack over the last number of months. I will continue to do that. It is part of the negotiation process. It is important that we continue to have conversations with the chief, with all the chiefs. That is what I have been doing and that is what I will continue to doing.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, the minister previously said that she had not read the Marshall decisions that led to the indigenous fishery and the dispute in Nova Scotia. Has she since read the two Marshall decisions?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, I have read the Marshall decision. The decision is extremely important. It affirms the Supreme Court decision on the right for first nations to fish. We will continue to work with them to ensure we implement that right.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: What does the second Marshall decision of the Supreme Court of Canada refer to, Mr. Chair?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, the second Marshall decision actually clarifies the first Marshall decision, because there were questions around that decision. The second has ensured that it is clarified so we can make sure we move forward to ensure we implement the right.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, implementing the right and providing for conservation means that Indigenous Crown-Relations and Fisheries and Oceans must meet together to get this done. How many regular meetings on a monthly basis does she have with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, our government takes a whole-of-government approach to reconciliation. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations has been extremely active in this file with me. I meet with her on a regular basis. She has met with me and first nations throughout this process. We have to continue to do that. It is important that the minister is involved, as well as a number of ministers, with regard to this issue.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, so I take from that there are no regular ongoing meetings between those two ministers to direct negotiations on this dispute.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, I meet with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations probably on a daily basis about this issue. It is extremely important to me that we have a whole-of-government approach to reconciliation. I will continue to do that. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations has a lot of knowledge she offers to this file, and I continue to learn from her every day.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, the minister's mandate letter specifically outlines the need to resolve an indigenous-related negotiation in British Columbia. There is no mention of Atlantic Canada. Why is that?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, our government has been committed to reconciliation from day one. We know how important it is to implement the Marshall decision. We are going to continue to work toward implementing it. Reconciliation is a key priority for our government.

The previous government left reconciliation on the table. We are not going to do that. We are going to continue to work to ensure we are working with first nations communities.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, which minister is the lead on finalizing this indigenous right? Is it the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations or is it this minister?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, as I have said, we take a whole-of-government approach to reconciliation. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations is actively involved with me on this file to ensure we are moving forward in a positive way in reconciliation, but recognizing that Fisheries and Oceans is actually my file. I am very involved with this as well; we both are.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, by "whole of government", I take it that there is no lead on this file. The minister could clearly clarify that if she wanted.

The previous minister to her was able to negotiate two indigenous-led rights agreements. How many have been negotiated under her tenure as minister?

• (1910)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, I am very proud of the fact that we got three agreements in place in the last two years. Previous to that, when that member was part of the government for 10 years, not one agreement was signed. We have moved forward with reconciliation. We are putting in place the things we need to do to ensure we have agreements with first nations communities.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, to clarify, she expanded the time period. Would she confirm that none have been confirmed under her watch as minister?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, we are working diligently to ensure we sign more agreements. We have signed three so far since we have formed government. As I said, that member was a member of a government that did not get one agreement signed in 10 years.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, for people watching at home, the first minister was Minister Tootoo; no action. The next minister, now the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, was known for clam scam. The previous minister to her got a few agreements done. There has been nothing under her watch. Nor will she even confirm whether there is a schedule of ongoing meetings with fellow ministers.

Why has there been no action on something she considered vital to the economy of rural Nova Scotia?

Business of Supply

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, working on negotiations for these agreements is a complex issue. It is something that requires ongoing negotiations. We are doing that. We have been working expeditiously with the first nations communities to reach agreements. We are looking at fisheries plans now. We will continue to do that. We know how important it is to get these agreements done, and I am committed to ensuring we get them there.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, indigenous leaders have expressed concern, even calling for the need of peacekeepers. The Municipality of Barrington, commercial fishery representatives and even the premier of Nova Scotia have been critical of the minister's inaction.

When everyone was calling for her to act, why did she appoint a retired Liberal politician to take the lead for her?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, I have been involved in this file and engaged in it since day one. We have appointed a special representative to work with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and me. He is a neutral third party. He is there to bridge the gap between first nations communities and industry. This is actually something industry asked for.

We have full confidence in Mr. Surette. We will continue to work with him to make sure we are going forward in the right way. It is extremely important that commercial harvesters and indigenous people, who have fished side by side for generations, continue to do that. We are looking for the right path forward.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, how many names were considered alongside Mr. Surette's?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, I cannot speak to confidential negotiations on who was involved in that process. We are extremely proud of—

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, my question was how many names did the minister consider for the special appointment before she appointed a former Liberal politician?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, Mr. Surette has a long-standing history of community advocacy. He has been a well-respected member in his community. He has worked in fisheries negotiations in the past. I have full confidence in his abilities, and I will continue to make sure we work closely with him to see what his report comes out—

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, I will chalk that response up to a whole-of-government approach to considering it. I hope people in Nova Scotia are seeing the minister's inability to respond to simple questions.

On September 16, the minister said that unauthorized fishing activity would not be tolerated. Of course, this was on the eve of the commencement of the commercial lobster fishery. Was she referring to the commercial fishery, and that she wanted it to stop in Nova Scotia?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, the Marshall decision is clear that first nation communities have a right to fish. We are working with those communities to make sure that we are able to

implement that right. It is a critical piece of work for reconciliation, and it is a priority for this government.

We are working with communities to discuss their fishery plans now. We are moving forward with negotiations. It has been a positive process. We will continue to do the hard work necessary to make sure we have agreements in place.

The Chair: The hon. Leader of the Opposition has time for one last question.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Chair, it is perhaps fitting to end here. In the member's maiden speech, she said the commercial fishery was vitally important to rural Nova Scotia. In recent weeks, she has been complaining that it is unauthorized.

Does she understand why many constituents in Nova Scotia are disappointed with the minister?

• (1915)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, the commercial fishery in Nova Scotia is extremely important to our economic growth. It is important to our rural coastal communities. It is something I have stood behind since I was first elected, and I will continue to do that.

I do not appreciate the member opposite putting words in my mouth. I am extremely committed to making sure we find the right path forward, which not only addresses indigenous rights, but also makes sure we address the concerns from commercial harvesters.

The Chair: Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is a pleasure to speak in the House today.

The primary reason I am here today is to discuss the spending plans for Fisheries and Oceans Canada for the 2020-21 fiscal year. In these main estimates, I am seeking a total of \$3.5 billion, which represents a \$469 million increase over last year. For the most part, this increase is primarily the result of new funding to advance reconciliation between the Crown and indigenous peoples by implementing agreements and treaties, as well as engaging with indigenous communities and stakeholders on fisheries policy.

It also represents incremental funding to continue the Canadian Coast Guard's fleet recapitalization projects, which will help to modernize the fleet and extend the life of its existing vessels, ensuring that the Coast Guard can continue to deliver critical services in support of the safety of Canada's coasts, waterways and oceans.

Planned spending will help my department provide important economic opportunities to Canadians in coastal communities, sustain and rebuild fisheries to ensure that they remain healthy for future generations, and protect and promote our oceans, coasts and waterways.

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As the federal minister responsible for fisheries and oceans, I am responsible for ensuring that our marine resources are managed for the long term and in the public interest. It is also incumbent upon me to advance Canada's commitment to reconciliation by ensuring that my department works in close collaboration with indigenous peoples to manage Canada's fisheries.

This can only be done through the co-development of new solutions that are consistent with the constitutional protections provided to aboriginal and treaty rights, and meaningfully advance Canada's important relationships with indigenous peoples, while ensuring a stable, predictable fishery for all participants.

Funding for reconciliation on indigenous rights issues will be used to implement reconciliation agreements and treaties, as well as engage with indigenous communities and stakeholders on fisheries policy. These landmark agreements are designed to help close economic gaps through the development of partnerships and co-management regimes, and by increasing aboriginal access to fisheries licences and quotas, thereby augmenting their participation in fishing-related activities.

Our government is committed to working alongside indigenous peoples to collaboratively manage this vital resource and ensure that as stewards of our land and waters they have a rightful place at the table when it comes to the management of our fisheries.

One of the most important priorities is restoring the health of wild salmon stocks and other important fish stocks across Canada. As members know, our government announced an additional \$107 million to support the implementation of stock assessment and rebuilding provisions in the renewed fisheries act to sustain Canada's wild fish stocks.

We also launched the B.C. salmon restoration and innovation fund and the Quebec fisheries fund, both modelled on the very successful Atlantic fisheries fund to support projects focused on building resilience through restoration, promotion of science partnerships, innovation and adoptive technologies.

Our government is also making an additional contribution of \$5 million to the Pacific Salmon Endowment Fund Society to support the important work of the Pacific Salmon Foundation to engage community groups in salmon conservation. These new funds will enable the foundation to be even more effective going forward.

These are among many activities that support our wild salmon policy implementation plan over the next five years to support important changes to the management of our aquaculture policies.

Keeping mariners safe and protecting our marine environment is a duty we entrust to the brave women and men in the Canadian Coast Guard. They are the backbone of one of the strongest marine safety systems in the world. Our government is committed to providing the Coast Guard with the tools it needs to keep Canadians safe and keep our economy moving.

In 2019, we announced the largest investment ever made to renew the Coast Guard fleet with 24 new large ships, 16 multi-purpose vessels, two Arctic offshore patrol ships, and six program ice-breakers.

Additionally, our government also announced investments of over \$2 billion for the comprehensive vessel life extension program for the Coast Guard's existing fleet. Building whole new classes of vessels takes a great deal of time, planning, money and effort. Repairs, refits and vessel life extension work must be carried out on the existing fleet until new ships are delivered under the national shipbuilding strategy.

We recently marked the completion of the first class of ships built under Canada national shipbuilding strategy with the acceptance of three offshore fishery science vessels. These are Canada's first-ever vessels purposely designed and built for vital offshore fisheries research, science and monitoring.

The Canadian Coast Guard would not be what it is today without the tremendous support of Canada's shipbuilding and marine industry, which fuels innovation and skills development, and creates new opportunities for workers and businesses across the country.

• (1920)

Our significant commitment to renew the Coast Guard fleet will provide our crews with state-of-the-art equipment and preserve the world-class marine safety regime that Canada enjoys.

On oceans protection, our government has exceeded its marine conservation targets to protect 10% of our oceans by the end of 2020. We are at nearly 14% now and already working toward our 25% target by 2025. That is with real protections that will have biodiversity benefits for generations to come.

This past summer, Canada joined the United Kingdom's global ocean alliance. One of the key focuses of this alliance is advocating for the adoption of the global target of 30% by 2030, which is a key pillar of next year's Convention on Biological Diversity, COP 15 meeting. Our historic \$1.5-billion oceans protection plan is creating a world-leading marine safety system, restoring and protecting marine and coastal ecosystems and habitats, enhancing environmental and local emergency response, and strengthening our ability to trade with confidence and safety.

As we go forward, we will accelerate the use of tools such as marine spatial planning to allow us to plan our ocean spaces in collaboration with provincial and territorial partners, indigenous peoples, and industry and environmental stakeholders. Our government has invested in Canada's ocean supercluster, composed of businesses, academia and non-profits, to accelerate innovation in sustainable economic growth in our oceans. We are mobilizing internationally to deliver the scientific knowledge, innovation and capacity needed to strengthen oceans protection because science and innovation will be the critical pillar of the strong, blue economy.

Our government is committed to promoting economic opportunities for Canadians while ensuring our oceans and resources remain healthy for future generations. As part of the approval of the Trans Mountain expansion project, our government put forward eight accommodation measures to address concerns raised by indigenous peoples.

We are implementing four of these measures, which focus on building capacity and enhancing long-term relationships with indigenous groups. These measures seek to advance shared objectives for maintaining and restoring fish habitat, understanding and monitoring the cumulative effects and improving spill prevention response capacity. I look forward to sharing more about these and other developments with my fellow parliamentarians in the months ahead.

Our nation's prosperity depends on making sure that the benefits of growing the economy are felt by more and more people with good, well-paying jobs for the middle class. We are well positioned to deliver on the government's priorities, and the investments I have mentioned will allow DFO and the Coast Guard to continue to carry out the important work of service to Canadians.

The Chair: We have just over seven minutes remaining in this time slot for questions. I will note for hon. members that this is a unique part of this evening's format, where normally the minister herself is receiving questions. When she takes a speaking slot, obviously she cannot pose questions to herself. Therefore, I will receive questions from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and then in all other subsequent rounds, regardless of which member is asking questions, questions will be directed to either to the minister or her parliamentary secretary.

We will go the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Chair, British Columbia is home to a significant number of recreational fishers who drive the economies of small coastal communities. In order to continue to thrive, they need access and opportunity to fish. Billions of dollars of economic activity depend on it and is at risk if we do not take action.

I had the opportunity recently to go out with a group of recreational fishers on Vancouver Island and talk about how we as a federal government can help. They fully recognize that there are stocks of concern and that we are having to make some very tough decisions to ensure that there are more fish in the water for the benefit of future generations. One solution they continue to raise with me and I know they have raised with the minister is a mark-selective

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fishery. The idea seems to have a lot of merit and can contribute significantly to providing greater access and opportunity while we work on longer-term restorative measures.

Could the minister take this opportunity to elaborate on what she and/or the department is doing to consider this idea and potentially implement it going forward and could she also provide any insight into any complicating factors that might have to be figured out prior to implementing such a fishery?

• (1925)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, first of all, I support exploring a mark-selective fishery. I understand how important the public fishery is to B.C.'s economy. A number of small businesses, whether tour guides or lodges, have suffered recently and not only due to the loss of tourism this year, but also due to the loss of the wild salmon. The cascading implications have not just been on them, but on first nations commercial harvesters and so many more.

A mark-selective fishery is one possible option that can be explored in terms of fish retention while reducing impacts to wild stocks. Indeed, there is no smoking gun when it comes to the salmon returns and making sure that we are seeing it last for years to come.

I am glad to say that my department is currently reviewing information to support the decision-making on potential expansion of the mark-selective fishery. There are vital concerns that need to be thoroughly understood, though. For instance, the mark-selective fisheries will still encounter wild Chinook. Release mortalities of stock concern needs to be accounted for to ensure that the mark-selective fisheries do not adversely impact the wild stocks.

I have been speaking with sports fishers in B.C., as well as environmental organizations. I have heard how a mark-selective fishery can offer potential benefits. I fully want to make sure that we continue to speak to these organizations to fully understand the issues of the potential, but we also need to know what we need to do to mitigate the concerns that we are also hearing.

To do this work, DFO is going to undertake additional consultations to further inform our decision-making and we will do everything we can to work with these communities to address the concerns that we are hearing.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Chair, British Columbia has many iconic species that call our coastal waters home, but none is more iconic or beloved than our southern resident killer whales. I have had an opportunity to work on our government's whale restoration program from various angles in DFO in science and in transport.

Could the minister update this committee on the measures our government is taking to make sure this species is better positioned to thrive and increase its populations going forward?

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Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, our government is committed to the protection and recovery of the iconic southern resident killer whales. In recent years we have taken significant steps to address the key threats to their survival. This May, we introduced measures focused on increasing prey availability and reducing the physical and acoustic disturbances, building on our efforts from last year.

These measures are informed by discussions with indigenous communities, environment, industry and with the governments of B.C. and the U.S. It was extremely important to have input from the public. We are going to continue to work with key partners and stakeholders to make sure we do protect these iconic creatures.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Chair, the minister mentioned this in her speech. Many wild Pacific salmon populations are at historic lows. This is a species that is also iconic to British Columbia and is a part of our cultural identity. There is perhaps no other species in the country that demonstrates so easily how the health of our environment and the health of our economy go hand in hand.

I would like to know how much has been invested to support British Columbia's salmon populations and what projects the government is working on to return wild salmon stocks to levels of traditional abundance.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the protection of the wild Pacific salmon stocks is a priority for our government. We have been working with a number of organizations through the B.C. SRIF program to make sure we are working toward habitat restoration. We have also invested in Big Bar, which was a significant landslide last year that seriously impacted the Fraser River salmon.

We are making sure we are doing everything possible to face these challenges head-on. As I have said, there is no one solution to the declining stocks. We are taking a number of different initiatives to make sure we address this concern. We know how important it is to the people of B.C. and to the culture of B.C.

It is not enough to just protect the fish that are still there. We need to make sure we are growing them to abundance, and that is the goal.

● (1930)

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Chair, I know I have been very B.C. centric in my questions so far, and I am going to get a second chance later this evening. Perhaps I could ask the minister how important small craft harbours are to this country and to her personally.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, small craft harbours are extremely important. They are the vital infrastructure that keeps our fishery running. We need to make sure we are doing everything. Our government has invested significantly in small craft harbours. I know how important they are to our rural coastal communities and I will continue to work to make sure we are addressing the gaps we are seeing in our small craft harbours.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Chair, people sometimes forget the essential role that maritime fisheries played in the development of Quebec. It was through fishing, among other

things, that Europeans first met first nations peoples. Even today, the sea is a crossroads where people meet up, rub shoulders and exchange ideas, but also where they sometimes clash. It was actually to secure control of the fishery that Great Britain and France fought during the colonial era, and it is unfortunately for that reason that some communities remain divided, even today, in the Maritimes.

In the past, this sector has also been the subject of federal-provincial bickering. On that front, no one will be surprised to hear me say that nothing is settled. In Quebec, fishing plays a fundamental role in the economic and social life of many communities in the Gaspé region, the Magdalen Islands, the Lower St. Lawrence, as well as in my home region, the North Shore, and in northern Quebec.

In 2018 the maritime fisheries represented more than 4,500 direct and indirect jobs and generated revenues totalling more than \$435 million for the Quebec economy. For many indigenous communities, such as the Innu, Maliseet and Mi'kmaq nations, the fisheries offer economic development opportunities that enable them to envisage a better future based on activities historically practised by those nations.

Fishing is a tangible reality that has been neglected for far too long by successive governments, resulting in the consequences we are familiar with and continue to experience. I am therefore taking this opportunity to outline the approach to marine fisheries that my party, the Bloc Québécois, intends to defend, because we can and we must do better for Quebec.

As members surely know, fishing is a shared jurisdiction under the Constitution Act, 1867. The conservation, regulation and protection of the resource are the federal government's responsibility, while the processing of seafood products and the ownership of the resource are Quebec's responsibility. As the former leader of the Bloc Québécois, Gilles Duceppe, so ably put it, when the fish is in the water, it is managed by the federal government, and when it is out of the water, it belongs to Quebec. If it comes out head first, it belongs to Quebec; if it comes out tail first, it belongs to the federal government. I would add that when it arrives at the processing plant, it returns to Quebec's jurisdiction.

The result of this division of powers is the worst part of Canadian federalism, in other words inconsistency in public policy. As hon. members know, Quebec's motto is *Je me souviens*, or I remember. Nonetheless, memory can sometimes play tricks on us and even make us forget. In time, we end up taking certain things for granted. The federal government's hegemony over fisheries management is one such thing. History shows us that this was not always that way.

Did hon. members know that for 62 years, the Government of Quebec was in charge of issuing fishing licences, enforcing the law, establishing the rules and developing other salt water fishing activities? Did hon. members know that for nearly 55 years, that management went off without a hitch under a Quebec-Canada agreement signed in 1922?

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Did hon. members know that in July 1983, the government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau unilaterally decided to end this Quebec-Canada agreement, thereby sparking another quarrel with Quebec? Let's not forget that. On the contrary, let's remember.

Did hon. members know that the traditional position of the Government of Quebec, reiterated by several successive governments since 1936, is that the provinces should have exclusive jurisdiction over fisheries in their territory? Very few people know that. The Bloc Québécois knows it, and our position on this matter is the same as Quebec's.

By terminating the 1922 agreement, Ottawa did two things. First, it demonstrated predatory federalism by taking away a tool that empowered Quebec to pursue vigorous development of its marine fisheries. Second, it reinforced the inconsistency in public policy. The two sectors are necessarily interdependent.

As a result of this confusion, fisheries development has suffered. As a result, Fisheries and Oceans is failing to publish RFPs in French, even though it was reprimanded by the Commissioner of Official Languages years ago.

• (1935)

As a result, people back home have been protesting for years demanding that the government return what was theirs, meaning access to the resource and saltwater fishing licences, but the department has ignored their demand.

As a result, the regulations are ambiguous and decisions are made opaquely. As a result, small craft harbours have a 25-year infrastructure deficit and communities are withering away. As a result, all the tools are there, but there is nothing to implement a food sovereignty and land use policy.

As a result, fishers feel abandoned, the first nations are legitimately angry and the quotas completely disregard Quebec and the provinces, and in the end, the final result is that there is no result, which is worse. Things need to change.

We need to completely overhaul the procedures at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We think the department needs to pivot towards decentralization. It needs to get back to the spirit of the 1922 agreement and work with Quebec, the fishers and the first nations. Why not restore management of the fisheries to as close to the coastal communities as possible, with full financial compensation?

Ottawa must stop its inept management of resources within Quebec's boundaries. It is time to put some serious thought into the fisheries and the federal government's action, inaction and counteraction on this front.

The Bloc Québécois represents a movement, and, as we did in the past with the St. Lawrence report, we will engage. We expect the government to push for the status quo, but we will not give up.

Quebec is a land of fields, lakes, forests, rivers and mountains, but it is also a maritime nation. Quebecers are a seagoing people. I want to see Quebec and its territory become a single, indivisible entity.

Now that I have completed my opening remarks, I would like to ask our Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard a few questions.

My first question is about how the department's funding is allocated. I would like to know if the minister feels that every region her department covers receives its fair share of funding.

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her intervention.

We have seen wonderful investments in the fisheries in the past two years through the Atlantic fisheries fund, the Quebec fisheries fund and the B.C. SRIF fund, making sure that harvesters have what they need through the fish harvester benefit and grant program and through the Canadian seafood stabilization fund. All of this was equitably distributed across all of our coastal regions, making sure that the fisheries were absolutely looked after throughout the area.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, that amount is not nearly enough. We do not consider it to be Quebec's fair share.

Can the minister tell us which province most of her department's employees are in?

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, when we were doing the COVID relief benefit programs, we looked at making sure that all of the areas that had been impacted, and all of the harvesters that had been impacted, would benefit from the programs. We saw that right across the country.

We are continuing to work with our provincial counterparts to make sure that we address the concerns we hear from the fishery in her area and all areas, and we will continue to do that.

• (1940)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, since the minister cannot tell us in which province most of her employees are located, could she tell us which province receives the most money in transfer payments from her department?

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I am sorry, my Internet cut out for a second. Could the member please repeat the question?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I was asking the following: If the minister cannot tell us in which province most of her employees are located, could she tell us which province receives the most money in transfer payments from her department?

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Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we look at a number of issues when we are looking at making sure that we are addressing concerns in provinces right across the fishery. During COVID-19, when we instituted the fish harvester benefit and grant program, I met regularly with all of my provincial counterparts in Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec, making sure that their concerns were addressed. I will continue to do that. It is important that we invest in the fisheries in all areas where it has impacts.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I agree with the minister that it is important to respond to COVID-19, but of course the department must continue with its day-to-day operations.

In that case, if she cannot tell me which province saw the largest staff losses or which province is receiving the most money in transfer payments, I would like her to explain to me, if she still maintains that this is fair, why in 2019 British Columbia received \$75.94 million from her department while Quebec received only \$12.8 million.

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, when we look at investments in fisheries, we look at a number of different things. It was extremely important to us to make sure that Quebec, as well as British Columbia, received funds that they needed, just like Atlantic Canada did with the Atlantic fisheries fund. That is why we instituted the Quebec fisheries fund: to make sure that fishers were able to access funding to grow their businesses and invest in technology. Those are all things that we are continuing to do. We will work with the provinces to make sure that we address the concerns they have, and we are doing that on a regular basis.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, it is important to us because the money that is being invested and the efforts that are being made obviously help ensure the development and, in some cases, the survival of this industry and communities in my riding.

Speaking of fairness, if we look at the numbers for the same year, 2019, we see that Quebec received only \$1.52 per capita in transfer payments, while Manitoba received almost double that amount at \$2.70 per capita.

How does the minister explain that situation given that there does not seem to be a lot of lobster in that province?

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we are making sure that we are supporting coastal communities right across the country. We are supporting fisheries right across the country, even our inland fisheries. They are extremely important to a number of communities inland as well. We are going to continue to do that.

Making sure that coastal communities are well looked after is extremely important, as is making sure that they have the investments they need to grow their fishery, that they can maintain their fishery and that it is sustainable for years to come. We are investing in science and technology to make sure that those coastal communities continue to have the fishery for the future.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I can assure you that the communities of Quebec do not feel well looked after. That is not really the case compared to other provinces, and the numbers prove it. I am not even talking about Manitoba and British Columbia. One need only compare Quebec to eastern Canada.

Quebec receives 10 times less funding per capita than Newfoundland and Labrador, which receives \$24.55 per capita. Prince Edward Island receives \$23.41 per capita, while Nova Scotia receives \$19.36 per capita and New Brunswick receives \$27.87 per capita.

How does the minister explain that?

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, when we look at what is required in coastal communities, we look at a number of different factors. It is important to make sure that we are addressing the concerns of coastal communities. That is why we are making these investments through the Quebec fishery fund, which is a contribution program that is funded jointly by the Government of Canada and the Province of Quebec. We are investing nearly \$42.8 million over five years to support Quebec's fish and seafood sector.

- (1945)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, of course supporting the sector does not mean developing it. The objectives that could be met with the necessary funding are not being met, as I said earlier in my speech. It takes investments if we want communities to do more than just survive. I could talk more about this later with the minister.

I would like her to think about all the numbers I gave her and the reality in Quebec. We have thousands of kilometres of shoreline in the north, in the estuary and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

By comparison with the Atlantic, or the Maritimes region, to which people often try to associate us, even though we are not part of that region or even the Pacific region, does the minister believe that Quebec is underfunded by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans?

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the Quebec fisheries fund is stimulating innovation in Quebec's fish and seafood sector. It supports development, it enables the sector to rely on three pillars for development, it relies on innovation and it encourages development of new products. The infrastructure encourages the use of new technologies, and there are science partnerships that enable the creation of partnerships that improve knowledge and impacts.

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We are investing significantly in Quebec through the Quebec fisheries fund in order to make sure that those coastal communities survive, thrive and are there for sustainability for years to come. We are going to continue to work with the Province of Quebec to make sure that we are delivering for those coastal communities.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Chair, with COVID-19 and the support for the fishers, can the minister clarify how many fishers and fish harvesters applied for the fish harvesters benefit and grant program? Is she willing to further extend the application process for those fishers who could not apply because they were out on the water fishing?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, the fish harvester benefit and grant program was one of the only industry-specific programs that was made available.

We recognized how challenging it was for fish harvesters. Because of the way their enterprises were set up, they were unable to qualify for a number of the other government programs that were there. That is why we developed this program. This was close to a half-billion-dollar program to make sure that harvesters could get through this very difficult—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, will the minister extend the application to the program?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the program was extended a number of times to make sure that we caught as many people as we could during the height of the pandemic and to make sure that people were able to apply.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, will the minister commit to increasing the transparency of quota licence ownership by creating a public online database of licence holdings in B.C.?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, with regard to the fisheries committee that actually did the study on the west coast fishery, we are making sure that we are working with British Columbia to identify the priority fisheries management and licencing concerns. This is ongoing work. We are doing it—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, in that same report, it was identified that fish in Canadian waters are a resource for Canadians and that no future sales of fishing quota licences to non-Canadians should happen.

Could the minister outline what steps she is taking to stop foreign ownership of the quota in B.C.?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we are continuing to work on a west coast licensing review through Fisheries and Oceans Canada. We have contracted a comparative analysis of Atlantic and Pacific commercial fishing policies and regulations, and are initiating a review of the existing foreign ownership.

There is a lot of work to be done here, but that work is ongoing and we are committed to making sure that we address these concerns.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, we have a wild salmon crisis going on in British Columbia. In fact, we saw the lowest return of the Fraser River sockeye, which is the largest salmon-bearing river in the world, this year, with less than 300,000 returning sockeye at a run that normally had four million. This is following last year, which was the lowest return in recorded history.

The minister has talked about her commitment to it, but does she actually believe that her current commitment of funds and resources is enough to deal with this issue?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the protection of wild Pacific salmon is a priority for the government. We sympathize with communities that have been impacted by the salmon harvesting. We know there is a lot to do. We have been investing in habitat restoration. We have invested in Big Bar.

We are making sure that we are working with community groups, with indigenous communities and with the B.C. government to do everything we possibly can to protect the wild Pacific salmon. However, it is not enough to just protect them. We need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to grow those fish as well. We want to see them come back to an abundance. We are going to continue to do that.

● (1950)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, Canada spends a fraction of what our neighbours in the United States spend on wild salmon management and recovery. We have a collective responsibility to invest in salmon now, so that the species can be recovered before it is too late.

Could the minister commit to significant new and ongoing investments in the recovery of wild salmon populations and management for future generations?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I agree with my colleague across the way. We need to do everything possible in order to address the crisis that wild Pacific salmon are in right now. That is why we made significant investments through the B.C. SRIF program. It is why we have pulled out all the stops when it comes to Big Bar. It is why we continue to work with indigenous communities, with the B.C. government, with stakeholders and with industry to find the best path forward.

There is no one easy solution to this. We are working to make sure that we are hearing from everybody and doing everything we can to protect the fish.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, here is a simple question. Will the minister provide further and new resources to deal with the wild salmon emergency?

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Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we are continuing to work with our partners to make sure that we are addressing the concern of wild Pacific salmon. We know there is a lot to be done. We will continue that work. We will not rest until we make sure that the Pacific salmon grow and come back to where they should be.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, will the minister commit to a coordinated and co-operative wild salmon recovery plan, something which DFO has not clearly been successfully doing so far?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, wild Pacific salmon are a priority for our government. We are working diligently on a number of different measures to address the steep declines in the Pacific salmon population. That includes everything from habitat restoration to working with indigenous communities, commercial harvesters and recreational fishers.

We are not stopping. We are going to continue to work to make sure that we address this ongoing concern.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, I will tell colleagues how it is working in terms of the significant investments. The salmon enhancement program is a lifeline for hatcheries and habitat restoration. It has not seen any funding increase in over a decade. In fact, the Tofino hatchery where I live is getting \$8,000 a year. They will work on a river, bring it back, and then they will go to another river and bring it back. They will have to go back to the other river because it has crashed. They are not getting the support they need.

Will the minister commit to a significant and permanent increase to the salmon enhancement program? If not, why?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the member opposite and I are actually on the same page. We know there is a lot that needs to be done when it comes to restoring wild Pacific salmon. We are working with communities. We will work with the province and with indigenous people on a coordinated plan. That is what we are doing.

We have had significant investments in the B.C. SRIF program. We support the salmon enhancement program. We are working with stakeholder groups to find out what the best path forward is. Those are all initiatives that we have undertaken as a government. We are committed to—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, we are clearly not on the same page because not enough money is flowing. I just keep reminding the minister about the salmon enhancement program and the lack of investments in restoration and enhancement. Right now we need \$500 million just to save the Fraser, never mind the rest of the coast in the next five years. We cannot get an answer.

Will she commit more money, yes or no?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we will continue to work with our partners to make sure we have a coordinated approach to the restoration of the wild Pacific salmon. This is extremely important to us as a government. We are continuing the important work that is at Big Bar to restore the national fish passage there. We continue to work with first nations, with industry and with stakeholders to support the recovery of wild salmon.

There is no one easy solution to this. We are taking—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, the resources are inadequate.

With respect to the Discovery Islands fish farms, which we know were identified in Cohen recommendation 19, they were supposed to be moved by the end of September this fall if they were threatening obviously juvenile migrating wild salmon, which is happening.

Were the current farm-level diagnoses for disease and pathogens used in the minister's current determination of less than minimal harm to wild sockeye stocks?

• (1955)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, our government is committed to an area-based management approach to aquaculture, and these particular farms may not be the best fit for the location or for their adjacency to first nations communities. That is why we are finalizing formal consultations with the local communities and each first nation on the Discovery Islands as to whether those licences will be renewed. I will say that the first nations communities there recognized how important it was, but also told us—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, is it reasonable to assume that the DFO document, “A fishery decision-making framework incorporating the precautionary approach”, is the default policy when it comes to decision-making related to fish farms?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I would like to finish my comments on the Discovery Islands. What I thought was very important was that we heard directly from first nations communities that we could not make unilateral decisions without consulting with them before we made decisions on the Discovery Islands fish farms. That is one of the reasons we are having those conversations now. I have met with first nations chiefs directly on this issue. We know that we are taking an area-based management approach to aquaculture. We are going to continue to do the hard work that needs to be done.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, so she means she is not using that document.

Is the government on track to keep its election promise to remove open-net fish farms from coastal B.C. by 2025?

Business of Supply

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, our government is committed to developing and delivering on concrete solutions to transition open-net farms. Recently, we announced the parliamentary secretary, the member for Burnaby North—Seymour, as the lead on engagements on this important initiative. This is a change that requires close relationships and collaboration with the Province of British Columbia, with indigenous people, with communities, with industries and with other stakeholders to ensure that the transition is workable. We are committed to this, and we are going to continue to work on it to make sure that we get it done.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans negotiators are proposing a new approach for first nations to increase their food, social and ceremonial access. The proposed approach goes by the name “single allocation” and requires first nations to purchase fishing access to increase their FSC access. First nations can use either government funding provided for this purpose or their own revenue.

Can the minister explain to first nations why this single allocation mandate was developed without any consultation with first nations in British Columbia?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, first nations have a right to fish for food, social and ceremonial reasons. We recognize that. We are going to make sure they have these rights. We take this as a priority, but conservation has to take top priority over everything.

Through the aboriginal fishing strategy, DFO and first nations seek to negotiate mutually acceptable FSC fisheries agreements. These agreements contain provisions related to the amounts that may be fished for FSC purposes, species, gear, area and other factors—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, we hear about the government and its relationship with first nations and see how it has failed to honour section 35 rights. We have heard from witnesses that a large part of the issue is that DFO does not have the mandate to negotiate on a nation-to-nation basis. Witnesses say that responsibility falls to the government and the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and that she should be leading this discussion.

What can she say to ensure true nation-to-nation discussions are happening that are not based on existing regulations and colonial procedures?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, when it comes to reconciliation, our government takes a whole-of-government approach. I work directly with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations on the agreements we have with first nations, particularly right now in Atlantic Canada given what we are dealing with regarding the moderate livelihood fishery. It is extremely important that those negotiations and conversations include the minister and me.

We are going to continue to make sure we address the concerns we hear. We will continue to work on the path of reconciliation. It is not an easy thing to do, but we are committed to making sure we get there.

• (2000)

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, European green crab in B.C. are a significant threat to wild Pacific salmon. The minister and DFO failed to live up to the direction of the Auditor General in controlling the spread of green crab.

Will the minister be providing adequate funding to coastal first nations, which have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars of their own funds, to develop a comprehensive plan to mitigate the impact of the European green crab?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, my mandate letter addresses aquatic invasive species. The European green crab can have significant impacts on marine ecosystems and can harm shellfish and aquaculture industries.

DFO is collaborating with our partners, including first nations, provincial governments, stakeholders and the U.S. state and federal governments, to address the threat of this species to Canada's fisheries and ecosystems. We know there is a lot of work to be done when it comes to aquatic invasive species and we are committed to doing that work.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Chair, a significant comprehensive recovery effort should be in place for the species affected by the Big Bar slide. Returns have been near zero and it seems DFO is not treating this issue like the severe emergency it is.

When will the department be initiating a comprehensive recovery effort for salmon populations affected by the Big Bar slide?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I am very proud of the work we have done at Big Bar. It has been a trigovernment approach. We have implemented a number of measures to make sure salmon are able to traverse the river. We are currently in the process of creating a natural fish passway. These are all things that have to be done, because we know how important the salmon are in the Fraser River.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, I am thankful for the opportunity to contribute to today's discussion at this gathering of the committee of the whole. I have about nine or 10 minutes of comments and then I will proceed to questions at the end of my time.

As the minister has indicated, the funding we are seeking relates to our government's priorities of promoting economic opportunities for all Canadians, advancing reconciliation with indigenous people, strengthening environmental protections and making sure our waters are safe and navigable. Our government is focused on not just protecting the environment, but restoring it for the benefit of future generations.

We know that the foundation of a strong economy can only be built with a clean and thriving environment. In fact, there is no better demonstration of how the economy and the environment go hand in hand than our wild Pacific salmon.

Business of Supply

Serving and restoring Pacific salmon and ensuring a stable and predictable fishery for all participants, both indigenous and non-indigenous, is a responsibility we take very seriously. In many rural and coastal communities, salmon fisheries are a real economic driver that generate jobs and opportunities for thousands of Canadians. Salmon fisheries are part of the cultural identity of the province of British Columbia and play a critical role in building coastal indigenous economies, enabling indigenous groups to develop improved capacity for self-governance and self-determination. To many of our indigenous communities, wild Pacific salmon are not just an economic opportunity, but a way of life that is an important, if not sacred, tradition.

Our government is committed to working with indigenous peoples to explore opportunities to further recognize rights and advance reconciliation in the context of fisheries, oceans, aquatic habitats and marine waterways. Canada's wild salmon policies speak to the importance of maintaining the biodiversity of these important stocks, as well as their significance to commercial and recreational fish harvesters, indigenous peoples and, really, all Canadians.

We have collaborated closely on the creation of a \$142-million B.C. salmon restoration and innovation fund, a federal-provincial cost-shared program funded jointly with the Government of British Columbia. We have made an additional contribution of \$5 million to the Pacific salmon endowment fund to support the Pacific Salmon Foundation, which is doing incredible work to restore wild Pacific salmon and its habitat.

We announced \$15 million in additional annual funding to support stock assessments, wire tagging and catch monitoring. These investments contribute to our obligations under the Canada-U.S. Pacific Salmon Treaty and are targeted toward better managing west coast salmon fishing. We are investing \$107 million to support the sustainability of Canada's major fish stocks through implementation of the renewed Fisheries Act. We have also invested significant resources in restoring natural passage on the Fraser River after the devastating Big Bar landslide, and we are committed to transitioning from open net-pen finfish aquaculture on the west coast of Canada.

• (2005)

We are making difficult decisions and important investments today to ensure that Pacific salmon are available for future generations. With many wild salmon stocks at historic lows, it is only with the dedication of all members of this chamber that we will be able to ensure that these populations are able to return to traditional levels of abundance.

Of course, wild salmon do not live in a bubble. They, like all of the ocean's creatures, are affected significantly by the cumulative effects of human activity. This means that we must fight not only for our salmon, but for biodiversity itself and for the health of the marine environment in its entirety. Ensuring a healthy ocean is essential for Canada's long-term economic prosperity and will play an important role as we build our economy following this global pandemic.

As fellow parliamentarians know, the United Nations has proclaimed a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development,

beginning in 2021. Our government has pledged Canada's support, with major investments dedicated to the planning, promotion and coordination of activities related to this decade. Canada must be a leader in this space, as our nation has the longest coastline in the world.

Starting in 2015, as a nation, we had only protected less than 1% of our marine environment, which was completely unacceptable. We pledged to increase this to more than 10% by 2020. Thanks to the hard work of Canadians, we not only met this target but exceeded it. Canada has now protected approximately 14% of our marine environment, and we will get to 25% by 2025. This means that in 10 short years, we will have protected 25 times more ocean marine habitat than all governments before us since Confederation.

This is a significant achievement that all members of the House and all Canadians should be proud of. It is a major investment in the future of our country and the future of our planet. However, we intend to go further.

This summer, Canada joins the United Kingdom's Global Ocean Alliance to support the adoption of a global target of 30% marine conservation by 2030, which is anticipated to be a key pillar of next year's Convention on Biological Diversity's COP 15 meeting. We are also implementing the commitments we made during Canada's 2018 G7 presidency to shape international efforts to clean up the oceans, tackle oceans plastics and advance ocean observation.

We know that just like fighting climate change, protecting and restoring our ocean is an existential necessity. Canada needs to continue to take a leadership role on this and other global environmental issues. We will champion ocean science to help counter threats to ocean life and health, and we must advance a strategy to end illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. We do this not just for environmental necessity, but because growing the blue economy is a significant economic opportunity for the entire country.

New, sustainable technologies are going to present increasing opportunities to coastal communities. Our commitment to transition away from open net-pen fish farms on the west coast of this country speaks to that sustainable opportunity. British Columbians feel strongly about the health of our fish stocks, and they need to transition farms in a way that is workable, economically feasible and takes into account social impacts.

A change like this requires close collaboration with the Province of British Columbia, indigenous communities, industry and other stakeholders, and I am excited to help build this reasonable path. The timing of this transition is beneficial not only to our wild salmon stocks and marine biodiversity, but to opening our imaginations for what the future of aquaculture can look like in Canada.

Aquaculture goes far beyond salmon. I had the opportunity to visit an oyster farm in Prince Edward Island, which not only creates delicious oysters, but effectively cleans the oceans while doing it.

Companies and communities across Canada are already leading the world in aquaculture in areas that include fish, seaweed and shellfish. It is a core part of our blue economy growth strategy and strengthens the need for the legislative and economic certainty that a dedicated aquaculture act can provide, an act I expect we will be debating in the House in the next number of months. Such an act would bring clarity and transparency to Canadians as to how aquaculture will be managed in order to achieve responsible and sustainable growth.

● (2010)

Our waters provide immense opportunity, but I would regret it if I did not take some time to highlight the work of the men and women who patrol them, who respond to emergencies on them and who keep our economies moving through them despite thick ice and strong Canadian winters. Of course, I am referring to the brave men and women who serve in the Canadian Coast Guard.

Last year, our government announced the single-largest investment ever made to renew the Canadian Coast Guard fleet, with up to 18 new large ships, the construction of six new icebreakers and an additional \$2 billion in investments for vessel life-extension maintenance and repair work for the existing fleet. These ships are being built through Canada's national shipbuilding strategy.

Our offshore fisheries science vessels were Canada's first-ever vessels purposely designed and built for vital offshore fisheries research science and monitoring. These vessels were constructed at Seaspan shipyards, a world leader in shipbuilding, whose facility happens to be in my own backyard. Many of my constituents are directly employed at Seaspan and my entire constituency, indeed the entire country, benefits from their world-class work.

We are ensuring that the Coast Guard has the safe, reliable and modern equipment needed to carry out important work, such as ice-breaking operations, search and rescue, and environmental response, all while creating good jobs and economic opportunities that will extend across the country.

I value deeply the wealth of experience my fellow parliamentarians bring to the House. It is an honour to rise today and discuss some of the great work we are doing and even more so to express that we are doing this in collaboration with members on all sides of the House for the good of all Canadians and for the benefit, most important, of future generations.

As members know, Canada has the largest amount of coastline of any nation in the world. We are abundantly lucky to face three oceans, including the Pacific, the Atlantic and the Arctic. We know that despite them having different names, we all really share one giant ocean.

When the minister was first elected, Canada protected less than 1% of our oceans. Could the minister update us on how much is protected now and what the plan is for providing greater protections as we go forward?

Business of Supply

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, when we were first elected in 2015, less than 1% of Canada's oceans were protected. We, as a government, made a commitment to ensure we were protecting the ocean for future generations. We wanted to ensure they were sustainable, that we could have a blue economy and grow that blue economy. We set a goal of 10% by 2020. We not only achieved that goal, we surpassed it. It is almost 14% of protected area now. I was very—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Chair, the minister can add more to that if she would like, going forward.

We have heard many people speak to the importance of the green economy, when it comes to fighting climate change and growing our economy in a more sustainable way. The same opportunity is available with what the minister just mentioned, which is the blue economy. We know that if we do not make significant changes and take on ocean pollution, illegal and unregulated fishing and plastics, our future opportunity to grow our economy and to leverage Canada's tremendous natural assets will be, frankly, diminished.

Could the minister provide some insight into how she sees Canada's opportunity and role with regard to blue economy going forward?

● (2015)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, our government has placed significant emphasis on and made large investments in oceans over the last mandate, including the oceans protection plan.

I have been mandated by the Prime Minister to lead the development of a blue economy strategy in collaboration with the Minister of Transport, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Natural Resources.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global economic activity tied to oceans was expected to double to over \$4 trillion by 2030. Canada is lagging behind in fully leveraging our blue economy. The strategy will help create good middle-class jobs and opportunities for coastal communities, while advancing our conservation objectives.

I know how important the blue economy is to our rural coastal communities. I am looking forward to working with all parliamentarians as we advance this strategy.

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Chair, does she have any thoughts about the record investments we have made in the Canadian Coast Guard?

Business of Supply

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the Coast Guard is extremely important to our coastal communities, to our marine environment. We needed to ensure that the men and women of the Coast Guard had the tools they needed. That is why we are making significant investments in rebuilding our fleet and ensuring we have the ships we need.

Some of our ships are going to age out very soon. We need to ensure the new ships are available for the Coast Guard to continue to do the good work it does.

Mr. Terry Beech: Madam Chair, I will use this very short time to thank all the members in the House today, as well as the minister, who are participating in this important debate. There is nothing more urgent in terms of things that need to be tackled than the protection and restoration of our oceans. If we do that as a group, there will be abundant opportunities for future generations.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Resuming questions, the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time this evening with the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap.

I am glad to hear that the minister has taken the time to read the Marshall decision since she was before our committee last week. It is one of the most important and foundational decisions as it pertains to fisheries.

Now that she has read the decision, could she outline for us the role of the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard as highlighted in that decision?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, the Marshall decision is extremely important to ensuring we address the concerns of first nations. The Supreme Court decision was clear that they have a right to fish for a moderate livelihood.

The Government of Canada is working to ensure we implement that right. I am working with first nations communities on their fisheries plans right now. It is extremely important we move this forward. That is one of the things—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Chair, why did the minister decide to pass the buck and ignore her responsibilities under the Marshall decision, which is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has the authority over the fishery, by appointing a third party mediator to do her job?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I would like to be very clear that it is not a mediator. This is a special representative for whom a number of stakeholder groups had asked. We wanted to ensure we heard from all concerned parties to bridge gaps we had seen between the commercial harvesters and indigenous communities.

Mr. Surette is a well-respected member of his community. He has worked in the fishery before. He understands the issue. We are looking forward to seeing his interim report in December and his final report in March.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Chair, has the minister's personally appointed special representative read the Marshall decision?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I am assuming that Mr. Surette has read the Marshall decision. I am sure he has at this point. This is extremely important as we go forward. Mr. Surette is working with the first nations communities. He is speaking to commercial harvesters. He is speaking to stakeholders. All—

● (2020)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Chair, perhaps it can be forgiven that the minister appointed a third party special representative or mediator to deal with the fishing crisis before she read the Marshall decision. Now that she has read the Marshall decision, she knows that it is her responsibility to regulate the fishery. Why has she refused to do so?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the Supreme Court has made it clear that the first nations have a right to a moderate livelihood fishery. We are working with first nations to ensure we implement that right. This is extremely important for reconciliation. It is important to our government. It is important for first nations communities. It is a very complex issue. It takes a lot of time and effort to ensure that we get this right.

We are committed to working with those first nations communities to ensure that right is implemented.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Chair, given that the Marshall decision clearly outlines that the minister can regulate both indigenous and non-indigenous fisheries for the purpose of conservation, is the minister willing to ensure that conservation seasons are respected by all fish harvesters?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, conservation underpins everything we do at DFO. No decision will be made that will affect the conservation of the species. We need to ensure that it is sustainable for the long term. Nobody wants to do anything that will change that, including commercial harvesters and indigenous people.

Conservation will always be the number one priority as we make these decisions going forward.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Chair, does the minister support the establishment of a second fishing authority, yes or no?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I have said many times, these are difficult negotiations. We are continuing to work with first nations to ensure we implement the fishery. We are working with them now on their fishery plans. A number of them have been given to us and we are working in negotiations with them.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Chair, is the minister currently negotiating the establishment of a second independent fishing authority, yes or no?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I cannot prejudge what comes out of negotiations. Nor do I negotiate in public. These negotiations are ongoing at the moment. We will do everything we can to ensure that the right is implemented, but also ensure that conservation is our top priority.

Business of Supply

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Chair, could the minister tell us, yes or no, is she in favour of the establishment of a second independent fishing authority?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the Supreme Court was very clear that first nations have a right to a moderate livelihood fishery. We are working with first nations to ensure we will be able to implement that right. That is a priority for this government in regard to reconciliation. Conservation will always be the number one priority as we go forward.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Chair, I will ask one more time because I really feel this is important and Canadians are wondering, from coast to coast. They want clarity around this issue. No one is questioning the indigenous people's right to fish, at all. What this comes down to, though, is this: Is the minister in favour of establishing a second, independent fishing authority?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we have been working expeditiously to reach agreements, with conservation as a top priority in these conversations. I understand that the unknown is very difficult for people. I understand that it is a challenge when we will not negotiate in public. I know everybody wants to know what is happening, but we will not prejudge the outcomes of those negotiations. We are, right now, working with first nations to make sure that we are able to implement that right.

Mr. Richard Bragdon: Madam Chair, we have heard testimony at committee from indigenous leaders, representatives from the commercial fishery, academics, scientists, former DFO employees and politicians, including the Liberal premier of Nova Scotia. We have even heard concerns from the minister's own caucus colleague, a former chair of the fisheries committee, the hon. member for Malpeque. The one common thread among them is that they are unsatisfied with her efforts.

Does the minister think she is doing a good job solving this crisis?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, this is a very complex issue. If there were a simple solution it would have been had 21 years ago. A number of issues within issues are involved. We are continuing to work with first nations to make sure we implement this right.

The previous government, in 10 years, did not sign one agreement with first nations. We already have two signed, and we are working diligently to make sure there are more. I will continue to do that hard work.

• (2025)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Chair, 11 months ago, the Prime Minister mandated the fisheries minister to make new investments to fight aquatic invasive species.

When will the fisheries minister finally make those new investments to fight invasive species?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, our government understands the importance of protecting biodiversity and the quality of Canadian waters. As such, we are focused on coordinating our efforts to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in Canada. This is so important that the Prime Minister included it in my man-

date letter, as the member says. Management of aquatic invasive species is a responsibility that the federal government shares with provincial and territorial governments. We will continue to work closely with them and our U.S. counterparts to make sure that we are doing everything we can to address the threat of aquatic invasive species.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Chair, five months ago, on June 2, the fisheries minister stated that these investments were imminent and that she would have more to say “soon.”

When will the fisheries minister finally make new investments in the fight against invasive species?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I said, we are continuing to work with our provincial and territorial counterparts. We recognize that aquatic invasive species are a real threat to our ecosystems. More has to be done. We are working diligently to make sure that we address the concern of these aquatic invasive species. This is hard work that we are committed to. I am going to make sure that we do the work necessary in order to address the concerns.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Chair, as we have learned, a Liberal's “soon” could very well be never or too late, as is the case for Shuswap Lake, where an infestation of invasive clams was confirmed just two months ago.

When will the fisheries minister finally make investments to fight against aquatic invasive species?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I said, the Prime Minister has put in my mandate letter the work to fight aquatic invasive species. We are working with our provincial and territorial counterparts to make sure that we address these challenges. I know that it is a difficult situation with these aquatic invasive species in our lakes, rivers and oceans. We need to do everything possible. This government is committed to making sure that we address the problem. We are continuing to do that work.

• (2030)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Chair, as this latest discovery of an infestation of aquatic invasive species has shown the words of this Liberal minister, and the three other Liberal fisheries ministers who preceded her, are completely ineffective in preventing the spread of invasive species. Canadians deserve better.

Business of Supply

For five years now, I have been pressing the government to act against the spread of aquatic invasive species and the damage that they will inflict on B.C.'s ecology and economy if not prevented. The Commissioner of the Environment has also warned this Liberal government, as did the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in a study last year. Both reports concluded that preventing the proliferation of aquatic invasive species is a fraction of the cost of trying to manage or eradicate them. This minister and government sit on their hands while permanent damage is being inflicted on the aquatic ecosystems of the communities that depend on them.

When will the fisheries minister take invasive species seriously and deliver resources for effective prevention?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his intervention.

I know how hard this is. I know what a difficult situation it is with aquatic invasive species. We are working with our provincial and territorial counterparts to address the concern. We know that it is significant in some areas. We have been working on a number of initiatives, and we will continue to do that.

I will commit to making sure that we do everything possible to address the concern of aquatic invasive species. We have invested \$43.8 million over five years to prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species, but we know that more needs to be done.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Chair, Oceana has recently released its "Fishery Audit 2020", which found that Canada's fisheries have declined under the Liberal government.

Under this government's tenure, the number of healthy fish populations decreased by almost eight percentage points from 2017 until 2020. To make matters worse, no comprehensive or meaningful rebuilding plans were released in 2020, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada only delivered on 14% of its published priorities.

Why has the fisheries minister failed to deliver on the other 86% of her priorities?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we welcome Oceana's fisheries audit, and we will be reviewing its recommendations, but our government has made several key investments that are already showing progress toward sustainable fisheries and strengthening our oceans' protections.

The department is continuing to complete rebuilding plans for priority stocks. Since 2018, DFO has completed rebuilding plans for six of these 19 stocks, and a further two have improved to the point that they are no longer in the critical zone. For the remaining priority stocks without rebuilding plans, DFO has specific fisheries management measures in place. These measures are going to ensure that the limited fishing of the stocks does not compromise the rebuilding.

We know that the fisheries rebuilding plans are important, and that is one of the reasons why we put them in the modernized Fisheries Act. We are going to continue to work to make sure that we are rebuilding stocks.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Madam Chair, federal fishing regulations have severely restricted access and opportunities for salmon fishing in

B.C., especially around Vancouver Island, by using anglers as scapegoats in an attempt to look like salmon are being protected. Well-recognized organizations such as the Sport Fishing Advisory Board, which has worked with DFO for decades, recommended mark-selective fisheries, which would have a near-zero impact on stocks of concern yet would provide opportunity and economic relief in the area.

Can the minister provide an estimate of how much revenue has been lost due to the closure of the public recreational fisheries on the west coast in 2019-20?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, our government acknowledges the challenges being faced by Pacific salmon fishery participants, including recreational anglers. We are also carefully considering requests for a mark-selective hatchery-origin chinook and mark-selective fishery opportunities. Further consultations are planned to seek input on benefits and costs of these approaches as well as further discussions.

As I said earlier, this is not something I am averse to. It is something in which we want to make sure that we have the right path forward, and that is what we are working on.

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will begin my 15 minutes of questions with the minister on the issue of the moderate livelihood fishery.

Obviously, in Nova Scotia in recent months, this issue has been the subject of much coverage and controversy. When I speak with those who are members of indigenous communities who want to exercise their right to a moderate livelihood, it is clear that they rely on the law we adopted in Canada in the treaties of the 1760s. Of course, the right was embedded more fully and with some more clarity in the Marshall decision of the late nineties.

One of the things I find to be a major source of frustration is that when I talk to people independently, either indigenous fishers or commercial fishers, a lot of them want the same things. They have grown accustomed to fishing alongside one another. They both, for the most part, recognize the existence of the right to take part in a moderate livelihood fishery. I find it frustrating because my career before politics was in litigation, where two sides would come together completely in disagreement on virtually everything, yet we would often come to a resolution.

In the present instance, I hear that there is an appetite to recognize a moderate livelihood, but it is peppered with fears. There are sincerely held fears among commercial fishers about the ability to practise their fishery, because they are worried about the conservation outcomes that may arise if there is increased effort placed on the fishery. They are subject to rules that have been built up over decades. There are people in my office saying that they want to support increased participation among indigenous fishers, but they are worried for their livelihoods.

Business of Supply

I am curious if the minister can offer some comfort or commentary around the subject of conservation and the importance that she, as minister, will place on that very important principle as any kind of a framework is developed to implement the right to a moderate livelihood.

• (2035)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, at DFO every decision we make is based on conservation. It is the number one priority. We want to make sure that the fishery is sustainable for the long term, for generations to come.

I will say that this is a goal shared by commercial harvesters as well as indigenous fishers. This is something that we all agree on. What we need to find is the path forward. I understand that, in coastal communities, our commercial harvesters are worried for their livelihoods.

We need to make sure that we are not increasing fishing efforts. That is one of the top priorities for me, as well as making sure that conservation objectives are met. These are tricky negotiations, as I have said. They are full of bumps along the way, but we are committed to making sure that we find the path forward to implement the moderate livelihood fishery, address the concerns of commercial harvesters, make sure conservation is the number one priority and that there is not an increased fishing effort.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Chair, I will shift gear slightly, though I will remain on the subject of conservation.

As the minister knows, I represent two coasts within my constituency: the eastern shore of Nova Scotia and the Northumberland Strait. On the Northumberland Strait is a marine refuge that protects juvenile American lobster stocks. On the eastern shore there has been some discussion in recent years about a proposed marine-protected area, or at least an area of interest for potential conservation going forward.

I have had many conversations with the minister about the area off the eastern shore. One of the questions that I receive from local fishers, particularly with the lobster fishery, is whether a proposed marine-protected area would be designed to protect the ocean for the fishermen or from them. It has become clear to me over the course of the conversation that there is no limitation that would be placed on the lobster fishery, but I am curious.

Can the minister talk about the importance of community engagement and consultation, so that we do not implement any kind of a conservation measure against the will or interest of the community?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, when it comes to marine-protected areas, we know the ones that are the most successful are the ones built from the ground up with the communities, making sure there is active engagement. The Eastern Shore Islands area of interest encompasses exceptional coastal habitats, home to a very diverse range of marine species. I remain committed to a broad and inclusive process focused on the conservation of this remarkable area.

Our next step is to meet with the commercial fishers and other community members on the eastern shore to discuss and carefully

consider their priorities for the area. We are committed to continuing to work with local communities to effectively conserve this unique place for those who make their living there.

One of the reasons we need marine-protected areas is to make sure we have fishing for generations to come. This is not to stop fishing; this is to make sure it is sustainable for the long term.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Chair, during the previous Parliament I had the privilege of serving as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. In that role, I spent a lot of time working on conservation and came to learn about a massive potential extinction event when it comes to our biodiversity across the planet. Over the past 50 years alone, two-thirds or more of the world's wildlife has vanished. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has a responsibility to protect biodiversity within our oceans. In particular, on the east coast with the North Atlantic right whale and on the west coast with the southern resident killer whale, I am curious if the minister can offer insight as to what measures we will be implementing so these national treasures will remain here for generations long after we are gone.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, with respect to the North Atlantic right whale, we have taken measures to make sure we protect this iconic species. I would like to say this was done in collaboration and co-operation with harvesters, environmental stakeholder groups and communities. Making sure we protect this species was important to all of us. We put some pretty stringent measures in place this year and I am happy to say there were no entanglements of right whales in Atlantic Canada. That was extremely beneficial. We know it has been a challenge for a number of our coastal fishermen, but this is something we have developed in collaboration with them. We are going to continue to work with them this year to see what happens and how we can best move forward addressing their concerns.

Making sure we are addressing the concerns around ghost gear is another big initiative we have put in place. There is far too much ghost gear in the ocean. We have put funding in place to collect that gear. We are working with our fishers to make sure that gear is retrieved so there will be no further entanglements. We are going to continue to work to make sure we protect the North Atlantic right whale.

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● (2040)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Chair, of course in Nova Scotia the seafood sector is going to remain an important economic driver going forward. Pre-pandemic, I was thrilled to see a major investment in the Halifax international airport that was going to have a serious expansion of the air cargo logistics park to seriously increase the export capacity of seafood from our waters to kitchen tables all over the world. One of the things I have seen is when one deals with folks in the seafood industry, whether producers, harvesters, processors, whoever it may be, those who are able to adapt and innovate within their businesses are often able to create a new product or improve the delivery of existing products in a manner that allows them to hire more people in our communities and keep jobs in rural Nova Scotia. Can the minister comment on the importance of the Atlantic fisheries fund to allow those working in the industry to grow their business and keep more of our kids at home?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the Atlantic fisheries fund is a real success story. It was so successful that we have actually expanded it to include Quebec and B.C. as well. This is a fund that is available for fishers and producers to innovate their businesses in order to scale up or do value-added. We know there is a huge market for our seafood products around the world. We want to make sure we are doing everything to we can to support the industry as we grow our fish and seafood sector.

COVID-19 took its toll on the industry, but I am very proud of the investments we made there as well with the seafood stabilization fund. We were able to provide money to processors who were able to better provide freezers and cold storage, which was a gap we had seen. We wanted to make sure that they had the ability to invest in PPE and all of the measures they needed in order to keep their workers safe during the pandemic.

We are going to continue to work with industry to make sure we are supporting them, so that our wonderful fish and seafood products can go around the world.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Chair, conservation of our wetlands and waterways is extremely important. I have been fortunate to work alongside members of the community who have been working on river restoration projects along with West River, for example, in Sheet Harbour, and along the St. Mary's River throughout the District of St. Mary's and elsewhere.

These are beautiful watersheds that could be enjoyed for recreation, and once had the ability to actually host sport fishing for Atlantic salmon. As a result of a number of factors over time, the sustainability of the salmon populations in these rivers has been severely diminished. Through the work of these associations, we have seen serious returns of salmon populations, in particular during the previous Parliament. Through the coastal restoration fund, a multi-million dollar investment saw each of these rivers have restoration work completed. I recently took a tour with some of the members of the St. Mary's River Association.

I am curious to hear the minister's thoughts as to whether these kinds of investments could one day see a return of a recreational salmon fishery on rivers on the Eastern Shore and the District of St. Mary's in my riding of Central Nova?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, it is interesting that my hon. colleague brought up Atlantic salmon and the challenges they are facing with regard to habitat degradation. We have seen the same problems on the west coast with the wild Pacific salmon. Investing in coastal restoration is extremely important. The habitat for salmon, both on the west coast and the east coast, is critical to making sure that we are able to grow those populations of fish so that we have a future fishery. I have met with a number of anglers and salmon enthusiasts in Atlantic Canada about ways forward.

We are going to continue to work with those communities and organizations to find the best way to make sure that we are addressing the concerns around the decline of Atlantic salmon as well. This is a priority for our government. We know that no species should become extinct or endangered. We want to make sure we are doing everything we can do bring back those extremely important populations.

● (2045)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Madam Chair, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed everything about the communities that we live in, the way we work and the way that we live. During the last commercial fishing season, as a result of the timing of the pandemic in the spring, not far off from when my community goes to fish, there were a lot of people who had serious worries about their health and working closely on deck with others.

Obviously, record levels of benefits were extended to help people whose employment income or income from harvesting had been diminished. These new investments were put in place to help them get through a time of difficulty. Nova Scotia is seeing cases spike. There were 37 new cases announced just recently and it is trending, frankly, in the wrong direction. I encourage anybody watching this at home to follow public health advice.

Should cases continue to rise, would the minister be willing to continue to support commercial harvesters as they struggle to keep food on the table with the uncertainty that COVID-19 brings to their ability to earn a livelihood from harvesting seafood?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the fish harvester benefit and grant program delivered financial support that was much needed in our commercial fisheries. We recognized early on that with the measures we put in place as a government, they did not qualify because of the way that their enterprises were set up.

Our government has said we will continue to work to make sure that all Canadians are looked after. We are going to continue to do that as we get through this pandemic. As my hon. colleague said, people should be paying attention to public health guidelines, but right now we are very focused on making sure that we are working to address the concerns we are hearing in our communities and from those on our coastal waters. We will make sure that we are there to support our fishing sector.

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Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time this evening with the member for Abbotsford.

It was an interesting discussion that we just heard. The minister was much clearer tonight than she was at committee the other day on conservation being the number one priority of her department. That is good news. She also added today that her goal is no added pressure on the fishing industry. I think she was talking about the lobster industry, in particular.

How does she propose to do that when there are potentially many more entrants set to come into this important industry? There are no easy solutions, she said, but we would like to hear her answer.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, since day one I have said that conservation is going to be our number one priority when it comes to the moderate livelihood fishery and Atlantic Canada. This is a goal we share with first nations as well as with commercial harvesters. I am never going to do anything that is going to challenge conservation. We need to make sure that the fishery is sustainable for the long term, and that is what we are going to do.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Chair, I appreciate that, but the minister did not answer the question.

With potentially so many more participants coming into this industry, she stated that she does not want to add pressure and conservation is her goal. How does she propose to balance all these competing interests to ensure the fishery remains healthy and viable in the years ahead?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we are currently negotiating with first nations to implement their fishing plans. As I have said many times, we do not negotiate in public. I cannot prejudge what the outcome of those negotiations will be. We are working with first nations to make sure that we implement their moderate livelihood right, but we also recognize that the commercial harvesters have concerns that we will be addressing as well.

• (2050)

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Chair, is the minister considering quotas in the lobster industry?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, no.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Chair, that is good.

Premium Brands Holdings Corporation, in its presentation to investors, says that the benefit of the Mi'kmaq coalition purchasing 50% of Clearwater is a "strategic long-term relationship for the sale of inshore fishery catches".

Can the minister advise the House how her department plans to ensure that only in-season DFO-regulated lobster harvested in the inshore will be enforced?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, our government welcomes a collaboration between industry and first nations to grow our Canadian seafood industry. This project represents a positive step in building strong partnerships between indigenous communities and the commercial seafood sector. We are continuing to work

with all our partners in the seafood sector to promote sustainability and productive commercial fisheries across Canada.

This, of course, is a relatively new deal. We are still doing our due diligence on this new purchase, and we will continue to do the work we need to do to make sure that we are protecting the Canadian fishery.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Chair, the other day, the minister complained I was putting words in her mouth. She complained the leader of the opposition did the same thing tonight. I would ask the minister to get away from the talking points and answer these questions.

Last year, Parliament passed Bill C-68, which amended the Fisheries Act. Conservatives supported elements of these changes because they enshrined in the law two key principles: the owner-operator and the fleet separation policy. This legislation exempted first nations from these provisions. The proposed Clearwater buyout sees 100% of Clearwater's Canadian licences being held by FNC Holdings, a company 100% owned by two first nations, and those two first nations are exempt from the inshore fleet separation and owner-operator regulations of the act.

Will the minister put as a condition of her approval on the transfer of these licences, which she is entitled to do, that FNC Holdings will not be able to acquire inshore fishery licences, contrary to the spirit of the law passed last year?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I am quite glad my hon. colleague brought up the Fisheries Act and the modernization of the Fisheries Act. Of course, that had to be done because the previous government, of which he was a member, absolutely gutted the Fisheries Act. It took away protection for fish and fish habitat. We put that back in.

With regard to owner-operator, this is something I have been committed to since the first day I was elected. We are working toward making sure we have those regulations in place. This is something that is critically important to our rural coastal communities. I am going to continue to work to make sure we address it.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Chair, will the minister make it a condition that the owner-operator fleet separation will be maintained under this new Clearwater deal? The company should not be able to use this new partnership to get around the provisions that legislate owner-operator and fleet separation. Also, the inshore fleet will continue to own those licences and they will be operated as the law outlines.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I said, the previous government actually gutted the Fisheries Act. It was our government that put provisions back in place to make sure that we addressed owner-operator, and to make sure that we addressed the protection of fish and fish habitat for the long-term sustainability of the fishery.

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We take no direction from the Conservatives when it comes to making sure that the Fisheries Act is where it needs to be. We have made sure that we are doing everything we possibly can to address fisheries in Atlantic Canada and on all coasts.

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Chair, the minister is back on her talking points. Folks down east know the steps the previous government, as well as the Liberal government, took to ensure owner-operator fleet separation was first enshrined in regulation, cleaned up and then passed into law.

We are looking for clear answers on this. Are you going to ensure that this corporate deal does not gut the owner-operator fleet separation policies and that the inshore fishery will continue? Do not give us talking points that sidestep the question. Give us an answer. Fishers back home are listening and hanging on your every word because their livelihoods are at stake.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I will remind the member that I cannot answer the question, but the minister will be able to.

• (2055)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, it was our government that actually enshrined owner-operator in legislation. It was our government that put owner-operator in the Fisheries Act as legislation. This is something we are committed to, and we will continue to be committed to it. Regulations are ongoing and we will make sure that this is—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Chair, I am here to advocate for B.C.'s recreational angling industry, as well as for the wild salmon on the west coast that are in precipitous decline.

Between April and August of this year, the minister's department imposed unprecedented Chinook closures on the public fishery in Howe Sound. These closures have had a devastating effect on Vancouver's recreational angling industry.

Why were there closures?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, our government acknowledges that it has been a real challenge for B.C. with regard to Pacific salmon fishery participants, including the anglers. Conservation-based fishery management measures continue. We need to make sure that we are looking forward to future years given the poor status of the stocks. That is one of the reasons these decisions were made. We know that it is difficult, but we are continuing to work to make sure that we can grow the stocks. We are investing in—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Chair, Howe Sound has historically had an extremely low encounter rate on wild Chinook stocks, and a high prevalence of marked hatchery Chinook available for anglers to keep.

Why did the minister impose a closure on Chinook fishing in Howe Sound when she knew the devastating impact it would have on the public fishery?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the at-risk Fraser River chinook salmon stocks face a number of significant challenges.

Their road to recovery requires a long-term view and close collaboration with first nations, as well as with all stakeholders in the province.

We have made significant management measures, introduced in 2019, to protect the chinook. They were difficult but they were necessary. These decisions were made to continue and strengthen these conservation measures in 2020—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Chair, the minister did not quite answer the question, but I am going to move on to the mass marking of salmon.

Marking hatchery fish allows anglers to release wild salmon back into the water, but keep the plentiful hatchery salmon. I am looking at a 2001 DFO policy document entitled "A Policy for Selective Fishing in Canada's Pacific Fisheries". Is that policy still in effect?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I have said a number of times tonight, the mark selective fishery is one possible option that can be explored in terms of fish retention, while reducing impacts on wild salmon. I am not averse to a mark selective fishery. I want to make sure that as we go forward, we are doing it in the right way.

There are challenges with regard to the impacts that hatchery fish have on the wild population. We need to make sure that we have the right data. We need to make sure that we have the right measures in place to go forward with a mark selective fishery—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Chair, I note the minister did not answer the question. I asked her, is that policy still in effect? I have to assume that it is. She is the minister after all.

I refer the minister to page eight of that policy, which states, "...mass marking of hatchery fish has proven to be a useful technique to distinguish harvestable enhanced salmon stocks from wild stocks destined for release."

At the fisheries committee in June, we asked the minister why only 10% of hatchery salmon are being marked. She was unable to fully answer our question, so I will ask it again: Why is she marking only 10% of hatchery fish, when mass marking would dramatically improve sport fishing opportunities without impacting our wild salmon stocks?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, there are valid concerns that need to be thoroughly understood. For instance, the mark-selective fisheries will still encounter wild chinook. We need to make sure that the mortality of stocks of concern are accounted for as we move forward with an MSF, so that they do not adversely impact the wild stocks.

We know that this is an important initiative for recreational fishers. We want to work with them to find the best ways forward, but we know that to do this work, there need to be a lot more consultations done. The department is currently conducting a pilot project with regard to the hatchery chinook in conjunction with the project exploring the applications of new stock assessments. These are all things that have to be done as we move forward. It is extremely important for recreational fishers, but we have to make sure that we protect the wild Pacific salmon stocks.

• (2100)

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Chair, I do not believe the minister understands the issue. One hundred per cent of those hatchery fish are being released into the wild. Only 10% are being marked. The 90% are out there interacting with wild salmon, so there is no additional incremental impact on those wild salmon by marking 100% of them.

Again, will the minister today agree to mark 100% of the hatchery salmon that are released into the wild?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, in speaking with the sport fishers in B.C. as well as with environmental organizations, I agree how the MSF can offer potential benefits for fisheries, and I tend to agree with them. However, it is incumbent on me, as the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, to balance this with the full understanding of the issue and the potential resource requirements needed to mitigate all of the challenges and concerns.

We need to make sure that we are protecting the wild Pacific salmon, but we know that there can be a path forward with regard to a mark selective fishery and we are working diligently to try to find that path forward.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Chair, the time for delay is over. There can be no more procrastination.

Washington state selectively marks 100% of its hatchery salmon, providing ample opportunities for American sport fishers to catch and keep marked hatchery salmon. However, here in southern B.C., the minister has failed to implement mass marking of hatchery fish and instead shut down the whole chinook fishery.

Why will the minister not do for Canadian anglers what the Americans are doing for theirs?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I have said, I am not averse to mark-selective fisheries. We just need to make sure that, as we go forward, we are doing it in the right way to make sure that we are protecting the chinook salmon.

These measures are difficult. We know the anglers want a more robust fishery. We want that for them. We are also carefully considering requests for a mark-selective fishery of chinook and mark-selective fishery opportunities. Further consultations are planned, and we seek their input on the benefits and how we can best go forward with this.

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will be speaking for approximately seven minutes and for the remaining eight minutes I will have questions for the minister.

I am happy to be here tonight to talk about some of the important investments that this government is making in our communities

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when it comes to supporting our fisheries and coastal areas, especially those in my riding. In Cape Breton—Canso, the hard-working women and men who make up our fisheries support rural and coastal communities. Their catches end up on tables across Canada, providing Canadians with high-quality, sustainable seafood, year-round.

We have heard tonight that fisheries are the backbone of many of our rural communities. We understand how important it is that our ocean environment is protected in order to support healthy, productive fisheries. That is why it is critically important to make investments that will support communities in accessing shared ocean resources and spur innovation as we deal with impacts due to climate change and ocean pollution.

I would like to talk about a few of the DFO investments that are particularly important in communities across my riding of Cape Breton—Canso. I would like to start with small craft harbours.

Investments in infrastructure are critical to economic development in rural communities. That includes marine infrastructure. Here in Cape Breton—Canso, marine infrastructure is vital to so many of our small communities that rely on the ocean for their livelihoods. Our government knows this. That is why, since 2016, there has been about \$484 million invested in new funding for the small craft harbours program. This is on top of the program's ongoing regular annual budget of \$90 million.

This represents more than 800 projects that are instrumental in keeping commercial fishing harbours safe and accessible for the benefit of coastal communities across this great country. These investments have supported the growth of coastal communities across Canada, but we cannot stop there. We need to continue to make these critical investments that will keep rural and coastal communities resilient, especially now during these unprecedented times.

I would like to focus now just a little on the Atlantic fisheries fund. Like small craft harbours, the government is committed to promoting innovation in the fish and seafood sector. That is why in March of 2017, \$325 million was invested in the Atlantic fisheries fund. This fund allows the seafood sector even more future success by supporting market entry and growth, creating jobs and of course supporting coastal communities that rely on the marine economy.

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This federal-provincial joint funding program has been used to acquire state-of-the-art processing equipment, implement innovative processes for automation, improve infrastructure and other projects that will generate great opportunities for the sector. This fund has supported many projects in my riding, focusing on the expansion of operations at various seafood processing centres like Louisbourg Seafoods in Canso, allowing them to reach markets around the world and, in turn, making a substantial investment to our economy.

In addition to the investments in the Atlantic fisheries fund and small craft harbours, our government also understands the importance of investing in clean technology, which is why, in 2017, \$20 million was invested directly into clean technology for the industry. This program will help protect our environment while developing sustainable fisheries. It will also accelerate the use of sustainable and more efficient tools, practices and techniques in producing and harvesting Canadian seafood. I am happy that our government will continue to promote sustainable and inclusive growth for the middle class and that we are committed to protecting our oceans and marine resources for future generations of Canadians.

I would also like to spend a little time just talking about the measures this government has taken when it comes to combatting marine plastic pollution. It is the end of 2020 and we are entering 2021. We know now, more than ever, that we need to do our part to keep our environment clean of plastics and other pollution. This is especially true for our oceans.

Canada has shown leadership on innovation in fisheries, including industry-led initiatives addressing ghost gear and, for our whales, safe gear technology. Marine litter, particular ghost fishing gear, is one of the biggest threats to our oceans. I was proud to see that earlier this year, DFO hosted the first international Gear Innovation Summit to focus on important areas of industry innovation. This summit provided an opportunity for harvesters, technical experts, non-governmental officials and government agencies to share information and learn about innovative technologies and programming aimed at the prevention, reduction and retrieval of ghost gear, and reduce the impact of fishery activities on mammals.

During 2018, at the G7 meeting in Halifax, Canada strengthened its domestic and international commitment to address marine litter by signing on to the Global Ghost Gear Initiative. As a signatory to this initiative, our government is committed to improving the health of marine ecosystems, safeguarding human health and livelihoods and protecting marine life from harm.

• (2105)

The new ghost gear fund is one of the many actions announced under the strategy of zero plastic waste by this government to combat plastic waste in the environment, and it supports our commitment to the ocean plastics charter. This \$8.3-million investment will assist indigenous groups, fish harvesters, the aquaculture industry, non-profits and communities to take concrete actions to support ghost gear prevention, retrieval and responsible disposal.

It will also support fish harvesters to acquire new gear technologies to reduce gear loss. This fund was identified by the Global Ghost Gear Initiative as the first time a national government has dedicated a specific funding program entirely to domestic and inter-

national ghost gear prevention and mitigation strategies. It is thanks to strategies like these that our government will be able to achieve its goals announced last week, the net zero emissions by 2050.

There is always more work to be done and we know this, but Canadians can count on this government to protect our environment, whether it is on the land or in the waters. We are making real investments to ensure that our environment will remain healthy for generations to come.

I would like to take the rest of my time to ask some questions of the hon. minister.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans does important work in every corner of my diverse riding around small craft harbours, as I just mentioned, whether it is working with harvesters in Chéticamp to support their livelihood or working with residents in L'Ardoise to explore ways to improve their community's environment. The work of this department is so critical and so greatly appreciated in my riding. Again, small craft harbours provide support to the commercial fishing industry, and we are indebted to them.

The small craft harbour program keeps the harbours that are critical to the fishing industry open and in good repair. Can the minister tell us about the work that is being done and how that has positively impacted rural communities like the ones in my riding?

• (2110)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, since 2016, we have announced over \$484 million in new funding for small craft harbours. This is on top of the program's ongoing regular budget of \$90 million. In total, this represents more than 800 projects.

We know how important small craft harbours are to our rural coastal communities. It is the infrastructure that drives our fishing sector. We need to make sure that it is safe, that it is reliable and that it is built to withstand climate change. We are seeing a lot of small craft harbours that have been challenged because of storm surges. We need to make sure that we are building resilient infrastructure. That is one of the reasons we are making significant investments in small craft harbours.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Madam Chair, I am going to pivot on the next question, which is about COVID-19.

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COVID-19 continues to have a large impact on this country. As we all know in the House and around Canada, many have been hard hit, and the men and women of the seafood industry are included in that.

I remember quite well, as does the minister, that when the pandemic hit, the government moved quickly to support harvesters and all those involved in the sector. My office has heard from countless harvesters on this, especially during the past season. I wonder if the minister could tell us a little more about the impacts that the support measures announced by our government will have or have had towards harvesters.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the government moved quickly to make sure that we were there to support fish harvesters with the fish harvester benefit and grant program. This was almost a half a billion dollar program. It was one of the largest single investments in the fisheries since the cod moratorium.

It was extremely important for us to make sure that harvesters had the access they needed to make tough business decisions on a season that saw the collapse of export markets and the closure of restaurants. We needed to make sure that fish harvesters were able to make the right decisions about whether or not they were going to fish this year.

The money that was invested definitely helped the industry. We are excited to see that there has been a good season for the harvesters this year.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Madam Chair, many have spoken tonight about engagement, as have you, minister. Engagement with our coastal communities is crucial to maintaining a thriving fishery. We can all agree on that in the House and in the country.

What is our government doing to support a stable fishery solution? In particular, can you talk about the initiatives to keep our oceans free from plastics and ghost gear, which I mentioned in my statement?

The Deputy Chair: I want to remind the member that he is to address his questions and comments to the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, during the 2018 G7 presidency, Canada spearheaded the Charlevoix blueprint for healthy oceans, seas and resilient coastal communities. We have invested \$8.3 million in our ghost gear fund. This is a very popular initiative that sees harvesters collecting gear out of the ocean. We have collected a great deal of it over the last little while. We know there is more to be done and we will continue to make sure that there are investments to address this program.

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Madam Chair, when I worked at Cape Breton University, there was a slogan: “science matters”. Research matters, but in particular science matters. Under the Conservatives, cuts were made to DFO and science.

I am wondering if the minister could speak about how this government is supporting science at DFO.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, DFO employs more than 2,000 scientists who research and monitor our oceans. Under the previous government, significant cuts were made to DFO sci-

ence. We have reinvested to make sure we are making our decisions based on science. We have invested in over 300 new science positions.

We are going to make decisions based on science. It is extremely important to have the right people in those jobs. We are committed to making sure that science is our number one priority when we are looking at this.

• (2115)

Mr. Mike Kelloway: Madam Chair, those are my questions.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time this evening with the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington and the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

This past weekend, people around the world celebrated World Fisheries Day. This annual opportunity is to celebrate our fishers and our heritage while identifying the challenges in the industry.

In that spirit, as a parliamentarian, I proceeded to review the best and worst practices in our Canadian fisheries. Unbeknownst to me, when I reviewed the government's departmental plan, sustainability plan and the minister's mandate letter to further seek clarification on where our fisheries have been and where they are going, I was astonished to learn that our freshwater fisheries, which are critically important historically and economically to my home province, were not mentioned once in these documents.

Can the minister explain this obvious glaring omission, will she proceed to immediately apologize to freshwater fishers and can she identify any priorities in her departmental plan that specifically address this critical sector?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, freshwater fisheries are an extremely important part of fisheries in Canada. That is one of the reasons we made sure that freshwater fishers were eligible for the fish harvester benefit and grant program. We are making sure that we work with the provinces, which regulate the inland fisheries. We will work with them to make sure the fisheries are monitored and that they have access to the same programs as our coastal fisheries.

Freshwater fisheries are extremely important in Canada. We know that. That is one of the reasons we are working with the provinces to make sure they have the supports they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Chair, I guess that is why it was in the mandate letter.

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The Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation is among the government's most troubled federal agencies. Issues ranging from poor management to dodgy expenses to high rates of workplace injury were common practices, leading to all provinces withdrawing from their obligations. In 2019, the government recommended that the corporation transition to a harvester-led co-operative or an indigenous economic development corporation. The minister's departmental plan identifies that she wants to ensure indigenous peoples are empowered to make decisions about their communities, their fisheries and the industry.

It has been over a year. Will the minister commit today to meeting with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to discuss, identify and advance the prospects of transitioning the agency into an indigenous-led economic development corporation?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I have already met with a number of first nations chiefs in Manitoba. We will continue to have those ongoing discussions. Reconciliation is extremely important to the government, and we know there is a lot to be done.

With regard to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, this is one of the issues we have spoken about. We will continue to have those discussions. We know it is important for indigenous communities to market their fish. We will continue to work with them to make sure we find the best path forward.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Chair, the minister has identified increasing investments in Canada's small craft harbours as a top priority. However, year after year, freshwater fishers continue to wait for improvements to their local harbour authorities. In fact, in the last two years, there have been zero investments in Manitoba.

Could the minister detail what the department has planned for small craft harbour enhancements throughout the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, of course DFO looks after all the small craft harbours under its mandate. We will continue to work to make sure that small craft harbours are addressed, if they need to be.

We have invested significantly in small craft harbours since 2016, with over \$480 million in over 800 projects. We know there is more to be done. We will continue to work to make sure that we address the issues around small craft harbours.

• (2120)

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Chair, over the next three years, the main estimates indicate that DFO plans to cut nearly \$1 billion out of its current total budget. That accounts for almost 20%.

Could the minister explain how drastically cutting the department's budget will in fact improve services, enhance our fisheries and achieve the priorities outlined in the department plan?

The Deputy Chair: Time is basically up. I ask the minister to give a brief answer.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, actually, this year's estimates show that we have increased spending at DFO by almost half a billion dollars. That has been done to help with reconciliation, the TMX accommodations and the renewal of the Coast Guard fleet.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Chair, like my colleague from Manitoba, those in the Ontario freshwater fishery have expressed concerns that they do not seem to be a priority for DFO. In fact, I listened intently to the minister's opening speech, and there was no mention of them.

Could the minister briefly outline the top priorities in the three-year to five-year plan of the ministry for the Ontario freshwater fishery?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, DFO works in collaboration with the province when it comes to its freshwater fishery. As the hon. colleague well knows, that is what has regulations for the inland fishery. We have made sure we are working with the province. I have met with the provincial minister of fisheries to make sure the province is addressing the concerns we heard with regard to harvesters during COVID-19. We are also making sure we are addressing the concerns around—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington.

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Chair, does the minister support the work of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission does very good work. We know it is an integral part of making sure the Great Lakes are well looked after. We will continue to work with them.

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Chair, the Great Lakes fishery has an economic value of over \$8 billion, but it was largely decimated by the invasion of the sea lamprey. Economic viability was restored through the convention with the U.S., the treaty called the "Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries". The resulting control measures were implemented binationally.

Is the minister not concerned that Canada's \$10-million underfunding of the commission threatens the viability of this fishery?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the sea lamprey control program is administered by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to protect the native fish and species. This is in accordance with a binational agreement that Canada contributes over \$10.6 million annually to control the management of the sea lamprey. We are going to continue to work with the Great Lakes commission because we are committed to the long-term sustainability of this program.

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Chair, we contribute \$10 million, but we are \$10 million short. I can say that eight Great Lakes U.S. senators raised the issue with the Canadian ambassador in 2016. This past spring, the U.S. Great Lakes task force met with a Canadian MP and a Canadian senator and again raised the chronic underfunding issue.

What is the minister's response to these American concerns that the current government has known of for over five years?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we know how important the Great Lakes Fishery Commission is to the protection of the native fish and species of the Great Lakes. We have worked with the Great Lakes commission. It is a binational organization with the U.S. We are contributing \$10.6 million a year to the control and management of sea lamprey specifically. Aquatic invasive species are a—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Chair, on October 23, the Walpole Island First Nation's chief, Charles Sampson, announced they were moving forward with commercial fishing in surrounding and traditional waters.

What is the ministry's plan in response?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we work with first nations on reconciliation and a number of issues. We will continue to work with them. Fisheries is an extremely important part of reconciliation. Those are all questions and comments we are working to address as we go forward.

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Chair, the minister has stated that the definition of a moderate livelihood is locally determined, so who are the parties to this determination and what is the process for this determination?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, moderate livelihood fisheries is a Supreme Court decision that impacts the first nations communities in Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec. The Supreme Court has stated that first nations have a right to a moderate livelihood, and we are working to make sure we implement that right with those first nations.

• (2125)

Mr. Dave Epp: Madam Chair, what is the minister's message to the commercial fishers with existing commercial fishing licences and quota levels, with respect to how their interests will be represented?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I have been working and meeting with commercial harvesters since day one of becoming minister. I will continue to do that. They are listened to. They are an extremely important voice in the fishery. We want to make sure we continue to work in partnership with them. Commercial harvesters have fished side by side with first nations for generations. We know there is now a gap there that has never existed and we want to make sure we do everything we can to address that.

The Deputy Chair: I want to remind members that they have to wear ties if they want to speak. All members need to have the proper attire if they want to speak in the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Business of Supply

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Madam Chair, recreational sport fishing provides a livelihood and/or is a loved pastime for eight million Canadians, providing over \$10 billion in economic activity per year.

What is the minister doing specifically to support this community?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, the recreational fishery is an extremely important and vital part of our economy. We recognize that. We know that the measures we put in place in B.C. this year with regard to the wild Pacific salmon has impacted them. We want to ensure we are doing everything we can to address their concerns so—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, instead of working with groups on the water that are experts in fish conservation, such as the Public Fishery Alliance, the Fraser Valley Salmon Society or the South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition, she simply went against sound advice and shut everything down.

Why does she not work with these groups instead of against them?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the wild Pacific salmon stocks are in serious decline. Tough measures have to be taken to ensure we can continue to work to address the concerns around the decline of these stocks. We know this has been very difficult for anglers. We are meeting with them on a regular basis to discuss their concerns and find the best path forward.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, that is interesting as they sure do not share your optimism, Minister.

This is from Dave Brown from the Public Fishery Alliance. From April 1 to August 31, there were unprecedented chinook closures placed on the public fishery around Vancouver that had devastating socio-economic impacts on the Vancouver guiding industry, marine industry and recreational salt water fishing industry. Why were there no fishing for chinook regulations implemented for Howe Sound when science showed there were plentiful chinook?

The Deputy Chair: I want to remind the member he is to address the questions to the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Business of Supply

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the at-risk Fraser River salmon face a number of significant challenges and the road to recovery requires a long-term view and close collaboration with first nations, provinces and stakeholders. Significant management measures introduced in 2019 to protect the chinook salmon were difficult but necessary. A decision was made to continue to strengthen these conservation measures in 2020-21. These measures included delaying commercial—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, this is from Peter Krahn, a selective fishing expert.

For the 12 years since the sport fishing community has been petitioning DFO to do a similar study of a selective fishing technique called bar rigs, which is virtually guaranteed not to intercept the endangered sockeye, why has the minister and DFO refused to do the required study and put the sport fishing community and the \$1.5 billion in economic benefits and jobs in such peril when such a study would only cost about \$225,000 and all the sports anglers' time would be voluntary?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I have said, we have had to take drastic measures with regard to the chinook salmon because of the decline in the stock. We know that these management decisions are difficult. We know it has been hard for the commercial fishers, as well as for the anglers. We know they provide a lot of economic growth in the area. However, at the same time, the chinook are in a very bad state. They need to be protected. We need to do everything possible to grow their stocks.

We will continue to make fisheries management decisions, but will at the same time recognize—

• (2130)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Madam Chair, Chris Bos, of the South Vancouver Island Anglers Coalition, has said, “The past two years, where DFO have implemented catch and release from April 1 to August 31...it's killing the fishery and all those who rely on it for their income. They won't be able to survive too many more years of this. There are millions of U.S.A.-origin hatchery-marked chinooks around Sidney, Victoria and Sooke that can be retained without any harm to Fraser wild stocks of concern.”

Is the minister's department considering 100% marking of all Canadian hatchery chinook for proper and accurate conservation, as the State of Washington already does successfully? Science has proven its effectiveness in restoring Pacific salmon.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I have said a number of times this evening, I am not averse to a mark-selective fishery. However, we need to make sure that as we go forward, we do it in the right way and address the concerns we are hearing from conservationists, commercial harvesters and indigenous populations. We want to make sure we are doing what we can to protect the stock, but we also know that a mark-selective fishery is a possible path forward. We want to make sure we are doing everything possible with the right science to make the right decisions.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will be sharing the last five minutes of my time with the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

I have a question for the minister on the subject of small craft harbours. It is a file that I know the minister is very passionate about and very involved in.

Could she briefly confirm to the House and those listening the position of the department today, as it was when we formed government in 2015, regarding the budget of small craft harbours?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, there has been significant increase in funding since 2016, after we came into government. We have announced over \$484 million in new funding for small craft harbours. This is over the \$90 million budgeted annually. In 2019-20, my department worked on over 245 projects to ensure that small craft harbours were kept in good shape and to meet the needs of the commercial fishing industry.

As I said earlier tonight, small craft harbours are an economic driver in our rural coastal communities and we need to—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Egmont.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Chair, I know the personal efforts the minister has put into securing sector funding for the fishing industry through the fish harvester benefit and grant program. It is important for those watching to realize that the fishing industry is the only sector that has a sector-specific financial aid package as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Could the minister give a brief overview of this funding?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we recognized very quickly that when COVID-19 hit, commercial harvesters were going to be seriously impacted because of the closure of export markets as well as the closure of restaurants. Because of the way their enterprises are structured, they did not qualify for a number of the programs we had in place for relief for businesses. That is why we came up with the fish harvester benefit and grant program. That was an almost half-billion-dollar program to support harvesters. It is the largest single investment in fisheries since the cod—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Egmont.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Chair, I would ask the minister if she could continue to elaborate on the importance of that benefit to the industry.

Business of Supply

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the money that was made available to the harvesters allowed them to make really tough decisions with regard to whether they would fish for the season. A number of people took advantage of this program. They desperately needed these benefits because they knew the fishery was in dire straits when we started COVID-19. They were actually one of the first industries impacted by the pandemic. They saw the decline of the fisheries in early February when everything was still moving across the world.

We knew it was important to ensure that harvesters had the money they needed to make those tough decisions about whether they were going to fish this year. One of the—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Egmont.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Chair, the issue that is getting the most attention, and one of the most serious on the east coast, is the conflict between first nations fishers and commercial fishers. One of the areas I hear the most concern about, and it comes both from departmental staff as well as fishers both commercial and indigenous, is the lack of enforcement capability within the department.

Madam minister, could you give an opinion on the level of enforcement capability in the department? Is it adequate to do the job that we expect it to?

• (2135)

The Deputy Chair: Again, I remind the member to pose the questions through the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the C&P officers have a very difficult job, but they do a very good job. We did see cuts under the previous government to C&P, but we want to ensure they have the tools they need to do the jobs they are given.

I know that conservation is a top priority for not only commercial harvesters, but for indigenous people as well. We want to ensure we have a long-term sustainable lobster fishery. That is one of the reasons we need to work to address the concerns around a moderate livelihood and implement the right that was granted under the Supreme Court decision.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Chair, I would ask the minister to elaborate a bit more on this. There were cutbacks in the department in the area of protection and enforcement. Is this a priority that she sees within the department under her ministry, in continuing to staff the department higher in that area?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, under the previous Conservative government, there were significant cuts to DFO in a number of areas, including science, and conservation and protection. We have reinvested in DFO to make sure that we have what we need in order to do the job that is so important in our coastal communities. We have to make our decisions based on science, and yet the cuts that were made under the previous government made that very difficult. We have reinvested to make sure that the science is available to us.

With regard to conservation and protection, we know how important those jobs are on the water and to our rural coastal commu-

nities. We are doing everything we can to make sure that we support the conservation and protection officers.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Chair, could the minister elaborate a bit on Mr. Surette's role, whom I view as a very credible individual to advise you on this issue? You indicated earlier that he was going to report to you at a particular time frame. Could you just explain a bit to the House his role as it relates to you, as the minister? He is not doing the negotiations on moderate livelihood, but it is my understanding he is advising you and meeting with the commercial fishers.

The Deputy Chair: I can advise the member that nobody is advising me at this point. I would ask him to use the word "she".

The hon. minister.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and I both appointed Allister Surette to act as a special representative in this issue with regard to moderate livelihood.

Mr. Surette is a well-respected member of his community. He has experience in fisheries files in the past. His job is going to be to meet with commercial harvesters, to meet with first nations communities and to meet with stakeholders like the municipalities to find out what the best path forward is in order to rebuild relationships, in order to provide clarity to industries—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Chair, could the minister be clear to the House, as was asked several times before, regarding the commercial fishery. Who has the responsibility in the department to ensure that the rights of the commercial fishing industry and the owner-operator policy that our government enshrined is taken into consideration during these negotiations and that the commercial fishers' rights are protected?

• (2140)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I have met with commercial harvesters on a regular basis throughout all of this, listening to their concerns. Making sure that we hear from them is extremely important to me, as is making sure that Mr. Surette also has the ability to talk to them, so that when he files his interim report at the end of December, we will have another voice heard.

We know how important it is to have the commercial voice at the side table. That is one of the reasons we are listening to them. We want to make sure that we address the concerns that they have.

I am committed to hearing from commercial harvesters, and that is why I continue to meet with them.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Madam Chair, I see that there is funding for ships in the main estimates.

Can you give us an update on the capacity of the Canadian Coast Guard?

Business of Supply

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member must address the Chair.

The hon. minister.

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, the Coast Guard continues to make progress on fleet renewal through the national shipbuilding strategy.

In 2019, the most significant investments in Coast Guard history were announced and included the construction of up to 24 new large vessels. All three offshore fishery science vessels have now been delivered, representing the first class of large vessels delivered through the national shipbuilding program. The Coast Guard is also renewing its small vessel fleet, with eight search and rescue lifeboats and two channel survey and sounding vessels delivered in recent years.

It is extremely important that the members of the Coast Guard have the tools they need to do their important job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Chair, the Conservatives made cuts to DFO and to science.

Can the minister tell us a little about how the government is supporting science at DFO?

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, more than 2,000 DFO science employees research and monitor our oceans and our aquatic ecosystems across the country. Over 90% of DFO science employees work outside Ottawa.

Under the previous Conservative government, there were significant cuts to science. We reinstated a number of those positions. It is extremely important that we base our decisions on science.

In keeping with promoting women in science, technology, engineering and math, nearly 50% of DFO science employees are women. DFO science—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Chair, our oceans are shared with the entire world.

Can the minister tell us more about what Canada is doing with its international partners to protect the oceans?

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, this year we signed on with the Global Ocean Alliance to make sure we are committing to protect 30% of our oceans by 2030. This is an international effort to make sure that we are doing everything we possibly can to make sure our oceans are sustainable for the long term.

This is a commitment that we made as a government. We will hit 25% by 2025, and 30% by 2030. At this point, we are already at 14%, and we know we have more work to do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Chair, the Prime Minister gave the minister a detailed mandate letter in which he set out ambitious targets for the protection of the marine environment.

Can the minister inform us of the progress that has been made with respect to the marine conservation targets?

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, in 2015, when we first formed government, less than 1% of Canada's oceans were protected.

We set an ambitious target of 10% by 2020. We exceeded that. We are almost at 14%. We know there is more work to do. We are now committed to protecting 25% of Canada's oceans by 2025, and 30% by 2030.

We know that the sustainability of our oceans is extremely important and that is why we are going to continue to make sure that we make these important conservation targets.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Chair, the conservation of fish stocks is extremely important for achieving a sustainable fishery.

What initiatives has DFO implemented to protect fish stocks?

• (2145)

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I said in my opening remarks, one of the most important priorities for this government is restoring the health of wild salmon stocks and other important fish stocks across Canada. That is why our government announced an additional \$107 million to support the implementation of stock assessments and rebuilding provisions in the renewed Fisheries Act to sustain Canada's wild fish stocks.

We are working on publishing and supporting regulations. We have launched fish funds across the country to support our regions, including the B.C. salmon restoration and innovation fund and the Quebec fisheries fund, both of which are modelled on the very successful Atlantic fisheries fund. These are supporting projects focused on building resilience through restoration, promotion and science partnerships, innovation and the adoption of technologies.

Last month, I was happy to also receive the delivery of our third and final oceanographic—

Business of Supply

The Deputy Chair: The time is up. I am sure that the hon. minister will be able to add during the next question and comment.

The hon. member for Manicouagan.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Chair, I have several questions for the minister.

I was not able to talk about Quebec's port facilities in committee. As the minister surely knows, many communities in Quebec and in my north shore riding have no road connecting them to the rest of the world or the continent.

Be it the Magdalen Islands, the iconic Anticosti Island or the lower north shore that borders Labrador, port facilities are central to the history and the economic and social development of these communities and to the lives of first nations. In short, we evolved in symbiosis with the St. Lawrence River.

The minister probably also knows that the Premier of Quebec is very interested in port facilities. In his book entitled *Cap sur un Québec gagnant*, François Legault wrote that Quebec needs to be able to count on the federal government to take on its share of responsibility, especially when it comes to wharf maintenance, which falls under federal jurisdiction.

According to Mr. Legault, the federal government's disengagement in recent years has rendered the situation completely unacceptable. Some wharves have become so dilapidated that they no longer meet the needs of recreational boaters, even though those wharves are an important part of the economy and very identity of towns and villages along the river. Unless this situation is remedied, it could cost Quebec dearly.

Does the minister agree with what the Premier of Quebec said?

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, I know how important small craft harbours are to our coastal communities. That is why our government has invested almost \$486 million in new money since 2016 to make sure that we are addressing the concerns around small craft harbours. Many of them need significant work. We know there is a lot to be done with regard to making sure that the infrastructure is safe, sound and built with resiliency.

Knowing that we are seeing storm surges with climate change, the impacts on our small craft harbours have been significant. We need to make sure that when we are building infrastructure, we are building it for the future. That is why we are going to continue to invest in the small craft harbour program. I know it is extremely important, especially, as my hon. colleague said, to the communities she represents, where the only way to get to those communities is through those harbours.

We want to make sure that the infrastructure that is in place is safe and that it is resilient for years and years to come, not only because our fisheries rely on it but because our coastal communities rely on it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, the minister said that \$450 million has been spent through her program since 2016. Is she able to tell me how much of that went to Quebec?

• (2150)

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I do not have that number off the top of my head, but I am happy to get it for her.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I know that the minister was not the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard in 2016, but what has been done regarding ports in Quebec since 2019?

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, with regards to small craft harbour investments, in 2019, we know that there has been ongoing work. Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic did put a bit of a halt on some of the work, but we are working to catch up. We will make sure that we are addressing issues in the most—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, there are some distressing situations in a number of communities back home in my riding and in eastern Quebec. I am thinking about the port in Baie-Trinité, which is classified by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as essential to the town of Baie-Trinité. An assessment of the port noted that it is not safe and has an estimated life expectancy of zero years, literally.

The port was last inspected in September 2019. What has the department done since then, and how does it plan to remedy this situation?

[*English*]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, once again, I am not familiar with the specific port that the member is referring to, but I am happy to get back to her, and we can have a conversation with regards to that structure specifically.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I thank the minister.

I could give her plenty of similar examples. The situation is the same in Natashquan, where the wharf was declared surplus 25 years ago. The department wants to acquire it. Currently it belongs to Transport Canada. Apparently the transfer is being negotiated, but here again, it is negatively affecting the economic development and the very survival of the communities, and the first nations fishery as well, of course. There have been no developments since April 15, 2019.

The minister may not be very familiar with this file, but can she assure us that it is a priority for her?

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, one of the things that is a priority is making sure that our small craft harbours are addressed, and that is the DFO issue. With regards to transport ports, we do not have any authority over those specifically.

I am happy to talk to the member about any small craft harbours in her area that may need to be addressed. Those are what we at DFO deal with. They are extremely important to our rural coastal communities, and we need to make sure that our fishing sector has the infrastructure it needs in order to continue to maintain the industry.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, indeed, there are many, many communities that need attention. There are nearly 100 wharves in eastern Quebec. I talked about economic development, which is being undermined, as well as the future of first nations communities and land use.

I talked about Natashquan, where there was no road at one point. There is also Baie-Johan-Beetz, which is in a similar situation. Transport Canada tells us that these wharves are no longer in use because there is now a road in some places. Traffic is no longer by sea but by land. However, these wharves have always been used by fishers.

I could also cite the example of Sacré-Cœur. I want to talk about all the hardships that our small coastal communities come up against. Villages of 200 to 300 people have these infrastructures and want to keep them. They would like them to be modernized.

A wharf in Sacré-Cœur that was divested several years ago is being modernized. The certificate of authorization was valid, but the village had to wait 18 days to start the work because of a delay in obtaining a signature that was caused by the department. This resulted in \$100,000 in additional costs that had to be paid by a population of a few hundred people. This completely compromised the project.

I live on Quebec's North Shore, where winter lasts almost six months. This means that the work schedule, despite the Department of Fisheries and Oceans calendar, does not work for our municipalities. This jeopardizes projects.

I would like to know if the department will provide compensation and if, instead of proposing a one-size-fits-all solution, it will tailor its assistance measures so that communities can keep the infrastructures they are entitled to without having to pay for unwarranted mistakes or administrative delays.

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I said, DFO is responsible for the small craft harbours program. We have invested significantly in that program. A number of small craft harbours need additional work. We recognize that. We are working through them on a priority basis.

We will continue to do that because we know how important small craft harbours are, not only to the fishing industry but also to the communities they support. We are happy to work with the member opposite to have a constructive dialogue on whether the

ports she is referring to are actually small craft harbours or if they are something under a different department from mine.

• (2155)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, will the department commit to compensating the municipality for cost overruns caused by the department? I mentioned the example of the delay in obtaining a signature, which led to \$100,000 in extra costs. The minister did not answer.

When it is the department's fault, would it be possible to have the department admit it made a mistake and have it help the community with what really is a hardship?

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I have said, we have invested significantly in small craft harbours. I am not familiar with the specific harbour that our hon. colleague is speaking about, whether it is an actual small craft harbour or whether it is a Transport Canada port. There is a significant difference in terms of funding.

I am happy to have my officials reach out to her to make sure that the small craft harbours in her area are the ones we are talking about.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for her response.

If the people of Natashquan, Baie-Johan-Beetz, Baie-Trinité and Sacré-Cœur-sur-le-Fjord-du-Saguenay had gotten responses to the demands they have been making over and over for the past 10, 20 or 30 years, we might not be having this conversation, even though I am happy to be here. I myself have even intervened several times.

I hope that these communities back home will get answers, because they are facing other issues, such as environmental impact assessments. We are, of course, in favour of protecting the environment and conserving wildlife. However, we see municipalities being given deadlines that they may not have the resources to meet.

In addition, Quebec's environmental plans are not being acknowledged. That is the case in the last situation I mentioned. The municipality is not allowed to move forward, even though the compensation was authorized in 2017. Yes, the law has changed since then, but I would like to know whether the minister could ask for an exemption for certain cases, where projects are in jeopardy because Quebec's jurisdiction over environmental impact assessments has not been recognized. We all know that the government will refuse to move forward with the project in this community and then turn around and buy a pipeline in the west.

Business of Supply

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, DFO works on projects for fisheries authorizations. It is important to ensure that fish and fish habitat are protected. These are things that we made sure were put back in the Fisheries Act after they had been taken out by the previous Conservative government. We have to make sure that we are looking after the fish habitat so that we can continue to have a fishery.

I am sure that my hon. colleague would agree with me that this is extremely important, but I am happy to work with her to help address any concerns that she may have.

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, on another point altogether, for the last few years or decades, people have been feeling as though their river is being taken away from them. In my speech earlier today, I said that people want to be one with the land. The river is not a border. The river is simply an extension of our territory. People want to have access to its resources and not be considered poachers by the federal government.

Does the minister realize that the people of Quebec would like to have access to this resource?

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, it is extremely important for all of us to have access to resources if we do it in a reasonable and sustainable way. We know that the St. Lawrence is an extremely important economic driver in Quebec. We are going to continue to make sure that it is open for trade with the Canadian Coast Guard.

We know that there is a lot of work to be done as we go forward, but the Coast Guard is vitally important to the St. Lawrence, and we are going to continue to work to make sure that it stays open as a commercial trade route.

• (2200)

[Translation]

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Chair, I am pleased to hear the minister say that because yesterday at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, I asked that we study the issue of recreational fishing. Some call it sport fishing, but in fact, people just want to have access to the resource to feed themselves or as an economic activity, as is the case in the British Columbia, for example. However, members from the minister's party, the governing party, refused to consider this possibility.

Since the minister just said it, I just want to confirm that she agrees that Quebecers can have access to the resource for recreational or sport fishing.

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I think the hon. colleague misunderstood what I said. I said that it is important that we have access to resources. I am happy to have a conversation with her about what it is that she would like to see.

Of course, when it comes to the committee, the committee members are the masters of their own destiny. They will make the decisions based on what they think is important to study.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Madam Chair, today I rise during committee of the whole to speak and ask questions. I would like to speak for about nine minutes and then ask some questions to the minister for about six minutes.

I have been listening to the discussion tonight and a lot of it focuses around the Marshall decision when we are talking about moderate livelihoods. Some will talk about it as Marshall one or Marshall two. To many MPs and people around Canada, it is just a name on a piece of paper or the title of a case, nothing more, nothing less.

However, as the only Mi'kmaq who has ever sat in the House, I think it is important to give context on who Donald Marshall Jr. was. To the Mi'kmaq, there is much more to this. We know the man. I can think of his smile right now and his moustache and the bell cap he usually wore out and about in Cape Breton. He was known as "Junior" to most of the Mi'kmaq because his father was the grand chief of the Mi'kmaq nation for 27 years, until his peaceful death in 1991.

I remember as a young child listening to Donald Marshall Jr. when he went to classrooms to talk about his fight to change the justice system, after spending 11 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. Donald Marshall Jr. spoke to Mi'kmaq youth at youth conferences about his personal views of justice and what he endured. He taught about resilience and that each one of us has a responsibility to fight for justice, whether in a courtroom, at home or even in jail.

I remember watching a movie at a very young age called *Justice Denied* that talked about his story and his fight for justice. We often ask in Nova Scotia how this could happen.

It was the focus of a provincial commission, the "Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall, Jr. Prosecution", which found, on page 1, "The criminal justice system failed Donald Marshall Jr. at...every turn from his arrest and his wrongful conviction" in 1971. It called it a "miscarriage of justice". It stated that the reason was, at least in part, because Donald Marshall Jr. was indigenous.

Despite all he had gone through, just four years after his commission, Junior was fighting for justice again, but this time on behalf of a nation. After years of litigation, the Mi'kmaq who had validated their treaties at the Supreme Court case in 1985 now turned to Donald Marshall Jr. for the most important litigation the nation had ever been a part of. Unlike any other case, it was not about surviving but thriving as a nation. It was a court case about a Mi'kmaq person being able to move from poverty to a moderate or modest living.

Elder Kerry Prosper, a chief then, described it as a win for our nation. It was the first time many chiefs felt a collective win as a nation. Unfortunately, the jubilation for the Mi'kmaq and Junior was brief. Only two months later, our Supreme Court of Canada, based on political and economic pressures, decided to clarify this decision.

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As far as I know in my academic career and legal knowledge, I can point to no other Supreme Court of Canada case that has ever needed clarification. I can only imagine what Donald Marshall Jr. went through and what it must have felt like to hear his victory on behalf of the nation required an unprecedented clarification.

In both cases the facts were the same and the verdict was the same, which was that Donald Marshall Jr. caught and sold eels out of season and was protected by a Mi'kmaq treaty right to do so.

Donald Marshall Jr. passed away a hero in 2009, a hero to his nation. I felt it was important to give this context to the legacy we are dealing with when we speak of the Marshall decision. I am only sad that Junior died before seeing his home community of Membertou become one of the owners of the largest fisheries company in this country. I congratulate his home community, Chief Terry Paul of Membertou and its council for making sure Junior's legacy will always be a positive one.

• (2205)

I have heard people speak about the Marshall decision over the past few months. Many quote the case as if the Mi'kmaq lost this case, as if they did not have this right. Unfortunately, understanding the Marshall decision requires understanding indigenous case law from 1929 until today.

Understanding the Marshall decision requires understanding the Constitution of Canada, specifically section 35, which recognizes and affirms all existing aboriginal and treaty rights, as well as section 52, which states: "The Constitution of Canada is the supreme law of Canada, and any law that is inconsistent with...the Constitution is...of no force or effect."

I wanted to give that context because I thought it was important for the Mi'kmaq, and for the House of Commons, to understand that when Marshall decisions 1 or 2 are talked about, it means a lot to the Mi'kmaq people because he was one of our heroes. I miss him. Many of us do today.

I will now pivot my questions to the minister. I would like to start off by thanking her for her valuable work during the early stages of COVID. I acknowledge her for the many conversations that we had about some of the difficult situations that were going on within the fisheries in the early months in the spring and her success in advocating for the fish harvester benefit and grant.

I ask the minister if she could give us the numbers of how many fishermen we helped in Nova Scotia during these difficult times.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is extremely important for all of us to understand what it means to be treaty people. I want to thank the hon. member for talking to me over the last few months on a regular basis about Marshall and helping me understand the context of the Marshall decision. His input has been invaluable, so I really do appreciate it.

With regard to the question, more than 15,000 self-employed harvesters and their families across the country have received support to help them weather the COVID-19 pandemic. I do not have that broken down in front of me, but I am happy to provide that to him.

We do know that it was an extremely valuable program to fish harvesters. It was extremely important that they had the supports necessary in order to make very difficult decisions when it came to their seasons. This is a program that we were committed to making sure we rolled out, and it has been very successful.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Chair, the minister and I had several conversations about ensuring that all fishermen were part of the fish harvester benefit and grant program. Specifically, we had plenty of conversations about some of the Mi'kmaq communal commercial fisheries that were left out in the discussions we have had over the past few months because several Mi'kmaq are part of the communal commercial fisheries. They fish alongside all other fishermen during the seasons and have done so successfully for a number of years. I can think of Crane Cove fisheries as one of them that, in my home community, employs close to 100 fishermen who are part of this group.

Could the minister speak to how we ensured that all fishermen were part of the fish harvester benefit in furthering reconciliation?

• (2210)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, when we designed the fish harvester benefit and grant, we knew how important it was going to be to get it to as many fishers as possible. That included first nations with regard to commercial communal licences. We made sure that it got to inland fishers, who would normally be under the provincial jurisdiction, but we wanted to make sure they also had their concerns addressed.

It was an important part of reconciliation to make sure that first nations harvesters had the same benefits and were able to access the same funding as everybody else, even though their licence structure is different.

The fish harvester benefit and grant program was a huge success. It has helped, as I said, over 15,000 commercial harvesters and their families across the country. We made sure that they had the benefits they needed in order to get through this very difficult time.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Chair, in the Fisheries Act passed in 2019, among other things, two very important sections were included in that.

Section 2.3 says:

This Act is to be construed as upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and not as abrogating or derogating from them.

As well as this key clause, which is law and which I will ask the minister about, under "Duty of Minister", it says:

When making a decision under this Act, the Minister shall consider any adverse effects that the decision may have on the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Canada recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Minister, with all that is going on, do you believe these two sections were key parts of our government's continued commitment to reconciliation and ensuring nation-to-nation respect was continued to be paid around aboriginal and treaty rights?

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The Deputy Chair: I do want to remind the member to address the questions to the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I want to thank Senator Christmas particularly, who made the amendments to those clauses to which the member has referred. That strengthens the act and the language that we use when it comes to first nations rights, section 35.

All Canadians have to learn more about our obligations, treaty rights and what it means to have an affirmed right to fish for a moderate livelihood. We have seen a real interest from people on this issue.

The Supreme Court upheld this decision and we want to ensure we implement it right. That is why we are working with first nations communities. The member of course is well aware of how complex the issue is. He has lived it himself. He knows there is still work to be done and we are committed to doing it.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Madam Chair, I would like to congratulate the minister on her comments in the committee of the whole tonight. I wanted to ask about the painting in her background. It is quite lovely. I wonder if she could give us some context on the painting and possibly talk a little about the artist.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the painting is by Loretta Gould, a Mi'kmaq artist from Cape Breton. It signifies women empowerment. It was done for the women's centre in Cape Breton and I was fortunate enough to get a print of it.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Chair, does the minister believe that Pacific salmon hatcheries provide a net-positive or net-negative impact on Pacific salmon conservation?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, with regard to the recreational fisheries, we know this has been an extremely tough year. We know that the measures we have had to take to protect chinook salmon have been hard for the recreational fishery. We want to make sure we work with them.

Again, as I have said many times, I am not averse to—

• (2215)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Chair, I do not believe the minister heard my question, because she did not even attempt to answer it, so I will ask it again. Does the minister believe that Pacific salmon hatcheries provide a net-positive or net-negative impact on conservation?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, hatcheries are an extremely important part of our fisheries on the west coast. Making sure that hatchery fish are looked after is a DFO responsibility that we take very seriously. We know how important hatchery fish are, and we will continue to work with small community hatcheries and other hatcheries to make sure they are able to be sustained.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Chair, can the minister tell us how much time the southern resident killer whales have spent in their

designated sanctuary area, to the exclusion of all recreational fishers?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, the southern resident killer whale is an extremely iconic, important species. We have to do everything we can to protect and recover this species. In recent years, our government has taken significant steps to address the key threats to their survival. We have to continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to protect them.

I am not really sure where my colleague is going with this question, but we are going to continue to take measures to make sure we protect the southern resident killer whales.

The Deputy Chair: I want to remind the hon. member that the House has asked there to be a neutral background when members are presenting before the House.

The hon. member.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Chair, my question for the minister was about how much time southern resident killer whales spent in their sanctuary area. Surely to goodness, this is one metric that would determine whether the sanctuary area was effective.

Again, can the minister tell us how much time southern resident killer whales have spent in their designated sanctuary areas, to the exclusion of recreational fishers?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I have said many times tonight, I know the conservation measures we have put in place have been extremely difficult for recreational fishers. However, having said that, we will continue to do everything we possibly can to protect the southern resident killer whale. This is an iconic species. It is endangered. We want to make sure that it is here for the long term, for everyone to enjoy. We will continue to work to protect southern resident killer whales.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Chair, does the minister understand that fishing lodges, guides and rural coastal communities relying on these businesses were devastated by the retention restrictions on chinook, coupled with COVID? Can the minister tell us why the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has not offered them any direct support?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I absolutely acknowledge the challenges being faced by the participants in the recreational fishery, including the guides, the lodges and all of the people who make their living from the recreational fishery. However, I also recognize that the chinook are in a desperate situation. We knew they need to be protected. We needed to take tough action. We needed to make sure there were measures in place to—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Chair, mass marking would allow for a mark-selective fishery for chinook salmon, which would be a critical lifeline for these communities. Interior Fraser coho currently have a mass marking and mark-selective fishery and have had one for years, with relative success. Interestingly, it is the interior Fraser chinook populations in that area that are struggling, so if it worked for coho, why is the minister so unsure that it will not work for chinook?

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• (2220)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we understand there is an interest in a mark-selective fishery. However, my department did not authorize a broad expansion of the mark-selective fishery this year because of several concerns. Among those concerns were the potential risk of increased fishing effort and the increased potential of mortality from hooking and releasing unmarked salmon.

We have to continue to work on consulting with first nations and other interest groups on the mark-selective fisheries and, of course, on hatchery production. We want to make sure that as we go forward with this, we do it in the right way to address the concerns that we are hearing and make sure the stocks are well looked after.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Chair, if it is working for coho, why does the minister think it would not work for chinook?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as I have said, we have had to take very difficult measures to protect the salmon species. We will continue to take measures. We have seen a rapid decline. It is alarming and concerning to see what is happening with the wild salmon stocks in B.C. We know these measures are difficult for recreational fishers. They are difficult for everybody, but they have to be taken to make sure—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Chair, I forgot to mention at the start that I would like to split my time with the member for West Nova. Am I at the halfway point already?

The Deputy Chair: The member can ask a very quick question of the minister.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Madam Chair, what do the minister's constituents tell her, especially those with active knowledge in commercial fisheries, about pinnipeds, their abundance and their effects on fish stocks? The minister was the chair of the fisheries committee and a member of the committee. Numerous reports, by members of Parliament from all parties, came to the same conclusion unambiguously that pinniped control is needed.

Where is the minister on this issue?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, we are working to use the best available science when making decisions with regard to management and Atlantic Canada DFO has documented the impacts of the grey seals on the fish stocks in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence and British Columbia. We are working with partners in doing more science to evaluate the impact of harbour seals and sea lions—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for West Nova.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC): Madam Chair, I thank the minister for being here tonight especially at this late hour here in Nova Scotia. I want to take moderate livelihood and put it to the side just for a moment.

When did the minister receive her first briefings on illegal lobster activity in St. Mary's Bay?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Chair, I would say that I have been having briefings with my department on illegal fishing right across the country since I was first appointed as minister. I am not really sure where my hon. colleague is going with this.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Chair, the question revolves around the previous minister of DFO, Mr. Thibault. He said for a number of years there has been illegal lobster activity going on in St. Mary's Bay.

When that was first brought up to the minister? I know she has written letters for illegal activity in her own riding prior to becoming minister. When did she first start talking about this within the department?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, with regard to illegal activity, recognizing that first nations have a right to a moderate livelihood fishery, as well as to an FSC fishery that happens in St. Mary's Bay. CMP officers have been active there in removing traps that were not tagged or did not meet qualifications. Of course, I would have had briefings on that very early on when I was appointed minister.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Chair, the minister was just saying there were routine inspections of lobster traps in St. Mary's Bay over the weekend.

Can she give us idea of how many traps were pulled and what the findings were?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I will say to the hon. member I do not have that information in front of me. I know that CMP was on the water on the weekend. I know there were traps pulled, but I do not have the exact numbers.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Chair, according to the CMP officials in the paper, during their patrols they observed several issues of non-compliance under the Fisheries Act. Some of them included untagged, unapproved and tampered lobster tags, using female crabs for bait and non-conforming traps.

Does "non-compliance" mean they are illegal traps?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, if a lobster trap does not meet requirements, it will be seized by CMP. There are specific requirements for all traps in order to make sure they have things like the right escape hatches. Those are all things the CMP officers will be looking for as they are looking at traps.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Chair, the officials also stated that there is an ongoing investigation into the matter.

Will the minister tell us when exactly the investigation is going to be complete, will charges be laid and will she commit to making that investigation public?

• (2225)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, as my hon. colleague well knows, I cannot comment on ongoing investigations into anything. That would be inappropriate, and I will leave it at that.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Chair, we hoped we would have an idea of how long this might be going on. Everybody in the world who has access to Internet saw the traps that were pulled and the article in The Chronicle Herald. I hoped the investigation could happen quickly.

How many routine patrols has the minister ordered over the last number of months?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, I do not order C&P officers to do their job. They are law enforcement officers who work outside of the minister. I do not direct them in any way, shape or form. They are professionals who know what their job is and they do it well.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Chair, I will move on because I have so many questions and not enough time.

In testimony at committee the other night, when the minister was asked about the definition of “moderate livelihood”, she said she did not have one, that it was something to be decided on by the community she was dealing with. We have an ATIP on a moderate livelihood gap analysis with 21 pages of the 23 pages blacked out. Could you table that document for folks to see?

The Deputy Chair: I would remind the member he is to address all questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, with respect to the definition of “moderate livelihood”, that is not something the Government of Canada is going to impose on first nations. That is determined by the first nations communities. Every community looks at this differently. We want to ensure we work with them in the negotiation process to address what a moderate livelihood is to them.

The last thing a first nations community wants is the Government of Canada dictating to it what it thinks a moderate livelihood should be.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Chair, the minister already has a definition. Her department did a gap analysis on it. We have a document with 21 pages blacked out. Therefore, it would be nice for the sake of transparency that we see what those are.

I have a quick question about Mr. Surette. The minister said that she was consulting with the industry. Which industry members suggested Mr. Surette?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, with respect to Mr. Surette, what I said was that a number of ministry representatives wanted to see someone they could talk to outside of DFO. That is what we have put in place with Mr. Surette. He is, as the member for West Nova knows, a very well-respected member of the community. He is someone who has a knowledge of fisheries issues and he will be a valuable asset to us as we move this file forward.

Mr. Chris d'Entremont: Madam Chair, commercial fishery districts 33 and 34 are opening next Monday. Why did the department ask for an interim report well after that season got under way? Why would it not have asked for that before?

Can the minister table the terms of reference from Mr. Surette?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Madam Chair, it is important to note that an interim report is due at the end of December, but the final

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report is not due until March. Mr. Surette has been working on this for a while now. He has already had a number of meetings with commercial harvesters and with stakeholders. We have regular updates from him. I know that it is important that we get an interim report from him in December, and he is going to continue to do the work he needs to do in order for us to move this forward.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is great to see you again as we continue our conversation this evening. I will be sharing my time with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I hope to speak for eight minutes or so because I have a question or two for the minister.

I am rising with a bit of nostalgia. It will be great to chat with my hon. colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, as someone who now represents a very urban riding in Vaughan—Woodbridge but who grew up in a small town in northern British Columbia called Prince Rupert, and who still has family there and whose parents immigrated to Canada. My mother and her four or five sisters all, at one point in their lives, worked at a cannery, whether it was B.C. Packers or J.S. McMillan Fisheries or the co-op fisheries. Prince Rupert is known as the capital of halibut, as one sees when one drives into the town.

I have very many fond memories. I actually worked at a cannery growing up, and on the weekends my family would go out for a picnic along the Skeena River and go fishing for chum, sockeye, spring salmon or coho, and sometimes trout. It would be a very fascinating time.

I would like to echo some of the things that the minister has spoken about today, and let Canadians know about some of the great work that is being done at Fisheries and Oceans under the minister and this government.

Canadians know that climate change is real and we are witnessing impacts that are directly affecting Canadians and our coastal communities. With the longest coastline in the world, our oceans are home to diverse ecosystems that support not only marine life but Canadians across the country who depend on it. With warming temperatures, we are seeing warming waters and ocean acidification, which is leading to less oxygen in our waters.

These changes are threatening the health of the species that live in our waters, including our fisheries, which not only contribute to ocean biodiversity but to our ocean economy. Canada's commercial sea and freshwater fish landings is, on average, over \$3.7 billion a year. Catches from our waters end up on dinner tables and in restaurants all across the country and, yes, around the world.

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Supporting ocean biodiversity is helping to also support our economy. This is why it is imperative that we continue to invest in ocean protection and work with the provinces and territories with a renewed focus on collaboration to conserve this important resource. This is exactly what our government has been doing from coast to coast to coast. This minister is working with provinces and territories to ensure that our fisheries and oceans remain protected and healthy.

I want to first speak to the capacity building at DFO, undertaken by this government after being elected by Canadians, following the major and devastating cuts brought forth by the Conservative Party. When the Conservatives were in power, it was their mission to weaken science, to ignore science and to remove protections from our oceans and fisheries. They believed that by slashing science, this would help with project development.

On this side of the aisle, Liberals believe that we can still put in place strong protections and support industry development. An example of this is the Fisheries Act. In 2018, our government introduced Bill C-68 to modernize the Fisheries Act and restore lost protections to fish and fish habitat after the Conservative government gutted the act. Even more shameful, the Conservatives did this under the omnibus budget bill so that they could force changes through without due consideration from elected parliamentarians. It was so bad that four former fisheries ministers opposed the changes, two of whom were, notably, Conservatives.

Let me quote former Conservative minister, the Hon. Tom Siddon, who said:

The real scary part of this is that the one minister in Canada who has the constitutional duty to protect the fishery...is the Fisheries Minister. These amendments essentially parcel out and water down his fiduciary responsibility, to the point that...he can delegate his responsibility to private-sector interests and individuals....

He also said, "it's appalling that they should be attempting to do this under the radar."

However, I am proud to say that, in the last year, our government passed the renewed Fisheries Act that restored lost protections that were previously stripped by the Conservatives, and modernized it to include important inshore owner-operator policies, fish-stocking rebuilding provisions and more certainty for industry.

• (2230)

Not only is the Fisheries Act strengthened when it comes to fish protection, but there is a clear permitting framework for development projects to ensure that industries have the regulations they need to move forward when it comes to large and small projects.

I would also like to add that our Liberal government introduced further amendments to Bill C-68 last year, which included a ban on keeping whales in captivity and a ban on shark finning. Both these issues had previously been identified as individual private member's bills that the Conservatives were trying to block. Following royal assent, Canada became the first G7 country to ban shark finning, and that is something that Canadians should be proud of.

On top of making important changes to legislation, our government has been making investments and taking action to build science capacity at DFO. Most Canadians will remember that the former Conservative government made \$100 million in cuts to DFO,

eliminated 500 jobs, and muzzled scientists. In fact, it even closed seven of DFO's 11 libraries, which contain world-class research, and attempted to close down the Experimental Lakes Area, a facility that boosts leading scientific research regarding freshwater systems.

Since 2016, our government has hired almost 300 new science staff, and between 2016 and 2021, this government will have invested over \$500 million in marine and freshwater science.

This is real progress. It is without a doubt that science underpins decision-making at DFO. Investments in science are important in ensuring that we have the information we need to protect our fish stocks, our coastal areas and our marine ecosystems. That is precisely why this Liberal government has made investments in science, not just at DFO, but across departments, a priority.

I also want to touch quickly on marine conservation. Protecting our oceans is important. It not only ensures that we are conserving ecologically significant areas to maintain biodiversity, but supporting marine conservation also means helping keep our fisheries healthy, which supports many of our coastal communities. It is in everyone's interest that we find ways to work with communities to protect our oceans.

Over the last five years under a Liberal government, Canada has protected almost 14% of our marine coastal areas, up from just under 1% under the former Conservative government. Indeed, this is something that Canadians should all be proud of.

I do wish to ask the Minister of Fisheries a question, going back to the province I was raised in. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans invested heavily to support the migration and improve Pacific salmon stocks. How much has been invested to support British Columbia salmon restoration and innovation? How is this improving Pacific salmon?

• (2235)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his intervention and his speech. It was very good.

I will say our government has invested significantly in not only the B.C. salmon program, which we run in collaboration with the Province of British Columbia to restore habitat, but also the Big Bar landslide. This has been a significant investment for our government.

The landslide, which happened in July of last year, actually blocked the Fraser River salmon. We needed to make sure we did everything possible to address those concerns. Over \$20 million has been invested to date to try to make sure that we see those stocks returning in the Fraser River.

We are going to continue to work in collaboration with first nations and the province to make sure that we are addressing the habitat restoration that needs to be done in coastal British Columbia. We know that is an integral part of making sure that we rebuild the salmon stocks. We are going to work with the provinces to make sure we do that.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Chair, we know that gillnets are the most widely used and implemented salmon harvesting tool on the Fraser River both by first nations and commercial harvesters. Salmon stocks are of concern and sturgeon are incidentally encountered in gillnets targeting more abundant species. What is this government doing to help this species?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, in 2019, the department implemented a substantial new fishery closure in southern British Columbia. This measure included a 42-day closure for all commercial nets, including gillnets, and a 27-day closure for the first nations food, social and ceremonial fisheries, including gillnets within the Fraser River. These decisions were taken as a precautionary approach, given the uncertain information. We were informed by consultations with all interested parties.

We know a lot more needs to be done to protect our wild Pacific salmon. We are going to continue to do that hard work to ensure we protect this stock.

• (2240)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for splitting his time with me. I also want to make note and thank a previous speaker, the member for Sydney—Victoria. *Wela'lin*. For people staying up late to watch the main estimates on fisheries, it was an important historical, personal and very relevant step toward reconciliation to understand who Donald Marshall Jr. really was.

I will ask the hon. member a number of questions. They are in the context of my extreme level of panic that Pacific wild salmon are in collapse and that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans does not seem to understand the level of urgency around a multi-faceted and multi-layered crisis.

I will focus with my bit of time on some very specific questions.

Based on advice that the fisheries and oceans committee heard before prorogation, the only thing to do with the Big Bar slide to help the salmon in the Fraser River is to get a fish ladder in place. Has the Department of Fisheries and Oceans commissioned and contracted for the engineering and construction of a fish ladder as a permanent solution on the Big Bar slide?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Chair, with regard to the Big Bar landslide, we have made significant progress but know that more has to be done. We are currently in the process of building a natural fish passageway. That is one of the things that has to be

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done to make sure we address the concerns in the Fraser River with regard to the slide.

We have been taking a multi-level government approach to this. We have the province behind us, we have worked with indigenous communities in the area and we are going to continue to do everything we possibly can to address this concern.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Chair, I take it the answer, then, is no. I would urge the minister to look at the testimony we had before the fisheries and oceans committee specifically from first nations leadership that the only solution, and it is going to be expensive, is a permanent solution with engineering and building a fish ladder. It must be done.

I want to move to the issue of recommendation 19 of the Cohen Commission and the Discovery Islands. The minister and I exchanged concerns about this issue during question period some months ago. I am desperately concerned that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans constructed its review of the threat to wild salmon from the fish farms specifically excluding the parasitic effect of the sea lice that escape and affect wild salmon. It did not take those into consideration. Within the minister's own department, Dr. Kristi Miller has done important work on this, which appears to have been excluded from consideration.

Why is it that we have not taken action, as the Cohen Commission recommended, to protect our wild salmon?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, first of all, I would like to clarify for my hon. colleague that we actually have contracted for the Big Bar ladder. That is the natural fish passageway. I want to clarify that it has been contracted. We are working on that. We know it is an important part of making sure the salmon are able to traverse the river.

With regard to the Discovery Islands, protecting the wild Pacific salmon is a priority for us, and we recognize the first nations' historic cultural connection to wild salmon. Our government manages risk from sea lice using a science-based adaptive management approach. This spring, in consultation with our partners, my department revised the licences of marine aquaculture finfish operators in British Columbia to increase the enforceability of licence conditions pertaining to the management of sea lice. That is a step we are taking to address the concerns around sea lice.

With regard to the Discovery Islands specifically and the Cohen Commission, one of the things we heard loud and clear from the first nations in those areas was that we could not make a unilateral decision on the fish farms. They are in their territorial waters, and they wanted to have a say. They knew it was important we make the decision, but they wanted to make sure they were—

The Chair: We have to leave enough time for one more quick question.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

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Ms. Elizabeth May: With respect, Mr. Chair, the department had plenty of time to consult between the Cohen Commission report and when we did not take those recommendations.

To the southern resident killer whales, I have had other discussions with the department about the sanctuary areas on Pender Island and Saturna Island. Not a single fine has been levied. No one who has violated the sanctuary for the whales has faced any punishment.

Can the minister commit to a much better and more robust protection of our southern resident killer whales?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, absolutely, we are committed to making sure we protect this iconic species. We are taking a number of measures to address the concerns that we hear with regard to the southern resident killer whales. We are going to continue to work with stakeholders and environmental organizations to make sure that we are addressing concerns.

This is an iconic species that nobody wants to become extinct. We are going to do everything we can to make sure that we protect it.

• (2245)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Courtenay—Alberni. I have about 10 minutes of questions for the minister and afterward, my hon. colleague will take the remaining five minutes to round out the evening.

I would like to start by acknowledging the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge, who began his remarks talking about Prince Rupert and his roots in that beautiful community. That is where I would like to start my remarks as well.

I was speaking yesterday with Joy Thorkelson with the fishermen's union and told her that I had this opportunity this evening. She was talking to me about the report on the west coast fisheries licence reform, with which I know the minister is very familiar. Ms. Thorkelson feels that the recommendations in this report hold a lot of promise for her industry. She understands that there are consultations going on at this point, but she does not know anyone who has been consulted.

I would like to ask the minister who precisely is being consulted at this time on the west coast fisheries licence reform report and whether anyone on the north coast of British Columbia is being consulted.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to thank the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for this report. This was an extremely important report with regard to west coast licensing. We are working to engage stakeholders in British Columbia to identify priority fisheries management and licensing concerns. I do not have the list in front of me with regard to who is being consulted, but I can follow up with the member directly to make sure he has that.

We need to inform ongoing west coast licensing review. We have actually contracted a comparative analysis of Atlantic and Pacific commercial fishing policies and regulations and we have initiated a

review of the existing foreign ownership restrictions as well. We know that there is a lot of work to be done. We do appreciate the hard work of the committee in bringing this forward.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, the reason these recommendations are so important, and I believe the minister will agree, is that it is vitally important that we keep as much of the value of the west coast catch in the hands of actual fishermen, especially after two of the worst seasons on record.

Can the minister give us some sense of whether her department is committed to implementing the 20 recommendations from the report on west coast fisheries licence reform?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, as I have said, this is a very important report. We are actually engaging right now on a number of the recommendations to make sure we are well informed, as we go forward, to make the decisions. We have contracted an analysis to be done between Atlantic and Pacific commercial fishing policies and regulations. We know how important this is to our coastal communities in British Columbia, and that is why we are taking the time to make sure we do the consultations necessary to get it right.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, could the minister inform the House what the timeline is for implementing the recommendations in the report?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, as I have said, right now we are engaging in the consultations. This will take a bit of time. I do not have a firm timeline in front of me right now, but we know it is important to make sure we hear from a number of stakeholders on this issue—

• (2250)

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, funding for west coast salmon stock assessment has been falling since the 1980s. Of course, it was the worst under the former Stephen Harper government, but despite the recommendations from former Liberal fisheries ministers, those funding levels have still not been restored to the levels they need to be.

Stock assessment is particularly important in light of climate change, which, as the minister well knows, is causing a number of impacts on wild salmon on the west coast. The runs are not as consistent as they used to be. We used to have people walking hundreds and hundreds of streams on the west coast to assess stocks. We do not anymore, and we need that information to make good fisheries decisions.

Can the minister tell us if she plans to follow through on the promises of previous Liberal fisheries ministers and restore stock assessment funding?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, under the modernized Fisheries Act, it is imperative for us to have rebuilding plans in place for stocks. We are diligently working on those now, especially for critical stocks that are under threat. We have initiated a number of rebuilding plans. There is more to be done, but we are going to continue this extremely important work.

For me, this is not about conserving a species; it is about growing it. We need to have abundance in our fisheries, and that is one of the things I am committed to.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, the focus of that last question was really around whether the stock assessment funding was going to be restored. I did not hear a specific answer to that question, but I look forward to engaging with the minister in the future.

One of the things I hear when I talk to people in the Skeena watershed about wild salmon is that community consultation and community engagement by DFO are sorely lacking. The department's consultations focus on dealing with specific stakeholders and first nations, but as we know wild salmon affect all of our communities in the northwest. In some cases, NGOs are taking up this role, but it should be DFO's job to engage communities in these vital decisions.

Does the minister recognize that the current approach to public engagement is deficient? Will she commit to resourcing and carrying out broader community engagement in northwest B.C., particularly with upriver communities that depend on wild salmon?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, it is extremely important that communities feel like they are part of the engagement process. That is something we have seen in British Columbia particularly: how engaged the local communities are with regard to habitat restoration. We have seen that through the B.C. SRIF program.

We will continue to work to make sure that we are addressing the concerns around communities that are impacted by the decline of the salmon stocks. I know first-hand how important it is to hear from communities, and I will endeavour to make sure those communities are heard.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, in the Skeena watershed, as the minister may know, DFO has long practised abundance-based management for sockeye salmon. They set minimum spawning escapements and they also set thresholds at which different fisheries are triggered. There is a growing call in the region for DFO to develop similar abundance-based management measures for other species, particularly for chinook salmon. The uncertainty created by climate change means that we need better in-season management tools.

Is the minister aware of calls for this kind of abundance-based management for other species, especially chinook, and does she support moving in this direction?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, as I have said a number of times tonight, the steep declines we have seen in wild Pacific salmon are extremely alarming. We are looking at a number of different measures to put in place to make sure that we are addressing those concerns and that we are building abundance. As I said earlier, it is not just about conserving. It is about growing. That has to be critical as we move forward. I will continue to work with stakeholders, communities and fishers to make sure we are finding the right ways forward with regard to wild Pacific salmon.

I have learned a great deal about Pacific salmon since taking on this role. I know it is a huge part of the cultural identity of British Columbia, and we need to do everything we can to protect it and conserve it.

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Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Mr. Chair, I will finish my questions with a question about the new Fisheries Act. In many ways, the new Fisheries Act is a solid step forward, but the government has been slow to operationalize the policies and regulations that are so important to the objectives set out in the act.

One important objective, and the minister mentioned this earlier, is the rebuilding plans for at-risk salmon populations. These plans are an important opportunity to support first nations, such as the Gitxan, the Wet'suwet'en, the Lake Babine Nation and the Gitanyow, who are working to rebuild salmon stocks that historically were vital for food.

What is the timeline for fully operationalizing the new Fisheries Act?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, it is extremely important for us to make sure the new Fisheries Act is fully operational.

We have put a number of rebuilding plans in place already. There is more to be done. Some of the ones that needed a rebuilding plan are now out of the critical zone. We are continuing to do that work. There have already been six rebuilding plans done out of 18. We know there is more to do. There are some coming in the very near future and we are going to continue to work to make sure we are addressing those rebuilding plans.

● (2255)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Chair, we are aware DFO is revising the shellfish aquaculture act later this year. We know there are some good players, but there are some bad players in that sector as well. DFO's relationship with the shellfish aquaculture industry is a stunning example of industry capture where input from science, federal and provincial commissions, and environment advocates has been totally ignored over the past 18 years. Practices and certain players in that industry have been allowed to degrade the marine environment.

The people of Denman and Hornby Islands, and Baynes Sound where I live, are calling for changes to the conditions of licensing for shellfish aquaculture regulations. They need this to happen. The impact of unchecked intensification without proper monitoring or enforcement of environmental impact on aquaculture and vital ecosystems has resulted in continued intensification and proliferation of industrial aquaculture, which has been destructive to the ecosystems that sustain the health of our region. They are calling for the government to use the guidelines of the aquaculture sustainability council. Will the minister do that?

Business of Supply

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Chair, our government is committed to upholding the independence of scientific work and ensuring that decisions are made on the best available science. That is why under this government DFO worked with Canada's chief science adviser to develop and adopt the scientific integrity policies. DFO is a science-based department and high-quality, impartial science is integral to DFO's work.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, herring is a vital source of the ecosystem. It is the bedrock. It is the forage fish for our ecosystem that wild salmon, cod, halibut, shorebirds and mammals rely on. We have seen a decline in herring on the west coast and right now the only open area of the six herring grounds is in the Salish Sea. We have seen the decline of 129,000 tonnes of biomass just in four years to a predicted 58,000 next year. The government said it relies on indigenous and local knowledge, but the first nations have been asking for it to be curtailed or shut down, and so have local communities. Will the minister do the right thing and curtail the herring sector or shut it down until a whole-of-ecosystem management plan is in place?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, we agree that Pacific herring fulfills a vital role in the ecosystem. Its conservation is always going to be a primary objective. We also recognize indigenous fishing rights and the important economic benefits generated from Pacific herring. We are continuing to consult with first nations, harvesters and other interested stakeholders on this shared objective. We consider their valuable input when we inform our fisheries decisions. However, we do base our decisions on science and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, we are glad to see the government and the House unanimously support my Motion No. 151 to tackle marine plastics. Part of that motion was to deal with ghost and derelict fishing gear.

We were glad to see the government come up with \$8.6 million, but some of that went to industry. We were glad to see it go to the Ocean Legacy Foundation and the Emerald Sea Protection Society as they are good players. However, there are concerns about the funding going to the very industry that has created the pollution itself.

What we were calling for was a polluter-pay system, which would include better standards for enforcement and monitoring, traceability, banning of toxic materials and of course extended producer responsibility for those who created the plastic pollution.

Will the minister apply those principles and do it soon?

• (2300)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, the retrieval of ghost gear is extremely important and a number of stakeholders are involved in that process. We have seen a significant uptake on this program. We want to ensure we are retrieving these harmful gear from our waters. There is no place for ghost gear in the ocean. We need to ensure we do everything we can to mitigate the problems that it causes not only for our whales, but also with regard to our ocean sustainability.

We have invested \$8.3 million in the ghost gear fund and we will continue to ensure we address this long-term challenge we have—

The Chair: The hon. member has 30 seconds left.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Chair, we are in a wild salmon emergency right now. We are seeing a collapse of wild salmon under the minister's watch. Tonight we have not even heard her commit to more funding. As an example, where I live in Clayoquot Sound, 2,300 chum salmon returned to the Tranquil River. Normally, 15,000 to 35,000 chum return.

Will the minister triple emergency funding to help rebuild those river sheds and help save the wild salmon or will she be the minister who will be known for watching the collapse of the wild—

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Hon. Bernadette Jordan: Mr. Chair, our government is absolutely committed to ensuring we do everything we can to address the decline of wild Pacific salmon. We know there is no silver bullet to this. There are a number of ongoing issues related to things like climate change and habitat degradation. We have seen the Big Bar landslide. There have been a number of challenges with regard to salmon.

We are taking every available measure to ensure we protect the stock. We will continue to do that very hard work. I look forward to working with my colleague on that.

The Chair: It being 11 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:01 p.m.)

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