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Thursday, November 25, 2021

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 25, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the House of Commons “Report to Canadians 2021”.

* * *

[*English*]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-201, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (volunteer firefighting and search and rescue volunteer services).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Windsor West, for seconding the bill.

Bill C-201 calls on the Government of Canada to increase the tax exemption for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue responders from \$3,000 to \$10,000 in the tax code. We know that search and rescue responders and firefighters are on the ground right now in British Columbia doing the important work, helping people at a time of need, which is when they always show up, in difficult crises, such as fires, floods and accidents in our local communities.

These volunteer firefighters account for 83% of Canada's total firefighting essential first responders. Approximately 8,000 essential search and rescue volunteers respond to thousands of incidents every year.

The tax code of Canada currently allows volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers to claim a \$3,000 tax credit if they have completed 200 hours of volunteer services in a calendar year. This works out to about \$450 per year that we allow these essential volunteers to keep of their own income from their regular jobs, which is about \$2.25 an hour. If they volunteer for more than 200 hours, which many do, this tax credit becomes even less.

These essential workers give their time, training and efforts to Canadians on a voluntary basis, often putting their lives at risk, al-

lowing local governments to keep property taxes lower than if paid services were required. Increasing this tax credit would allow these essential volunteers to keep more of their hard-earned money, likely to be spent in the communities in which they live. Also, an increase in the tax benefit would result in increased volunteer recruitment and retention at a time when volunteerism is decreasing.

I hope all members in the House will show support for the bill and show respect for all those first responders and volunteer firefighters across Canada who put their lives at risk and put themselves behind all of us. We saw the work they did during COVID-19. They were there for us.

I am thankful for the time to talk about this important bill, and I hope I will get the support of the House.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-202, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (controlling or coercive conduct).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to reintroduce my bill to make coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate partner relationships a criminal offence. This new offence would allow victims of coercive and controlling violence to get desperately needed help and would allow earlier interventions in problematic relationships rather than having to wait for physical violence to occur.

During this pandemic, we have heard reports from police and frontline service providers that domestic violence calls for assistance spiked by more than 30%, an alarming intensification of what was already a serious problem in the country.

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In the last Parliament, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights studied this issue, and all-party support resulted in a unanimous report, calling on the House to take action within a year, either on my bill or a similar government bill.

I thank the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam for seconding the reintroduction of my bill today.

Addressing the issue of coercive and controlling violence is not a matter of partisanship. It is a necessary step toward addressing the shadow pandemic of domestic violence that has hit women and families so hard during this pandemic.

I urge all members to support quick action on this challenging problem that will literally save lives.

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

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Mark Holland (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.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

INFLATION

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for an emergency debate. I invite the hon. member for Carleton to rise and make a brief intervention.

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my reason for rising is the need for an emergency debate on the Liberal inflation tax. As the Speaker knows, half-a-trillion dollars of Liberal inflationary Liberal deficits mean more dollars chasing fewer goods leading to higher prices. It is a long-proven statistical correlation that when governments run huge deficits and print money to pay for it, prices rise for everything and everybody.

● (1010)

[*Translation*]

Academics, the media and Liberal politicians are trying to tie inflation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, that does not hold water. Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, England, Germany, China, India, Japan, Singapore, the other G7 countries and the eurozone are all grappling with the COVID-19 crisis, and yet inflation is not as high in those places.

Obviously, the cause of our inflation is the major increase in government spending, which is causing an increase in prices. More money and fewer goods mean higher prices.

We need to have a debate to protect the interests of consumers. Young people are unable to buy homes and often have to live in their parents' basement. Seniors are having a hard time buying groceries. The cost of gas in Canada is going up, partly because of the

world price but also because of the stunning weakness of our dollar, which is linked to the fact we are printing money here in Canada.

Price hikes are taking their toll on poor people, those who are suffering, and those who do not have any financial or real estate investments to help them make money. These people need us.

I am therefore calling for an emergency debate to discuss the Liberals' inflationary tax.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Carleton for his intervention, but I find that his request does not meet the requirements of the Standing Orders.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ORDER RESPECTING THE BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE AND ITS COMMITTEES

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 1, I move:

That debate be not further adjourned.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their place so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I understood the government House leader's argument yesterday, it was that in spite of rules around vaccination, around masking, around social distancing, as well as the possibility of testing, we still could not have an in-person Parliament because of the possibility that some members were immunocompromised.

I wonder if the government House leader or another government minister is willing to tell us how many ministers are immunocompromised and whether ministers who are able to be in the House will be in the House.

● (1015)

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, what we do not know at this point in time is how many folks in this chamber are unvaccinated. This is an answer that will not be given right now.

Why does that matter to someone who is immunocompromised? Because that risks his or her health. The point is that when somebody who is unvaccinated gets in contact with somebody who has COVID-19, which, by the way, happened last week in the Conservative caucus, the person is supposed to go into isolation. That did not happen. Therefore, we do not know whether somebody is in here who is unvaccinated, who did not isolate. Maybe the person did isolate, but the Conservatives will not tell us any of this.

Here we are on the third day of Conservative obfuscation. We still have not gotten to the business of the nation. Instead we are debating whether or not the sky is blue. We are debating basic science, which is that in a workplace, can we work in person, yes, but also virtually. The member claims that he cannot work in person. Did he not read the motion? Did he not see he could come here every single day? Has he not heard my comments that said ministers would be in their seats and would answer his questions in this place?

What does he have a problem with?

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, time allocation measures are never something that should be used arbitrarily, but we are in a situation where we have had the consensus of all parties and all members of Parliament for the last year and a half to ensure that we were putting in place the appropriate public health measures, including having the social distancing that comes with using the hybrid Parliament tools.

We have seen the Conservatives and the Bloc reverse that position suddenly and arbitrarily, and not agree to something that should have been passed unanimously on Tuesday. It is disturbing to me that we have parties not thinking of public health measures, first and foremost, the protection of our employees, the protection of the public and the protection of people who are immunocompromised and may be in the families of members of Parliament.

Why have the Conservatives and the Bloc steadfastly refused to renew the public health measures that we have been taking now for a year and a half?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague poses a good question. The reality is that we all worked very well, and I will go back to that. I hope that maybe by taking a step back we can remember how together, at the Board of Internal Economy, though at the time I was a whip dealing with the other House leaders, we dealt with finding consensus and agreement about what had to be done in the global pandemic. With the administration of the House, we were able to create a system that worked, that allowed members to work remotely and safely and be in this place in person, and we were able to do so with unanimity.

My problem today is that we are still in a global pandemic, during which 30,000 Canadians have died and five million have died globally. There is no reason we cannot have the flexibility in our workplace to ensure that people can be here in person and have the opportunity to work virtually. I am saddened that we are now taking two days of House time on this. I will come back to this, because I have a sense that I will have that opportunity, but we are blocking the priorities this Parliament needs to get done.

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would just like to reassure my NDP colleague that we do not agree with the Conservative Party's position.

The Bloc Québécois listens to science. Our intention is to be present in the House. Democracy only works when it is out in the open.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mario Simard: Would you please be quiet?

Madam Speaker, during the last parliamentary session, there was one single person on the other side. Science tells us that, if we are all properly vaccinated and we follow the guidelines by wearing our masks, being here in the House is perfectly fine.

I do not want to be associated with what is going on in the Conservative Party, where people doubt vaccine efficacy and the leader's lack of leadership is putting us in the position we are in today.

• (1020)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind hon. members and the House that everyone must respect the person who has the floor. Members sitting close by should refrain from speaking to each other and causing a disturbance.

The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right. The Bloc Québécois has been quite reasonable and continues to be reasonable. All the conversations we have had with Bloc members have been based on science.

I understand why the Bloc Québécois is asking us about the number of ministers who will be here. However, the current situation is different from previous situations. When the pandemic was hitting us a lot harder, we obviously could not have as many people present here in the House.

The situation is less acute at the moment, so we can now have people in the House. I can say with confidence that the ministers will be present in person to answer questions.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is nice to see you in the chair again.

Since my colleague is talking about safety on the Hill, I was wondering if he could comment about his role in steering an allegation of sexual misconduct against former MP Raj Saini to mediation as opposed to a formal complaint, and then trying to ensure that process did not see the light of day.

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I was wondering if he would take this opportunity to apologize to the victim, who has suffered greatly from this, and commit to ensuring his party is not a deep, dark hole of continued sexual misconduct. If we are really talking about safety on the Hill, he needs to deal with that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question that is before the House has nothing to do with the actual debate currently before the House.

I see the government House leader has risen. I am wondering if he wants to speak to that.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, when any allegations are placed against any member or any individual, they should have the opportunity to furnish evidence in their defence and should have the opportunity to be heard. This is not a place where a member uses their privilege to hide, to make allegations and say things as if they are fact.

Let me be very clear about what the process was in every single instance when I was whip. In every single instance that an allegation came forward, we would ensure there was a rigorous process to look at whether the complaint had validity. In the instance a complaint had validity, obviously it was going to be acted upon. In the instances where the 360, the environmental assessments, determined it did not, then that was a different story. Those things are not to be adjudicated on the floor of the House of Commons.

All members of Parliament may from time to time find themselves involved in allegations against them. I could list members from the Conservative Party or other parties who have faced this. The place to adjudicate those matters is not on the floor of the House of Commons, which I say is a matter of principle. The place to adjudicate those matters is in an HR forum, where it is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to take this time to remind members they need to have their masks on unless they are speaking.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate my colleague. During the last Parliament we had the opportunity to work together as whips.

I have a simple question. I would genuinely like to understand the reasons behind this decision to have a hybrid Parliament until June 23, 2022.

As the government House leader knows, the House Administration and the technical support people would be able to reinstate the hybrid system with the push of a button if that is what we unanimously decide we want.

Given the current health situation, there is no need to decide today that we should be in a hybrid Parliament until June 23. That is something we should decide month to month, or every two months, depending on how the situation evolves.

Can the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons explain why the government, together with the NDP, is imposing a hybrid Parliament until June 23, 2022?

• (1025)

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I truly appreciate the opportunity to work with the excellent member opposite. It is a great pleasure. As whips, we have had the opportunity to work together many times and to find common ground.

As to the issue before us, we are not talking about a hockey game. In the case of a hockey game, people are travelling locally to the stadium. In the House of Commons, people come from across Canada, from Vancouver to Newfoundland. Furthermore, they do not come for just three hours, they remain here for several days at a time.

People in poor health do not have a choice, they must come to work. That is not the case for a hockey game in a stadium. Vulnerable people can watch the game on television.

If the motion is not adopted, we must come here, and that is not acceptable.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations on returning to your role in this chamber.

During the pandemic, we have seen Canadian companies scale up to produce personal protective equipment. My question is about the safety here.

Has the government House leader had a chance to bring this forward in terms of having Canadian suppliers of PPE? Not all PPE is created equal. In fact, we have seen bogus PPE not only in this place, but also across the country. Has the government considered being a role model and setting an example for the staff here and for the operations on Parliament Hill? Canadian PPE is a priority and is a first choice. We could create that for ourselves here.

If he has not done that, will he commit to doing that, and making sure that we have the highest standards and Canadian companies are actually winning the contracts? This is as opposed to U.S. conglomerates and Chinese firms using other types of material that does not provide the safety necessary. Will the member commit to that today?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, it is incredibly important that we not focus on our individual personal privilege, which this debate seems to be a lot about. When I look around and see who works here, like the pages, House administration, staff, journalists and indeed MPs, my concern first and foremost is their safety.

To the member opposite's question, at the Board of Internal Economy I think we have to rise to the highest and best standard. We have to ensure that every person here is safe. We have to ensure that the policies we choose, as a chamber that is supposed to provide leadership in the country, do not debate basic science and do not cast doubt about other workplaces where people are working in large numbers all across the country. Whether this should be a place that has a vaccine mandate does not seem to be the thing we should be focusing on. That should be something that we should have agreed with so that we were dealing with the four major priorities: the bills that we have to get done in this Parliament.

Instead, we continue to debate whether the sky is blue. We continue to deal with this obfuscation. Instead we should be asking questions such as the one the hon. member is asking, about how we can ensure this is the safest workplace possible.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two very quick points. In my home province, the Manitoba legislature has a hybrid system. As it debates over the next 10 days, it will have the option to sit virtually versus in person. It is a Progressive Conservative government.

The member for Beauce is not with us. He will not be able to vote on this particular motion. In the days ahead, there may be members who also might not be able to participate.

Does the government House leader not feel it is somewhat ironic, but very important, that we advocate for those members who would like the opportunity to be fully engaged in every aspect of debating, voting, attending committees and so forth? That is what this motion does.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North is absolutely right. The odd situation here is that if somebody, for example a Conservative MP, who contracts COVID-19 needs to go into isolation, or the people who are unvaccinated from the Conservative Party and are in contact with said person need to be in self-isolation, the position of blocking a hybrid Parliament actually blocks the privilege of the members they are talking about protecting.

On a point of privilege, if I could continue that point, I think that privilege should start with the most vulnerable. Let us remember that a member who feels comfortable being in this chamber and who is fully vaccinated has every opportunity to be in this chamber. Nobody would block them. However, a member who is vulnerable, who is immunocompromised and who does not feel safe does not have that ability. I believe in a workplace where vulnerable people are put first, and where their interests and the interests of their health are placed first.

When we are talking about personal privilege, we do not start with our own personal privilege. Rather, we look at those who are most vulnerable and ask about their privilege and how they, as members of Parliament, could be protected in carrying out their duties. That is what I would like to hear about. I would like to hear from the members opposite about how they are caring for the most vulnerable in this place and ensuring they can do their duty.

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• (1030)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government House leader is making the argument that it is dangerous to travel to Ottawa because we are in a pandemic, yet it is the current government that opened up travel again. It is his government that called a federal election in the middle of the pandemic when the delta wave was raging. The Liberals campaigned in hospitals during the election. The Prime Minister travelled across the country. His government just sent a delegation of 200 people across the ocean to Scotland for COP26. I am really not clear on his argument about it being dangerous to travel to Parliament to do our jobs, represent Canadians and hold the government accountable. It just does not match up.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, what is not clear to me is how many Conservative members are unvaccinated. Is it one, two, three, four, five, six or seven? They will not say how many of them are not vaccinated.

I have a real problem when members who will not tell us whether or not they are vaccinated talk about how safe it is because people are vaccinated. When people get on an airplane they are vaccinated. They know that everybody around them is vaccinated without exception.

Now that we are in this chamber I do not know who is vaccinated. I look across the way and I do not know who has done the responsible thing. I do not know who has done the irresponsible thing. I do not know who they have been in contact with. I do not know if they are following public health measures, because they will not answer basic questions. Yes, that makes people feel uncomfortable in this place. Absolutely, as in any workplace, no employees should feel unsafe in their place of work. They should be supported.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have a point of order. I am going to stop the clock, because generally there are no points of order during this debate.

I will hear it to see if it has to do with this particular matter.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the government House leader just suggested that the rules of the House are being broken, in terms of members accessing the chamber in violation of the rules. If he has information about that, the chair—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This is debate. Again, I want to remind members that generally there are no points of order unless something needs to be changed within the chamber because someone feels uncomfortable, which is more a point of privilege.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

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Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am appalled by what I am seeing this morning. Parliament has been shut down for six months because of the election that the Liberals opposite called. The election cost \$600 million. We are in the middle of a climate crisis and a housing crisis. How many housing units could have been built in Quebec with the \$600 million that was spent on the election? We could have built 3,000 units for women who are victims of domestic violence, for example, it being the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Here we are, having a debate over whether we are going to sit, helped along by the Liberal Party's farm team, when we should be fixing problems and meeting ministers.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, with a hybrid system, members are able to participate in debates here in the House any day of the week if they so choose. That is not an issue. They can also participate virtually if they would like, which is why I do not understand the argument that there are problems. The member is correct that we must work hard for Canadians. There is a lot to get done, and we can do this work in person or remotely. The system worked very well during the pandemic. We can continue to use this system. I have already explained that the minister will be here in person to answer questions.

Again, I ask, what is the problem?

• (1035)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I actually feel safer flying than coming to the House, not knowing who is vaccinated and who is not. Today, I wonder why we are not working to move forward on the important issues in our constituencies by working directly with the ministers in person or in a hybrid Parliament.

We should have voted. Can the government House leader explain how we can play our role properly with the motion before us?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is right.

Both the government and the House have major priorities. The number one priority is the people who are being affected by COVID-19 and who need immediate help. That is what we should be debating now, not the science or other things that are so obvious.

In hospitals, frontline workers are working so hard every day to protect all Canadians. However, it is easy to threaten these people at the hospital, making it harder for them to do their jobs, so we need to address this issue.

There are other priorities, such as the ban on conversion therapy, which is essential. This is the real priority for Canadians, and it is an issue that we can work on today if the opposition is willing.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would simply like to say that no one here is surprised that the Conservative Party is calling into question the vaccines, science, modernity and the new ways of working, such as telework or working remotely. What does surprise me, however, is the fact that the Bloc Québécois is siding with the Conservative Party. I find their about-face rather surprising.

Why should we keep the option of a hybrid Parliament open? The reason is that we are in the fourth wave and that the number of cases in Quebec has risen from 400 to 900 a day. Quebec society has adapted, and telework is now part of our lives. It is 2021. Should we not take a precautionary approach here in Parliament?

Why does the Leader of the Government in the House think that the Bloc Québécois is now siding with the Conservative Party?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely clear that the pandemic is not over yet. We are in the midst of the fourth wave, and there may be more.

It is very important that members are able to debate subjects such as this, and that includes the most vulnerable members. It is their privilege. In my opinion, it is essential to have a system where the most vulnerable members can vote and participate in committee meetings, question period and all aspects of Parliament. A hybrid system makes that possible. Members who are not vulnerable or who do not have any issues can come to the House. There is no problem with that. They can ask questions in person. The minister will be here for them.

What is the problem today? Why are we still having this debate? It is a big waste of time.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is fascinating to me that the government House leader continues to expound upon these rules and regulations when the question remains, does he really know what they are?

I want to go back to the fact that on air he says that anybody who is double vaccinated and has COVID can go back to work. That is nonsensical. My question then remains, will the government House leader retract his statements and realize that he has no idea what the rules really are?

• (1040)

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I struggle to understand the question, but I will try to answer it in a couple of ways.

First of all, we have rules and regulations that govern this place. One of them is the tie that I wear today. On Thursdays I happen to choose a bow tie, but that is permissible under the rules of this place. I am required to wear a tie to stand in my place. There are many other rules in this place. I am going to be limited in how long I can speak. I am not able to continue speaking for an unlimited time, and some members are excited about that rule.

However, let us talk about rules we should really be excited about, the ones that protect our personal safety, the ones that keep this workplace safe. I am not just talking about for members of Parliament. At the end of the day, the members who are here, including you, Madam Speaker, put our names on a ballot. With that, we accept certain risks, but it is really abhorrent to me that the situation of the employees here, the journalists and the pages, who may themselves be vulnerable, is not considered, and that some of the members opposite are unvaccinated. They will not say how many.

The member talks about the fact that people who are double vaccinated could work in a workplace. What about them? We do not know how many people are unvaccinated. This is a workplace where we expect people to be vaccinated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, what my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie just said was fascinating. He has been taking part in demonstrations all over Montreal for the past two months. I guess that means he checked that all the protesters were vaccinated before showing up.

On top of that, this is coming from a francophone. We francophones have had countless problems with the interpretation. Even my Liberal colleagues who are francophone and have participated in committee work must realize this. The IT department and its hard-working staff are not to blame for these problems. These problems are the result of people not having their headsets or the headsets not working properly. Committee work was often delayed because of these technical problems and, once again, it was the francophones who suffered.

My friend from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who is francophone, does not seem to care at all, just like his francophone friends on the other side of the House. It is a problem, and that is why everyone needs to work here in the House and in committee.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, the pandemic is very difficult and we are all very tired. This has been going on for a long time, and I do understand the member's point. However, we must continue to work safely and ensure that everyone is safe, especially in terms of their health.

As for the issues with interpretation, I am not stopping the Board of Internal Economy from unequivocally reiterating that the rights of French speakers are essential, as are services for everyone who speaks French. That is quite simple.

Unfortunately, my French is not great and I make mistakes. I do, however, understand why we need a good system for everyone who speaks French better than I do.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been struggling to understand the Bloc Québécois for the past half-hour. At one point, the Bloc said that it supported a hybrid Parliament system, but then it came out against such a system, before changing its mind again for about two months, only to change its mind once again and speak out against implementing the system right away. I do not understand why the Bloc keeps flip-flopping.

Their buddies in the Conservative Party are easier to understand, since they do not care about public health measures. However, the

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Bloc Québécois has had four different positions in the past half-hour. I would like to ask the Leader of the Government in the House to explain why the Bloc Québécois has been flip-flopping on this issue and why it does not seem to understand important public health measures.

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I guess the thing I feel at this time is frustration more than anything else: frustration that we are continuing to have this debate. I can guarantee the members opposite that if they take time to talk to their constituents and Canadians, none of them are saying we should spend two days debating whether or not a vaccine mandate is appropriate for this place. All of them would agree that it should have been dealt with by unanimous consent, but here we are, debating if the sky is blue and if dirt is where plants grow. I do not know why we are debating basic science.

All we are asking for is a safe workplace where people can come in person if they feel comfortable, or people can continue to use the provisions that worked perfectly well during the pandemic to ensure that we have a safe workplace for everybody who works here.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1125)

[*English*]

The Speaker: While we are waiting for the vote count, I want to point out that Robert Benoit did a flawless job.

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[Translation]

He recognized every member in the language of their choice. Well done.

[English]

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

(Division No. 1)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barron
Battiste	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Carr
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Garneau
Garrison	Gerretsen
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauson
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	May (Cambridge)

May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sari
Scarpaleggia	Schieffe
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Singh	Sorbara
Spengemann	St-Onge
Sudds (Kanata—Carleton)	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thompson
Trudeau	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
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Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferrier	Findlay
Fortin	Gallant
Garon	Gaudreau
Généreux	Genuis
Gladi	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kmiec
Kram	Kram-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Larouche	Lawrence
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)

Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
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Reid
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Rood
Scheer
Seebach
Shipley
Sinclair-Desgagné
Soroka
Ste-Marie
Stubbs
Therrien
Tochor
Trudel
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

• (1130)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I regret rising, but I must.

During debate today there was an unacceptable level of heckling that was rude and unbecoming of parliamentarians. When I was voting, I was being booed by opposition members and that is not acceptable.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for her observation and her point of order.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

RESUMING DEBATE ON THE ORDER RESPECTING THE BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE AND ITS COMMITTEES

The House resumed from November 24 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to conclude my remarks with respect to this motion. While we heard great enthusiasm from the government benches and their coalition colleague, the independent member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, I would expect, of course, nothing but silence and peak attention from the government benches as we discuss this important motion.

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We have a situation following nearly 20 months of real change in the way we have had to do things in this place, and now the government is looking to do what it has done many times over that 20 months, that is, to limit accountability and hide from its responsibilities to answer to Canadians, to answer to the opposition and of course to answer to the media.

While Canadians have returned to their workplaces and while they follow the best public health advice, we too, as parliamentarians, continue to do the same. However, what is different here? Unlike most Canadians, the Liberals are looking to pull a fast one and take advantage of Canadians while they are still settling into a new way of doing things during the pandemic, a new way of going to work, with masking and the like. They are looking for an opportunity to hide from accountability. While the rest of Canadian society looks to get back to a new normal, they are looking to do anything but.

We saw it all during the previous Parliament. There were technical difficulties that would not allow them to participate. We saw ministers on the Hill who had travelled to Ottawa but would not come into the chamber. We have seen them avoid the scrutiny of media by making sure they did not have to face any of them in person, getting out of their chauffeur-driven cars to go into their offices, and going back to their chauffeur-driven cars and then home. They never had to face a scrum and opposition politician in person or, heaven forbid, a Canadian on the street.

What we are looking for is simply a return to normal. What would I suggest as an alternative to the government proposal? Should a member, heaven forbid, fall ill, we should revive an age-old, time-tested reliable practice and allow members to pair with another member. If there is care and concern on the other side for a member on this side, which I believe there is, offer the pairing process again.

We have an opportunity to show Canadians that we are willing to get back to work. The time has come. Here we are operating safely. We are committed to that process, and we are looking for the government to be committed to a process that is accountable to Canadians and truly accountable to the responsibilities that members were elected to uphold.

It looks like I do not have any time left, but I do look forward to taking questions from my colleagues. I hope that should this motion pass, members continue to come to this chamber to be accountable to Canadians through questions in this place, accountable at committee and accountable to the media.

• (1135)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found the interventions by the member, from both the other day and today, to be quite interesting. He even reflected in his comments that Canadians are finding “a new way of going to work”. That is exactly what this is about. This is about giving flexibility to members to ensure they can continue to participate in the event they are not able to come here because, one, they perhaps have contracted COVID-19 or, two, they have been in close proximity to someone who has, and they are using their better discretion to not be in close contact with other people.

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What I do find most offensive about his comments is the fact that he said that this is somehow a form of limited accountability. Perhaps the member for Carleton's one-liners are not quite as effective if the room is not as full, but can the member explain how this limits accountability when ministers were here to answer questions?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, first of all, while I am sorry to hear that the member was offended, I do not believe I said anything offensive. What I did say is that ministers are accountable to this House and to Canadians. What we saw in the last Parliament was disgraceful. They would not even walk across the street or come downstairs to sit in their chairs in an empty House and be accountable to Canadians.

During the member's comments, he said if someone contracts COVID-19, we need to make them work from home. No, they should be recovering. The member who is ill should be paired with another member in this place so we can balance things out, as we have done for hundreds of years. That is what we are asking for.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, in more than 150 years, we have had to deal with a pandemic only once. In the past 154 years, however, there have certainly been people who were sick with the flu or pneumonia who were contagious, and they stayed at home to take care of themselves without being forced to work remotely.

What is the difference now? Why do we have to adopt a hybrid model when the majority of us are vaccinated, are familiar with the health measures and know that it is important to take care of ourselves when we or one of our loved ones are sick?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. When members of this place are ill, just as when any Canadian is unwell, they should not go to work. This has been done for so long. Why we need to literally reinvent how this place operates is beyond me. We have a system in place. I have referenced it several times. We can pair, and it does balance things out.

We do need to return to how things have been done in the past and this is a very simple way to do it while also allowing accountability, especially keeping in mind that public health guidelines are being strictly adhered to.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, currently members of the Manitoba legislature are sitting virtually. The leader of the official opposition there, despite being double vaccinated, has contracted COVID and is participating in question period and other deliberations of the legislature virtually.

Does the member feel that the government in Manitoba is jeopardizing democracy in Manitoba?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, what we have seen in this place is ministers, the Prime Minister, parliamentary secretaries and government backbenchers duck accountability and absolutely avoid this place like it was the plague that has affected Canada. Parliamentarians are accountable to Canadians. There is an accountability mechanism. They can come to this place safely. It is not too much to ask.

I hear members saying, "Blah, blah, blah." They ran in the election to come to this place and now they want to get paid to sit in their basements at home. They should do better for Canadians.

• (1140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I recognize the next speaker, I want to remind members that the heckling should cease. When someone has the floor, it is important for them to have the respect of the House. If members wish to say anything, then they should wait until it is time for questions and comments or for their turn to give a speech.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we are debating a motion put forward by the Liberals that would take away several vital components of the functioning of Canada's democracy. With this motion, the Liberals are suggesting that members in this place should not be attending this place, and that to me is very unreasonable. I am going to lay out why.

First of all, the Prime Minister called an election in the middle of the fourth wave of the pandemic. Every person in this place, I would hope, knocked on thousands of doors and talked to thousands of people during the middle of the fourth wave of the pandemic. I maybe could have bought the argument that in-person interactions cannot be managed safely if he had not gone to this unnecessary election, but come on.

In fact, during the unnecessary election, on August 27 the Prime Minister held a campaign stop in a restaurant in Mississauga, where capacity was exceeded. On September 14, he held a campaign rally in Brampton featuring former prime minister Chrétien, with over 400 people in a banquet hall. The argument that somehow we should not be attending this place is bunk.

For the people watching this today, it is a little ridiculous to say that members of Parliament should not be showing up to work, when they have been asked to make every accommodation to get to work, as many across the country do not have the ability to work virtually.

The reason the Prime Minister wants to pass this motion to not be here in person is very simple. He does not want to be here to be accountable. That is it.

During the last several months, in the lead-up to the unnecessary election, which saw us knock on tens of thousands of doors across the country during the middle of the fourth wave of the pandemic, the ministers of the governing party would sit in their offices or in their homes and read talking points off a computer screen. That is not accountability. They do not want to be here because they do not want people like me, who are very good at their jobs, holding them to account. They do not want to answer the questions of my colleagues.

That is the antithesis of democracy. We have this place for this reason. Again, we just went through a federal election, where the Prime Minister held campaign rallies. He does not want us to be here because he does not want to be held to account. We have seen this before. In previous parliaments, the Liberals suggested we should not show up for work on Fridays. They tried to cancel question period on Fridays. They tried to do all sorts of things.

The other reason the Liberals put this motion forward is our parliamentary committees. In a minority Parliament, our parliamentary committees are an excellent tool to hold the government to account. People who are watching this today may have watched my NDP colleague from Vancouver Kingsway and I being stymied as the Liberals shut down our committee because there were not any resources to be virtual. They want this motion to pass because they do not want to be held to account.

Liberals are using this argument of safety as well, that they are trying to keep everyone safe. If they were trying to keep people safe in this place, they would be looking internally as to why there are unresolved allegations of sexual harassment with former Liberal staffers that keep getting swept under the rug. Their argument is bunk.

Now I want to make an argument in favour of being here that every member in this House should support, and I want to make a particular appeal to members of the governing party. We gather in this place so that we understand each other's differences and that we understand the needs of the people who are in our vast and diverse country. There are members of other parties who are asking why we should not do this if Manitoba is doing it.

Our country is very diverse. From being on the ground, I know from the residents of Skeena—Bulkley Valley that their member of Parliament should probably be talking to the member for Avalon. Why? It is because, if we are going to be united as a nation in this place, we need to talk to one another.

• (1145)

The governing Liberal Party is not particularly good at this. In my time here, I have known that the Liberal desire is to beat me and my constituents rather than work with us for the betterment of our country. I also know that that is the spirit of this. It is a lot easier for the governing party's whips to keep its caucus members managed and under control if they are not here, not talking to us and not opening their minds to what is in the best interest of this country or to looking for commonalities.

In my time in this place, my viewpoints on issues have been changed by people who come from other parts of this country. When they say that something is not in the best interest of their part

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of the country, or when I say the same thing to them on behalf of my constituents, we try to work to forward towards consensus. That could not happen if we are not interacting with each other. Every Canadian who has been on Zoom for the last 18 months knows that we cannot get the same interaction, those whites-of-the-eyeball interactions, if we are sitting at a computer screen with our pyjamas on in our dens.

I send an appeal to my colleagues in the NDP, who it seems are going to support this motion. This would prevent them from being an active voice for their constituents on parliamentary committees. Members from the NDP have sat on committees with all of us when we have tried to get motions passed, and all of a sudden there are conveniently no resources because one of the Liberal chairs said so. Members of the NDP have tried to get questions answered on behalf of their constituents, and the ministers would not show up or would not do press conferences.

Every Canadian, even if they vote Liberal, should be concerned that the Prime Minister of Canada and the governing party are trying to make it so people cannot be here. It is actually crazy. We should be showing up for work. Let us think about this.

We are actually saying that somehow this does not matter, but it matters. Every day my eyes are opened up to what is happening across this country by people who represent other parts of it. I do not have to agree with everything. That is supposedly what this place is for.

Now, some of my colleagues have also raised the fact that if somebody is sick, could they not represent their constituents? I have been sick before, and I have still managed to represent my constituents. That is part of work. Every Canadian across this country, at some point in time, is going to get ill and be away from their job. It does not mean that they are not going to go back to their job, or that they are somehow not doing their job.

I would say that my colleagues, particularly with the examples they are using of one of my colleagues who is fully vaccinated but contracted COVID-19, are saying that somehow he does not want to be in this place or show up for work. That is not what he wants. We all want to be able to come here and hold the government to account.

I get it. I get that the government wants to be draconian. I get that the Prime Minister does not want to show up for work. Frankly, I think they are scared to be held to account. They are scared to be held to account on inflation, on the rising costs of everything, on out-of-work Canadians, on our changing economy, on the lack of ability of the government to do anything that resembles positive foreign affairs or on anything.

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They are scared to be held to account even on the billions and billions of dollars the government has spent without the scrutiny of this place during the pandemic, which has already, with just the minimal amount of review we have been able to do, shown great scandal. Let us remember the WE Charity scandal and the Kielburgers. They do not want that to happen, and that is why they do not want us to come here.

From what I am hearing, the NDP is going to support this. This is crazy. It really is. There is value in the dignity of coming here, into this space, to stand up for our constituents. It is why our constituents pay our salaries. To have a motion that says that we should not come here to try to learn from each other and our constituents is bananas. I ask every member in this place to stand against this so that we can get back to work and stand up for the best interests of Canadians.

• (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, I do want to remind members that, unless they are standing up to speak, they should have their masks on.

We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there were portions of my hon. colleague's speech that I agreed with and there were some portions of it that I have real trouble with.

The portion I agreed with was the ability for us to come together as parliamentarians and learn from one another. That is a valid point.

The member talked about the definition of work of a member of Parliament. I unfortunately had to be home in Nova Scotia because of the circumstances during the last Parliament. I would ask the member to check the Hansard and check the e-blues. Does she think that I was not working? At the end of the day, in this Parliament, if I have a brush with COVID I want to be able to participate. Right now, she is going to be denying that with her position here in this House. Can the member answer that?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I would remind my colleague that if he is standing in this place he is complying with the House of Commons rules for COVID-19 which were put in place to keep us safe. That is number one.

Number two, I highly doubt that my colleague across the way, even in his role as a member of Parliament in the back benches, has ever asked a question to hold the government to account. I doubt it is in there. Therefore, I actually do question whether he is doing his job.

I will not let the member take away my ability to stand up for my constituents and to hold the government to account. Shame on him, for suggesting that somehow we should not be in this place and supporting the government. The role of every member of Parliament who does not have a government appointment is to hold the government to account, including him, so he should be here. Even if he is not going to have the courage to stand up and hold the government to account, he should sure hope I will, on behalf of his constituents and every Canadian.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, there are two problems before us today.

One is that the Liberals, as my colleague has clearly shown, want to limit debate and do not want to be held accountable for their actions. We saw plenty of that in the last parliament. For their part, the NDP members prefer to remain in their pyjamas in the basement. That is their choice.

The other problem I want to raise is the issue of safety. The science tells us that vaccines are effective. I believe that my Conservative colleagues could also do something to help. Perhaps their leader's weakness makes him complacent about certain members who do not have a good reason for not getting vaccinated.

That is why we are holding a rather surreal debate today with some of my Conservative colleagues forced to defend the indefensible or the fact that some of their colleagues doubt the effectiveness of vaccines. We could move forward much more quickly if my Conservative colleagues would finally agree that people must be fully vaccinated to come to the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I will take this opportunity to remind Canadians that vaccines are safe and effective. I am fully vaccinated, and I encourage any Canadian who is not vaccinated to avail themselves of that opportunity. Every member who is in this place is compliant with COVID-19 rules that are set out by the House of Commons by virtue of their presence here. Every member of the Conservative Party is in compliance with that.

No member in this place should be taking medical advice from the Liberal Party of Canada. What we should be doing, and what my Bloc colleagues should be doing, is making sure that we get back to work on behalf of all our constituents, and hold the government to account because it has a lot of explaining to do for a lot of things, like inflation, like mismanagement of funds. Parliament has a job to do, and that is to scrutinize the government. Let us get back to work.

• (1155)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your reappointment as the Assistant Deputy Speaker.

I have heard a lot of comments today about what is happening here in this House. I just want to say that at this moment the effects of this ongoing pandemic are playing out on the backs of women and children: women who are nurses going into their second year of keeping Canadians alive in crowded hospitals, with no break, and in fact their backs are breaking; parents who need to send their kids out, and are worried about getting COVID.

As we think about why this matters, we must show leadership so that we do not contribute to one more case, one more hospital visit or one more ICU bed. Will the hon. members of this House support this hybrid model to show that we are doing everything we can for people, to stop this pandemic?

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Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, I would love to discuss that with my new colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam. However, she is about to vote for a motion that would prevent us from interacting here, so she has kind of burned herself.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today. I will start by congratulating you on once again securing the very important position of Assistant Deputy Speaker. You certainly have shown that you are very capable of controlling this extremely chaotic room from time to time and I congratulate you on that.

This being my first opportunity to rise in the House since the election, I want to thank the people of Kingston and the Islands for sending me back to this place to continue to be their voice and to represent them. It is a true honour. I have been elected a number of times, both to this House and our local Kingston City Council. The feeling of knowing that I have the support of my constituents to represent them is truly humbling. I am very grateful for their support in sending me back here.

It is quite interesting that we are having our first debate on how the House should participate over the next number of months as we get through the rest of this pandemic. I will say I am quite surprised to learn the position of the Bloc Québécois members on this. They have always been very progressive with respect to the need to have proper measures in place to protect not just MPs, but more importantly the staff and administration of this House, so to see their position on this today is surprising for me.

However, I am certainly not surprised by the position taken by the Conservatives. This has been an ongoing thing for them. They always seem to be one step behind as it relates to public opinion and the need to take care of Canadians. At the beginning of the pandemic, we saw they were the last to put on masks, probably begrudgingly. They certainly did not want to do that. They complained about vaccines not being ready. The member for Calgary Nose Hill said on a number of occasions that we were not going to have vaccines until 2030, which was not the case.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I hear the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan heckling me.

It has been said many times that I was the only person in this House from the Liberal bench for a number of months. I may have been the only person physically here, but I certainly was not the only person participating. The Conservatives are laughing as though there is some kind of difference between participating virtually and physically here. We passed rules that said all privileges were extended to those who were participating virtually. Indeed, people from all parties participated virtually throughout that time.

I will get back to my point about what I experienced and the lack of seriousness the Conservatives have taken toward this pandemic. When I sat in this House, from time to time I would hear explosions of laughter coming from the opposition lobby, as if they were having a party or something back there. They just have not taken this pandemic seriously from the beginning and it is showing today in their position on this and some of the rhetoric that we are hearing—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I know members are anxious to participate in questions and comments, but this is not the time right now, so I would ask them to jot their thoughts down.

The member has over 16 and a half minutes left for his speech. I would ask members to allow him the respect they would want when they are speaking. I hope the tone in the House will be reduced to allow the member that respect.

• (1200)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, thank you for that.

Of course, we have the most recent event, the creation of the freedom caucus, or whatever it is called across the way, of those who are fighting for the liberties of Parliamentarians or Canadians or whatever it is that really serves no purpose, other than to instill distrust, cross the line into conspiracy theory and promote policies that are not proven or based on science. That is what we have seen from the Conservative Party.

When we add up every position that the Conservatives have taken and where they are, refusing to say how many people are vaccinated, and we look at it holistically, there is not a single Canadian out there who actually thinks the Conservatives are taking the matter of the pandemic seriously. I think that is extremely clear.

I cannot understand why Conservatives do not just want to be upfront and provide the number of people who have been vaccinated. Why would they not want to do that? This is about showing leadership. The member for Calgary Nose Hill stood up and encouraged everybody to get vaccinated. Why do they not start talking about who is vaccinated on that side of the House? They would not even do it during the election when they were asked openly and publicly.

How can someone be a leader if they are not willing to, at least as a party, come forward and say they are making it a requirement that if someone wants to be a candidate in the upcoming election, they have to be vaccinated? Every other party did it except for the Conservative Party and the freedom caucus or the liberty caucus or whatever they have created over there to continue to promote conspiracies.

This is a motion that is really about ensuring that everybody can participate. The member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, who spoke before the member for Calgary Nose Hill, said that anybody who contracts COVID needs to be at home recovering. It is as though he is unaware of how this disease is spreading. Those who are double-vaccinated can actually contract the disease, continue to spread it and not even know that they are doing it because they have been vaccinated. There are a lot of people out there who can physically continue to participate but do not want to spread this disease.

For example, let us look at the member for Beauce. This member has not been able to participate in the election of the Speaker, the throne speech or any of the debates up to this point, or participate in a vote.

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The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order from the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the rules are clear. We are not allowed to talk about a member's presence or absence in the House, but that member has done so several times.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I believe the member is aware that he is not supposed to do that.

The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, I was not talking to his presence in the House right now. I was speaking to the fact that he has made it well known that he cannot come to Ottawa and participate in Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, he said the member was unable to be in the House to vote. In other words, he referred to the member's presence or absence in the House. I would ask that he pay attention to what he is saying and take care to avoid making such statements about my colleague.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Again, the member knows that he cannot say indirectly what he cannot say directly.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I actually checked the voting record and saw that he did not vote, so I assumed that he was not here. I apologize if that did not get across to the member, but that is how I know for a fact that he was not here, because the voting record does not reflect it.

In any event, the point is that if there are members out there who cannot participate because perhaps they have come into close contact with somebody who has tested positive and are waiting for the results to ensure that they are not going to be somebody who continues to pass along the disease, then it is important that we provide opportunities.

The member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes likes to talk about how we are doing things differently and work environments are changing. Canadians are getting back to work; they are wearing masks. That is, I guess, how he defines work environments being different, but there are a lot of people out there who are still working from home and in the workplace in a hybrid format. It is nothing new. The member suggests almost that this is something foreign, as though other people are not out there doing this. There are a lot of people who are out there doing this.

I think of my neighbours, for example, who are continuing to work from home three days a week and go into the office the other two days. It is very common for workplaces to establish practices like these in order to ensure that people can continue to participate and to do their jobs.

I have two children. One is just able now to be vaccinated and the other is not. What if I happen to, even though I am doubly vaccinated, catch COVID? Members certainly would not want me to

come around here, and I certainly would not want others to come around here if that were the case and it happened to anybody else. If that does happen and I happen to catch COVID, even though I am doubly vaccinated and still totally able to function in my duties from a physical perspective, why would we not extend the ability for me to be able to do that virtually? That is all that this motion is talking about.

I have heard the previous two speakers talk about accountability, as though it is not possible to hold ministers to account. I heard the member for Calgary Nose Hill go after one of my colleagues a few minutes ago, saying that he is not doing his job. The irony of all this is that those who are participating virtually are probably doing a lot more actual legislative work in the virtual world than they were before we had this hybrid Parliament.

We had committees meeting every single week, even on constituency weeks.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Now the members opposite are applauding that, and that is good, so why is it that they are against this virtual Parliament and having an opportunity to see this continue? That is the whole point. The whole point is to provide an avenue to enable people to continue to do their job.

I am really happy to see that there are at least some Conservative colleagues who would agree that members on this side of the House are doing their jobs and are working, because for the member for Calgary Nose Hill to suggest that any member of the House was not actually working during the pandemic because they were not able to physically be here is an insult not just to any particular member of this House but to people across Canada who were working virtually from home, as we saw thousands and thousands of people doing when we were directed to stay home whenever and if possible.

I do not appreciate the suggestion that colleagues are not doing their jobs. Despite the fact that I do not see eye-to-eye with Conservative members quite often, I would never suggest that they are not working. Maybe they are not doing what they are supposed to be doing, but they are certainly working and they think that they are doing their job, so it is just as important.

We also have to look at what the difference is. I have heard on a number of occasions different people from the Conservative Party talk about the difference. They are trying to suggest that when members are physically here, they are more accountable or able to be berated more by the member for Carleton during question period. I do not understand what the difference is. I sat here for five months and I heard the questions and saw the answers come from ministers. Yes, very rarely, on occasion, there may have been an instance where somebody was not able to respond immediately because of a technical difficulty, but it was very rare. It rarely ever happened. If it happened one time per question period, I would say even that is a stretch.

● (1205)

It actually worked out very well, because of—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Despite the fact that the Bloc is heckling me on this, members know that it is because of the incredible staff that we have here who set up that system to allow us to be able to work virtually. I mean, come on, at least we can applaud for the staff. Maybe not, and that is fine, but I appreciate the Liberal members for doing that.

In conclusion, for me this is very easy: This is about whether or not we are taking this pandemic seriously from the beginning right through to the end. As I indicated at the beginning of my speech, it is quite clear to me that the Conservatives have never taken this pandemic seriously. They have dragged their feet and have been dragged into every scenario, whether it was the voting application, whether it was the hybrid Parliament, whether it was shutting down Parliament to start with or whether it was putting on masks. No matter what we brought forward, there has always been opposition from the Conservatives to doing anything that protects the safety of Canadians and in particular those who work in this House and in this place. I think it is absolutely shameful that they do not think it is important to continue to extend these provisions so that people can continue to participate virtually and in person as we move forward through the rest of the pandemic.

● (1210)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see my next-door neighbour back in the House of Commons.

My next-door neighbour gave a long list of ways in which my party and all the people on the Conservative side of the House have not been taking the pandemic seriously. I will not go through his long list again, but he mentioned mask wearing. Back when the Prime Minister refused to wear a mask, back when we were being told not to wear masks, I was the first member of Parliament to wear a mask in the House, and then they followed suit.

Therefore, in the midst of all the self-righteousness, will the member acknowledge that, far from being a leader, the Prime Minister was saying not to wear a mask at a time when at least one Conservative MP was wearing a mask. We also have them in our lobby, and we have rapid tests in our caucus, which the Liberals do not have. Can we stop hearing this self-righteous nonsense about how the Liberals take it seriously and the Conservatives do not? It is just untrue and he should acknowledge that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud the member. I brought this point up before when he was in the House. He has actually asked me this question before and, yes, congratulations to him, but it is unfortunate that his leadership could not have gotten behind the same idea. When we got behind wearing masks, it was a decision that all Liberal members were going to wear masks, full stop.

It is just like when the Conservatives were deciding, “Well, if you want to get vaccinated, you can, but if you do not, you do not have to. As I am the Leader of the Opposition, I probably should take a position on this, but I do not know if it is such a good idea and so I will let you guys decide what you want to do.” That is not leadership.

The member talked about leadership. Why did his leader not demand that everyone who wanted to run as a Conservative candidate in the election needed to be vaccinated?

I thank the member for putting on a mask and for doing the right thing. It is just unfortunate that his leader could not do it. Maybe it is time for him to become leader.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is my first intervention in the 44th Parliament, so I would like to thank the people of Berthier—Maskinongé for their renewed trust. I would also like to congratulate you on your reappointment.

With respect to the matter before us, our hon. colleague said the Bloc Québécois has demonstrated goodwill and a willingness to collaborate from the start. Hybrid sittings were actually our idea, as members may recall. However, current conditions make it possible for us to be here in person and do our work the way it is supposed to be done. We are human beings, and we need to have conversations outside the chamber alongside parliamentary debate.

My hon. colleague seems to be neglecting another very important aspect too. Problems with interpretation for francophone members and House of Commons staff, who I imagine are listening to us back there and are very happy to hear me say this for their health and safety at work. I think we need to hold our sittings here whenever we can. If another epidemic wave were to emerge at the end of January or in early February or March, we would be able to meet quickly and adjust.

Is my colleague underestimating our ability to adjust?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the conditions may have made it possible, but it does not mean that it is the right or the recommended thing to do. The conditions may have made it possible for us to get together and to be in the same room like this, but it does not mean that it is the safest way to do it. As a matter of fact, the recommendations would be that we not do so, and that is why this is happening.

Why do we want to wait until February or March? Why would we not have the provisions in place? My thought is that the vast majority of people are still going to be here. All the ministers will be here for question period, as indicated—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I guess the members opposite were not listening to the debate, because the House leader said that yesterday. This is about providing options for people based on safety and their own personal circumstances.

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• (1215)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I plan to be in the House every day that it sits, as long as my health is good enough to enable me to do so, and I plan to represent the constituents of Edmonton Strathcona as best as I can in person as often as I can. In the last Parliament, we were given assurances that the government would show up and that its members would be here, but often they were not, and as much as I appreciate the interventions my colleague has made, we heard many interventions from my colleague during the last Parliament.

I am just curious, and I know he has reassured us, but what reassurance do we have that the Liberals will be here, that they will answer questions and that they will allow me to play a role in opposition to the government?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, members would think that no Liberal MP wanted to be here in the last Parliament, during the pandemic. That was not the case. People wanted to be here. People were asking all the time, “Can we come back to Ottawa?” It was about making the right decisions that were in the best interests of public health and safety at the time. As we have now learned, we can start to expand that and we can start to have more people in the room together.

The member asks for an assurance. She certainly knows I cannot provide her with one, other than to refer her back to what the House leader said yesterday. I have great confidence that people want to be in the House and that people will be here to answer the questions that come from the opposition and from government members.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Calgary Nose Hill explained at one point in her speech just now about MPs working. As the member would know, I would sit up on that screen, probably sitting in my seat at home in Nova Scotia, and would participate in the debates and be involved in the committee work.

Could my hon. colleague to speak to that fact? Let me be very clear that I intend to be here, but in the case that either my fiancée, who is a lawyer in Halifax, may be exposed to COVID, or maybe I could be exposed while travelling back and forth from Nova Scotia, I still want to have the privilege to be able to bring the voice of my constituents to this place, whether it be here physically or virtually. Can my colleague speak to the fact that working as a member of Parliament can be done virtually? It can be done here, but it needs to happen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I just want to apologize to my colleague from Kings—Hants again for the extremely ironic statement coming from somebody who was known to be out of the country while participating in Parliament and is now accusing a member—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the passion this member has. I sat with him on PROC through a 73-day filibuster. My point of order is that the derogatory remark that he is about to make, has begun to make and has had—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It is not derogatory.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member, but he is constantly bashing, and if the government is going to continue to talk about what a great job it is going to do in the House of Commons, perhaps he could show some restraint from always attacking my fellow member.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for the intervention, but I think that is really a debate between two people.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I think my hon. colleague from Kingston and the Islands was in the middle of drawing attention to the absence of a member from the House—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: On the contrary. She was here.

Mr. Scott Reid: —and now this member, who claims that Conservatives are disrespectful and will not follow the rules of decorum, is heckling in the middle of my comments. I just wonder if he could find a way to follow the rules and show the class that I know he can show, because I have seen it in the past, although not today.

• (1220)

The Deputy Speaker: As members know, we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly. I would ask members to keep it on the line.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am shocked. I sit through question period and listen to what comes from that side of the House and then I get accused of being derogatory for literally telling folks what happened. Maybe it is my tone, I do not know. I did not know tone was a thing in Parliament that would offend members so grievously. I apologize if that is the case.

To the member's question, there is no difference, which I have brought up on so many occasions, between participating virtually or physically in the House, and that is what this all comes down to. It comes down to this idea that members are not really here if they are participating virtually. That is what the Conservatives have been suggesting all along throughout the last session of the House and, indeed, what they are suggesting is going to happen now; that members are somehow not really in Parliament if they are participating virtually. They should really read the motion and the rules, because that is exactly not the case.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that I was elected to represent the constituents of my riding of Peterborough—Kawartha. All of us in the House were elected to represent our constituents.

I am curious if my colleague or any of my Liberals colleagues have even asked their constituents if they are okay with them not showing up to work.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, again, it is the same rhetoric that we heard from the member for Calgary Nose Hill, a suggestion that members are not working if they are participating virtually.

We heard the member for Kings—Hants talk about the work he was doing during that time. To suggest that there is somehow a lack of work or that people are not working only makes me wonder if maybe that is the way the Conservative members took this. When they were supposed to be working virtually, they just were not working. If I am wrong, they should explain to me why I am wrong. That seems to be the only way the Conservatives are taking this. They are insisting that members are not working if they are not participating virtually, and it is just wrong.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rising for the first time in the 44th Parliament, I have in mind the mandate given to me by the good people of South Surrey—White Rock. However, before that, I want to commend all British Columbia MPs in the House who showed passion, care and solutions last night in the emergency debate on British Columbia.

The mandate I was given was made very clear to me when I met with neighbours, friends, struggling small business owners, some who lost their businesses during the pandemic lockdowns, and voters at their doors: Go to Ottawa for us.

Our Armed Forces members are demoralized by constant criticism, without the balance of recognition for their hard work and, indeed, their heroism. The CAF would have appreciated a shout-out from the throne speech this week, but there was nothing there. Veterans are suffering because the government left many Afghan allies behind to be hunted down by the Taliban. The issues we need to address in this Parliament are too numerous to outline in a short speech.

We are choosing here to either advocate for Canadians in person in the House or allow MPs, despite vaccination proof masks and precautions throughout the parliamentary precinct, to stay distant on Zoom screens. This is an unnecessary buffer between government and the scrutiny of the Canadian people through its opposition parties. It is like two people trying to talk to each other with two masks on each with a plexiglass between them. We have all been there.

The Liberal government received just 32% of the popular vote. Unfortunately, government is formed by which party wins the most individual ridings, not the overall vote count.

I forgot to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am splitting my time with the member for Regina—Lewvan.

One would think that result would give the government some humility, some understanding that Canadians are looking for accountability and rigorous scrutiny, but no. The Prime Minister has said numerous times already that the government has a clear mandate. Does it, with 32% of the vote? I am not at all sure that Canadians would agree, and I know that people in my riding decidedly do not.

I am very proud of our Westminster parliamentary system, refined over centuries, of commoners elected by free people of free will in a free democracy, to hold those in power to account and, when required, to ensure a peaceful transition of power; a forum that provides a robust challenge function to those entrusted to govern us; a system where even the head of government and ministers are expected to participate in our form of question and answer de-

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bate, the back and forth of question period. This makes a prime minister and his or her leadership team directly accountable to the people.

Another hallmark is a professional civil service that supports our significant work here. Members of the public service are subject to the government's mandatory policies requiring them to be vaccinated or to prove an accepted exemption. They are here because they are in compliance. We are here because we are in compliance. There can be no honest suggestion that the House of Commons is somehow a more hazardous workplace than any other in Canada.

Her Majesty's official opposition is the caucus most seized with keeping the government in check and to stand ready to assume government. Equally tasked with upholding the best interests of the country writ large, it is built into this system that Parliament demonstrably provides the best way to hold government to account, which is and always has been in person.

The vast majority of workers in my riding do not have the option to work in a hybrid fashion, and are clear it is a condition of their continued employment to be double vaccinated and wear a mask. Some have lost their jobs as a result and are in great need. Most have obeyed these requirements and do not expect their MPs to be exempt from the rules by which they must abide. They do not expect us to have an elitist special accommodation.

• (1225)

We are here to represent them, not ourselves just because it is more convenient or comfortable for some to stay at home. No doubt we all want to be home more. As a B.C. MP, Ottawa is a 4,300-kilometre commute for me. However, we just had 20 months of doing our work from home and by Zoom. Should any individual MP require accommodation for a short time due to health, family or MP-related travel reasons, those exceptions can be made.

What about pairing, which has been brought up by others? Every opposition MP noted that even when we were allowed to be here in limited numbers, Liberal ministers often chose to participate by Zoom from their parliamentary offices. They should be in question period to answer the questions put to them; it is not backbench members of Parliament tasked with responding, ever.

Is it important to my constituents that we do our parliamentary work in person? Not one told me it was a good idea unless we had no other choice to be safe.

I would like to share with the House what some South Surrey—White Rock folks tell me, because they care about what we do in this place.

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Dorothy said, “My only wish is that [the Speaker] will halt question period to new questions if the minister refuses to answer the question put forward. Canadians deserve better than they have been receiving from this Parliament.”

Don said, “Looking forward to seeing you in action in person.”

Speaking to the devastation in B.C., Patsy said, “Both levels of government were late to the table.”

Wade simply said, “Fix it.”

When I posted my appointed as shadow minister for National Defence, Don wrote, “Canada so desperately needs a serious voice on our national defence.”

Julie said, “Got a big job there, but keep on the minister.”

Colin said, “Ask the new Minister of National Defence about her government's lack of commitment to the previously announced timeline for the \$19-billion purchase of fighter jets.”

Marie said, “I do hope you will finally be able to get back to Ottawa should we have a real government some day.”

Alana said, “Please do what you can. It is very scary what is happening.”

I have so many examples of people saying that.

Of course we do work in our ridings, of course it is work and of course it is important, but what we do here is unique. We are voted in to represent people who cannot have a voice here.

Darlene said, “Ethics in government means everything to me. Let's change the culture of Ottawa: no more scandals, no more corruption.”

Other people's issues include rebuilding their families' devastated small businesses, deep deficit and the concern about the country perhaps going bankrupt.

Harveer said, “We need a government that cares about our economy. The Parliament is an absolute mess due to the present government.”

Veterans groups want a military covenant and a military bill of rights.

There are just so many issues that need to be addressed here. We have all struggled through poor audio; poor video; intermittent connectivity; MPs embarrassing themselves on screen, which seemed to usually be on the government side; missed votes; overzealous use of the mute button; and straining of resources in both the House and in committee. That is enough.

I urge my fellow parliamentarians not to give onto ourselves special accommodations not afforded to millions of workers in the country, not to choose comfort over solemn duty. If we can send 276 delegates to COP26, the most in the G7, we can buck up and have 338 MPs in the House of Commons.

We all just took a new oath to conduct ourselves in the best interests of our country. That means being in our workplace doing our

work. We have riding times set aside. The voters chose us to be their voices in this place, in person. Let us get to work.

● (1230)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very difficult to understand why the Conservatives do not support this motion. All they have to do is look within their own ranks to find a member, the member for Beauce, who is not able to be engaged in all the procedures and abilities we have at our fingertips, whether it is debates, votes or possible committees. This is important for all members.

Why would the member opposite deny, by voting against this motion, members of Parliament today and going forward having access to do the fine work we do inside the chamber?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite obvious. This is a unique form of work that we do. We have work to do in our constituencies, and we have work to do here in Ottawa.

Doing the work here in Ottawa on Zoom screens is very problematic. As I have said, we have all experienced a lack of connectivity, people not being able to get in, ministers mixed up on who a question was actually going to, crackling and high voices on the screen. We do not need to do that right now to be safe. Those were temporary measures we agreed to.

Now, the whole parliamentary precinct is taking the appropriate precautions to keep us all safe. We can make some exceptions here and there for people who need a short-term accommodation. We should not make it a blanket one. It certainly should not go right through to next summer.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment. I would also like to quickly thank all my constituents in Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix. This is my first time speaking in this 44th Parliament and I am honoured to represent them.

I would like to ask my colleague about something we are all familiar with, the high-calibre scientists we have in our country. This is especially true in Quebec, where we have eminent scientists who are highly respected and who have succeeded in convincing an overwhelming majority of Quebecers to get vaccinated. Quebec is actually leading the way in that respect.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution scientists have made to the debate we are having today, and how grateful we are for science. Scientists point us in the right direction and make recommendations, so I would like to know if our colleague agrees that science, which goes beyond our layperson's remarks, might change things and lead his team and his colleagues to get vaccinated.

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I would like to take the opportunity to say that today marks the 100th birthday of my uncle Roméo, my adopted father, who was one of the first people to get vaccinated in Charlevoix. That is likely the reason he is able to celebrate his 100th birthday today and he is looking forward to getting his booster.

● (1235)

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, with due respect, unless the scientist is a member of Parliament, it is not that relevant to our discussion and debate here right now.

Of course science is important. I am double-vaccinated. I wear a mask except when I am speaking. We all do. My point was that we are all in compliance here. Our civil service is all in compliance here. This is no more hazardous or unsafe a workplace than any in Canada. In fact, I would suggest it is even more so.

At my recent swearing in, I was not allowed to take my adult children certain places in the precinct because of the precautions being taken here. We are being very careful, each and every one of us. It is safe to be here, and we should be here.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, congratulations.

I have a question with regard to safety. Would the Conservative Party support a review of Canadian-made PPE here on the Hill? In this country and also on the Hill, we have seen improper PPE. I am concerned about the staff, the people here on the Hill, as well as ourselves. We have invested in Canadian companies to transition.

Would Conservatives support that type of initiative?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest travesties in this pandemic is the government's call-out to companies to manufacture PPE here in Canada, and then to ignore the many companies that started up with perfectly compliant PPE and go, instead, to big conglomerates.

Of course I support self-reliance, and I support PPE made in Canada.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my first time on my feet in the 44th Parliament, I have a few words of thanks for the people who have allowed me to take my place in this august chamber once again. That starts with the voters of Regina—Lewvan.

This is my second term. The class of 2019 had an unusual first session of Parliament. We were in this chamber for about five weeks, at the start of our parliamentary careers, and then COVID hit on about March 13-14, 2020. It was a different experience for us. We went through the hybrid experience. Speaking for some on this side and maybe some others, that was not the best experience for us as parliamentarians. It added an extra level of difficulty. Being new members of Parliament also added to how we thought we needed to represent our constituents and how we needed to stand up for them in this place.

A lot of people who voted for me said, "Please be Regina—Lewvan's voice in Ottawa", not Regina—Lewvan's voice on a screen and not Regina—Lewvan's voice sometimes in Ottawa. When the House is sitting, voters want us to be in our chairs here because that

is our job. Our job is to represent our constituents in this chamber, to be their voice and to bring forward their concerns to the government. The opposition's job is to propose and oppose. I think that is very important for us to do. It is incumbent on all of us to think about how we could do that best. I have heard a lot of Liberal members say they are going to be here regardless of whether hybrid sittings happen. Why do we not continue with that tradition?

Members have talked about our member for Beauce. Is he the only person who has ever had a health care issue and could not come to the chamber? It has been happening since the start of sessions in the chamber. People have health care issues that mean they cannot come here. When they get better, they come back to sit in the House and do their jobs. It has always been that way.

I think the idea of pairing, which the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes brought up, is a very good idea. It is a proposition from us that suggests a different way of doing things without there being a bit of leverage for not being in the chamber.

Why could we not use pairing? I have not heard a response from the Liberal government, or from our NDP colleagues who are propping up the Liberal government's decision to take away accountability, about why that would not be an option for us to make sure that we could continue to do our jobs in this chamber.

I grew up on a dairy farm in Rush Lake, Saskatchewan. There was no way that we could ever virtually milk a cow. I represent people who have to go to work every day regardless of their health, regardless of whether they want to get up, and regardless of whether they had a long night the night before. People have to get up and they have to go to work. That is for dairy farmers, people who have to put hay up, ranchers and people who have to harvest. There is no virtual harvesting of products in Saskatchewan. People have to get up every day to go to work. My friend Dieter, who runs a cement company, cannot pour cement over a screen. People have to get up and go to work every day to make sure they can support their families.

That is what we are talking about today. Why do Liberal members think it is okay for us not to have to show up for the people we represent? They do it for us all the time. Every day they get up and go to work because they have to. During the pandemic, the people who work at grocery stores did not have the choice to say they were not going to go to work because they did not feel good or just did not feel like they wanted to.

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That being said, members always have the ability to not come to the chamber. If a Liberal member does not feel well and wants to keep people safe, they can not come. If a person is sick, they should not come to the chamber. That is how this works. That is our responsibility. If someone does not want to spread a sickness, they should not come to the chamber if they are not feeling well. We have a personal responsibility as well. We are all adults in this chamber. Why can we not do that? Why does the government have to make a rule to tell people not to come to work if they do not feel well? That is what I ask. We can do that on our own. We are intelligent people.

Accountability is what this is all about. The government thinks it can hide over virtual Parliament until June of 2022. My constituents in Regina—Lewvan do not want that. They want us to be in this chamber. They want government ministers to be answering questions in person instead of having technical difficulties over Zoom. That is what I am talking about.

● (1240)

There are also two different sides to Liberal members. There are Liberal members and the House leader in the media saying it is all about safety. Then the cameras go off and they are hugging people all over during our opening day. Each and every one of these members went and hugged people throughout the chamber on opening day when we were here. What is the difference? Why is that okay? Is it because there are no media and they can feign their hypocrisy?

When the cameras are on, it is all about safety, hand over heart. Then they can jump on a plane, go to COP and rub shoulders with Leonardo DiCaprio. That is okay. They can go and hang out with their global elitists in Glasgow, but they cannot stand up for their constituents in this chamber. That is what we get with a few of the Liberal members.

Some Liberal members have the best intentions. I have worked with the member for Kings—Hants on the agriculture committee and he has done his duty on agriculture, but I am sure he would rather be here. I am sure he would rather be in this chamber. Actually, I heard him say that. There is the Maritime bubble. If I am able, I would rather be in the chamber.

I wish some Liberal members would have talked to their leadership like that before this motion was brought forward. I think there are a lot of Liberal members who feel like their jobs should be in this chamber, and they want to be here as much as possible. However, they did not have a caucus meeting until 50 days after the election, so they probably never got a chance to have that conversation. Unfortunately, if there was a bit more collaboration on the Liberal benches, maybe they would have heard their members and said, “It is time for most Canadians to go to work to earn a paycheque and we should, too.”

When it comes down to it, what we are really talking about is the need for us to be leaders and to show the people who sent us here, after a \$600-million cabinet shuffle, that we are going to be here and standing up for their rights. Liberal members must feel that same way, because I do not think someone puts their name on a ballot to sit in front of a screen. I do not think any of them did that. I believe in my heart that they want to represent their constituents as well.

I am hoping that when all is said and done, we make sure the Liberal front benches hear from their back benches that they want to come to work, too. To have this motion on the Order Paper and say we are going to shut down real Parliament until June 2022 shows that this is more about political gamesmanship than about the safety of those here. I believe that the parliamentary precinct has done a great job of making this a safe place. I believe they worked hard and they did all they could to make sure we could do our jobs over virtual Parliament when we had to, but now we can do this in person.

I will give a shameless plug to the Saskatchewan Roughriders. They are having a home playoff game on Sunday. There are going to be 33,000 people at Mosaic Stadium watching our Riders beat the Calgary Stampeders. If we can do that, if we can fly to Glasgow and rub shoulders with global elites at COP, 338 of us can sit here in this chamber to make sure we are passing laws for the people of Canada and make sure we are going to work to represent our constituents.

That is what I want to do and that is what my request is. To some of the back bench Liberals, talk to the front benches and ask if it is not possible that we can sit here in person and make sure we are doing our jobs so that each and every Canadian has a representative in this chamber.

● (1245)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the hon. member to stand in this place and apologize to all Canadians who, through the course of this pandemic, did the right thing. They still worked, but worked virtually. To students—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I continue to be heckled. I cannot stand that the Conservatives give it but they cannot take it. To all the students and to all those employees who went to work virtually over the course of the pandemic, and to doctors and nurses who still saw their patients, for the Conservatives to stand here today—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing. Let us allow the member for Pickering—Uxbridge to finish her question.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Will the Conservatives stand in their place and apologize for accusing Canadians of not working throughout the pandemic? They went to work virtually and went to school virtually, and did the right thing to keep Canadians safe.

Is the member going to apologize?

Government Orders

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, obviously the member thinks the media is here, because there is the feigned hypocrisy of a Liberal who is asking me to apologize. I am standing up for people who want to see us work here. I know people work virtually. You all worked virtually. What I am saying is that there are some people who cannot. There are some people who have to get up and go to work every day because they do not have the opportunity to do it virtually.

I am standing up for ranchers and the oil and gas people who have to put their boots on and go to work every morning, the people the Liberals do not respect. They hate what we do in western Canada. Every time they get on their high horse, which must be because of the media up there, they feign hypocrisy, and they rub shoulders with global elites in Glasgow and make sure they look down their noses at all of us. I am standing up for the people of Regina—Lewvan and I have no need to apologize for that.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to remind members of the House about using the word “you”. I never thought I would get to remind members about using the word “you”. Just be careful about that.

The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, up to one-quarter of adult Canadians live with a disability that does not allow them to lift hay or farm in fields, yet they do work. They work in every area of our economy.

Does the member acknowledge that work does not mean physical labour, physical ability or physical attendance in the House or anywhere else?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam that work means almost everything. It means many different things to many different people. However, would she agree that there are also people who have to go to work each and every morning and do not have the option of doing it virtually over a computer screen? They have to put their boots on and go to work every morning.

Why do we always talk about divisive policies like this? Why can we not stand up for all working people across Canada instead of pitting east against west? I think that has happened because the government has not done one thing to try to unite Canadians.

We on the Conservative side would like to talk about everyone going back to work, everyone having opportunities to support themselves and everyone having a better life and a better future for themselves and their children. That is what the Conservatives want to talk about. I would really love for us to stop talking about this divisiveness of east versus west.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was flustered earlier and so I did not take the time to recognize my constituents in Longueuil—Saint-Hubert. I thank them for putting their trust in me. When a person gets elected the first time, there may be some luck involved, but when they are re-elected, then it must be at least a little bit because of who they are. I would therefore like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment.

When one listens to the Conservatives, one cannot help but think about their relationship with science. We know that when it comes to climate change, something people recently met in Glasgow to discuss, scientists around the world are saying that we need to eliminate fossil fuels. Meanwhile, the Conservatives are going around with little stickers that say “I love oil and gas”. They are promoting oil when everyone knows that we need to move away from using it.

I also do not understand why the Conservatives are complaining. The Liberals are doing better than them. They have been investing \$14 billion per year in the oil industry since they took office. There are even some environmentalists who miss the Conservatives. That says a lot.

With regard to vaccination, we heard that 30% of the Conservative members got an exemption while scientists are saying that only 1% of the general population should be exempt.

My question is simple. Do the Conservatives believe in science?
[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. I am not a doctor, so I do not know about the medical exemptions, and I do not play one like the deputy House leader tries to play here when talking about medical exemptions. What I do know is that I love talking about the oil and gas sector and that a strong oil and gas sector makes for a stronger Canada and brings Canada together. I appreciate that my colleague said that.

Also, Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your appointment. It is very well deserved. Great job.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Outremont.

Since this is the first time that I am standing in the House in the 44th Parliament, I want to thank my constituents of Ottawa West—Nepean for putting their faith, confidence and trust in me once again as their member of Parliament.

I would also like to thank my family, especially my husband Don, my stepdaughter Courtney and my mom Maria, for always being there and supporting me throughout, as well as my volunteers and supporters.

I am pleased to participate in the debate on the government's motion to implement a hybrid sitting approach. The motion is proposing that we adapt our procedures and practices so that all members can fully participate in the proceedings of the House either in the chamber or by video conference. It is an important motion. The pandemic is ongoing and we require the flexibility that a hybrid system would provide.

[*Translation*]

I would like to paint a complete picture of the government motion.

First, the motion would allow all members to participate in the proceedings of the House in person or by video conference. The members who would attend in person would have to be double-vaccinated or have a valid medical exemption in accordance with the Board of Internal Economy's decision of October 19, 2021.

Government Orders

The motion also proposes certain changes to the Standing Orders of the House to take into account the virtual participation of members. For instance, members who participate remotely would be counted for quorum purposes. All standing orders relating to such requirements as standing when speaking, or being in one's seat in the House, would be amended to allow for participation by video conference.

The motion would also allow documents to be tabled or presented to the House in electronic format. For instance, members participating by video conference could table documents or present petitions or reports to the House in electronic format during Routine Proceedings. However, the documents would have to be forwarded to the Clerk prior to the members' intervention.

• (1255)

[*English*]

With respect to committees, the motion would allow members to participate in committee meetings remotely or in person on the condition that they meet the vaccine requirements set out by the Board of Internal Economy.

The motion proposes a process for recorded divisions in hybrid proceedings. The motion would bring the remote voting application back into use. This application was used successfully for over 120 votes in the second session of the 43rd Parliament. The remote voting application would also allow members to cast their votes safely, securely and conveniently. However, the motion takes a cautious approach. It would direct House administration to carry out an on-boarding process of all members, which would be completed no later than December 8, 2021. The remote voting application would be put into use no later than December 9.

Until the remote voting application was implemented, members of the chamber would continue to vote by standing votes, and members participating remotely would be called one by one to cast their votes. The motion proposes measures to ensure the integrity of the remote voting application. Votes would need to be cast from within Canada using a House-managed device. A member's visual identity would need to be validated for each vote. Any member unable to vote because of technical issues would be able to connect to the virtual sitting to indicate their voting intention.

[*Translation*]

Lastly, the motion also proposes a process for the supplementary estimates (B) for the current fiscal year.

The motion provides that, on a day appointed by a minister of the Crown, consideration of the supplementary estimates shall be taken up by a committee of the whole at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment. At the conclusion of the four hours allotted for consideration, the committee shall rise, and the estimates shall be deemed reported. This is the approach that was used at the beginning of the last parliamentary session because the composition of the standing committees had yet to be established.

It is important to note that the motion states that this method of operation would be in effect until June 23, 2022, the last day on the sitting calendar before the summer break.

[*English*]

The government is proposing a reasonable and pragmatic approach to ensure that members are able to participate in House proceedings while respecting public health guidance. This motion supports the fundamental role of members of the House.

The government has always recognized our essential role in representing our constituents and holding the government to account. The government has supported members in fulfilling this role since it came to power. The government has promoted free votes for members of the governing caucus and established the Prime Minister's question period. When the House was adjourned at the beginning of the pandemic, the government sought ways for members to fulfill their roles.

The former government House leader wrote to the Speaker to ask whether House administration would be able to implement virtual sittings. This is because the government wanted to ensure that the House could continue to hold the government to account during the pandemic. The House passed government motions in April and May 2020 to instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to study how members could fulfill their parliamentary duties while the House was adjourned during the pandemic.

The committee undertook two thoughtful studies on this issue. In its second report, the committee recommended a detailed set of standing order amendments that would codify procedure for hybrid sittings and remote electronic voting. The committee also proposed guidance for the development, testing and implementation of a remote electronic voting application. The committee's reports provided valuable guidance to the House and to House administration in implementing a hybrid sitting approach in September 2020.

I want to stress this point. The motion does not propose anything new. During the last Parliament, in the face of an unprecedented public health crisis, the House adopted creative and innovative ways to debate, transact business and make decisions using a hybrid approach. From September 2020 to June 2021, the House sat with members in the chamber and members participating remotely. All regular business of the House was conducted, including consideration of government legislation and private members' business.

During this time, 19 government bills received royal assent. This legislation has a real impact on the lives of Canadians. For example, Bill C-4 created three new temporary recovery benefits to support Canadians who were unable to work because of COVID-19. Bill C-9 put in place targeted support to help businesses with emergency rent and wage subsidies. I hope members will come together to support the important economic measures that the government is proposing in Bill C-2 to address the current phase of the pandemic.

Regarding private members' business, six private members' bills received royal assent and six private members' motions were adopted during hybrid sittings. This success shows that it is possible to consider legislation and other important matters in a hybrid approach.

• (1300)

[Translation]

A hybrid parliament would also allow for better work-life balance, especially for members with young children. During the debates on the Standing Orders and House procedure in February 2021, several members from different parties mentioned the importance of work-life balance. Several members also noted that the hybrid Parliament and electronic voting made it easier for them to juggle their various responsibilities during the 43rd Parliament. Allowing members to choose whether to take part in House proceedings in person or remotely would make it easier for them to balance their responsibilities at home and at work.

[English]

I certainly hope that all members of the House will pass this reasonable motion so that we can do our work in a safe way for our constituents.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House. It has been a mere few days for me as a newly elected member. I was sent to this place to get to work, not to debate the desire to hide in a basement. It was hugs on the other side on Monday, and we are debating hiding on Thursday.

How is it that the Prime Minister can call an election, criss-cross the country, campaign in hospitals and gallivant around Scotland with a delegation of hundreds at COP26? Why is it that 18,000 people can go see the Toronto Raptors win and the government cannot agree to have 338 members in the House? How does the member explain this to the good people of Ottawa West—Nepean, who sent her here?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Speaker, I have been in this House for six years, and I know that members in this House work hard every day. I find it both insulting and disingenuous that the member opposite would accuse any of us of wanting to hide in basements simply because we want to maintain public health measures. We need the flexibility in this place to make sure that we ourselves are not becoming vectors of the virus.

My riding is here in Ottawa. My constituents are working in the restaurants. They are the bus drivers and others. We are coming here from 338 ridings. I heard members on the other side suggest that members come in sick. I do not think there is a workplace in this country where employers would encourage their workers to come in sick. This could potentially spread the virus to those who work on the Hill and to my constituents working in downtown Ottawa.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your new role, and I congratulate the member for Ottawa West—Nepean on her victory.

To me, this debate is very much about the role of technology, not just now but throughout history, in allowing societies to be more productive and work in a safer way. I see the fact that we can use video conferencing as a way to continue to do our very important work but in a safer way. I think that all governments are encouraging employees, whether they work in offices or factories, to use technology, if they can, to work in a safer way.

Government Orders

Would the member not agree that the advent of video conferencing technology has, in many ways, not only allowed us to work more safely but also expanded the privilege of members? We know that some members might be absent for personal reasons. Perhaps they are ill, or they have an ill family member. Now they could continue to participate, whereas before they could not come here to speak and vote.

• (1305)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with my hon. colleague. The one thing that is absolutely vital about democratic institutions is resilience and the ability to modify and adapt to changing circumstances. Institutions, by their nature, need to reflect and adapt to the current environment they we are in, in order to serve Canadians.

My hon. colleague is absolutely right. The use of technology has provided a level of flexibility that serves Canadians even better.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your new position.

First, I would like to thank all the people of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, who elected me to this 44th Parliament and to a second term.

Let us be honest. There is a double standard in Parliament. We bicker and we talk incessantly. I think it is important to remember that we went out on the campaign trail when we did not want to. We stood before our constituents. We are all double-vaccinated. There were some interpretation issues.

The scientists speak for us. We are certainly responsible and must follow public health guidelines. Moreover, our position is aligned with public health measures, as I said before. I also have to say that we are using common sense.

Why has something smelled fishy since June?

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Mr. Speaker, our main responsibility here in the House is to protect Canadians and their health. We need to keep that in mind in everything we do.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that I have had the opportunity to stand in the House in this new Parliament. I will therefore take a minute to thank the voters of Outremont, Côte-des-Neiges and Mile-End for their renewed trust.

My constituents sent me here with a clear message. They want to see progress in the fight against climate change, and they hope that the housing crisis will be resolved, that gun control measures will be strengthened and that the economic recovery will be strong, green and fair. I am eager to start work on these issues.

*Government Orders**[English]*

As this is my first time rising in this chamber in this new Parliament, I would like to take a moment to thank my family, particularly my husband for his incredible support, as he is back home in Outremont with our young daughter so I can be here in Ottawa. I would also like to thank all of my volunteers and supporters, in addition to, of course, all of the voters in Outremont, Côte-des-Neiges and Mile End for their renewed trust and confidence in what was my third election in two and a half years. I will tell them, as well as all of my colleagues in the House, that I am just getting started here.

[Translation]

I am pleased to comment today on this motion to allow Parliament to operate using a hybrid format. As many people have mentioned, the pandemic is not over yet, and we need the flexibility that a hybrid system would provide. This system works. Our adaptability and ability to leverage new technologies enabled us to truly transform the way we carry out our parliamentary duties.

The hybrid Parliament allowed us to fulfill our obligations toward Canadians as elected officials, while protecting our colleagues and support staff.

I must admit that I am disappointed that the parties in the House were unable to reach an agreement on how we could adapt our procedures for this new session. I hope that we will be able to reach a consensus in the House to reinstate a hybrid system.

With this in mind, I would like to point out that the motion before us today would allow all members to decide whether to take part in proceedings of the House in person or by video conference. Each member would get to choose for themselves, and that is a very important point for me.

- (1310)

[English]

The proposal that is on the table does not prevent any member in this House from being here in person to take their seat, nor does it dictate when or how members can participate in the deliberations of this chamber. Members have the choice of participating in person if they wish. Giving maximum flexibility within the parameters of the public safety regulations that will be enforced is what this motion is all about.

This is important for me, as I know it is for other colleagues. Our ability to stand in this chamber to speak on behalf of our constituents is critical to me and to others, and it is entirely protected by the proposal put forward in this motion. What is also protected is the ability of members who may be symptomatic, or sick, or even members who were in contact with someone with COVID-19 and therefore need to isolate, to continue doing the job of representing their constituents and having the opportunity to vote and make their voice heard.

What I think I have been hearing from some of my Conservative friends is that, if I get a notice on my COVID-19 alert app saying that I have been in contact with COVID-19, then I cannot vote. That is ridiculous. I should always, always be able to vote. I should

not be denied the opportunity of casting my vote on behalf of the constituents that sent me there.

I believe those Conservatives speaking out against this motion are actually arguing that we need to limit the ability of members from participating in Parliament and doing our job. I ask them this: Why?

There is a way to ensure that through a hybrid formula, a virtual option, all of us can do the job of representing our communities. Why do they wish to deny that of me and other members? I do not know.

Nothing in this motion prevents us from interacting in this place in person, absolutely nothing. The motion simply provides the opportunity to those who cannot be here in person to continue doing their jobs, which is what Canadians have sent us here to do: our jobs.

[Translation]

As we know, the motion before us today provides that those who take part virtually will be counted for the purpose of quorum.

The motion also provides for changes to the Standing Orders to take virtual participation into account. For example, all references in the Standing Orders relating to certain requirements, such as the need for members to rise when speaking or to be in their place in the House, will be changed to take the virtual nature of the proceedings into account.

The motion also allows documents to be tabled or presented to the House electronically, and that is a good thing.

In the current circumstances, we must be innovative and flexible to continue to represent our fellow citizens as safely as possible. That is one of the reasons for this motion to create a hybrid Parliament.

[English]

I would now like to address the issue of safety and security, and I do not bring this up in the context of my own safety. I recognize that I have been sitting in this chamber of 338 seats. I also recognize, as is quite obvious to everyone now, that when we rise to speak, we take off our masks. However, what concerns me is not my own health but that we are each, as leaders of our communities right across the country, travelling back and forth to our constituencies.

We will go back to meet with and serve the people we represent this weekend. There will be the people we see at spaghetti dinners and the children at the community fairs. Those are the people who sent us here, and there is nothing more important to me than protecting them. When I hear that many, possible dozens as we do not know, Conservatives appear to have exemptions allowing them not to prove their vaccination status, I wonder what higher principle they are defending.

Government Orders

We know that only about 0.001% of people are expected to require a medical exemption from vaccination. That is what the science says. Therefore, I question what is going on here. Are those Conservative members fighting for an issue of personal freedom over the collective well-being? If that is the case, let us address that debate head on and not mask it, if members will permit the expression, with debate on whether the option of participating virtually in order to vote means that we are doing our job.

While I am, like many Canadians, happy to return to restaurants after showing proof of vaccination, and I encourage everyone listening to support our small businesses and our hospitality sector, and while I, like many Canadians, am happy to get back to work in person to see my colleagues and do the work that we know often needs to be done in person, I also want to ensure that we are not vectors for the spread of this disease to different regions of our country. We can do that most effectively by ensuring that there is, first and foremost, a strict vaccine mandate for those entering this chamber and also by providing options that would allow members to do their job from outside this chamber if they are experiencing symptoms or if they have been in contact with COVID.

• (1315)

[Translation]

The vaccination debate is polarizing, I know. We are all free to make choices, including personal choices about our health. However, some choices are simply unacceptable, like refusing to show proof of vaccination to enter the House alongside almost 400 people from around the country who are in contact with many other people.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member very much for providing her uptake on this.

To me, as I look at everybody in the chamber, we have met that benchmark. We have been told to do this or to do that. I am fully vaccinated. I have members within my own family who I have to ensure will be safe. However, when I am really concerned after being out, after a couple of days, I might do a rapid test. This is something we are asking of people who come here with these medical exemptions. We are asking that they have to test, and they are doing it. I am very concerned with the idea that members are talking about being able to have everybody here. I think that is very unfair.

As a mother, and I know that the member is very proud to be a mother, I go out grocery shopping, and people do not have to be vaccinated there. Those are different things that we need to think about. We need to be safe, but we need to work, and we need to be accountable. After 73 hours of filibuster, I do not think we are getting the work done this way. I am hoping the member can answer why it is safe to go grocery shopping but not to work here.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, what I am arguing is that I would like to ensure that all 338 members can work all of the time. If, when I go grocery shopping, as the member pointed out, with others who are perhaps not vaccinated, and my COVID alert app tells me I have been in contact with COVID, I should be allowed to vote. However, without passing the motion that is currently before this chamber, that is not a possibility.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. If the system proposed by the Liberals and, incidentally, the NDP, were a good one where everything worked perfectly, we would not be opposing it.

Unfortunately, it has had a negative impact on my work. There were countless technical problems in committee and, once again, it was the francophones who paid the price. I find it unfortunate that my francophone colleagues in the NDP and the Liberal Party are not making an effort to defend the French language.

We wasted time in committee. In a hybrid Parliament, I could not have discussions in the hallway like I did earlier, when I explained my point of view to the leader of the NDP in the lobby. Right now, this way of doing things is having a negative impact on our work. I would agree to this proposal if I could be sure my work would not suffer, but that is not the case.

Does my hon. colleague think that the right thing to do is to allow our work to suffer the consequences of the Liberal Party's proposal?

• (1320)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I believe that he is asking a very important issue about the functioning of our hybrid system.

Of course, in our last mandate, we were all in virtual mode. Personally, I hope that there will be more than 300 members, even 338, in the House. However, I would like to make one thing clear.

If someone cannot be in the House because they have symptoms or were in contact with someone with COVID-19, they must be able to continue carrying out their parliamentary duties and to vote. It is very important that we ensure they can do so.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Outremont for her intervention and speech. I am still a little surprised to see the Bloc Québécois joining hands with the Conservative Party.

It seems to me that by default the majority of members should be in the House to do their job. However, why not keep this option of a hybrid Parliament?

People could work from home, as we have for a year and a half. We adapted, society adapted. There is now a fourth wave in Quebec; there were 900 new cases yesterday and more than 5 deaths. We must continue to be prudent and thus keep this option.

What is my colleague's explanation? Why are the Bloc Québécois members rejecting this option?

Government Orders

If we must help interpreters with the French fact, the Bloc members need only propose that more resources be allocated to interpretation services.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have found common ground with my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I commend the Bloc's proposal to perhaps find more resources for the interpreters to ensure that everyone can understand and hear each other in both official languages.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

As this is my first opportunity to rise in the House, I will take a moment to thank the constituents of Mégantic—L'Érable for their support, the volunteers, and everyone who worked on the last election campaign. I am very proud to represent them in the House, in this chamber where so many things have happened over the past few years. I owe it all to them. I thank them very much.

We are gathered here today to discuss something very important, but we are also talking about something else that should have been left off the agenda. We are talking about the possibility of having a hybrid Parliament. The government chose to discuss this motion, in one of its first acts, by muzzling the opposition parties who want to discuss the best way to hold hybrid sittings and act for the people of Mégantic—L'Érable and all the other ridings.

The Liberal government chose to limit debate on its very first motion. That gives us an idea of what to expect in the coming weeks and months. It is all hypocrisy, with the speeches we have heard from a number government members since this morning, and especially from the government House leader. I will get back to this later.

It is pretty much the same thing with the NDP, who chose to support the Liberals in this closure motion. To a lesser extent, it is the same with the Bloc Québécois. At least the Bloc Québécois members agree that we should continue to be physically present in the House.

I will get back to this morning's comments by the government House leader. He was very eloquent, very loquacious, and especially very much the political hack. I do not know how many times he repeated that the Liberals are eager to get back to work. However, at the first opportunity, as I mentioned, they imposed closure on an opportunity to get to work to ensure that Canadians across the country have a voice in the House.

In his speech, the government leader wondered why the official opposition would refuse to give its unconditional consent for a hybrid parliament until June 2022, as we did the first time. The opposition is not the reason and that is not where the answer lies. If we do not consent, the government leader should rather look to his own side of the aisle. He should look around him to understand why the Conservatives cannot give their consent to today's motion, why they cannot blindly trust the government.

We want to talk about inflation, the labour shortage, the economic recovery, or the cost of living, which is rising at an alarming rate. We also want to hold the government to account for the CanSino agreement that deprived Canadians of the vaccine at the start of the pandemic, when they really needed it, for the lab in Winnipeg and the government's deliberate decision to keep important information from Canadians, and for the decision to trigger an election in the middle of a pandemic, an election that nobody wanted and that clearly showed that the Prime Minister is completely disconnected from what Canadians really want.

When he called the election, the Prime Minister even said that this would be the most important election since World War II. He was certain he would win a majority government. Otherwise, he would not have called an election. I can imagine the Prime Minister picturing himself winning the most important election in Canada's history. He gambled and lost. We still have a minority government, and Parliament has barely changed, except for a few nice surprises: some eager new Conservative members have joined us and are now here in the House.

• (1325)

This morning, the government House leader was getting melodramatic, saying that, by refusing to support this motion, the opposition was preventing Parliament from resuming its activities by delaying it by a day.

How much time did it take for the Prime Minister to recall Parliament after his failed bid to seize full control of the House? How long did it take before he met with members of his own caucus? One thing is certain: it took him far less time to organize a couple of days of surfing in Tofino. It took more than two months before the Prime Minister deigned to recall the House, two months after an election that nobody wanted but that was so important to him. Today, the Liberals are trying to make Canadians believe that time is short. I have never seen anyone so good at talking out of both sides of their mouths.

I would like to tell Canadians what went on in the House in the final months of the 43rd Parliament. When members were allowed to attend in person, in numbers set by the parties and the House in accordance with all public health guidelines, which parties showed up to represent their constituents? Which members came to the House in person? Which ministers looked the opposition parties in the eye and answered their valid questions?

I was sitting over here, and I asked questions every time the rules allowed me to. I asked questions about WE Charity, the Lac-Mégantic bypass and the labour shortage. We were used to hearing ministers read prepared answers, but what we saw during that period was worse than ever. The Prime Minister's lines came in so fast, it felt like the ministers were receiving their answers by email on their computers.

Government Orders

I sat here as often as the rules allowed, as often as the House wanted, and I noticed just how much the Liberals, by which I mean all of them, not just the members and ministers, preferred to stay in the comfort of their own home or even their office on the Hill a few feet away rather than enter the hallowed walls of this House.

The leaders had decided how many members of each party could sit here safely. We followed the rules to the letter. We were allowed about 20 members on this side. On the other side of the aisle, they were allowed about 30. Each time I came, I took the time to see whether people were following the rules. I would start by looking at the Liberal benches and counting the empty seats—

• (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell on a point of order.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election.

The member opposite rose earlier to drive home the fact that we cannot make reference to a member's presence or absence in the House, yet he is doing just that right now. I would ask him to withdraw his comments.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, in response to this point of order, I was not referring to any one member in particular but to all of the empty seats on the other side of the House. There is only one seat that was not empty and has not been for a long time, and I was happy to see that.

I did the same thing with the ministers, but I will not repeat what I said to avoid another point of order. However, I can say that the number was not one. It was zero. There was nobody here to look me in the eye and answer my questions. The ministers chose to respond on screen. They chose to answer on camera instead of looking me in the eye and answering my questions.

We are here to discuss a hybrid Parliament, and it is important to raise that issue. Today, the Leader of the Government in the House told us that, by some miracle, the ministers will be here and will answer our questions, and members have repeated that. However, the ministers could have been doing that for months now, but they have not done so. They have not shown up at all to answer the opposition members' questions. How can we trust them now?

The Prime Minister clearly likes crowds. People like asking the Prime Minister questions. However, do my colleagues honestly believe that the Prime Minister will show up in the House to answer questions at any time other than Wednesday without his scrum of supporters right behind him?

All members have the right to ask questions and to expect meaningful answers for their constituents. That is why, as the member for Mégantic—L'Érable, I will be here. I hope that all my colleagues, whatever their riding across the country, will follow my lead and want to show up on site, take their seats, and stand up for their constituents.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I have a quick comment on the point of order. I want to ensure that we all remember that we cannot do

something indirectly that we cannot do directly. We cannot infer things that we are not allowed to infer.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely perplexed by the last comments of the member. We would think he had not been here.

The Prime Minister was here answering questions for about four months without anybody behind him. Why would the member suggest that the Prime Minister will not come here, when he knows, to their own claim, that the Prime Minister was the only one who was physically present in the House?

Is the member aware of that or was he not working during that time? We were doing important work even though a lot of it was virtual. Perhaps the member was not doing anything and that is why he was not aware of the fact that the Prime Minister had actually been here participating and answering questions from this very chamber.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to reiterate that, much like we cannot talk about members being absent from the House, we also cannot talk about members being present. I want to point that out to my hon. colleague. If the Liberals are going to feed us that line, two can play at that game.

The most important thing to remember is that we have a unique opportunity right now to be here in the House to stand up for our constituents. I feel that is what people expect of us.

In the last election campaign, I did not meet a single constituent who congratulated me because I looked good on screen when I wanted to represent them. What people want is for me to be here in the House with my colleagues so that I can ask questions and, most importantly, make progress on my constituents' concerns.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do have some concerns. The member spoke about not working when we are actually online. During the beginning of this pandemic, we did have to be online to work. It was very important. I am very proud to say that I attended 100% of the online sessions of this place. I do know that many of my Alberta colleagues did not. In fact, some of them attended none.

I wonder if the member's actual concern is that his colleagues may not show up for work if we have an online session.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that my colleagues were there at every session we had the opportunity to attend in the House, whether they were from British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec or Ontario.

When we had the chance to be in the House to speak on behalf of our constituents, we flew or drove so that we could come and do our work where it should be done, in the House of Commons.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one thing has struck me since this morning and since we have been discussing this matter. It is the approach of the Liberal Party's farm team, meaning the NDP. Instead of attacking the government, the NDP is attacking the second opposition, the Bloc Québécois. That is quite something.

I wonder if this is not somewhat related to the fact that the former member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, Pierre Nantel, recently ran for a pro-independence party in Quebec City, namely, the Parti Québécois.

During his press conference, which I attended, Pierre Nantel said that for eight years, he had been a member of a party, the NDP. He said that he had worked hard to change legislation on the environment, the French language and culture, and that it had not worked. He went on to say that for eight years, he tested the system, Parliament and Canada and that on all these issues, there was only one answer: Quebec independence.

The question I want to ask my colleague is this: What does he think about the alliance between the Liberal Party and the AAA Midget team, in other words, the NDP?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, it is moments like these that make the House so dynamic: seeing colleagues debate back and forth, since we each have different interests to defend.

I certainly do not share my colleague's desire for independence. However, I too can see that there is a coalition. I would not go so far as to call the New Democrats "midgets", but there is a fairly obvious coalition between them and the Liberal Party.

[English]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise for the first time in the 44th Parliament. I want to congratulate you for your ascension to such a great chair and presiding over these important meetings. I also want to thank all the voters back in Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for putting their trust in me for the seventh time. I thank my family and, of course, all the great volunteers who worked tirelessly on our campaign.

This is such an important debate. The idea that again the Liberals, with the NDP, want to go back into their basements and Zoom Parliament is so disheartening. As someone who has been in the chamber since 2004, it is important that we have the opportunity to look each other in the eye, to carry on these discussions, to be empathetic and to read the room.

We cannot do that when we are sitting in a Zoom call. We cannot do that when people are shutting off their cameras and wandering away from the computer. They are not able to see every member in

the House. Nor do they have the ability to have the sidebar conversations with their colleagues on both sides of the aisle, with all parties.

For all the newly elected MPs sitting in the Liberal caucus right now, as well as our own MPs who were just elected, some of the most important work they will ever do for their constituents is by having the opportunity to approach the ministers right in the chamber, to pass them a letter from a constituent, to sit down and talk about a problem with an infrastructure project that may be under way in their riding or to talk about refugee files and immigration cases directly with the minister or the parliamentary secretary. When we try to do that on Zoom, people are just too busy and shut off the camera or mute their microphones.

That is not the way Parliament is meant to work. If we respect this institution, we will do what the people elected us to do in all 338 ridings. That means taking our place in the chamber, in our seats, and advocating for them publicly in this forum or in private sidebar conversations we can have in the chamber, in the lobbies or in the committee room.

One of the reasons the Liberals want to close down Parliament to in-person sittings is that it works so well for them to be non-transparent and not to be held accountable. A case in point is what happened to the Standing Committee on National Defence, which, in the last Parliament, was doing a study into sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces by former chiefs of the defence staff. The Liberals were able to use the argument that there were not enough House resources for the committees to keep meeting, and would suspend meetings indefinitely. They never had the ability to adjourn a meeting because they did not have consent, so chairs were instructed by the Liberal whip to just suspend, and the Liberals would leave the room.

When we had reports to write, when there were witnesses to be called, the Liberals would suspend the meetings indefinitely. Meeting 26 of the Standing Committee on National Defence was suspended from April 19 to April 23. It was the same meeting running over all those days. Meeting 28 was suspended from April 30 to May 7. Then they realized this was working so well that meeting 32, when we were trying to draft the report to come back to the House on how to deal with sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces, the Liberals filibustered committees and suspended meetings endlessly from May 21 to June 21. There were 21 sitting days, 505 hours of filibuster, and there was no report to table in the chamber. That is not only a failure of our democracy; it is a failure to the brave women and men who serve in our Canadian Armed Forces. We could not even get a report tabled in the House. That is not how Parliament is meant to work.

Government Orders

● (1340)

If there are going to be difficult conversations, then let us have those difficult conversations in committee. If that means committees are sitting for hours on end because of procedural moves that members will take, both in government and in opposition parties, to filibuster, let them talk it out. At some point in time a decision will be made. However, to use technology and the argument of the lack of resources from the House of Commons is no way to conduct the business of the people of Canada.

I know it is great to be at home with our families. It is great that while we are there, we can be a little more in touch with our constituents. However, during COVID there were not as many activities and events to attend. Some of that is starting to come alive again.

When we were door knocking, canvassing our constituents and asking for their support, they were not saying they wanted us to be at the Rotary club breakfast or to stop by the legion for the meat draw. It is great that we can do those things, but our constituents have elected us to be here.

Again, it comes down to this being all about the Liberals trying to cover up, not to be held to account and us not having the ability to interact with cabinet. One of the great things in our Westminster system is that the executive branch of government sits in the House of Commons with the legislators.

An hon. member: Not anymore.

Mr. James Bezan: No, not anymore, because the Prime Minister, who definitely does not like coming here, and it is debatable whether he even likes his job anymore, is trying to avoid listening to all the voices in the chamber rather than just who sits at the cabinet table.

It is so disheartening to see the New Democrats being the enablers. If NDP members are going to sit here and take their orders from the Liberal whip and House leader instead of standing up and being independent members, then maybe they should be telling all their constituents back home to vote for a Liberal instead of an NDP member. The Conservatives will be more than happy to put forward strong Conservative candidates in those ridings next time around, who want to be here, who want to serve the people and who want to carry forward the constituents' voices and the issues they need addressed in the chamber.

We can see the Liberals coaching the NDP members. It is great that their coalition is working so well and that they get along like that.

We are here to carry forward the voices of the people who elected us. We are here to protect this institution, which should be treasured by each and every one of us. While sitting in our basements and home offices, turning off the camera, turning it back on when we want and using the voting app might be convenient, that is not how democracy works. That is not how Canadians expect us to be. They are generous and charitable in how much we are remunerated for this job and they expect us to do the hard work, which requires us to be in our seats representing their views, their values and the important things in our ridings.

● (1345)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of points of clarification before I get to my question. One is that I do want to be here, but I want to ensure that the privileges of parliamentarians are extended in cases that they need to be. Second, the member for Mégantic—L'Érable who spoke previously poked fun at some of the ministers' responses to the questions they had to get by email. I sit on this side of the House and I think Canadians liked and were fine with the answers the ministers provided.

What about a situation where the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Immigration, the Prime Minister or our frontbench had exposure to COVID? By the Conservatives not allowing a virtual hybrid Parliament, are they not denying the accountability that they seem to want? I want to hear from the Minister of Finance when she answers questions, but we need to have that in case something, God forbid, does happen.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, the Westminster parliamentary system has survived for centuries. It has survived here with in-person sittings through pandemics, like the Spanish flu and SARS. Even if we have a situation where members of Parliament and cabinet ministers become ill, there is an age-old tradition called pairing that we could implement. We have parliamentary secretaries who can answer on behalf of ministers. We have ministers who can carry on with other portfolios in the short term for ministers who have to take a leave because of personal health reasons, which could include COVID. That is not a reason for shutting down the way democracy is supposed to work.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman that so many people have made this point in the House, but I want to put it to him so that he can check with the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. The Glasgow conference was not a hobnobbing event, nor did we rub shoulders. We were required not only to be double vaccinated, but also to take a daily COVID test to provide proof to the National Health Service before being admitted to the building, where we had to remain masked and were not allowed to fill plenary sessions. We were kept to a minimum number of people and worked at a distance in very unpleasant working conditions.

As I said, his hard-working colleague, the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, attended for the whole two weeks and I think will verify what I have said.

Government Orders

• (1350)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, we know for a fact that the people of Glasgow were quite concerned that not all countries required participants to be double vaccinated. They may have been testing daily with rapid tests, which is something we could do here quite easily, even for those of us who are vaccinated, but there is no reason we need to be doing things differently here.

If people can show up in the thousands in Glasgow and people can show up at football stadiums and hockey arenas, why can we not be sitting in this chamber? It is completely baffling to most Canadians to see the Liberals and the NDP arguing against having in-person sessions.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to engage with my colleague from the Conservative Party and insist that science must dominate all our considerations. There is a new wave on the horizon and a third dose of the vaccine may be necessary. In Parliament, I think we can come to an agreement on appropriate measures so we can meet in person.

I would like to know if my colleague believes that a third dose could provide the ideal solution for this Parliament.

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I can say that my wife, who is a nurse, is scheduled to have her third shot of Pfizer. In Manitoba, I will have the opportunity in the new year to get my third shot of Moderna. There are great opportunities for all of us. We could administer some of those vaccinations here in Parliament. In the past, we have offered the flu shot in Parliament to all members. All we had to do was walk across the hall, go into one of the side rooms and one of the nurses would be there to give us a vaccination.

There are advantages to being here and allowing us to be at the same level of protection. Many of us want to make sure that we are taking all the proper precautions to protect each and every one of us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

I will begin by taking a moment to congratulate you on your appointment to the chair, Mr. Speaker. It is good to see a fellow Nova Scotian in the chair. I wish you good luck for the day ahead.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all the staff and people involved who allowed parliamentarians to participate in the 43rd Parliament. I want to thank the interpreters in particular, especially now, as I know my French is far from perfect.

Today we are here to talk about government Motion No. 1 to create a hybrid Parliament.

I had the privilege of sitting in the House for the first time after the 2019 election. I had roughly 12 weeks of parliamentary sittings before the world changed completely. I remember taking the plane home on March 12, 2020, and we were thinking this might last two

weeks. Of course the situation was far more serious than we thought. The Atlantic provinces restricted travel and ended up creating the Atlantic bubble. I had to quarantine for two weeks to come back and take my seat in the House of Commons.

The hybrid Parliament system allowed me to do my job when I otherwise would not have been able to. Would I rather have been in Ottawa in person? Absolutely, but the circumstances forced us to work remotely. Although it sometimes felt isolating, I think we all need to remember that we were privileged to have been able to work remotely.

• (1355)

[*English*]

When I look at this motion, I truly believe that it is reasonable. Let us identify some of the realities of where we are today.

COVID is still prevalent. We are still in the midst of a global pandemic. The United Kingdom, just three days ago, reported over 40,000 cases on that day alone. We see in Europe that in some situations there is truly a fifth wave occurring right now and variants remain a challenge.

While we are in a different situation than we were over a year ago and members of the House are able to gather, the reality is that provincial and territorial health protocols still dictate that if an individual is exposed to COVID or contracts COVID, they are required to isolate for two weeks. This motion at its fundamental core is about allowing individual parliamentary privilege.

I have had the opportunity to be here all morning to talk about this motion, and I stress this point to my colleagues: I want to be here in person in Ottawa. I will commit publicly that I will be here in Ottawa. However, what if something arises, like my fiancée is exposed? I mentioned to my colleagues that she is a lawyer in Halifax. She works with her colleagues. What if one of them is exposed and she is required to self-isolate? Do I want to potentially bring COVID back to my colleagues as we sit shoulder to shoulder in the House? I would like for my colleagues not to be exposed to COVID-19, although my preference, of course, is to be here.

Today, the Conservatives seem to be talking a lot about accountability. I just asked a member opposite about those in our front bench, such as the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I want to hear from them. If members have questions, I want to hear the ministers respond. They will have the opportunity, if God forbid they are exposed to COVID, to be able to do so virtually. Otherwise they would not be able to participate.

Right now the member for Beauce has been exposed to COVID-19 and is unable to join us. That is a sin. He should have that opportunity, and that is exactly what this motion seeks to do.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]*

There has also been a lot of talk about the work of members of Parliament. As I mentioned earlier in my speech, I had 12 weeks before the world changed and the parliamentary precinct as we knew it had become fundamentally different. If members look at the Hansard record or the committee evidence, they will see that I was absolutely working, as were all of my colleagues on this side of the House and indeed, I presume, on the other side of the House. However, it was done in a virtual manner.

Do I take the point raised by some of my colleagues in the debate here that there is a benefit to being together? Absolutely; I do not disagree. However, why is there such a restraint on the other side of the House to allow flexibility, given the fact that we are still in the midst of a pandemic? I look around and see masks everywhere, which is a sign that we still have to protect one another against COVID-19, so I have real difficulty in understanding why there is such hesitation on the side opposite.

[Translation]

I am proud to be the chair of the Liberal rural caucus. There is one very important part of this motion about holding votes at specific times in the week, but I have not heard much talk about it. Many of our colleagues from rural regions do not have transportation options to travel to Ottawa. Not only are these provisions fair and equitable for them, but they are also reasonable for all members.

• (1400)

[English]

I had the opportunity to speak to the Minister of National Revenue this week, who is also the member of Parliament for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. It is quite a struggle for the hon. member to get to Ottawa. She is dedicated and will be here, but she does not have the ability to get here by plane the same way. She has to go from her riding to Quebec City to Montreal and then to Ottawa. Members like her need to have the ability to participate.

I see I am coming to the end of my time. I look forward to continuing this after members' statements.

* * *

COMMISSIONER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: Before we continue, it is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 23(5) of the Auditor General Act, the fall 2021 reports of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), these reports are deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

COLD WAR VETERANS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Remembrance Day, we honour those who fought for our freedom at home and abroad in times of war, military conflict and peace. However, many veterans of the Cold War, which dominated global relations from the end of World War II to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, often feel their vital role in national security is overlooked. That is why this November I want to thank my constituent, Cape Bretoner-turned-Burlingtonian Patrick Ryan, and others like him who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Cold War.

During the Cold War, the former Soviet Union was a global threat. Canadian Armed Forces members constantly guarded against Soviet bombers and submarines that carried nuclear weapons and probed our defences. Cold War vets protected our nation from imminent threats that many of us never even knew existed.

I thank them for their service. Lest we forget.

* * *

NORTH OKANAGAN—SHUSWAP

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to return to the House as the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap, and I thank the voters, volunteers, family and friends who supported me here as their voice. Like so many British Columbians, my constituents have persevered through the pandemic, wildfires and flooding that have ravaged our province. Now more than ever, they need action and results and I am here to be their voice.

Seniors are struggling with grocery and home heating costs while the current government claws back their OAS benefits. Indigenous communities need clean water and housing. We need resources for mental health and overcoming addiction. Hard-working families continue to face housing insecurity and mounting inflation. Workers need training opportunities, and employers need a government that will work with them, not against them.

I am here to be the voice of all constituents of the North Okanagan—Shuswap, and I will pressure the government to listen.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to use my first statement in the House to acknowledge that my children and I have the honour to live on the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people. It is our collective responsibility to work closely with indigenous peoples in our communities and advance reconciliation.

[Translation]

We have a responsibility to work with indigenous partners toward reconciliation.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

Whether their family came to this land six generations ago or they are a recent immigrant, this is every person's responsibility as a citizen.

As someone who has lived in Canada for 32 years and as a father, I recognize my duty every single day to seek out the truth, and as a settler to learn from elders and work with indigenous leaders and communities toward reconciliation.

Here in my riding of Ottawa Centre, there are local organizations like the Tewegan youth housing, Gignul housing and Tungasuvvingat Inuit that are serving indigenous communities through access to housing, vital resources and support. We have a lot more to do, but I believe that Canadians are determined to walk the path toward reconciliation.

In the words of Algonquin grandfather, the late Chief William Commanda, "We must come together with one heart, one mind, one love and one determination."

* * *

● (1405)

*[Translation]***QUEBEC FARMERS' UNION**

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 16, we learned that Martin Caron, a dairy farmer from Louiseville who has been involved in the union for 35 years, will officially become the new president of the Union des producteurs agricoles on December 2. I am therefore extremely proud to tell you today that the next president of the UPA is a resident of Berthier—Maskinongé and that his land is very close to my riding office.

Mr. Caron is a man of conviction. I am sure that he will make a difference. I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to him. I also want to acknowledge the extraordinary contribution of Marcel Groleau, who served as the president of the UPA for 10 years. During that time, Mr. Groleau was able to make agricultural information more accessible to the general public and promote the interests of farmers and, by extension, the interests of all citizens, since we must always remember that we are nothing without agriculture.

Congratulations to them both and long live the agricultural community.

* * *

HOCHELAGA

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all the members on being elected or re-elected. It is an honour and a huge privilege to be back in the House. I would like to thank the people of Hochelaga for their renewed confidence. I am very proud to be representing them in the House for the second time, a responsibility I take very seriously.

My riding is made up of several neighbourhoods: Hochelaga, Maisonneuve, Longue-Pointe, Mercier-Ouest and Rosemont East. These neighbourhoods have repeatedly asked us for more affordable housing, more green spaces, support for people experiencing

homelessness, a strong social and economic safety net and a collaborative approach to sustainable, inclusive development.

I would like to conclude by thanking my children, Keyla and Ianko, my family, my friends and my entire campaign team. Alex, Rose, Rime, Arnaud, Ariane, Victor, Malia, Camille, Laurence, Sébastien, Béatrice and Maxime, I would not be here without you. I thank you for your support, engagement and dedication. We certainly have our work cut out for us. Let us do it together.

* * *

*[English]***SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS**

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian doctor David Card was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics last month for his pioneering empirical approach. He shares the prize with two other economists.

David, the son of Yvonne and the late Ted Card, grew up on a dairy farm in Wellington County, just down the road from where I grew up. In fact, we both worked at different times for the same farmers long ago. He is now a professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley. We are proud of the contributions this great Canadian has made to the field of human knowledge.

This is the third Nobel Prize awarded to a Canadian from southwestern Ontario in the last 10 years. Alice Munro of Wingham was awarded the prize in 2013 and Donna Strickland, formerly of Guelph and now of Waterloo, was awarded the prize in 2018. These three Nobel prize winners are a reflection of the industriousness, hard work and creativity of the people of southwestern Ontario.

* * *

FRASER MCDUGALL PRIZE

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to share the news with members of the House that one of my constituents, Rachel Watts, a fourth-year journalism student at Carleton University, is the recipient of this year's Fraser MacDougall Prize for best new Canadian voice in human rights reporting. This prestigious prize is awarded to an exceptional piece of student journalism with a human rights focus. Rachel's winning entry, entitled "Pandemic intensifies silent sorrow of Canada's asylum seekers", was a truly compelling and insightful piece on a vital and timely issue.

Rachel possesses a rare gift for the written word and an ability to capture a subject in a way that is capable of engaging public opinion and influencing public policy decisions. Indeed, this is the role and power of great journalism. Rachel Watts is clearly on the cusp of a promising and exciting career as a journalist. I just want to be clear that this statement is very much meant to be on the record.

HEART DISEASE AWARENESS RIDE

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to say congratulations on your re-election as Speaker of the House and also to thank my husband, kids, family, campaign team and volunteers for their support, as well as all the residents of the beautiful riding of Mississauga—Streetsville for giving me the honour to serve them.

There are many who heed the call to serve a greater purpose in life. For some, it happens because of great loss. Adam Hoerd, from Mississauga—Streetsville, is biking across Canada to raise awareness for arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy. He built a family support network in Canada and supports research into ARVC. It is a disease of the heart muscles that can lead to life-threatening heart rhythms that cause sudden cardiac arrest in young, otherwise healthy Canadians, often without warning.

I had the chance to meet him and his team, where I learned his story. His wife died suddenly at the age of 31, and his son, 23, has been left in critical condition by the disease. Adam's stoicism and activism are inspiring, and I encourage everyone to learn more and support the foundations of a future where this disease is beaten.

* * *

• (1410)

B.C. FARMERS

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the constituents of Foothills for once again showing their trust and confidence in me to be their member of Parliament and their voice in Ottawa. It is an honour.

It is these same constituents who faced the BSE crisis and the 2013 flood. The road to recovery was long and arduous. It is heart-breaking now to see farm families in B.C. facing their own crisis. Dairy, pork and poultry producers have lost thousands of animals. Fruit growers have been decimated, and B.C. farm families face a challenging and long road to recovery. I thank the service clubs, the volunteers and the military for doing all they can to help, and groups like the Do More Agriculture Foundation for offering their services.

I am asking the agriculture minister to announce a comprehensive and accessible assistance package for these farmers as soon as possible. The impact on the financial and mental health of B.C. farm families would be profound.

This is no time for them to be alone, and they are not. Canada stands with them.

* * *

[Translation]

ALFRED-PELLAN

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your re-election.

It is so nice to be back in the House, surrounded by the dark green of our workplace, after so long in virtual mode.

For my first statement in the House during this 44th Parliament, I want to say thank you 24,516 times to the people of Alfred-Pellan.

Statements by Members

The confidence they have placed in me for a third time fills me with pride, humility and a sharpened sense of responsibility.

[English]

Since October 19, 2015, I have been a trusted partner for my community and I am committed to continue being so.

[Translation]

I am committed to working with local people, community organizations and businesses. It is for them, first and foremost, that I continue my work in my community of Alfred-Pellan. I am confident that together, we are moving Canada forward.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, internationally one in three women is subjected to physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. That is roughly 736 million women around the world. Nationally our numbers are not much better. In Canada, three out of 10 women aged 15 years or older have experienced sexual assault. That is 30%. That is one-third of all women in Canada. These numbers should deeply upset Canadians, and especially us as parliamentarians. They should motivate us for real, tangible action.

Today marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the beginning of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. This year's theme is "Orange the world: End violence against women now". Orange is the colour used to represent a brighter future, free of violence against women and girls. If we work together, we can make this future a reality.

We all have a part to play in ending violence against women. We need to come up with a concrete plan that provides the necessary resources, funding and support for women and young girls facing violence. To ensure safer communities and a safer Canada, we need to do better.

* * *

THE HOLODOMOR

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Saturday marks the 88th anniversary of the Holodomor genocide. In 1932-33, Joseph Stalin's brutal Soviet regime used food as a weapon to exterminate upwards of 10 million Ukrainian men, women and children. At its height, Stalin's starvation edict killed 28,000 Ukrainians per day in 1933.

Statements by Members

To illustrate the extent of the Holodomor genocide in modern times, imagine if in Western Canada all the food was forcibly removed from all homes, produce, crops and livestock were seized from farms and all the grocery shelves were stripped bare. Then let every man, woman and child slowly starve to death in Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. That would be the equivalent of the evil perpetrated on the Ukrainian people by Stalin and his communist thugs. The Ukrainians' only crime was being patriotic. Ukrainians wanted to keep their language, culture and traditions.

Today, Ukraine's very survival is threatened by Putin's kleptocratic regime, which is amassing Russian tanks and troops on Ukraine's border. This Saturday evening, I invite every Canadian to light a candle in remembrance of the millions of lives lost and honour those who survived.

[Member spoke in Ukrainian and provided the following text:]

Vichna yim pamyat.

May their memories be eternal.

* * *

● (1415)

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): Mr. Speaker,

Uqaqtittiji, qujannamiik.

I speak today on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Indigenous women experience significant more violence in Canada. On September 1, 2016, the national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people began its work.

Three years later, on June 3, 2019, after many testimonies across Canada, the commission published its calls to justice. Two Inuit women in Montreal and in Nunavik were recently lost to violence. These deaths were preventable. These deaths are evidence of incremental justice, a practice that is unjustly a norm in Canada.

To my colleagues in the House, I ask that we make implementing the calls to justice a priority. Indigenous girls, women and two-spirit people are loved. They must be strong, use their voice and keep defending their rights.

Qujannamiik.

* * *

[Translation]

ANTONINE MAILLET

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable woman and ambassador of francophone literature, Acadian author Antonine Maillet, who was honoured in Paris yesterday. She was awarded the rank of commander of the Legion of Honour, and it was the French President himself who handed her the insignia. It is the highest distinction awarded by France to a person who is not a French citizen.

Many of us know Antonine Maillet for her famous character, La Sagouine, who has charmed us on stage and on television. Her award-winning literary work includes dozens of treasures of a richness and depth that transcend far beyond just a few titles.

Ms. Maillet was the first Canadian woman to win the Prix Goncourt, in 1979, for her novel *Pélagie-la-Charrette*, and is now part of a very exclusive club alongside Marcel Proust, André Malraux and Simone de Beauvoir, to name just a few. Through her writing and storytelling talents, Ms. Maillet has been showcasing Acadian and francophone culture around the world for over 60 years.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois and the entire francophonie, I would like to salute Antonine Maillet for her exceptional contribution to the French language, to Acadian identity and to literature.

* * *

[English]

44TH PARLIAMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP was spotted in a TikTok video, sitting on a swing, plucking daisy petals. He was heard whispering, “Do I have a coalition with the Liberals, or do I not? Do I have a coalition with the Liberals, or do I not?”

With the upcoming vote on the Liberals' latest anti-accountability motion, Canadians will get to see, in prime time, just what kind of dance these partners have planned. It certainly will not be a western swing, but more likely the job-killing jive, the shutdown shuffle or the inflation waltz.

A Liberal-NDP coalition will be an absolute disaster for Canadians, who are already struggling to get by because of the skyrocketing cost of living due to the Prime Minister's reckless spending. This coalition promises to wreck the economy, kill jobs and raise costs for Canadians. The Liberals and the NDP are the dance partners Canadians cannot afford.

Will the Prime Minister get his wish and form a coalition with the unprincipled NDP? Tune in tonight to witness what the final pull of the daisy petals will reveal.

* * *

● (1420)

NIAGARA ATHLETE

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am extremely proud to recognize the accomplishments of Port Colborne lifelong resident and cycling athlete Anna Tykoliz. Starting with a bicycle built for two that she shared as a teenager with her future husband, Wally, Anna eventually excelled in the cycling disciplines of mountain bike, cyclocross, road, individual time trial and criterium racing.

Her most recent master level results include gold medals and Canadian championship titles in individual time, road race and criterium back in September 2021. Only Anna's commitment to training during the COVID-19 pandemic has allowed her to accomplish these historic results. She trained indoors and outdoors in all weather conditions to reach the required fitness level to succeed.

Anna is not just a role model for her children, Jay and Janet. She has also set an example for the entire Niagara community.

The Speaker: Before going to Oral Questions, I just want to remind all the members that Statements by Members are 60 seconds. I let them go a little longer and some of them went a little longer. It is good news, wonderful news for the most part, coming from ridings, and I just want to make sure we do not cut anyone off.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Prime Minister went to Washington. Last night, Canadians got hit with new tariffs on softwood lumber. The price of everything is going up, and now more Canadians are seeing their jobs threatened, from B.C. to the Saguenay to New Brunswick.

President Biden said that Canada is his easiest relationship. When will the Prime Minister stop being such a pushover?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber industry is a source of jobs and pride for Canadians across our country. We are extremely disappointed by the unfair and unwarranted decision of the United States to increase the duties it imposes on softwood lumber. This issue was raised, of course, by the Prime Minister at his meeting with President Biden. I have raised it with Secretary Yellen, as have all of our colleagues, and we have pointed out that these duties are adding to the inflation tax American consumers are paying.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, another thing the Prime Minister pointed out was electric vehicle subsidies. He failed on that too. He failed on Keystone XL; he was months late standing up for Line 5, and now we have mill workers having their jobs threatened just before Christmas, workers who already cannot afford this Liberal economy.

Is the Liberal government going to stand up for Canadian workers or just keep selling them out?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to standing up for Canadian workers, they know who is prepared to take a tough line, and they also know who is not—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am having a hard time hearing the answer. I am going to ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to start from the top so I can hear the whole reply.

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to standing up for Canadian workers, they know who is prepared to take a tough line and who is not. They remember that the man who is now the leader of the official opposition, during our 232 tariff fight, publicly called on us to drop our retaliation.

He thought we were being too tough. We were not; we won, and we will win this fight too.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Prime Minister's new foreign minister will rectify the failures of the Deputy Prime Minister when she was in that role.

Now the Prime Minister has stopped our potato exports because of threats from the Americans. More threats does not sound like a friend to us, and it is nice that the Prime Minister informed the U.S. State Department before he informed the premier of P.E.I.

Farmers, foresters and factory workers are all being failed by the Liberal government. Will failing the Americans be a chapter in the Deputy Prime Minister's new book?

• (1425)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will leave it to Canadians to judge the success of our NAFTA negotiations and of our successful fight to have the illegal 232 tariffs lifted. We won that fight.

Now, I do want to say something specifically to the potato farmers of P.E.I. I grew up on a farm too. I know how important farming is to our communities. Our members of Parliament, our ministers and our Prime Minister are fighting for P.E.I. potato farmers, and we are going to get this done.

[Translation]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Prime Minister went to Washington. Last night, Canadians were slapped with new tariffs on softwood lumber. The cost of everything is going up and an increasing number of Canadians in the Saguenay and northern Ontario are seeing their jobs threatened.

When will the Prime Minister stop failing Canadians in his dealings with the United States?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, softwood lumber is a key industry for Canada. Our government will always be there for softwood lumber workers.

The opposition leader need only talk about the aluminum industry to his neighbours. We were successful in opposing the section 232 tariffs and we will be successful in this matter.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every job is a key job.

Oral Questions

The U.S. tariff on softwood lumber has doubled. The Prime Minister has let down farmers and workers for six years with one failure after another. Inflation is a real crisis affecting gas, groceries and housing. Families and seniors are worried.

When will the Prime Minister decide to make life more affordable?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know perfectly well that inflation and affordability are a serious challenge for Canadian families. We also know that this is happening around the globe as the world faces the challenge of reopening the global economy after the COVID-19 shutdown.

Our government is there with policies like child care services and our affordable housing plan. We supported Canadians during the COVID-19 recession. We are going to help them through the COVID-19 inflation crisis.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we made progress yesterday on Ottawa-Quebec relations.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister explained to us, and I quote, “in Canada, in a federation, we have something called provincial jurisdiction”. Kudos to him, I say. He went on to explain that there are things the federal government can do, but other things that only the provinces can do because they fall under their jurisdiction.

Now that we all finally understand that, and I am hoping the Prime Minister understood his own words, will he transfer the money needed for health care to Quebec?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that I cannot win at wordplay in French with my esteemed colleague from the Bloc Québécois, but I hope that he understands that our government sincerely wants to work with the Bloc and the Province of Quebec to help Quebecers. We have demonstrated this desire and will continue to do so.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government refused to commit to increasing health transfers in the throne speech. Worse yet, the government does not even seem willing to commit to talking about it.

The Bloc Québécois is suggesting that the government hold a summit to have a public discussion on health care funding. That is the least the government could do after what happened during the pandemic. The government has no choice, yet it still cannot commit. It is a world record.

This government is totally disconnected from reality. When will the government organize this summit?

• (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague in the Bloc, I remind him that our government has been supporting Quebecers since the beginning of the pandemic, and team

Canada has been working to protect all Canadians, including Quebecers, against COVID-19.

We contributed a billion dollars towards a successful vaccine rollout across the country. We have an agreement regarding day cares. We want to continue working together, and that is what we will do.

* * *

[English]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are in the grip of a climate crisis; we are feeling the impacts of it and we need immediate action.

The Liberals claim that their fossil fuel subsidies help reduce emissions. It turns out the Auditor General has just confirmed that is not the case. In fact, they are not reducing emissions.

Why will the Prime Minister not just finally end all fossil fuel subsidies and invest that public money into renewable energy and creating good jobs that help us fight the climate crisis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with the leader of the NDP, and I hope with all members of this House, that climate action is urgent and essential. That is why we are committed to eliminating fossil fuel subsidies by 2023. That was in the climate plan that we ran on during the recent election campaign, and I would like to point out, with the greatest respect for all of my colleagues, that a raft of independent experts found our climate plan to be the best.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are in a climate crisis, and it is hitting us hard. We need to take action, and fast.

The Liberals claim their fossil fuel subsidies reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but the Auditor General said that is not at all the case.

Why is the Prime Minister not ending fossil fuel subsidies and investing public money in renewable energy to create good jobs that will help us fight the climate crisis?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree with our NDP colleagues 100%. I hope that all our colleagues, including those in the Conservative Party, can agree that the climate crisis is real and that we all need to step up to fight it. That is why our government is committed to completely eliminating fossil fuel subsidies by 2023.

*Oral Questions**[English]***CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS**

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, something very puzzling just happened. President Biden just doubled the tariffs on Canadian softwood lumber in spite of two things: the World Trade Organization, which came out in favour of Canada, and the Prime Minister of Canada just meeting with President Biden days ago. This will undoubtedly hurt Canadian forestry workers, who are already struggling during this difficult time.

Has the Prime Minister considered the uncertainty that this constant failure to manage Canadian-American relations will have on other industries, such as auto manufacturing and agriculture?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we, of course, are very disappointed with the result of the administrative review that will increase tariffs for the Canadian softwood lumber industry and forestry sector. This is an issue that we take very seriously. We will continue to defend our workers and our forestry sector.

What the opposition member says is correct. The WTO, as well as panels in NAFTA, found Canada to be fair in its trading practices. We will continue to fight for Canadian workers and forestry workers all the time.

• (1435)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if a doubling of tariffs is what defence looks like from the government, I would hate to find out what its definition of success is. It is just crazy. The tariffs have been doubled. It has been six years. I think the Liberals have gone through five foreign ministers and four international trade ministers in the last six years. They have not been able to get anything done, and it was doubled. This is going to hurt Canadian forestry workers. We cannot have these platitudes anymore.

This is rotation number six in the minister's office. What is going to be different this time, and when are we going to get justice for Canadian forestry workers?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the forestry sector and its workers are extremely important to our government, and we will continue to defend their interests to the Americans. We raised this issue with the President of the United States last week. I raised this issue with my counterpart, the United States trade representative.

I think this government's record in standing up for Canadian businesses, in negotiating a trade agreement that works for Canada and improves North American competitiveness, is the record that we stand on. I will not take any lessons on asking us to capitulate to the former president.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's softwood lumber crisis has not yet been resolved. The Liberal government has gotten into the habit of off-loading responsibility. Its excuse was that it was hard to negotiate

with the former president, which is funny because we on this side of the House knew it was going to be very hard with the new president.

Now that the Americans are doubling duties on Canadian softwood lumber, what excuse will the federal government come up with this time?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this issue is top priority for our government. It is why we have pursued litigation under chapter 10 of CUSMA. This is only possible because our government fought hard to keep the dispute settlement mechanism in the new trade agreement so we can stand up for Canadians, just like we are doing now.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives urged Canada to capitulate to Donald Trump's demands and to settle for a weaker deal. Unlike the Conservatives, our government will always have the backs of Canadian businesses and workers.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, relations with the United States are getting worse every year, even with a new president. It is time to realize that the problem is not on the other side of the border. It is here.

These new tariffs are another brick on the back of Quebec and Canadian business owners. On top of that, Canadians are seeing prices rise everywhere. The additional tariffs are making the situation worse.

What excuse does the government intend to give Canadians and Quebecers now to justify its failure with the Americans?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not going to take any lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to defending Canadian interests. When we retaliated against unfair U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs, the leader of the opposition urged us to stop fighting back. When we were negotiating for a better CUSMA deal, the Conservatives wanted Canada to capitulate to U.S. demands.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Our government has consistently stood up for Canadian businesses and workers. We are going to keep doing that every day.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I heard something. I have a good idea of where it came from, and it was not very parliamentary. I am not going to point anyone out, but I am sure that it will not be repeated again.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that Canada's standing in Washington has declined. The Prime Minister committed to a renewed relationship with the Biden administration. Instead, we got electric vehicle tax credits that threaten our auto jobs, stringent buy American policies, measures targeting our dairy farmers, actions against pipelines that have contributed to skyrocketing energy prices and now a doubling of softwood lumber tariffs.

It is clear the Prime Minister does not have a close working relationship with the President. What is the government going to do about this?

• (1440)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will do precisely what we have done successfully with two previous American administrations. We will state our case clearly and rationally.

We will also make it very, very clear that Canada is prepared to retaliate to defend national interests. We have done it before. We will do it again if we have to.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister could not get a phone call with the President to informally resolve Line 5. Instead, he had to formally invoke a treaty to get a meeting with the White House. The Prime Minister visited Washington last week, and instead of coming home with some issues resolved, he came home with a doubling of the softwood lumber tariffs.

It is clear the Prime Minister does not have a close working relationship with the President. What is the government going to do about this?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will start by refuting assertions that are simply untrue. The Prime Minister has a very strong, very effective working relationship with the President. I was there. I saw it in action. I saw their extensive tête-à-tête where important issues were raised.

I want to tell the House this: We came home, and we continued working. I and all of my colleagues have been in touch with our American counterparts following up on that very effective meeting.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in light of the shooting deaths of innocent people like Thomas Trudel, age 16, and Meriem Boundaoui, age 15, Quebec City and the mayor of Montreal have asked the federal government to tighten the borders against firearms trafficking.

Instead of saying, "Yes, let us work together," the Minister of Foreign Affairs blamed Valérie Plante, saying that this needs to be a priority for the City of Montreal too.

The police seized more guns in Montreal last year than the federal government did at the border across all of Canada. Instead of being condescending, why does the minister not promise action?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her new role. I hope that we will work well together.

My heart goes out to the family and friends of Thomas Trudel, who was taken from our community far too soon. This is an unacceptable tragedy.

We are focusing on stopping the flow of firearms across our borders. During the election campaign, we promised to invest at least \$1 billion to help the provinces ban handguns. We will continue to do that in co-operation with the Government of Quebec.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the Quebec minister of public security, who said, "Guns do not just magically end up in Quebec. They come across our borders, which are the federal government's responsibility."

Every government must do its part. It is up to the federal government to tighten the borders. If it does not do so, then there is not much point in working on prevention and banning illegal guns on our streets. The federal government needs to work with the partners involved, including the first nations, to secure every inch of the border.

What is the government waiting for? When will it take action against firearms trafficking?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has already taken real action. We have made investments at the border. We plan to ban military-style weapons, and we will continue to make real investments in co-operation with the Government of Quebec.

As I said yesterday, our door is open if the Quebec government wants to work with us, and I am very pleased to work with my colleague.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us call a spade a spade. What is happening in Montreal is a gang war. It is a war that is causing an escalation in firearms trafficking and shootings in our neighbourhoods. It is a war that is creating innocent victims: teenagers. We saw this in Montreal before and said, "Never again." We need a federal government that takes its responsibilities today. We must do whatever it takes to prevent firearms from circulating in our communities.

When will the government do something about this?

• (1445)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has already taken meaningful action. Protecting the safety and security of Canadians is our government's top priority, but we know that far too many lives have been affected by gun violence.

To reduce gang violence in our streets and our communities, we must focus on combatting the social inequalities that may lead to crime.

As I have already said, we will continue to make investments and take firm action against gun violence.

* * *

[English]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has a history of making promises to Canadians and not following through. An example of this behaviour happened last week when the Prime Minister travelled to Washington. If the Prime Minister did mention softwood lumber in his meeting with President Biden, it is obvious the President does not care what the Prime Minister has to say.

Following the Prime Minister's trip to the U.S., the U.S. commerce department doubled duties on Canadian softwood lumber. This is devastating to the industry. Why did the Prime Minister not use his one-on-one time with President Biden to resolve this dispute?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first begin by saying I welcome the opportunity to continue working with my hon. colleague in his critic file on trade, and I look forward to that work.

Softwood lumber, the forestry sector and its workers are extremely important to Canada. It is an issue that was raised not only by the Prime Minister with the President, but also by me with my colleague in the USTR. My colleagues have raised this with their counterparts as well.

I would like members to know that it is an issue we will continue to work on to defend the interests of the sectors and the workers. We will continue to do that, and I look forward to working with my colleague.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these actions by the United States are a serious threat to Canadian jobs and the Canadian economic recovery after the pandemic. These unfair duties hurt Canadian businesses and workers.

The government must take a clear and strong stand with the Biden administration to defend Canadian workers and the Canadian industry. Softwood workers want to know what the Prime Minister's plan is to end this dispute. What is his plan to end this dispute?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will remain focused on defending the sector and its workers. Within the forestry sector, I have had an opportunity to

Oral Questions

spend time with workers as well as the industry. We are working together on this and using a team Canada approach. It has proven to work well when we are able to work with those who are directly affected.

We will continue to push and work with the Americans, as well as with Canada's sectors, but know that we will always defend Canada's interests.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sometimes the lessons we do not like are the best lessons learned. It was over six years ago that the hon. member for Abbotsford negotiated the last softwood lumber agreement we had in Canada.

Now, due to Liberal inaction, the Biden administration has doubled the tariffs, and the workers in my riding, where mills have been shut, are wondering when the Liberal government will give them a step-by-step process, a plan of assurance, to keep them in their homes, to give them a job, to give them a way to protect their families and provide for them. When are we going to get—

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely share the impassioned plea that my colleague and the member opposite have shared. We, too, want to ensure that Canada's forestry sector and its workers are absolutely defended. We have said consistently that these tariffs are unfair and unwarranted, whether at the CUSMA panel or at the WTO. We have litigated this and in those litigations Canada has won. We have been deemed to be fair trading partners. We are going to keep standing up for those workers and the forestry sector.

* * *

• (1450)

HOUSING

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after six years of the Trudeau government, one in three Canadians cannot afford to buy a home. In my riding, most of the new housing is luxury condos. A home should not be a privilege accessible to only the wealthiest. We need truly affordable housing, housing that is accessible to everyone, and Canadians need it now, not in five or 10 years.

Will the government finally commit to making truly affordable homes a priority in the upcoming budget?

The Speaker: Before I go to the minister, I want to remind hon. members that when referring to someone in the government or to someone's government, we refer to them by his or her title or riding, but not by name.

The hon. minister.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home.

[English]

Since coming to office, we have addressed the housing needs of a million Canadians. In the recent throne speech, we have introduced a \$4-billion housing accelerator fund and an innovative and groundbreaking rent-to-own program. We will work to make sure that more Canadians have access to affordable housing by working with the municipalities to increase the housing supply and with non-profits to acquire land and buildings.

We have worked with all our partners through the national housing strategy. We know there is more work to be done and we are determined to do it.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the start of the pandemic, the unhoused population in Edmonton has doubled. In ridings like mine, which is home to one of the largest urban indigenous populations in Canada, the housing crisis hits especially hard. However, the Liberals failed to include a “for indigenous, by indigenous” housing strategy in the throne speech. They have been promising to address the issue for years, but still are not backing up their words with action.

Will the minister finally commit to delivering a strategy to help indigenous people in desperate need of affordable housing?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it is my first time to rise in the House, I want to thank the constituents of Thunder Bay—Superior North for electing me yet again for a third time.

It is with a profound sense of responsibility that I assume this role as Minister of Indigenous Services. So many indigenous people live in the communities I represent, and I am so proud to have this role.

Absolutely, housing is a priority, and I look forward to working with indigenous partners on an indigenous-led, specific strategy to improve housing no matter where one lives in the country.

* * *

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 exacerbated the realities of gender-based violence across the country. Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the start of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. It is a time to reflect and renew our commitment to ending violence against women, girls and people of all gender identities and expressions.

Would the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth please update the House on how our government is addressing the prevention of gender-based violence?

Hon. Marci Ien (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank

the member for Hamilton Mountain for her work and also for her advocacy.

Today, we take time to remember our mothers, our sisters and our daughters taken from us because of senseless, preventable violence. No one should face violence for who they are, yet for far too many women, youth and people of all gender identities and expressions, this is their terrifying reality.

GBV must not and will not be tolerated in Canada. We introduced the first-ever federal strategy to address GBV. In budget 2021, \$3 billion over five years will advance initiatives to prevent it. I look forward—

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

* * *

*[Translation]***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for three years, the Prime Minister told Canadians that it was impossible to close the Roxham Road crossing. However, during the pandemic, all of a sudden, miraculously, we stopped letting illegal migrants cross. This proves to Canadians that it can be done if there is the will to do it.

Since Sunday, the border has reopened to illegal migrants from the United States. Why?

● (1455)

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member can appreciate the exceptional nature of a once-in-a-century pandemic that required exceptional measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to save the lives and protect the well-being of Canadians in our communities.

As the public health imperative changes, we have domestic and international legal obligations that we will meet in a way that respects the dignity with compassion of asylum seekers, and we will do it in collaboration with our provincial counterparts in the Province of Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand very well. Throughout the history of Canada and the United States, Canada has always welcomed immigrants, people fleeing their country because of poverty or war.

In this specific case, we are talking about people leaving the United States and coming to Canada. In January 2017, in response to Donald Trump's actions, the Prime Minister told them to come to Canada. Joe Biden is the President of the United States now. Is there still some reason we are telling people in the United States to come to Canada illegally?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the origin country of an asylum seeker does not change the legal obligations that the federal government is required to meet, both domestic and international. Further, I find language is being used to spark fear and division among Canadians and to turn them against people who are showing up at the border. We will treat some of the world's most vulnerable people with compassion and respect, and put in a fair, rules-based system that will provide a fair and final result as we adjudicate their claims.

* * *

LABOUR

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sectors across Canada are grappling with labour shortages.

A BDC report has found that 64% of companies say that difficulties finding workers are limiting their growth. RBC reported that over one-third of businesses are having problems finding employees, resulting in 870,000 vacancies across Canada. Businesses need workers to make money.

What is the minister doing to resolve these labour shortages?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some sectors in Canada are actually outpacing their ability to find workers, and that is because of the strength of our economy. That is why, through budget 2021, we made the largest investment in training for workers in Canadian history to help them reskill to meet the needs of employers.

Moving forward, we have a plan to address these labour shortages by welcoming talented workers to Canada, keeping experienced workers in the workforce, boosting the participation of diverse Canadians in the skilled trades and addressing the specific needs of evolving sectors.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week I listened to, read and reread this Liberal government's Speech from the Throne.

Unfortunately, it does not mention the labour shortage that is plaguing all of Quebec, including my hard-hit region, Chaudière-Appalaches. That is a veritable scandal, especially after we held an election for absolutely nothing.

Will the government commit to working with the Conservative members from Quebec to find solutions to the labour shortage for our Quebec businesses?

Oral Questions

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that some industries are unable to find workers.

We have a plan to address the labour shortage by welcoming talented workers to Canada, keeping experienced workers in the workforce, boosting—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am sorry to have to interrupt the minister, but I cannot hear her.

I would ask the minister to start over so I can understand everything she says.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, we understand that some sectors are unable to find workers.

We have a plan to address the labour shortage by welcoming talented workers to Canada, keeping experienced workers in the workforce, boosting Canadians' participation in the skilled trades and addressing the specific needs of evolving sectors.

* * *

● (1500)

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was bad enough that the United States was imposing duties on our softwood lumber, but now Washington is thumbing its nose at us by doubling its already unfair duties.

Ottawa was supposed to get the United States to eliminate duties altogether. Amazingly, the opposite happened: Washington doubled them.

This is utterly appalling, especially since Quebec's forestry industry has been an exemplary trading partner and the United States has no quarrel with our producers.

What is the government doing to protect Quebec's forestry industry? Does the government understand that it cannot let itself be bullied like this?

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely right. This is a very important sector to Canada and to Quebecers. I want to assure him; I want to assure forestry workers and I want to assure the forestry industry that we will continue to defend them. These duties are unjustified, they are unfair and they do hurt workers on both sides of the border. I have communicated this to my counterpart.

We are going to continue to stand up for the Canadian forestry sector, and we are going to keep doing this work.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS**

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since I am absolutely right, I will go on. I hope I will be absolutely right again.

What is going on in the United States is very worrisome. Ottawa was supposed to get rid of softwood lumber duties. Washington's response? Double those duties. Ottawa was supposed to lobby for exemptions to protectionism in the electric vehicle sector. Washington's response? Add another layer of protectionism.

In the space of one week, our main trading partner behaved more like an adversary twice. The government used to blame it on Trump. Now that Biden is in office, whose fault is it?

I have to wonder if the problem might be the Liberal government.

[English]

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me answer the other question that the hon. member raised with respect to electric vehicles. This was very much a top priority in the discussions we had with Washington last week. The Prime Minister has had them, as have the Deputy Prime Minister and myself, along with colleagues.

We are going to continue to find solutions that work for Canadians. Whether it is on the EV issue or on the softwood lumber issue, we are going to be there every step of the way. We are going to work to find solutions that are going to be acceptable to Canada, to our industry and to our workers.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in October, Pollara Strategic Insights reported on systemic racism throughout the IRCC. The report highlights the mocking of racialized employees, calling a department known for having a lot of ethnic employees as “the ghetto”, and references to certain African nations as “the dirty 30”.

What faith can anyone have in the new immigration minister to solve issues of racism in IRCC and its toxic workplace when he could not even stand up to the Prime Minister for doing racist blackface?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on an issue as important as addressing systemic racism in the public service, we need to ensure that we behave like adults when we are having conversations. I thank the hon. member for the very responsible conversation that we were able to have just a few hours ago, where it was not framed in necessarily quite the same way.

The reality is systemic racism is a real threat, not only to the victims who are subjected to that racism but to the ability of the government to perform at its full potential. I intend to follow through on the IRCC's plans to implement an anti-racism task force. I will make sure that this is not just window dressing but provides everyone with a safe and effective place to come to work.

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a new mom, I am very well aware of how expensive having a baby can be. The cost of many items, like diapers, is getting more expensive under the Liberal government.

Ever-increasing inflation is making life more expensive, from gas to groceries and everything in between. When will the Prime Minister recognize the inflation crisis and help the many families that are struggling today?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to congratulate my new colleague, who I know is a new mother. I am looking forward to working with her to make life more affordable for families.

In fact, I am really pleased to announce in this House that just a week ago we were in Alberta to announce \$10-a-day day care. Not only are we working to make life more affordable for families in that member's riding, but as of January 1, they are going to see a reduction of 50% in fees. Here is to fighting inflation and working for families.

● (1505)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, universal child care is a promise that has been made and broken by Liberals since I was in grade school. Forgive me for not necessarily trusting the Liberal government.

The cost of necessary everyday items, like diapers and formula, is rising. Affordability in child care is a priority for many working families, but so is feeding their children and keeping the heat on.

Will the Prime Minister at least acknowledge that these massive increases to the cost of living are being caused by your government's policies?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us just reflect on the fact that, as of January 1, an agreement between the Province of Alberta, Premier Kenney, and the Government of Canada is going to bring a 50% reduction in fees for families in Alberta.

For some families in Alberta that means an additional \$600 or \$700 a month. That is going to mean a lot for their bottom line, to give their children the things they need today and into the future.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I just want to remind the hon. members that when placing a question or even answering one to place it through the Chair, not to the Chair. I assure you that I have no government here.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

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COVID-19 ECONOMIC MEASURES

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tourism, arts and culture, and hospitality sectors are key economic drivers in my riding, Acadie—Bathurst. They create thousands of jobs and contribute to the local economy. They also allow people from across the country and around the world to see why I and so many others are proud to live there.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly difficult for these sectors. That is why the work our government has done to keep them afloat has been so critical to their workers.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us about the ongoing support we are providing to those sectors in my riding and across the country?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst for his work and for this excellent question.

Thanks to the hard work of all Canadians, we are on the road to economic recovery, but some regions of the country still need targeted support. That is why we are proposing the new tourism and hospitality recovery program, which will provide support to hotels, tour operators, travel agencies and restaurants through wage and rent subsidy programs.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the finance minister on her flip-flop today. She had said that deflation was a bigger risk to Canada than inflation. Now that Canada has the second-highest inflation rate in the G7, higher than the eurozone and higher than most of our competitors, and the second-highest housing inflation of any country on earth, she has admitted that we have an inflation crisis. I congratulate her for finally waking up to that.

Will she acknowledge that this inflation is, in fact, a homegrown problem?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that Canadians understand that inflation is a global phenomenon, and here are some numbers to back that up. Inflation in Canada in October was 4.7%. In the United States it was 6.2%. In Mexico it was 6.2%. In New Zealand it was 4.9%. The G20 average is 4.6% and the OECD average is 4.6%. This is a serious global challenge, not a made-in-Canada problem.

• (1510)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us just see about that. Land does not have a global supply chain. It was supplied by geological factors many millions of years ago, and yet land prices in Canada have gone up by 20% in one year, giving Canada the second-highest real estate inflation on planet earth. It is ahead of every other nation on earth, except for New Zealand, a phenomenon that really kicked off after the finance minister began flooding markets with cheap cash and ballooning prices.

Is that not a homegrown problem?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives may not want to listen to me about inflation, but I suspect they read the National Post, so let me quote what a Post columnist had to say this week: “Inflation is...a global phenomenon. It is being influenced by external factors like supply kinks and global bond yields.”

The National Post was likewise unimpressed by the antics of the member for Carleton, describing him as “charging out of his corner, arms wind-milling”. I suspect that will be the judgment of most Canadians, including the conservative readers of the National Post.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it would be impossible to listen to what she has to say about inflation, because before today, she had not even mentioned the word. She suggested that we would have deflation. As for the claims of her Liberal media friends, they are disproven by the fact that countries all over the world, including five of the other six G7 countries, have lower inflation than Canada, and every country on earth has lower housing inflation than Canada except one.

Given that we are doing so much worse than our competitors, will she finally admit it is a homegrown problem?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to address one of the assertions of the party opposite's members, which is that our spending during the COVID recession was inappropriate. I want to ask them to be honest with Canadians, and I want them to tell Canadians whether they really believed that COVID lockdowns were the time for austerity. Canadians know that supporting them during the COVID recession was the right thing to do, and they know better than to trust Conservatives to have their backs during a crisis.

*Points of Order***CHILD CARE**

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that affordable child care is not a luxury; it is a necessity. It is also essential for our robust economic recovery. Parents in Brampton are eager to get moving on improving our early learning child care systems.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development please update us on the government's work to ensure affordable and accessible early learning and child care systems are implemented across Canada?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, affordable, quality and inclusive child care is good for kids; it is good for parents and it is good for our economy. Sixty percent of children in Canada are now covered by provincial agreements with the federal government that will see \$10-a-day child care in the next five years. That is nine provinces and territories where parents will see their child care fees cut in half next year. I am looking forward to adding Ontario to this list soon so that parents in Brampton and across Ontario will also benefit from this transformational federal investment.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, militarized police once again descended on Wet'suwet'en territory. The world watched as unarmed indigenous women were arrested at gunpoint. I have heard from dozens of indigenous leaders who are horrified by what happened.

To the minister responsible for the RCMP, do the events of November 19 reflect his view of how Canada should engage with indigenous people on their lands and, if not, what is he going to do to review RCMP conduct?

- (1515)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said earlier this week, we expressed concern at the way in which the operation was conducted in the Wet'suwet'en territory. I have said that we are going to continue to monitor the case very closely.

Of course, as members will know in this chamber, elected representatives do not direct operations; nor is it for elected representatives to adjudicate the merits of an individual case. That is a job for the courts. However, our job will be to ensure that there is alignment between the values and the principles that underscore the responsibilities of the RCMP and those operations. We will do that job.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, COP26 has ended, not with a bang but with a disappointing whimper, and 1.5°C might still be alive, but we must all do more globally. That means that, in Canada, the plans that have already been put in place have to be believable; they have to deliver results.

Today's report from the Commissioner for Environment and Sustainable Development that Canada has 30 years of failure on climate focused on this new program, emissions reduction fund, through which, after the government spent \$70 million, the Auditor General is unable to find whether a single tonne of carbon was reduced.

Can the hon. minister update us on how this program can be fixed?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome the report by the commissioner, and my officials are presently reviewing its recommendations. While we agree with a number of the commissioner's observations with regard to ongoing programming, one must remember that this particular program was a temporary COVID response measure and was intended to do two things: sustain jobs for workers and communities at a time of record low energy prices and ensure continued action on methane pollution at a time of economic crisis. This program has succeeded in those two elements, but we are now beyond the worst of COVID, and the oil and gas sector has certainly improved in terms of economic prospects. We have now commenced a review of the future of this program and the remaining funding.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé is rising on a point of order.

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POINTS OF ORDER

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you made several calls to order during question period and I thank you for that. However, as this Parliament begins, I would like to point out a situation that already occurred in the last Parliament, that I hope will not become a tradition: heckling during members' statements under Standing Order 31.

Members are elected by the people, and each of them has as much right as anyone else to make a statement here in an environment that is at least somewhat quiet. If people do not want to listen, I can understand that. However, those same people should not, like they did today during my statement, have discussions that are so loud I can hardly concentrate. It is a good thing I am good at it, because it was very hard to do.

Mr. Speaker, I would like you to remind the House and ask members to be more vigilant on this issue in the future.

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member.

Since we are in a place where debates are taking place, so that everyone can hear the person speaking, I would ask the people currently holding discussions in the House to please move to the hallways or the lobby.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I hope that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that given that tomorrow is Make Amazon Pay day and in light of the fact that Amazon, despite record profits as a result of pandemic profiteering, does not pay its fair share of taxes; has a clear anti-labour record, including in Canada, where workers trying to unionize faced retaliation; and has abysmal environmental practices, including a carbon footprint the size of entire countries, the House call on the government to stop coddling the ultrarich by refusing to properly tax Amazon while giving it cushy government contracts. It is time to make Amazon pay.

• (1520)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to get back to the truth with the habit we have in the House of Commons of the Thursday question between both House leaders.

[Translation]

Allow me to officially congratulate you on your election, Mr. Speaker. We have demonstrated in the last four days that Parliament is working well.

What does the government have in store for us in terms of parliamentary work in the coming days? That is my question to the hon. government House leader.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. I love questions, but I especially love the Thursday question.

I can say that tomorrow we begin debate at second reading of Bill C-2, an act to provide further support in response to COVID-19, which was introduced yesterday by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

[English]

On Monday of next week, we will resume debate on the COVID-19 economic measures legislation. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, we will have a debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ORDER RESPECTING THE BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE AND ITS COMMITTEES

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kings—Hants has three minutes remaining.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we talked about the opportunities of the 2019 class in the previous Parliament. One opportunity I did not have then was to give a speech that ran out of time just before we went to members' statements, so I will try to pick up where I left off.

I was explaining that as the chair of rural caucus for the governing party, I have had the opportunity to speak to my colleagues. I mentioned the Minister of National Revenue and that I had spoken to her about the challenges she has in being able to get to Ottawa because there is not the same availability of flights. I am tying that back to the provisions of the motion under consideration right now, which allows us to look at certain votes and make sure they happen at certain times of the week. It is responsible, it is equitable to members from far-flung parts of this country who are not within driving distance and it is a reasonable piece.

I also want to mention to my colleagues who have been expressing some level of concern over the motion that this is time limited. As I have said, we are in the middle of a pandemic. I look around and I see people with masks on. We know that COVID still exists, but the motion is not going to continue indefinitely. It has a date of June 23, I believe. I do not have the text right in front of me, but it is June 2022. It is a reasonable motion to make sure that we can continue debate.

Some of my colleagues may not have been in the chamber before question period, but I mentioned that I intend to be here. However, I want to make sure that all of my colleagues and I have the ability to practise our parliamentary privilege in the event that one of us or someone close to us contracts COVID. The fact that the member for Beauce has COVID-19 right now is a prime example of that. I want to make sure that his privilege is protected in the House, and I fail to understand completely why there is such opposition in the House to the motion that has been put forward.

I will leave it at that. I would welcome any questions from my colleagues if they have them.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really do respect what the member is bringing to the table and understand the importance. I know that many of my colleagues have brought forward the option of pairing, making sure that if someone's vote is not able to be counted, we can pair or do something of that sort. There have been many options.

I have sat through a hybrid Parliament. I have sat through PROC, where we saw so many issues with interpretation. We understand that there have been medical conditions.

Government Orders

I wonder why the member is not asking why we should not test when we come in. Why are there not options other than just having a hybrid Parliament?

• (1525)

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, we know that testing is part of the COVID response, but testing alone is not always going to pick up instances where COVID-19 exists.

The member mentioned the hybrid Parliament. Again, I would dare say that the majority of the members, if not all the members, prefer to be here, but we are still in the midst of COVID-19. We have to make provisions for members if they do contract COVID-19 so that they can participate.

The member mentioned pairing. I would not want to take away anyone's ability in the House to come here physically, if they choose to do so, because I contracted COVID-19, and then get them to ask a member from the official opposition or from one of the other parties not to physically show up. I would rather have the ability to tune in from Nova Scotia. I say this regrettably because I would rather be here, but I still want the opportunity to bring the voice of my constituents to this place.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, as we saw in the Speech from the Throne, we have a government that talks the talk but does not walk the walk. We have a government that talks about science, but that does not act on it.

Can someone explain to me why the City of Montreal, the Quebec National Assembly, the City of Toronto and the City of Winnipeg can offer their citizens functioning legislatures and municipalities while here, in Ottawa, we are told it would be impossible?

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

The examples he gave were local ones. The City of Montreal, the Government of Quebec and other local jurisdictions. This is the Parliament of Canada, and members come from all across the country, from coast to coast to coast. I think it is in the best interests of members to have the option to participate virtually when necessary.

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is the first time I am speaking in the House, I want to thank my constituents for putting me back here for the second time.

I have a couple of really quick yes-or-no questions for the member opposite that I am confident he will actually answer, unlike maybe his colleague from Winnipeg North. First, would he say that it would be preferable for the rhetoric in the House to be toned down, yes or no? Second, would he agree that it is a lot easier to build relationships in person than it is through a hybrid Parliament?

Finally, I have a comment. The member should talk to the member for Winnipeg North. He spoke yesterday during this debate about extending the motion past the June timeline.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member opposite for his re-election to this place. I was taking

notes, and yes, of course it is preferable to be here. As a new member, I felt like I was not able to fully participate because of the COVID pandemic. It was isolating at times to be at home.

To his point about building relationships, I agree. In fact, I built many good relationships with the members opposite, particularly at the agriculture committee and the public accounts committee, in the last session.

I will continue to be here in person, but I want to make sure that members have the ability to continue their privileges in the event that they are exposed to COVID-19 or their partner or a family member has to isolate. They should still have their privileges. We can continue to have respectful decorum and relationships, but we can also protect members' privileges when necessary.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in the 44th Parliament to once again represent the great people of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. That is in Nova Scotia, of course. I want to thank them for electing me for a third time and giving me the privilege of continuing to represent them, speak on their behalf and advocate for them and all of the communities in my riding.

I also want to thank the volunteers in my riding who came out to support the democratic process and do the work that is so important in delivering the message of Canadians during an election. What we were committed to is how to deliver that. That is really important.

Finally, I want to thank my family, because we all know that when one of us is running, the whole family is in it together. It is a challenge, but it is an enjoyable experience and I would do it again, maybe.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

I am very pleased to speak to the motion we are debating today, to bring back a hybrid Parliament, and in particular to speak on social topics such as our working and private lives.

More and more studies are showing that a flexible work environment has a lot of advantages. For example, it can reduce stress and increase satisfaction at work, on top of increasing productivity, which is a very important consideration.

Canadians continue to develop this work-life balance. I think COVID-19 has shown that people can be very productive and successful in this type of system.

A recent survey of Canada conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development reported that decision-makers should look at implementing policies that would help Canada achieve a resilient and healthy post-pandemic society.

That is also why we promised during the election campaign to amend the Canada Labour Code with certain very important principles in mind. We want to strengthen the code's provisions to better support women who must be temporarily assigned to other duties during their pregnancy, include mental health in workplace health and safety standards, require employers to take preventive measures against stress and the risk of workplace injury, provide all federally regulated workers with 10 days of paid sick leave and work with federally regulated employers and groups representing workers to develop a policy on the right to disconnect, which would let workers disconnect without having to worry about their job security.

Since March 2020, the pandemic has forced us to change how we work and, to a certain extent, to reinvent work. An unprecedented number of Canadian employers have had to adapt and be more flexible over the past 20 months. Accordingly, telework and virtual schooling have led to huge changes with many positive effects. Virtual schooling has existed for quite some time and the pandemic has done much to advance this essential virtual programming.

Despite the many benefits of teleworking, the closure of schools and school day care centres caused additional stress for many parents. That is why our government strongly believes in the right to disconnect. We are doing everything we can to manage the pandemic and accept that a return to normal will require a healthy work-life balance.

The House of Commons Administration also demonstrated tremendous creativity and adaptability. It did an outstanding job delivering a hybrid parliament in such a short time. For 150 years, we had no other way to vote than to be physically present in the House. Suddenly, thanks to the exceptional work of the House of Commons Administration, we managed to do it, and we will be able to use this system for years to come. That is what it means to learn and to make the most of a difficult situation.

The motion we are debating today is very similar to the one we discussed in the last Parliament. Yes, the vaccination rate has increased, the Pfizer vaccine has been approved for children aged 5 to 11 and the third dose is available. However, the situation is still precarious, and the number of cases is increasing because of the season, as we are going into winter. We are already seeing those numbers go up across Canada, and that is why we need to find ways to make this work.

It is extremely important that we be able to work. Whether it is from this building or elsewhere, we must be able to work. Whether we vote here in the House or elsewhere, we must be able to vote and represent our constituents. If we find ourselves at home an extra day to participate in an important activity in our community, that is even better for our constituents. That is our job; we have done it before and we will continue to do it in the future.

• (1535)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. After listening to it, I am wondering whether he actually wants the hybrid model to become the usual practice. Is that really what he wants? Our role, the reason why we were elected, is to come to Ottawa to debate and legislate. That is why the people of Shefford elected me.

Government Orders

I have a little story to tell. Tuesday evening, I went to the Bell Centre to see the Genesis concert. There were thousands of people there. I showed my vaccine passport, washed my hands and wore my mask. I never felt unsafe. If the Government of Quebec is allowing thousands of people to gather when proper health measures are followed, can my colleague explain why we cannot do the same here?

Is a Genesis concert more important than our role as parliamentarians?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments, and I want to congratulate her on getting re-elected.

There is absolutely nothing in this motion that says that she cannot come to the House if she wants to. She has the right to come here every day. What is important is that she can do her work here when she has to be here, and if something really important comes up in her riding that she is involved in, then she can be there to help promote projects that are important to her constituents. She will not lose her right to vote.

I once had to leave the House for 36 hours while my wife was having surgery. I missed 22 votes because there was a marathon of votes. Is that right? Did I have the democratic right to vote? Was I representing my constituents? No.

With the proposed model, we will be able to do that.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that my hon. colleagues across the aisle continue to talk about science. I am not sure how many scientists there are over there, but that is a whole other matter.

It is important that we look at this. We have never done this before, besides last year. How many people really know that it works? Is it effective? Have we really studied it? We have not. I think it is a shame that after 150-odd years of Parliament in Canada we allow the opposite side to control the destiny of democracy in Canada without any study at all, and to say that this is a virtual Parliament that is going to go on forever.

When are we going to look at the science that all the Liberals continue to speak about?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Nova Scotia for being elected to the House of Commons. As he knows, we represent people and communities. It is our responsibility no matter where we live to support them. I congratulate him for being here.

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I know my poor colleague was not here in the last six years, when the party across the floor refused to listen to science. Even today, it is still refusing to listen to science. Just because we did not do it for the first 150 years does not mean it is not good and we cannot do it. That is what is very important. This is an opportunity to allow us to do our jobs even better.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his speech.

Something made me prick up my ears. I am a whip, I helped create the hybrid Parliament and I am going to say quite frankly that it is a temporary tool to get through a pandemic. I am hearing that telework is becoming more and more popular, that it is flexible and so on.

Am I hearing that the government wants to change how Parliament works? That it wants to fundamentally alter Parliament just like that with one motion? A story cannot be changed. Telework is practical, but parliamentarians are elected to sit here in the House.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, once again I want to thank my colleague for her question and comments.

She needs to understand that the motion before us does not say it is forever. That is not how I read it. Like my colleague said earlier, I understand that it lasts until June 23, 2022. That is what the motion on the table says, and my speech reflects this motion.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ) Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to let you know that I intend to share my time with my delightful colleague from Laurentides—Labelle. I would like to wish her a very happy birthday once again. She turned 23 yesterday, so I would again like to wish my colleague a happy birthday.

I hope you do not mind, Madam Speaker, if I take this opportunity to recognize the people who supported me during the campaign this autumn. I am thinking of the family members who, by force of circumstance, have become our most fervent volunteers and our most fervent admirers. I am thinking of our teams around us and, above all, we are thinking of the voters who have given us their trust. As we all know, sometimes we can say that the first time is perhaps an accident, but I can confirm that the second time is a mark of confidence that is appreciated all the more.

My thanks to all the volunteers who worked on my campaign, I see them not only as thanks, but also as a prelude to what I am about to discuss, because this team was on the warpath for months preparing for an election that was coming, we did not know when. That is always what happens in a minority government. They were also called upon to reinvent themselves, according to the somewhat overused term we heard during the pandemic.

We also wondered why the Liberals called an election during a pandemic. In Parliament, we even voted on a motion stating that it was irresponsible to hold an election during a pandemic, but that clearly did not bother the government since it went ahead and called one anyway.

One also has to wonder what has changed so much since the time of the election and now, since during the election it was fine to travel from one province to another and the borders were not closed. What has changed so much that we now need to adopt a hybrid system of Parliament?

As far as I know, things have improved somewhat and some restrictions have been lifted. Restaurants are able to welcome more customers at a time and there are no longer any limits on the number of people allowed at theatres. We stopped limiting the number of people who can go into the grocery store at one time. I do not think that things have gotten so bad that we have to go back to a hybrid system of Parliament.

The current situation is not ideal. The ideal situation would be if there were no pandemic. However, there is one and we must live with it. In this context, I would say that the Bloc's proposal for how we should work during the pandemic is the most balanced and the most reasonable: The 338 members would return in person and everyone would provide proof of double vaccination. That is the closest to what we are seeing in all societies that have put in place strict health measures.

The arguments made by my colleague from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook to justify hybrid sittings do not entirely have to do with the pandemic. This further bolsters my belief that we are being fed false arguments and that the pandemic is but a pretext to avoid returning to the House and being accountable to the people we represent. I find that there are false pretenses behind this.

I hear arguments about sick leave, maternity leave or snow storms. I am not saying that those are not legitimate concerns, but now is not the time to be talking about them, and during a pandemic is definitely not the time to be having this debate. Last summer I sat on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, where we nailed down the ins and outs of a hybrid Parliament. During our discussions, we said that it was not the time to be making these kinds of arguments for a broader discussion on a hybrid Parliament. I get the feeling that this is what people are doing here today.

The motion will clearly be adopted and the hybrid system will soon be back. People are telling us that a hybrid Parliament is so important because they are worried about their health and want to be safe. I do not think there is any guarantee that the people we see on Zoom will spend the rest of the week in their basement, avoiding meeting with constituents, turning down meetings, not going to bingos or spaghetti suppers, and not campaigning in their ridings while they are supposed to be here, in Parliament.

• (1545)

I really want to stress that hybrid sittings mean we lose the natural, organic contact with our colleagues that we have seen over the course of these four sitting days. We lose the opportunity for one-on-ones with a minister, a colleague, a critic or a fellow parliamentary committee member. That kind of thing is not easy on Zoom.

The same thing happened in parliamentary committees. Not only are Zoom committee meetings more arduous, but they also do not afford members the opportunity to glance at a colleague in a way that says, “Let us meet at the coffee station to discuss something” while still following the conversation. Zoom meetings are not nearly as effective.

I think the biggest downside of all is lack of accountability. That may be why government members are the ones who seem most keen on the hybrid model. Virtual attendance means no reporters waiting for them on their way out of the House of Commons. All they have to do is click on “Leave” to dodge any accountability to the fourth estate, the press.

We also forget the work of the support staff, who we burned out by using the hybrid model. I am thinking about the IT group. We have to tip our hat to them because they performed miracles, but we wore them out by using the hybrid model so much. I am also thinking about the interpreters, whose sound quality during Zoom meetings was quite bad most of the time. We exhausted them as well. Returning to normal would do them a favour.

I am anticipating certain questions, so let me answer them immediately. If I answer them ahead of time, then my colleagues will not need to ask them. I invite them to come up with other questions to ask me.

We have been asked how this will work if the situation deteriorates while we are in normal mode. In that case, we will do the same thing as last time. We will turn things around in 24 hours and bring in a hybrid Parliament, especially now that we already have the necessary technology.

There have also been questions about how we will know if the situation has gotten worse. We will just have to look at what is going on in the provinces and in Quebec. Any new lockdowns would be an indication that the hybrid system should be brought back. It would be a relatively simple and quick process. We already know that it is possible.

There have been questions about members who may be immunocompromised and who may be afraid of coming to Parliament. I do not get the impression that the majority of members of Parliament are immunocompromised. If it turns out that there are members who are immunocompromised, which remains to be proven, they would probably be the exception. By bringing in a hybrid Parliament, the government is enforcing a universal standard to cater to special cases. The standard should be that members come in person because that is why we were elected. These supposedly immunocompromised members, if there are any here, probably campaigned outside of their basements.

We are also hearing the argument that some people have young unvaccinated children and they are worried about bringing

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COVID-19 home to them. We are about to start vaccinating younger children. Because of that, the argument already holds much less water. However, I would be curious to know whether members who have young children stop them from going to the movies, going to shows and seeing other people. Are they home-schooling to ensure that the children are not at risk? I think that is a fair question.

All that to say that the motion we are debating seems much more bogus. It seems to be using the pandemic for purely political and partisan purposes, and that is what I find really disappointing.

Moreover, the government is already anticipating that this measure will stay in place until June 23, 2022. June 23 is seven months away. If we go back the same amount of time, seven months ago, I could not even get on a waiting list for my vaccine. A lot of water has gone under the bridge in the past seven months. I expect that a lot will happen too. If the government wants to go so far with this right off the bat, surely that just confirms how partisan this measure is.

• (1550)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech, and I would like to wish the other member a happy birthday.

We all know that COVID-19 is a very contagious disease. All the peer-reviewed scientific studies show that the risk of death in vaccinated individuals is practically 0%.

My question for my colleague is this: If a person decides not to get vaccinated and risk their own life, that may be their right, but does that person have the right to endanger the lives of others?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, that sounds more like a question for a member of another party than for a Bloc member.

The answer is simple. Our solution is the most balanced approach. We want a return to in-person sittings with everyone providing proof of double vaccination.

[*English*]

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on her election and on her speech.

Today, in Ontario, 748 new COVID cases have been reported. As of yesterday, 15 of Ontario's public schools were closed due to COVID spread.

In the 43rd Parliament, a person like me who has a compromised immune system was able to fulfill their duties as a member of Parliament. I was able to vote in spite of having COVID for two weeks. I was able to vote and I was able to chair a committee.

However, not knowing how many members across the aisle are not vaccinated, why should we put the health and safety of some members at risk when, with a hybrid Parliament, we can perform our duties as members of Parliament, and we have done that?

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, and I am sorry that I do not see her anymore. I may not be on the same committee as her, but I want to tell her that I enjoyed sitting next to her during the last Parliament.

Once again, our proposal settles the matter of double vaccination. We want everyone who enters the parliamentary precinct to be double-vaccinated.

Beyond that, the real question is this: What is the balance between parliamentarians' rights and their obligations?

This proposal seems to completely overlook parliamentarians' responsibilities and obligations, which includes the governing party's responsibility and obligation to be in the House to answer the opposition's questions.

All we are hearing the Liberals talk about is rights. They are avoiding the issue of responsibilities.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really want to congratulate my Liberal colleagues on how much concern they have over the people who are not immunized. It is fascinating, but in my mind, as a scientist, I really wonder how, if someone were unvaccinated and got COVID, it would make the lives of all these people who are vaccinated doubly so much worse. I fail to understand that. Perhaps someone could please explain that to me. It really makes no sense to me whatsoever.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I understand that the question was not addressed directly to me, but I would still like to try to answer it.

Science has proven its worth. A person who is unvaccinated has a much higher viral load. Although double vaccination affords adequate protection, it is not perfect. We can still have symptoms of COVID-19.

The ideal solution is for people to get double-vaccinated and to return to the House in person.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have just enough time for one short question.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

• (1555)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, as we have seen, the number of COVID-19 cases continues to rise in Europe, and several countries have already gone back into lockdown. We are seeing a resurgence of the pandemic across Canada, including in my riding, New Westminster—Burnaby. We also know that the vaccine is starting to lose its effectiveness over time.

For all these reasons, I would like to ask my hon. colleague the following question. With the number of COVID-19 cases on the rise everywhere, including in Quebec, why is she taking this matter so lightly?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby seems to be suggesting that he thinks the various public health authorities are taking this situation lightly, since they have authorized the reopening and are allowing public gatherings.

I would remind him, as I said in my speech, that we will follow all public health recommendations and that, in the event of another lockdown, the hybrid model would be justified, but that is not currently the case.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment.

We have been discussing this issue for several hours now and many arguments have been presented. Everything has been said and the debate is winding down.

Since this is my first time rising in the 44th Parliament, I want to take the opportunity to express my thanks. I would first like to thank the people of Laurentides—Labelle who put their trust in me a second time. I am very proud of that, particularly since I won with an overwhelming majority.

My constituents can count on me to properly represent them and stand up for their interests. I will take all the time needed. In the end, we, as legislators, have 26 weeks to work here in the House and 26 more in our ridings to get to know our constituents and hear about their concerns. I would therefore like to tell my constituents that I will always be there for them.

I also want to thank my two beautiful daughters, Anne-Sophie and Ève-Marie, and my husband of 26 years, Yannick Thibault. They have been there from the start. In 2019, the Bloc Québécois faced quite a challenge, and I was very proud to be part of it. I thank them for their trust in me. Work-life balance is a team effort, and I thank them for their resilience and, above all, for their kind words. Yesterday, since I could not be there, we celebrated a birthday virtually. I cannot say it enough, my family members are at the very heart of my commitment, and the sacrifice they make is beyond honourable.

I also want to give special thanks to my volunteers. I will not name them all, as there are many, but they know who they are. I offer them my most sincere thanks. I can count on them, and I am fortunate to have such good people around me.

I also want to give a shout-out to my constituency team. They work miracles every day. The pandemic has not been easy on anyone. In response to the alleged slowness of the decision-making process, I will remind you that we have wasted some time. People are having a hard time understanding why bills that were supposed to pass this fall must unfortunately go back to the beginning of the process.

At the Mont-Laurier office, I want to say hello to Maryse Larente and Annie-Claude Poirier. At the Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts office, I want to say hello to Maxime Caouette and Michel Kieffer, as well as our new recruit, Annie Lajoie. There is also Mathieu Laroche Casavant, who works on Parliament Hill and supports me in my parliamentary duties as well as in my duties as chair of the Bloc Québécois caucus.

Our loved ones are the most important people in our lives. My mother, Françoise, has enabled me to do what I am doing now, which is to speak to the members of the House, always to improve our collective well-being. I would also like to thank my parents-in-law, Solange and Lévis. I cannot forget my father, who is also in my thoughts every day. I hope he is proud of his daughter up there. In fact, I am sure he is, and I love him.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge my predecessor, Johanne Deschamps, who was the member of Parliament for Laurentides—Labelle for four terms.

Having said that, we are here to talk for a while longer about the motion that Parliament should operate in a hybrid format.

Yesterday I was talking to people in my riding and trying to find out what they thought. Since we are vaccinated, it is now possible to go to establishments offering various services and to see shows, while respecting the health measures proposed by the experts and scientists.

• (1600)

It was not complicated. They thought that we took advantage of the pandemic to be somewhat comfortable and relaxed, but what about the work that we do beyond speeches and the House of Commons? How about what happens when we walk to the Hill and have meaningful discussions?

When I arrived on Monday, after greeting my colleagues and the new members, I realized how much work can get done on a very specific issue that matters to our constituents, all with a simple discussion. People may already realize this, but I unfortunately did not have much time in a normal Parliament before the pandemic arrived.

It was even more difficult in committee. There was a lot of obstruction. Things can sometimes be much more efficient and effective in person. We can come to an agreement much more quickly when we have discussions with our colleagues. We cannot forget about language. I must say that the interpreters did an excellent job. I congratulate and thank them.

Technically, everyone here should be bilingual. Having said that, it is not right that an MP has to listen more closely to the original to be certain they have not missed anything. In fact, people speak too quickly and this makes interpretation more difficult at a time when we want to intervene to ensure that we have understood before voting. It is too late when the voting begins.

I came to realize that it was not the right approach for us because committees must meet in person and that goes for the House as well. I also think it is difficult to get used to speaking without looking at one another, and I enjoy speaking with people in person and not on a screen. Otherwise, we would have chosen other careers.

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My job is to speak on behalf of people and to have discussions with my colleagues.

I realize that we got it right when the pandemic first started. We were able to show our fellow citizens that, as my colleague mentioned earlier, in 24 hours we were able to turn on a dime. We were able to do it. We had to find and use the technology that was crucial at that time.

Now we have confidence, we want to make the most of our time and maybe try to do two or three things at once. This is critical. When we are here in person, we are able to focus on what needs to be done.

Personally, I trust the experts and I am sure that my colleagues trust the science. If we need to make a quick change some day, we will do so. We have shown that we are able to adjust.

To us in the Bloc Québécois, there is no good reason to not return to the House if we are double-vaccinated and if we obey the rules that have been established. On Monday, people could see in the first five minutes that there was no distancing. Everyone greeted each other and shook hands. Come on.

It is okay to be cautious and concerned, but I think we need to do our job the way it has been done for many decades now.

• (1605)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not quite understand the Bloc's logic. The legislature of the Province of Manitoba, my home province, is sitting today. It has a hybrid system, which was non-controversial. Everyone understood the safety and health benefits, the need for strong leadership, and it is not a political controversy at all.

We are doing something of a very similar nature. There is a sunset provision, so it ends by the time we get into June. It seems to me that maybe the Bloc was kind of conned into this by its cozy cousin the Conservative Party.

I wonder if the member has any regrets not recognizing that there is absolutely nothing wrong with enfranchising and enabling parliamentarians at a time when they could be infected by COVID to be able to participate fully, like the leader of the official opposition in the Province of Manitoba today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I would like to come back to what I was saying about maximizing our effectiveness. Doing our work in person means we can work better and more effectively, and come up with quick solutions for the collective well-being of our constituents. It has been proven, and we have all experienced this. In a virtual situation, there are no exchanges that might allow us to work small miracles for our constituents.

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We do not have enough information at this time to say definitively that we should keep this model until June.

[*English*]

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise for the first time after being re-elected by the great people of Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley. I am happy to be back live and in person in this amazing place.

I have been listening carefully to the speeches today and almost, without exception, everyone supporting the motion is saying that if somebody gets COVID, has been near somebody who has COVID or received an alert that he or she has had a brush with COVID, the member should not be disenfranchised and should be able to participate virtually. There is some logic to that, but the fact is that is not what the motion says at all. The motion says that any member can participate virtually or in-person for any reason.

Does the member not think the motion is simply too broad and if the government is sincere in wanting members to be able to participate virtually because they are ill or might become ill, the motion should simply say that?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. What we experienced, namely, people hiding behind their screens, could be perceived as avoidance by some people. We need to be consistent in the work we have to do. This means being available, answering questions and following through on things, all for our collective well-being.

• (1610)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. There seems to be a problem with the interpretation.

Is it working now?

The interpretation is working again. The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle may continue.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, quickly, the perception of people when we work in virtual mode is that we do not have the exchanges that go alongside it. The work is therefore not as effective because we have to be accountable, answer questions and follow up on files. Hiding behind a screen, as we have unfortunately seen during the exchanges of the last few days, makes our work less effective.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, legislatures across the country are operating in hybrid mode. The British Columbia legislature is doing it, as well. There are people who take part by being physically present, and others who participate remotely. The British Columbia legislature also has physical distancing measures, which is something we cannot do in the House without having a hybrid Parliament and without having the virtual capacity.

I am listening carefully to my colleague, but I find it hard to understand her opposition to doing everything that other assemblies in the country are doing to avoid being responsible for a breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic here, among employees and members of Parliament, their families or the general public.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, does it make sense for the Sergeant-at-Arms and the institution to guarantee that people's health will be protected provided that they are double-vaccinated? That is what is going on at the Quebec National Assembly. Should that suggestion not be considered? That is more of a question.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will note, with pleasure, that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert.

I want to spare a moment for all of us in British Columbia. There are more weather events on the way. Our thoughts are with our emergency services people and everybody else still trying to recover.

After almost 20 months, so many aspects of our lives have been upended by this once-in-a-century pandemic. As difficult as it has been, Canadians have found ways to adapt. This includes finding new ways of working and doing business that minimize the risk of transmitting the COVID-19 virus.

The House has not been an exception. In the last Parliament, we agreed to modify our proceedings in accordance with public health guidelines. This included a hybrid approach, with members participating in the House and committees proceedings both in-person and through video conference.

This was a reasonable approach, because it allowed all members to participate in all types of House business, while limiting close physical contact with too many people. We know that limiting close contact is a key measure to stop the spread of the virus. It was the right thing to do, not only because we wanted to keep parliamentarians safe but we also wanted to keep safe the staff who support us, our families and our constituents.

COVID-19 is unpredictable. I know a family of three, two people in their late 50s and a mom in her 80s, all with compromised health systems, and all who had COVID and did not know it. On the other hand, a robust chap in his late 50s, an outdoorsman and enthusiastic bhangra dancer, the husband of one of my staff, in fact, ended up in an induced coma for two months, a candidate for a lung transplant, still doing his best to walk for more than a few minutes without needing to rest.

We have seen examples of long-haulers, who suffer for extended periods. A recent Washington Post article noted, "The worst effects include debilitating weakness and fatigue, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, difficulty thinking, and hard-to-define challenges functioning in daily life. Family members, suddenly thrust into the role of caregivers for a seriously ill loved one, endure emotional and practical difficulties of their own."

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A year ago next month, we thought we would see the end of the pandemic in sight, thanks to Canada's world-leading vaccination program rollout. Unfortunately, at the outset of this 44th Parliament, the pandemic lingers, longer than we had hoped. We are getting close to finishing the fight against it, but we still must remain vigilant.

We know that government members, members from the New Democratic Party, the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party are fully vaccinated. Personally, I do not see any problem disclosing my status as a breach of my right to privacy; rather, it is a signal to our families, staff and everybody here that I am not among those more likely to spread the virus. However, if I am unlucky enough to be laid low by COVID-19, I owe it to the people of Fleetwood—Port Kells, who I thank for honouring me with my third term, to keep doing what I was elected to do. What our government is proposing will allow that.

It is a mystery that the leader of the Conservative Party would want to deny that ability to anyone in this place, especially members of his own caucus. However, his opposition to a reasonable tried and tested alternative will do just that.

It is a further mystery why Ottawa's best-kept secret is whether a Conservative MP next to other members in the lobby or at committee is vaccinated or not. I would not be surprised if a Conservative raised a question of privilege on that matter, the right to a safe, secure workplace. We saw a member of the Bloc do so a couple of days ago, and it is a mystery to see the Bloc's position on this.

I would point out that vaccine mandates are not new. The United Kingdom had one in 1853 to address the smallpox epidemic. In 1905, the United States Supreme Court, in the case of *Jacobson v. Massachusetts*, upheld the constitutionality of mandatory smallpox vaccination programs to preserve public health.

The Conservatives might think of themselves as the freedom party, but those freedoms exist in the context that also recognizes the duty we have to one another in the interests of the common good. As the party of the charter, we Liberals fully understand that in some ways personal choice should not trump our collective rights. It is a matter of reasonable vigilance.

That is what the motion before us today is all about, vigilance. The motion is about allowing all members of Parliament to fulfill all their duties safely. As noted, we have a tried and tested model of a hybrid Parliament that was used in the second session of the 43rd Parliament, and the motion before us would mostly reinstate the approach used then.

● (1615)

The motion mainly seeks to do five things. First, it would allow members to participate in proceedings of the House, either in person or by video conference, provided that members participating in person did so in accordance with the Board of Internal Economy's decision of Tuesday, October 19, 2021, regarding vaccinations against COVID-19, and that reasons for medical exemptions followed the guidance from the Ontario Ministry of Health entitled "Medical Exemptions to COVID-19 Vaccination". As well, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization informs us on this.

The motion temporarily suspends or alters a few Standing Orders to facilitate this move.

Second, the motion would similarly allow members to participate in committee meetings remotely or in person provided that they met the vaccine requirements set out by the Board of Internal Economy.

Third, it would provide for documents to be laid before or presented in the House electronically. This includes the documents that the government is required by statute to table as well as petitions or other documents that any member may wish to provide.

Fourth, the motion sets out how and when recorded divisions are to be taken in the hybrid format. I will return to this in a moment.

Finally, for the current supply period, it provides for Supplementary Estimates to be referred to and considered by a committee of the whole. This is in keeping with past practices of the House to allow for scrutiny of the estimates early in a new Parliament before standing committees have been constituted.

The motion would keep these measures in effect from the day it is adopted until Thursday, June 23, 2022, before the House adjourns for the summer. This time frame would allow the House to safely conduct the business Canadians sent us here to accomplish for them. After June, we could have another look at how we conduct our proceedings, taking into consideration the best health advice at the time.

Focusing now on the motion's provisions relating to voting, I wanted to first acknowledge how this single act is one of the most important that parliamentarians carry out. During the early months of the second session of the last Parliament, members in the chamber voted by the traditional process of row-by-row. Members participating by video conference were called on one by one to cast their votes orally. While these voting arrangements were successful and used for over 50 votes, they were time-consuming. Some votes required as much as 50 minutes to complete. However, the House also agreed to develop and test a remote voting application, and one was introduced in March. With this application, a vote could be completed in 10 to 15 minutes. The remote voting application was used successfully for over 120 votes.

Today's motion would put this app back into use, allowing us to express our will safely, securely and conveniently. Although the remote voting app was successfully used in the last Parliament, the motion would take the prudent step of directing the House administration to carry out an onboarding process of all members for this app to be completed no later than Wednesday, December 8, 2021. Once the onboarding is complete, but no later than December 9, the app would be put into use.

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Paragraph (q) of the motion ensures that there would be integrity in the use of the app. Among other things, it requires that votes have to be cast from within Canada using the member's House-managed device. Also, the visual identity of members must be validated for each vote. This could be verified by the whip of each party recognized in the House.

Any member unable to vote via the electronic voting system during the provided 10 minutes could connect to the virtual sitting to indicate to the Chair their voting intention. The motion is therefore very careful to put in place contingencies should members encounter problems with the voting application, so as to not disenfranchise them. We want to avoid disenfranchising people.

Some have argued that the literal act of standing up to be counted during an in-person vote is too important to be set aside. I do not want to argue that tradition. I would simply say that the motion aims to put in place reasonable, temporary measures to allow each member the ability to safely vote.

For each vote, members' names will still be recorded in the House journals allowing all to see where they figuratively stood on the issue voted on.

The motion before us also seeks to arrange a deferred schedule for recorded divisions on most types of debatable motions, or a motion to concur in a bill at report stage on a Friday. Specifically, votes would take place after question period on a day depending on when the time recorded division was requested. This order would be in keeping with past practice of the House, would provide members with some predictability for when votes would occur and would allow us to better manage our time both in and outside of the House.

• (1620)

I know all members of the House agree that we want to put this pandemic behind us. Through the Speech from the Throne, we set out an agenda to do just that. We are securing the next generation of COVID-19 vaccines, especially for kids—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Time is up. The hon. member will be able to add more during questions and comments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise for the first time in this new Parliament.

Does the hon. member agree with the government House leader who said on Monday that if a fully vaccinated person tested positive for COVID-19, they could still go to work?

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what this motion allows. A fully vaccinated person who does come down with COVID-19 could still go to work.

The Conservative opposition to this measure would deny that person the opportunity to serve their constituents.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I have a question for him.

He listed some of the advantages of the hybrid model, including remote voting. For example, he said that if he had COVID-19, he could stay at home and not come here to vote. In the past, people got sick while Parliament was sitting and were unable to come to vote.

Does he agree that the opportunities that we might have with a hybrid Parliament in exceptional cases should be studied at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, for example, and not under a closure motion?

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, I think we are missing an important point here, which is that in spite of the presence of a hybrid voting system, anybody and everybody would be free to come to the House to fulfill their duties except if they were sick or if they were fearful of getting sick. At that point, the hybrid system would allow them to do their jobs.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his well-thought-out speech. I was really moved at the beginning when he spoke about our shared concern about the climate crisis happening in British Columbia. We have just come off COP26 where the Prime Minister made great statements, yet we see the RCMP going with sniper rifles against unarmed indigenous people defending their territory.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question, while I have the chance to be here with him. The climate crisis is here, and the Environment Commissioner has just given a damning report to the federal government on its failure to stand up and actually make moves on targets.

Would the member explain whether or not he is standing with the Wet'suwet'en people in the face of the RCMP attacks?

• (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member is asking a question that is not really on the matter that is before the House. I am not sure if the hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells wants to answer or if he wishes me to go to a different question.

Mr. Charlie Angus: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I think you will realize that is what it is about, because it is about my presence in the House and being able to ask a question. That is what we are debating today.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, I respect my colleague a great deal and I have no problem answering his question.

What is going on with the Wet'suwet'en territory is concerning. It is troubling. As politicians, we do stay out of the way of policing matters. We also have to defer to the Province of British Columbia, which is basically setting the framework for what is going on there.

That said, in the spirit of reconciliation, I think that more work does need to be done. I appreciate the member's question because it raises a very important, pertinent, current matter.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, following up on the question from my hon. colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay, if it is deemed relevant, I would like to ask my hon. colleague from the Liberal Party why his leader did not denounce the activist David Suzuki for threatening to blow up pipelines in regard to the protests.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I want to remind members that when they are asking questions, they should be relevant to the matter that is before the House, which is the time allocation and the issue about hybrid sittings. I will allow the hon. member to answer this question, but I want to advise members to please focus the debate on the matter that is before the House. If the hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells wants to answer the question, that is fine. If not, I will move on.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Again, Madam Speaker, out of respect for a person I do respect quite a bit, I will answer.

The fact is that Dr. Suzuki issued a statement today in which he retracted his comments and apologized for them. We have to recognize that this gentleman is extremely passionate and sometimes passions get away from people. Lord knows, who among us has not been guilty of that from time to time? The story is now straight. Hopefully it has settled down and we can move on.

[Translation]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I extend to you my warmest congratulations on your re-election as Speaker.

I would also take this opportunity, my first time rising in the 44th Parliament, to thank my constituents in Brossard—Saint-Lambert for sending me back here for the fourth time, with an overwhelming majority. I am honoured and deeply touched.

I am honoured to participate in today's debate on the motion moved by the government leader to implement hybrid sittings for the beginning of the 44th Parliament.

I have heard a lot of arguments for and against this motion, as well as a controversy that was blown out of proportion for reasons that sometimes escape me.

I would be the first to say that I would prefer to sit here full time. I love being in the House of Commons. I love meeting with my constituents, not all, but most, and I am very happy when I am in the House. I came here as often as I could when we were operating virtually.

I do not think the purpose of this motion is to send us all home. The goal is to make sure we all have a safe option if we need it, such as if physical distancing measures had to be reinstated.

Again, the idea is not to find ourselves in a situation where there is just one person in the House. It is to establish a limit on the number of people who can be here.

The point is to give ourselves a degree of flexibility we do not have right now, and that includes the flexibility to vote and partici-

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pate in debates without necessarily being here in person. Any one of us could get sick, maybe even with COVID-19, and need that flexibility.

What the hon. member for Saint-Jean said earlier is absolutely true. Before the hybrid Parliament option was available, many of us stayed home when we got sick and could not participate in debates here. Progress being what it is, we can now have a hybrid version of Parliament.

I think the point of this motion is to show that we are still in a very delicate situation. The pandemic is far from being fully under control, we have not yet reached herd immunity as we would have liked, and children five to 11 years old are only just beginning to be vaccinated.

It is with this in mind that the government is proposing the option of a virtual Parliament, that is, for those who could not come to the House of Commons. This is not at all about sending us home. On the contrary, we want to be here as much as possible and with as many colleagues as possible.

I also think the terms of the motion aim to bring some predictability to the way we will be working in the coming months, considering we are still in a public health emergency.

During the long months of 2020 and 2021 when we were in hybrid mode, we got to learn how it works. We also saw that it came with some pretty real challenges, from both a technical and human standpoint.

I agree with my colleagues who say just how hard it has been for our interpreters. It may have led to work-related illness for those who sometimes had to grapple with a virtual presence less disciplined than it was in person in the House. We have to admit that, because every day we see the cacophony in our debates, especially during question period. On Zoom or in the House, the cacophony is part and parcel of our debates. Though it may seem harder with Zoom, I think it has the same effect on the interpreters in the House.

It also caused problems for committee interpreting. I am not sure why, but it seemed to have something to do with the fact that a lot of members were not wearing their headsets. This made it difficult for the interpreters to do their job. If that is the problem, I totally agree: It is a matter of respect for the interpreters and for our other colleagues.

● (1630)

The fact remains that, before the pandemic, I believe there were usually about a thousand employees in the parliamentary precinct, including MPs, parliamentarians, staffers and all of the personnel who support us in our work in the House. That includes the security staff, pages, food services staff, clerks and the whole structure that enables us to do our work. We are talking about over a thousand people in the House every day. That is a lot of people, and we want to make sure that they are all double-vaccinated. I assume that is the case for all of us.

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We also know that the vast majority of us will need a third dose. Quebec just announced today that those who received two doses of AstraZeneca can now go and get their third dose, because they are not yet fully vaccinated. There is still a lot of uncertainty regarding the pandemic. There is still a good chance that things will go downhill again. We are already seeing an increase in the number of cases every day in Quebec and across Canada.

Furthermore, an increase in cases can cause more complications, which is why we need the flexibility this option affords us. We do not want to suddenly force everyone into virtual sittings, but we want that option to be available. I think that is the objective of the government's motion. That is why I think we are here.

In closing, I want to say that I am very happy to be back in the House, being around and seeing my colleagues. I was looking forward to this and I am happy to be here among them all. I hope that we will be able to do so safely until June 2023.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to stand here this afternoon and take this opportunity to thank my family, my friends and my partner Tammy for their support on the journey that has landed me here in the House. As well, I would like to thank our volunteers for their tireless work on our campaign.

It is an honour to be chosen to represent the people of Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame in this House, and I thank them for the faith they have put in me. All members' constituents want us in this House, where we can advocate and collaborate, work for them and be accountable. Instead, the Liberal-NDP coalition wants a virtual Parliament.

In 2011, Jack Layton chastised then Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff for having the worst attendance record in Parliament. He said that when Canadians pay us, they expect us to come to work. What was promised to the NDP in return for voting with the Liberals so that they could stay home? Why is the Liberal-NDP socialist coalition following Mr. Ignatieff's example?

An hon. member: How did you get here?

Mr. Clifford Small: How did I get here? I was elected to come here, and I want this place to be here for the people.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès: Madam Speaker, I am sorry, but I do not quite understand what the question is. I did say that, yes, we are elected to be here and that I very much am looking forward to being here. There is nothing much else that I can add to that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a hard time understanding that whole controversy as well, because it never should have happened.

There is no controversy over opening arenas, universities or restaurants, but members on the other side of the House are suggesting a government available for delivery. A government to go.

Could we not have a flexible solution, as the member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert said? The House would be reopened fol-

lowing the health regulations and then we could reassess how things are going later, if necessary.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mirabel for his question.

It is warranted by the situation right now because we have colleagues who are impacted by COVID-19 and cannot be present at this time. Even if they do not have serious symptoms, they cannot come to the House.

Therefore, the health situation remains precarious. There are still a lot of unknowns and we do not know how we will proceed. Thus, offering parliamentarians the opportunity to continue to participate virtually is one way to continue.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons did actually confirm today that ministers are supposed to be here every day, and we are supposed to be here every day. If we are healthy and vaccinated, why would we not be here every day?

Proposing a solution does not mean that we will decide to proceed in that manner and have a government to go, as the member called it.

• (1640)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is time for a brief question.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I first want to congratulate you on your election.

I want to thank my family and the people of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne for the trust they have placed in me.

I also want to congratulate my colleague from Brossard—Saint-Lambert on his election.

[*English*]

The point of this is actually for prevention. Right now, the Standing Orders do not allow a member of Parliament to participate in their elected duty should they become sick. What we are trying to do is to say that if they are sick or have symptoms, we ask them to stay home. It is just like the measures we are going to put in place for workers, so that they can have that time to stay home and stay safe.

Would the hon. member explain how this is a preventative measure to make sure people can have their opportunity to speak?

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with my colleague. This is preventative. This is just an alternative that we are offering parliamentarians, and it is at the moment the best way we see to go forward to ensure that all parliamentarians can participate.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to stand in this House, as always, and add to the debate.

I first want to send my heartfelt thoughts and prayers to my community of Vanderhoof, because literally 20 minutes ago a warning came across that there was an active shooter in the community. I meant to stand up and say to please stay safe and stay inside, but my understanding is that the shooter has been caught.

Ladies and gentlemen, and colleagues, it speaks to the debate that we are talking about today. This person, for reasons unknown, shot into our RCMP detachment. Thankfully, as far as I know, no one was wounded. The person was taken into custody.

Our country is divided. We have all just come through probably one of the most divisive elections we have seen in a very long time. We have colleagues from the government's side and colleagues from our opposition side who faced intimidation, threats and vandalism. Our family has received threats of violence and threats of death, and I know some of my colleagues have faced the same.

I want to bring us back to just two days ago, when we all convened in this House for the first time. There are pictures out there on social media. We are all sitting there, glad-handing each other and patting each other on the back. Some people even gave hugs, fist bumps and elbow bumps. There is a happiness in our being back here. I know I speak for many of us who have gone through the last six years, and at least for myself, when I say it is good to see members and it is good to be back here.

Last night I hosted the National Diwali on the Hill, Parliament's national Diwali, which was started by our great former colleague, the hon. Deepak Obhrai, 21 years ago. He started it here because he wanted to bring light to Canada. He wanted to bring a beautiful ceremony right here to Canada.

I think about this debate that we are having right now and I think about that significant event. Diwali is about the banishment of darkness and the bringing in of light, hope and peace. That is what Canadians need right now: light, hope and peace.

When I think about my riding of Cariboo—Prince George, there are residents who have been severely impacted by COVID and who have lost everything, including loved ones. I think about my friends and my family and our colleagues down in the Lower Mainland, who are battling the worst natural disaster in our country's history. I also think about my friends in Atlantic Canada, who are now receiving some of the worst weather patterns they have seen. I think about our good friend who spoke yesterday in a member's statement about losing two young members of his community.

The gentleman I am splitting time with, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester, is going to speak about the impacts in his riding as well, and he is a physician.

It is time we got back to work here in Ottawa. I know there are important things, and I know that just because we were in a hybrid setting, our days did not stop. I know that we were all faced with probably more meetings than we could count, because it made it easier in some sense. However, it also made it easier for some on the front bench to obfuscate and get away from their responsibilities.

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• (1645)

Our friend from Kingston and the Islands is a good soldier. He said that maybe once or twice in question period a minister could not answer the question. I would hazard a guess that it happened more often than once or twice, but at least he was admitting it.

We saw that during the WE scandal. Does everybody remember the WE scandal when we were having committee meetings? All of a sudden there were technical difficulties or, guess what, the meeting had to be called because the translators were having a hard time, or we did not have translators, or the room was booked for that full length of time or there were technical difficulties.

Think about the cost merely to put on hybrid. Think about the cost that we just went through for an unnecessary election, and that we are downloading onto the backs of Canadians.

We were all elected to be here. I will remind everyone, and those who are new, that it is not one of my speeches if I do not remind members that this House does not belong to us. It is not our House. It is the House of electors. It belongs to Canadians. They elected the members to be here to represent them and to bring their voices to Ottawa, not the other way around.

I have heard some of the arguments, such as, it is just in case somebody gets sick. I will bring members back to 2018 when I had a very serious illness and I was at home. I still managed to do my job. I got incredible messages from members that kept me in touch with what was going on with the fisheries file, because I had that at the time.

We need to get back to work. We need to hold the government accountable.

It is shameful that we have our NDP colleagues, many of whom I count as friends, who have partnered with our Liberal colleagues here. I know that many of our Liberal colleagues probably do not share the feelings of the front bench in pushing this forward, and they would like to be right here doing the work that they are doing. In the last session, in the last Parliament, 622 days ago, it was Friday, March 13 and I remember taking a picture of the calendar when we rose and we went into hybrid.

I have heard somebody saying again that Conservatives have not taken this pandemic seriously. I will bring them back to that last session in January 2020. I was the first person to raise the questions. Should we not be doing something; should we not be taking this international threat seriously; should we not be talking about perhaps closing our borders, perhaps limiting flights from those destinations that have high cases? I will remind members that I was told that I was fearmongering, that perhaps I was racist. Yes, we have taken this seriously all along the way and we have worked tirelessly with our colleagues from all ends of this House to make sure that we have a team Canada approach.

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It was 349 days ago that members of this House stood together unanimously and passed my motion to bring 988 to Canada as a national suicide prevention hotline right here for our country. It was 349 days ago, yet, we still do not have that.

There is something to be said about being present in person, and looking across the way at the minister or being able to have those sidebar conversations with our colleagues, and those personal relationships to be able to get things done. It is much different than texting and zooming and video conferencing. Personal relationships are what get things done in this House, and we all know that. We need to get back to work, and our work is right here in Ottawa.

I will end with that. I look forward to the great questions from my colleagues.

• (1650)

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very sorry to hear about the events in the member's riding today, and my heart goes out to all those affected.

I am glad to see him. I am glad to see everybody in this room. I have not hugged him yet, but I might before the week is out.

I agree with much of what the member said today. There has been a lot of rhetoric in the last 24 hours on this motion. The rhetoric was amped up already. We were talking about hockey games and concerts and all those things. I am looking at the motion, and I cannot figure out for the life of me why we are having that discussion because what this motion does not say is that I cannot come here. I plan on being here.

Therefore, what we need to do is talk about some of the issues the member raised in his speech and we can do that as soon as this motion is passed. I think the member will find most of us are here. Please, can you go to your colleagues and get unanimous consent on this motion so we can get back to work, because I am going to be here and so are most of us.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member should address all questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, this is my first time standing in the House. Yesterday I was so concerned with sending my condolences to the town of Vanderhoof that I forgot to thank the residents of Cariboo—Prince George for once again electing me. I also forgot to thank my rock, my wife, and our family for all their support. Without them, we cannot do what we do.

First off, in answer to my colleague's question, if he wants to hug me he can. I am double-vaxxed. We all want to be back here. We do not need unanimous consent. It is that side of the House that needs to be convinced. It is down there that need to be convinced.

Let us get back to work. Let us be here and let us show Canadians that light, peace and hope are possible.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

From the beginning of the debate, we have heard from the government and the NDP that no one is being prevented from coming to the House. However, would my colleague agree with me that the issue really is whether those of us who come to the House have the right to have our colleagues opposite us in order to answer our questions and be accountable?

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what I said when I said that this House does not belong to us, it belongs to the electors. They elected the 338 members of Parliament to stand, be counted and bring their voices to Ottawa, not the other way around, to represent them, do that work and make sure that, at least on the opposition side, we are holding the government accountable.

On the government side, the members' constituents elected them to be here, do their job and be accountable.

• (1655)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is so good to see my colleague here. We worked together on a private member's bill a couple of years ago. It is great to see him.

Nowhere in this motion does it say that I cannot be here. I can assure the member that I have missed this place too. I have missed everyone. I am planning on being back as long as my health allows me to, and I am not exposed. My concern is that, God forbid, I become exposed to COVID. There is no mechanism for me to come and make sure that I can vote, make sure that I can speak and be the voice of the citizens.

I lost my aunt to COVID-19 in May 2020 in a CHSLD. I know first-hand what it means to be afraid. I do not want to take away the opportunity for my colleagues, who may be afraid to come in because they may have been exposed, to participate in a vote.

I can assure my colleague across that there is no way I will be hiding and not come to this House if I am able to do so. Would he agree that this is the responsible thing to do?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, first, let me send my heartfelt condolences to my colleague for the loss of her loved one. My son lost one of his best friends to COVID, a young gentleman just in his twenties.

To the best of my knowledge, it sounds like this is about a member's privilege. The reality is that it is not about a member's privilege. It is about the jobs that we were all elected to do.

We can all find ways to get our job done and get here. We can get COVID from going to the grocery store. We can get COVID from going to other places. It is about being here, being accountable and doing our job.

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Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend and colleague from West Nova on his appointment as Deputy Speaker.

I am sure over the course of my speech I will also echo some of the comments and sentiments from my colleagues over the past couple of days. However, they are very important and will be echoed.

It is an immense pleasure to have the opportunity to speak in the House of Commons and address my fellow hon. colleagues in the 44th Parliament of Canada in person. We are following public health measures and the science and representing our constituents in person.

It is an indescribable feeling to be standing here making my maiden speech. I would be remiss not to thank the constituents of Cumberland—Colchester for entrusting me to be their representative in this House. I thank my friends, volunteers and my family, especially my wife Deborah, my children Samantha, Allison and Zac, who have all supported me in this incredible journey.

My dear friends, I have had the opportunity to live my version of the Canadian dream. What do I mean by that? I have been able to work hard to secure an education, to find meaningful employment and to help make my community a better place. I realize this is not the version of the Canadian dream for all. However, being an elected member of Parliament allows all of us to help Canadians live their version of the Canadian dream.

For my maiden speech, I should also be talking about my background. As a young man, I grew up in a trailer park in rural New Brunswick. I joined the Canadian Armed Forces, attended medical school and had a career as a family physician for the past 26 years.

My life continues to be about serving my country, having a strong work ethic and bringing forth my constituents' triumphs and tribulations to this very floor. Sadly, the Prime Minister and my Liberal colleagues prefer to avoid these difficult questions from my Conservative and Bloc colleagues on pressing issues of inflation, continuous scandals and vaccine hesitancy of Canadians, and they hide behind a hybrid parliament. The best way to hold a government to account is to be in person and to respect the work that occurs in this institution.

The COVID pandemic began very inauspiciously for me on March 13, as my learned colleague said, in Truro, Nova Scotia. I entered an unprepared hospital, region, province, and quite frankly, an unprepared country. We have been toiling in this situation as health care workers and as all Canadians for 21 months.

In the medical world, COVID-19 was a brand new foe. Sadly, as we were so unprepared, many of us on the front lines thought we faced certain death as patients began entering our hospital on March 18, 2020. All Canadians have suffered greatly during this pandemic. We have all suffered in different ways: physically, mentally and financially.

Frontline health care workers worked overtime, and continue to do so. A regular work week as a physician was 80 hours or more. Families were separated by distance and the inability to feel the

embrace of a grandchild. Seniors living in long-term care longed to be with their families, but were separated by a pane of glass.

Children were forced to go to school via Zoom and they were deprived of their friendships and their participation in sporting activities. The tourism sector was decimated and continues to remain so. We have missed birthdays, weddings, bar mitzvahs, baptisms, holiday gatherings, faith services and, sadly, funerals. We have been mandated, locked down and tested. We have been ordered, locked out and excluded.

Finally, as a nation, a great nation, it is now time to begin to emerge from this pandemic. It is time for Canada, and indeed this Parliament, to be the voice of Canada and to show our fearless leadership as we sit in person in the House of Commons.

● (1700)

As my hon. colleague mentioned, I have been privileged to see first-hand the enthusiasm of members meeting in person for the first time in a very long time, and hearing stories of friendships missed and open discourse thwarted by a virtual Parliament. I have heard about the mental and physical health of interpreters and the failure of technology. There is an overall sense that virtual Parliament does not work.

Once again, as I mentioned, there is no scientific data to say how great it works, even though many colleagues will say how wonderful it is. Legislatures around the world have been closed to the public; numbers of representatives have been reduced; and in extreme cases, such as in Hungary, the Prime Minister is ruling without consulting members of Parliament.

As a family doctor at heart, I am a social scientist, and we as human beings are social beings. There is a great need to interact with others in person. Indeed, as my colleague mentioned, we have seen the usual handshake replaced by other forms of contact, such as fist bumps and elbow taps.

Setting aside the incalculable effects of the lack of socialization, we are not here to socialize. We are here to work, to make laws, to consider significant issues and to lead our great country. We need to be a reflection of Canadians and also to give them hope. They have borne the burden of mandates and lockdowns, and now, as it is possible to emerge, we need to lead the way. If hon. members of the government do not intend to return to in-person work and intend to stay locked down alone at home in their slippers, the work does not get done and the benefit of vaccines is lost.

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Around the world, people are envious of our position, not just the incredible opportunity afforded to us as Canadians, but as individuals who have the opportunity to return to in-person work. We know that our Liberal colleagues have attended in-person social events. We have seen many on TV and social media. Just this week, the House gathered safely to elect a Speaker and to debate the Speech from the Throne.

I have another analogy: What if all of our health care workers decided to work only virtually? I have tried it and quite frankly it stinks. Should we ask Canadians to draw their own blood, listen to their own heart sounds, insert their own chest tubes or insert their own intubation tube? I think not. Then why, we might want to ask, should we all not return to work here in the House of Commons?

We are not asking parliamentarians to take any greater risk than we ask of other Canadians who report to work every day. My learned colleague mentioned the farmers, fisher-people and other people who work with their hands. They need to go to work. Are some of us more equal than others?

It is clear to me that not being here in person allows the government to continue its reckless platform of overspending and not addressing real crises, such as housing and the floods in B.C., without having to be held accountable. Real-world issues such as the high cost of living, the censorship of the Internet and an inadequate number of workers need to be addressed, debated and solved. Instead of addressing these critical issues, the Liberal government would rather waste time questioning the validity of the House administration and questioning the integrity of medical professionals.

Canada has the highest vaccination rate in the G7. The parliamentary precinct has enforced public safety measures to ensure our members' safety. Why must we add rules to rules? Canadians are returning to work, businesses are reopening and Parliament Hill should be no exception to this reality. Millions of Canadians are unable to participate in a hybrid workspace, so why should the government believe it can receive special treatment and accommodations? Do people think that we are exempt from the same rules that everyday Canadians follow?

I realize that I am a newly elected member; however, I do not believe that the good people of Cumberland—Colchester have sent me to Ottawa so that I could sit behind a screen alone in my home or my office. They sent me here so that I would be here in the middle of the action where I can properly hold the government to account. That is what I was elected for, and the best way to do that is in person.

Canada was once an economic powerhouse, a revered nation of peacemakers, a friend to struggling nations and a beacon of hope in an otherwise dark world. This, my friends, is the Canadian dream. I implore my fellow members to do what is best for all Canadians, and that is to vote against the hybrid Parliament.

• (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not quite understand why the Conservatives oppose this motion. They are the ones who have decided to make this political.

My daughter gave a virtual speech inside the Manitoba legislature today. In Manitoba, the leader of the official opposition has COVID-19, and because it is virtual he is able to participate as the leader of the official opposition. There is a member of the House today who is not able to come in because of COVID-19. It is a reality that the pandemic is not over. No one is saying that there will be no members inside the House; in fact, it is quite the opposite.

Does the member believe that the Progressive Conservative government in Manitoba is wrong by having a hybrid system? Is it assaulting democracy by having a hybrid system? The Conservative opposition really needs to understand that this is about enabling members like the member's own colleague, the member for Beauce.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, one of the main arguments that need to be made here is one of facts, science and trust. It is very clear that there is no science around having a hybrid parliament, how well it functions, what the outcomes are and how it is different from an in-person parliament. We know that over the last 150-odd years in Canada, an in-person parliament has worked. Therefore, when we have no certainty that a hybrid parliament works, I think on this side of the House there is a lack of trust that our good friends will not want to continue this indefinitely and indeed forever.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague's riding represents the homeland of my mother's family, the McCurdys, so I am happy to hear from people from Truro in Cumberland—Colchester. However, I must admit that I have trouble agreeing with him.

I am a scientist. He is a medical doctor. He said we have no data. All I can say is that, from my experience, the hybrid Parliament worked very well. I had great access to ministers and other colleagues.

I fully intend to be here as much as I can throughout this Parliament, as I think everybody else does. What the motion does is it gives people who are sick or cannot be here for whatever reason the option to participate, to exercise that privilege. What is the problem here?

• (1710)

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, there are a couple of issues that I have to address. My scientific colleague has a study, as we might say in science, of "n=1". He has one person in the study, himself. That is quite fascinating. Those studies are very good. We call them useless.

Government Orders

That being said, the other thing is good intentions. There are a lot of songs about good intentions and where that road is going to take us. We may all have good intentions to show up. We may all have good intentions to exercise every day, to eat better and to be better people. Clearly, the majority of us fail in those things over and over again. The concern is that it is very easy to take the easy road, stay home with our fuzzy slippers on, use a virtual parliament and say that there is something way more important to do than come here to do our job.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to note for the member that his comments were actually bordering on personal attacks. That is not what the House of Commons is about, and he may want to apologize for that.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am hearing the arguments from all sides. The Liberals said earlier that ministers would always be present in the House. That was not my experience last spring and I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

Did my colleague understand that every minister would be present in the House? If so, does that change his position on the need to not adopt a hybrid format and sit in person? Our goal is to hold ministers to account. Does my colleague think that if every minister were present every day during oral question period that would change things? Unlike me, is that what he expects?

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, the expectation for in-person Parliament is that people are here, and that is the standard that has been set over the last 150-odd years. That is what is important. We want people to be here and we want them to be held accountable. That is the job of the official opposition, as I know it, and that is what I have been elected to stand here and do in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.): Madam Speaker, congratulations on your election. I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for York Centre.

This being the first time I rise to speak in this 44th Parliament, I would like to thank my constituents in Vimy for entrusting me once again to be their representative in the House of Commons. I would also like to pay tribute to my team and the volunteers who participated in my campaign, as well as my husband, Gerry, who has supported me throughout this entire adventure.

It is an honour and privilege to serve our community. I look forward to another productive session of Parliament.

[*English*]

I am pleased to rise today in support of the motion on the continuation of hybrid sittings. I think it is an important motion that would allow all of us to participate in the House in a way that is safe, productive and accountable, and that sets a good example for all Canadians. That is where I will start, because I think it is really important for us to realize that how we behave, how we adapt and

how we represent the legislative branch of government has an impact on Canadians across this land.

We have asked Canadians to modify their behaviours to help protect their family, friends and communities, and we must do the same. It is our duty as parliamentarians to ensure that we are taking a careful, responsible approach that reflects the ongoing pandemic that we are all living on a daily basis.

[*Translation*]

It may seem like the pandemic has been going on for a decade, but it was only in March of 2020 that we began to realize the gravity and seriousness of the global pandemic and that we had to take significant action.

This is the first time since the great flu pandemic of 1918 that we have had to suspend regular in-person sittings of Parliament, just as Canadians from coast to coast had to stay home to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

I would like to take a moment today to pay tribute to some of our colleagues in the provincial and territorial governments who also had to find new ways to ensure that, in a world where it was not safe to go to work, they were still able to work together to support Canadians and businesses from a provincial perspective.

If we look at that period between March and May of 2020, very few provincial and territorial governments were able to meet to conduct government business, with most holding less than five sitting days in the first three months.

While this was a necessary and important choice that demonstrated leadership in managing a public health crisis, it was clear that there would come a time when more regular sessions and accountability would be important. The question then became how to do that in a safe and responsible manner.

● (1715)

[*English*]

As we look around the chamber, we see the issue that many of our provincial and territorial counterparts would also quickly realize: Legislatures were not designed with social distancing in mind, with many located in historic buildings that have cramped seating. However, if we were simply limiting the number of people in the legislature, the question would become how we would also ensure that all representatives can continue to have their voices heard. It is a fundamental right and privilege of members to attend sittings of the legislature to which they are elected.

Government Orders

Some provinces and territories focused on the types of measures that would protect in-person meetings. This included measures like limiting the number of people in their legislatures if space would not allow for social distancing, requiring the use of masks, finding ways that would allow voting to take place safely, and eventually requiring proof of vaccination to enter the premises. These types of policies became the norm across the country, not just in governments, but in businesses and gathering places the world over. Others quickly began looking at how technology could be used to allow everyone to participate equally. Fortunately, we live in a time when technology gives us the ability to connect with people around the world at the touch of a button.

I admit that it would have been extremely difficult to participate remotely even a few decades ago when the Internet was in its relative infancy. However, here we are less than two years after the start of the pandemic, and the word Zoom is no longer synonymous with moving quickly, but instead is an adjective for how we are able to connect with one another.

[*Translation*]

For provinces and territories such as British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Quebec and Manitoba, the use of hybrid and virtual sessions began with committees, which was a cautious step and allowed some jurisdictions to test technology solutions on a smaller scale before deciding whether they could be deployed more widely.

They began by holding virtual committee meetings using video and teleconferencing technology. These were not just meetings to discuss pandemic-related issues, but to ensure that, even in the absence of face-to-face meetings, the necessary types of discussion and monitoring could take place.

In fact, some jurisdictions went beyond simply holding virtual committee meetings and, as we did at the federal level, adopted hybrid sessions of their legislatures during the pandemic.

The people of British Columbia are in our thoughts and prayers right now as they deal with the consequences of extreme weather and flooding caused by climate change, another issue of great importance to our government.

I just want to point out that British Columbia led the way with virtual sittings throughout the pandemic. On June 22, 2020, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia began meeting in a hybrid format using Zoom and limiting the number of members who could be present in person to ensure appropriate physical distancing. Those kinds of rules remain in place today.

On October 4, 2021, the Legislative Assembly adopted temporary changes to its Standing Orders to allow video conferencing. These changes enabled members to participate, vote and table documents virtually, just as the motion we are discussing today would do.

• (1720)

[*English*]

The list of provinces and territories that have taken similar steps gets longer. On October 8, 2020, Manitoba held its first virtual sit-

ting of the legislature, with only about half of MLAs present in person to allow for social distancing.

On March 11, 2021, Nova Scotia adopted a motion that would allow for virtual sittings, with just three members of each caucus and two independent members physically present in the legislative chambers.

May 2021 was a big month for provinces moving to hybrid sittings. In response to a COVID exposure, Prince Edward Island implemented its own temporary hybrid system. On May 18, 2021, New Brunswick held its first virtual sitting, with at least one MLA suggesting that it is a practice that should continue beyond the pandemic to deal with other potential issues such as extreme weather that would keep members from getting to the chamber. Finally, later that month, Nunavut also began having most regular MLAs attend their legislative assembly remotely.

I could go on, but suffice it to say the way things are being done has changed drastically in a relatively short period of time. While it might be nice to go back to business as usual, we are reminded on a daily basis that COVID-19 is still a threat to Canadians' health.

While vaccinations have been an important step towards a return to normalcy, we continue to see waves of cases. As we move into the winter, where more people are stuck indoors and less able to socially distance, it is important that we stay vigilant. Our government has been clear that we have to realize we are still in a pandemic that needs to be treated seriously. Just like our colleagues in the provinces and territories, we have proved that hybrid sittings work, and may even have some advantages over the old ways.

With that, I implore everyone in this House to support the motion, which sends a strong signal to all Canadians that the government is ready to get to work, but is still keeping health and safety as a paramount concern.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about hybrid sittings having been done in the past and being done at other levels. It is important to underline that there are two things about the context that are particularly different now. One aspect of the context is that we have multiple strategies now that we were not aware of at the beginning for keeping ourselves safe. We have vaccination, but we also have testing, and the government has not put forward proposals, for instance, to have members regularly tested. I would support a measure to have all members regularly tested, regardless of vaccination status, but the government has not done that. We have tools available that we did not have a year and a half ago.

Government Orders

One other aspect of the context that is a different and particular to this chamber is that Liberal cabinet ministers have simply refused to show up. We have been in a context where the chamber, on that side of the House, has been virtually empty. One member would be here, yet there would be ministers giving speeches on government legislation from their offices in this building. They cannot even come down the elevator to speak in an empty chamber.

Would the member not agree that is an abuse of these provisions, which helps explain why the opposition is particularly concerned about the government wanting to position itself to repeat those abuses again?

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, yes, there is a lot of information that we did not have in the past, but we also have to remind Canadians that people were not vaccinated at the rate they are today. We cannot only be asking Canadians to sacrifice their own liberties by staying home when they are sick, so they do not spread the COVID-19 virus.

Our government and ministers were always ready, able and willing to answer questions and be held to account. I think they did a great job.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I give the floor to the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, I would like to remind members that, if they want to ask questions, they must be in their seat.

The member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

• (1725)

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question for my colleague is pretty simple.

I think the hybrid Parliament was the exception to the rule, the rule being how Parliament functions normally. Hybrid sittings were introduced in response to a pandemic. The context then was very different. One significant element has changed: We now have access to vaccines.

As long as members and parliamentarians can present proof of vaccination when they enter the building, I see no reason why we should not sit in person, especially considering that nearly 20,000 people can attend a hockey game in the Bell Centre.

Safety first, of course, but I would like my colleague to comment on why we should not do the same thing here that people do elsewhere for recreational purposes.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, it is much better for us all to be here together to communicate, exchange ideas and debate, but is everyone here today vaccinated? The answer is no.

If we look at the numbers in the newspapers, we can see there are a lot of cases. Some members do not even want to disclose whether they are vaccinated. I do not think we should risk being infected.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague across the way for being back in the House.

She made some very critical points around the fact that we are still in this pandemic. I know many of us in the House are very concerned that just a few days ago we lost a senator, who, I might add, was double vaccinated.

It was mentioned earlier that two MLAs in my home legislature of Manitoba have COVID-19. We know a Conservative MP has COVID-19. The idea of keeping one another safe, despite the fact that most of us are vaccinated, is so critical. I wonder if the member could speak to that.

Ms. Annie Koutrakis: Madam Speaker, I also congratulate my colleague across the way for her re-election.

Vaccination is the way to getting back to normal. We cannot be hypocritical as members of the House. Canadians who voted for us, by the way, saw that a hybrid Parliament did work and that most of us are back in our seats. We cannot be asking Canadians to be vaccinated to help keep everybody else safe and not do the same thing in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I resume debate, I just want to apologize to the member for Cumberland—Colchester for the comment I made regarding the personal attack. I believed that he was speaking about the member's credential and not the report. I do apologize for that, and I wish to retract it.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for York Centre.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank all the members and colleagues who are here with me today. Congratulations to each and every one of them on their election or re-election to this House.

I want to thank the constituents of York Centre who put their trust in me again. I was elected October 2020 and walked into this chamber for the first time exactly one year ago today. I want to thank my daughters Taya and Eden, my parents Uri and Nancy, my family members and my community members who helped me in the brave decision in the middle of a pandemic to stand up for my community.

I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of the motion to implement a hybrid sitting model in the House of Commons. As the 100th woman to step onto this House floor for the first time ever, I do not take it lightly that in this day and age, the role of women, both at home and in the workplace, matters more than ever, and our voices need to be heard in this House during the pandemic and as we move forward.

Government Orders

As we embark on a new parliamentary session, I have reflected on the past months and how we have adapted, as individuals, families and communities, our lives to the realities of the pandemic. I have thought about how we, as members of this parliamentary community, had to adapt our traditional ways of meeting and representing our constituents in order to keep us, our staff and the House of Commons administration safe.

In fact, until this week, that was the only way I knew how to be in this House. I entered in a Zoom Parliament. I worked hard through pieces of legislation with every member in this House, whether it was through committee, caucus meetings or other opportunities via email and separate Zoom meetings to make sure the work of this House got done. We kept Canadians safe, and we moved forward with what our government and this House is meant to do, which is to keep Canada moving forward.

A significant way that we achieved this was with the hybrid system whereby members could participate in person and virtually. That is what we are proposing now. I believe that the development of this hybrid system is a success story and one that should continue in this Parliament.

There are so many reasons that a hybrid system is beneficial. First and foremost, it helps keep us and our support staff safe by following public health guidance. Second, it ensures the participation of all MPs in proceedings and in chamber. Even those across the floor who have tested positive can be part of the parliamentary process. Third, it provides greater work-life balance for us as members of Parliament as we conduct our responsibilities in our constituencies and in Ottawa.

A fourth way in which hybrid sittings are beneficial, and one that is not mentioned as often, are the positive impacts for the environment. It is interesting to ask how a hybrid Parliament could help the environment. This question was asked as part of a study conducted by the Parliamentary Budget Officer just this past February. The study is titled “Cost Estimate of a Hybrid Parliament System” and was requested by Senator Rosa Galvez.

As described on the website of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the report estimated the incremental costs and savings of a hybrid parliamentary system. The significant decrease in travel reduced greenhouse gas emissions and as such, this report also attempted to estimate this associated reduction.

When the findings of the report were released, Senator Galvez stated that this is the first time the PBO assesses the Parliament's climate footprint. This initial analysis found the avoided travels to and from Ottawa would approximate annual reduction in GHG of 2,972 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, savings that are equal to removing 1.5 cars per parliamentarian from circulation each year.

The report offers conservative figures, not my colleagues across the floor, that do not include the use of charter flights by parliamentarians and concepts such as stratosphere GHG emissions of flights, which would effectively double GHG emissions. The PBO report confirms that a hybrid Parliament system is cheaper, more efficient and climate-friendly.

Since 2015, the government has been committed to finding real solutions to help tackle the climate crisis while also creating jobs,

strengthening our economy and growing the middle class. How our Parliament works should be part of that solution.

● (1730)

We have put a rising price on pollution that puts money back into the pockets of Canadians. We have made new investments in public transit. We committed to reducing pollution by planting two billion trees and banned harmful single-use plastics to protect our oceans.

Another significant achievement was the passage of Bill C-12, a bill that I worked on with my colleagues in the House, the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act. It was our keystone piece, work that I am proud of in the previous Parliament. This was all done on Zoom. Our government promised to put forward a plan that would allow Canada to exceed its pollution-reduction targets and create a legally binding process for all future governments to set national climate targets that would achieve the science-based goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

Bill C-12 is the fulfillment of our commitment to Canadians to put these legally binding processes in place.

I was encouraged to hear the recent Speech from the Throne on how our government would continue to take strong and bold climate action by focusing on innovation and good, green jobs. By working with like-minded countries, we will build a more resilient, sustainable and competitive economy. These commitments include investing in public transit and mandating the sale of zero-emission vehicles that will help us breathe cleaner air and increase the price on pollution, while putting more money back into Canadian pockets.

I will conclude my remarks by asking all members to support this motion of a hybrid Parliament. It is time for us to get to work. I am here to work and to do so in a way that is responsible and safe for all of us. This would allow all members to participate in the important debates in the House. Let us continue with a hybrid Parliament and do the job that Canadians elected us to do.

● (1735)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government has been presenting arguments all day about the safety of staff and health. Now we are hearing that this is about convenience, this is about the environment and this is about the continuation of a virtual Parliament until the end of time. Which reason is it? Is it for the safety of the House, or is it for the environment or is it simply for the convenience of the member?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome the new member across the aisle. She is my neighbour in Thornhill.

First, we have talked about this all along: the commitment to keep Canadians safe; the commitment to keep the House running and working. This is not about convenience. This is about ensuring that we fulfill our legislative duties in our roles as parliamentarians to represent Canadians from our constituencies from coast to coast to coast.

I think it is convenient for the member to ask the question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. We heard her deliver a long speech and talk at length about the environmental benefits of a hybrid Parliament.

Which does she think would have a greater impact on climate change: a hybrid Parliament or ending fossil fuel subsidies?

[*English*]

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, right now, this debate is why we need a hybrid Parliament. It is not about fossil fuels and what we will do in the future. We have made a commitment to Canadians to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We have made a commitment to ensure that the clean fuel from our country is the cleanest it can be, as we move forward for Canadians. However, right now we are talking about the safety of the House and keeping it working.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, if the member were talking about all the vaccinated Conservatives over there, I would have been more sold on her argument. However, what she is telling us is that it is much more efficient. She said it is cheaper, cleaner and maybe more carbon friendly not to have a sitting democracy.

If we are going to start dealing with the Liberals' horrific record on the environment, I would not use democracy as a way of cheapening that. The Environment Commissioner today said that Canada was once a leader under the G7 and now we are a laggard, thanks to the government.

I would like to hear the member tell us what the emissions standards are that the Liberals will actually impose. Was that just a photo op at Glasgow? Our workers are waiting to see action, so why does the member not explain that?

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the member that we were talking about the added benefits of a safe Parliament for Canadians and for parliamentarians, and that lowering GHG emissions is a benefit of that. I would be happy to debate with him at another time on our environmental policy.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the constituents of Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa for sending me here for the second time.

This is my first time rising in the House, and I have a question for the hon. member. Do you plan on—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions are through the Chair.

Mr. Dan Mazier: I am sorry, Madam Chair. I have a question through the Speaker. Do you plan on attending committees in person for the first time since you have never attended them in person?

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• (1740)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will remind the member again. He might want to use the word “she” as opposed to “you”.

The hon. member for York Centre.

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Madam Chair, I would like to welcome my colleague from across the floor, and I congratulate him on his standing in the House for the first time. It is a pleasure to work with you.

I did tremendous work in committee through Zoom last year. In fact, I am happy to speak with my colleague about it. Bill C-12, the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, is a bill of which I am very proud. I have worked on other important legislation in committee. We will continue to do so as long as we follow the Public Health guidelines.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I want to remind the member to address questions and comments through the Chair and to maybe use “him” instead “you”.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Parliament for Victoria.

I am proud to speak in 100% support of the motion to move back to a hybrid Parliament. I am proud that the NDP has been pushing for a hybrid Parliament. I am proud to rise in the House for the first time in this Parliament. I am honoured to fight for the people of northern Manitoba. It is rooted in where I come from and who I represent that I rise in the House to make it abundantly clear that we need a hybrid Parliament.

I am frankly shocked that in the year 2021, in the throes of a fourth wave of a global pandemic, after a year and a half of creating and making a hybrid Parliament work, that we are even having this debate. It is a failure of leadership that we are even here having this debate, frankly. We should have gone straight back into a hybrid Parliament.

Let me start by making it clear. It is reckless to push for an in-person Parliament. We are in the fourth wave of the global COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is very much still spreading across our country. It is making people sick, including those who are doubly vaccinated. In Manitoba, two double-vaccinated MLAs have COVID-19 right now. We also know that COVID-19 is still killing people, and I want to share my condolences with the family of Senator Josée Forest-Niesing.

Government Orders

What do we know right now? We know that COVID-19 cases are on the rise once again in our country. We know that people are being encouraged to get their booster shots to ensure vaccine efficacy. We know that there is greater chance of transmission in crowded enclosed spaces, particularly during winter months as people move inside. We know upgrading our masks when inside is the way to go, but somehow this does not seem to apply to some people on planet Parliament.

I was here on Monday when we elected our Speaker and when we voted for the Assistant Deputy Speaker. There was no social distancing. There was overcrowding, and in the lobby, more than one Conservative MP at a time was not wearing a mask. We know that some Conservative members are also choosing not to disclose whether they are vaccinated.

We were told early on in this pandemic that we were vectors in the spread of COVID-19. Today, we have 338 people travelling from various parts of the country, including hot spots, all in one place. We are vectors once again.

We have to be concerned not only for our colleagues, but for our loved ones and our constituents, and we cannot pretend that we are the only ones working here.

Our work is made possible by the hundreds of people who work on Parliament Hill, from our party staff to pages to interpreters to technical staff to security guards to cleaning staff to catering staff. Their health and safety should not be put at risk because we as MPs refuse to acknowledge the ongoing reality of a global pandemic. We can make a difference with a hybrid Parliament that takes advantage of virtual technology, that allows us to participate in our communities rather than everyone having to be here.

Let us also be clear that a hybrid Parliament makes sense in terms of logistics. It has become harder for us to get to and go back from Ottawa. Many flights and many routes have been cut since the beginning of the pandemic. The regional carrier, Calm Air, servicing my community, Thompson, the largest city in my riding, has cut almost half of its flights to and from Winnipeg. Air Canada has no direct flights from Winnipeg to Ottawa and back. These flights have not been restored, and they will not be restored anytime soon, making our travel to and from Ottawa longer and oftentimes a logistical nightmare.

My message for colleagues who feel they are okay, because they can simply step on a flight or get in their car to get to Ottawa, is to look beyond their own personal circumstances. We need to find solutions that ensure we can all do this work safely.

Beyond the pandemic, a hybrid Parliament is the way of the future, a future where more women can get involved. We are not in the 1860s anymore, when male MPs left their kids with their wives at home and went to Ottawa to live their lives unencumbered by the responsibilities of being a parent or a caregiver. It is 2021. We can and must do our work differently in a way that reflects values of gender equality and the need to see 50% of the House represented by women.

• (1745)

I have been asked many times about how we can get more women elected, and I cannot say how many times I have heard from women who are thinking of having kids, or who have kids, that they cannot imagine running to be an MP and doing this work because of the travel, the time away from home, the lack of child care and the need to be there for their kids. I know this reality well, as someone who did this work for nine years without kids and now for four years with my twins. It is not easy and that is an understatement.

Right now I have to be in Ottawa. My partner, a veteran, is finishing his education degree and is just starting his teaching placement in the semi-remote Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, a first nation community outside of our home in Thompson. I do not have child care here in Ottawa and I have to leave my kids, one of whom is sick, with my parents in Winnipeg so that I can be here today. It is not rocket science. One of the ways of making Parliament accessible to women, and to all parents, is by ensuring a hybrid Parliament.

Let us also get in line with so many workplaces, including the federal public service, where virtual work and hybrid work are seen as the legitimate, effective work that they are. We have done this before. We did it for a year and a half and it worked. We can do this.

Finally, let us be clear. A hybrid Parliament is necessary as we face a climate emergency. Climate change is here. It is wreaking havoc across our country and around the world. COP26 made clear that we need to drastically cut our greenhouse gas emissions. We must drastically cut our carbon footprint here in Canada. We know that Canada's climate record is the worst of the G7 nations', and time is running out. We must end subsidies to oil and gas. We must cancel the TMX pipeline and new fossil fuel infrastructure. We must phase out the burning of fossil fuels and move to green energy, and we must stand with land protectors such as those on Wet'suwet'en territory. We must invest in a green new deal.

We must also find immediate ways to cut down our carbon footprint. With a hybrid Parliament, we do not all have to fly back and forth every week from every corner of the country. Let us not forget that our work is rooted in our communities. It is driven by the people we represent. It is time we work in a Parliament that reflects today's reality. A hybrid model allows us to stay rooted in our home communities and regions. This is the way of the future.

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I propose that Parliament strike a committee to find ways to modernize Parliament, including having a permanent hybrid Parliament: a Parliament in tune with today's reality and the immense challenges we face. Let us put aside the anti-science, COVID-conspiracy-driven politics and the 19th-century family model that continues to set women back. Let us face today's reality of climate change and find ways to do our work in a better way.

The choice is clear between a 19th-century vision of Parliament and a 21st-century vision of Parliament. We can do this. Let us be on the right side of history.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I apologize because I was only able to catch the last half of my colleague's speech, but even in that short time, she had some very important points, particularly about trying to increase representation in the House and trying to make this place accessible, particularly for women with children. I know my fiancée and I have had conversations. We try to look at what we will do when the time comes. It is going to be a very difficult balance for us as parents.

There have been conversations in the House today about not doing parliamentary work. I can say my constituents actually quite enjoyed seeing me at home, present in the communities, but also seeing me participating online virtually. Could the member opposite speak to her own experience of how she was able to contribute through virtual means? I presume she will still want to be in this place, but will she perhaps take the opportunity when needed, for health reasons or otherwise, to participate in this fashion?

• (1750)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, I would say first of all that I think all of us as MPs who were here in the previous Parliament found ways to fight for our constituents during a time of crisis, and we made Parliament work. I will also say what I heard from constituents. As many know, our part of the country was particularly vulnerable. It had heavy travel and lockdown restrictions. One of the things I never heard constituents say was, "I miss seeing you in Ottawa". Nobody said that. People wanted to know that I was there and that our team was there fighting for them. They saw that work happening online, on social media, through our ongoing communication and through the visits I was able to do. That is the kind of work that we need to continue doing because, first of all, we are still in a pandemic. Second of all, this is the smart way of doing this work: rooted in our communities and continuing to fight for the people we represent.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I agree with my friend that we all have unique circumstances that we deal with when trying to do this job. I would also argue that, in fact, an election is a chance to apply for a job. Someone is asking constituents to vote for them to do a job, and the job is in Ottawa. My friend mentioned in her speech that she did the job for a number of years without kids. I recognize as a parent myself that there are challenges. We also understand what the job entails. Leading up to an election, people always make a choice about what job they are going to apply for. If someone is going to stand for re-election, they stand knowing all of the challenges.

However, I also heard my friend in the NDP say something we have been hearing that is opposite from the Liberals. The Liberals

have been saying all day that a hybrid Parliament is to be used in extreme circumstances, but now my friend from the NDP, who is supporting the Liberals, is saying it is to be used whenever someone does not feel like coming to Ottawa. A clarification would be nice.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, once again we hear more conspiracy theories from the Conservatives. The party is clearly comfortable with conspiracy theories.

Let us be clear. The work of a hybrid Parliament, including a virtual component, is real work. To say otherwise is simply not true. It is also disrespectful to many people, including public servants and many others who have been doing virtual work throughout this pandemic. This is a safe way of doing this work, and it has to be a way of going forward.

We have major challenges ahead of us, and we need to find ways to do this work safely, effectively, in a cost-saving manner and a way that respects our environment. A hybrid Parliament is very much the way to do that. I invite the member to get on board with that vision.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to acknowledge how much I admire my esteemed colleague, who has twins. I just had a baby barely two months ago. I went into politics with my eyes open, knowing that the job would involve a lot of travel and would come at a cost to my family. I also knew that a member's work had to be done in Parliament, because that is what we were elected to do.

I have a question for my colleague. Are we turning an emergency measure into a work-life balance measure, which is a very important issue but one that should be discussed at another time?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on the birth of her child. I would also like to welcome her to Parliament and warn her that it is rather difficult to do this job when one has small children, and that goes for both mothers and fathers.

We really need to modernize the way Parliament works so that members do not have to choose between being a parent and fighting for their constituents. The traditional model of Parliament is based on an outdated image of the family. We need to modernize the way we work. Having more women MPs in the House is not the only way to achieve that, but it is certainly important.

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• (1755)

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, having the option for a virtual hybrid parliament is a no-brainer in a pandemic, so rather than start off my speech describing the obvious reasons why we would want to protect our fellow members of Parliament, our staff, our families and our communities, I am going to talk about some of the other reasons why a virtual parliament could be supportive in the House.

I am the MP who represents the beautiful riding of Victoria in British Columbia. I am also a new mom to the light of my life, my daughter Alora. She is seven months old. From door to door, our commute is about 10 hours. There are no direct flights. Mostly we are lucky to take two flights, but the past few times there have been three in a row. Travelling back and forth with a seven-month-old is not easy. In the past few months, she has been on 12 different planes. In normal times that would be exhausting, but in a pandemic it is also nerve-racking.

Beyond the big worry that flying here might put her at risk, I have also been thinking about what happens when she gets a cold. Last month, she got a really bad cold, then my partner and I got it and we were coughing for about two weeks straight. Luckily, our multiple COVID tests were negative, but we would not have been able to get on a plane if we needed to because we were symptomatic. Anyone who has raised little ones knows that they are constantly getting runny noses, coughs and mild fevers. Also, their immune systems are still developing. Babies who are teething often get fevers. Alora's two front teeth are just starting to come in, and if she has a fever we cannot fly. We would be stuck in Victoria, far across the country on Vancouver Island. A virtual Parliament for me would mean I could still work, even if I was stuck in Victoria unable to fly because she is still breastfeeding, has caught a mild cold or has a teething fever.

That is now. When I was pregnant this past year, if it had not been for a virtual Parliament, I would not have been able to work for months in the latter part of my pregnancy when I was unable to fly. Instead, I was able to continue working into my ninth month of pregnancy. Not every woman wants to do that, but every woman deserves the choice. Women deserve the choice to participate. They should not have to face institutional barriers. I am sad to say that despite the gains we have made, we still face many of them. The vast majority of the members of Parliament here are men. The House of Commons was built by men, for men, and we have a long way to go if we want equal access, equal participation and equity for Alora's generation.

If we want to encourage more young women to run, one important step is to make sure that Parliament is more family-friendly. One small example is that there is one family room here at Parliament. There are at least three moms with babies. Because of COVID, only one family can be in the family room at a time. That means when one of the other moms has booked that room, I breast-feed and pump in the quiet room: the room for meditation and quiet reflection. There is no lock on the door to the quiet room, so I have had MPs come in even though I barricaded the door. It has been awkward and funny, but there are small changes that we could make that would make life less challenging for new moms. It would

be great to have more family rooms. It would be great to have a private place to change into my pumping gear or to take my baby when she needs a nap, and a fridge to store breast milk in. Those would be small changes that would make a small difference.

Do members know what would make a huge difference? The option for a virtual Parliament. Women in every sector have taken on more during this pandemic. Whether through the loss of employment, additional child care challenges, increased unpaid labour at home or increased care for elderly family members, women have borne the brunt of this pandemic.

• (1800)

We need to address the barriers that women face across Canada. We need to especially address these barriers for women who face additional barriers: women who are single moms, indigenous women, racialized women, trans women, queer women and women with disabilities. We need these women in Parliament to help us make laws because we know that representation matters. It is not guaranteed, but people who have lived the experience of barriers are much more likely to fight to reduce those barriers.

Every chance I get, I encourage young women to get involved in politics, to put their names forward to run for elected office. However, when I am talking to women about running to be an MP, it is a hard sell to women with young kids, women from B.C. I have to be honest with them about the challenges. Being a mom is a demanding job, and that is just on its own. Being an MP is a demanding job just on its own. Doing them at the same time is beyond challenging. I accept that and am committed to rising to those challenges, but what is unacceptable to me is that MPs could make the House more family-friendly but they choose not to.

What is unacceptable to me is when I hear MPs in this debate say that those who want a hybrid Parliament want it because we do not want to come to work. I want to come to work. I want a hybrid Parliament so that when my daughter gets sick and I am stuck in Victoria, I can still participate. I want a hybrid Parliament so that pregnant MPs have the choice to keep working. I want a hybrid Parliament so that when I am talking to young women, I can tell them honestly that things are changing, that MPs in the House are working to make Parliament more accessible and more family-friendly.

I want to take a moment to express a huge thanks to my partner James. Without his support, love and incredible parenting, I would not be here. I also want to thank our parents, Alora's grandparents, and our community. It takes a village, and I would not be able to do this without them.

I want to thank my campaign team and my staff too. Running in an election with a baby and being an MP with a baby are tough, and I am so lucky to have amazing people on my team and in my community.

My partner James is also a huge advocate for a hybrid Parliament. He is on parental leave and is caring for our daughter. He is bringing her to Parliament for breastfeeding or just so I can see her in our 14-hour days when we have emergency debates and late nights. He wants a hybrid Parliament because it would maybe give us a bit more time in Victoria. When we are in Victoria, we have a community supporting us, with grandparents' support and someone to hold the baby when he needs to sleep because he has been up all night with her. It would give us the option of a bit more balance. It would give us peace of mind about making choices to reduce risk to my daughter.

I have heard some members in this debate speak as if the pandemic is over. However, while we are making great progress with vaccines, the pandemic is not over. We have continued to see outbreaks, and countries in Europe that are facing rising cases and hospitalizations are once again implementing lockdown policies. Having a hybrid Parliament in place right now would ensure that whatever happens in the coming weeks and months, Parliament can continue to function.

The pandemic has had devastating impacts. COVID-19 has killed around 30,000 people in Canada and five million people around the world. We should all pause and reflect on these victims. We should reflect on how we can work together to take every measure possible to end the pandemic.

This motion is a continuation of the measures that have already collectively been taken by members of Parliament, measures that were taken unanimously because we all understood that we are in a public health emergency. It is the right thing to do to keep everyone safe; to protect not just members of Parliament but their families, their staff and the employees on Parliament Hill; and to protect the communities that we go home to.

• (1805)

Without a hybrid Parliament, someone who might have symptoms of COVID, tests positive or needs to quarantine will not have the chance to bring concerns forward. I am worried that without hybrid Parliament, they may be tempted to show up anyway and put other MPs at risk, put their families at risk—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry but the member is out of time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was very special to see my hon. colleague with her beautiful baby. I want to congratulate her on showing that mothers can do both.

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My hon. colleague is taking issue with some colleagues in the House who are arguing that they do not want virtual Parliament because people do not want to come to work. The problem is that for basically the length of the pandemic, there was one Liberal member of Parliament in the House. Not all the other ones had COVID or were having babies. There was one member of Parliament here.

Is the member comfortable with that? Does she think it is acceptable that people can just choose, for whatever reason, not to come? She made really good arguments for childbirth and other things, but there was one Liberal member in the House, no others, and I personally did not find that acceptable.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that all members of Parliament are participating. I was able, in Parliament, to go to committee, question cabinet ministers in question period and question the Prime Minister. We can continue to do that.

This motion is not saying that we would be going back to the exact same measures, with limitations on the number of people in the House. Every member can come, and we will see more members in the House. However, having the option for a virtual Parliament is an important step right now to keep people safe. It also has all of these other benefits that are so vital.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your appointment.

I thank my colleague from Victoria for her speech. Before I ask my question, I have to tell her that Alora is absolutely adorable. I listened closely to the member's speech. If we were not debating under a gag order in a pandemic, I would have roundly applauded what she said about work-life balance.

However, the issue is that when we look around, there is often only one government member in the House. As far as I know, unless they are very secretive, none of the other members have a seven-month-old baby. My question is this: Does the member feel as though the situation we are discussing should be the exception even though the motion applies to everyone?

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, right now we are in a pandemic, and this motion is a continuation of what we already agreed to unanimously. We agreed that we are in a public health emergency. We need to do everything in our power to keep people safe.

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We also need to make sure that we are protecting the health and safety of members of Parliament, our staff, families and communities. This is one of the reasons I am supporting this motion. However, for me as a new mom, it is not just these considerations. We also need to see this as an opportunity to make Parliament more family-friendly, to break down barriers and to support women in the House.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague across the way. She has an adorable child.

I am coming back to the idea of prevention. Quebec has 902 cases today, which is much more than it has had. Just yesterday, the Quebec government renewed the emergency mandate because it sees where we are going. This is an opportunity to have in place a plan to continue to let us participate, should we need it.

Would the member agree this is the prudent thing to do so that we do not find ourselves acting in a reactive manner?

• (1810)

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for bringing up the fact that each community is different. There are 338 of us, and we are coming from different contexts and different communities with different case numbers. It is so vital right now that we take this step.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

I am pleased to speak in favour of this motion. I believe that it sets out a reasonable approach to allow the House to perform all of its regular business while keeping members and all the staff who support us safe during the ongoing pandemic. It is particularly frustrating that all parties in the House were not able to find common ground on a way to adapt our proceedings, given that the last Parliament, for those of us who were not here, appeared to function extremely well.

My riding of Vancouver Granville is the heart of British Columbia's medical infrastructure, with VGH, BC Women's Hospital, BC Children's Hospital, BC Cancer and the BC CDC, and it has also been ground zero for anti-maskers, anti-vaxxers and conspiracy theorists. Earlier today, I spoke with a health care professional from my riding, and they had one message for members of the House: Be an example. Be an example on vaccinations, be an example for wearing masks and, most importantly, be an example on showing people that they should be able to work remotely when possible so as not to spread COVID-19.

I am a new MP, and I have so much enjoyed being here physically with my colleagues this week. However, I also know that I have an obligation to my constituents, and that is to be an example of best practices, which is what this motion seeks to achieve.

There is no doubt that at the onset of COVID-19 in early 2020, changes in institutions and organizations all around the world occurred, whether they were public or private organizations. Universities went online and corporations like the one I ran were able to use technology to hire employees across Canada, not just in a single location.

Now, some have adapted well by leveraging technology to work remotely from home, but unfortunately, many others have not been able to. As members of Parliament, we are fortunate and privileged to work in a resilient institution. This resilience is not an accident. It is the result of the hard work of many generations of Canadians and many generations of parliamentarians who have evolved our rules and procedures to match the times.

This is precisely what the House did during the last Parliament in the face of an unprecedented public health crisis. MPs found creative and innovative ways to debate, transact business and make decisions using a hybrid approach. Most importantly, this allowed members to fulfill all of their duties while staying safe. For those of us not yet here, it appeared to be an example of how things could get done.

Let us take a look at what we were able to achieve in the House during the second session of the 43rd Parliament using the hybrid approach. This was from September 2020 to June 2021, when the House sat with some members in the chamber and many participating remotely. The motion we are debating today largely replicates the approach from that period.

In the second session there was a total of 124 sitting days, during which all of the House's regular categories of business were conducted. There was a total of 185 recorded divisions taken during hybrid means, and over 120 of these were done using the convenient voting app that was in place for March 2021. Today's motion is proposing to reinstate this now tried and tested app. Sixty-nine of these votes were on government bills at various stages of the legislative process, and 19 government bills received royal assent. Indeed, it was an approach like this that allowed the member for Calgary Nose Hill to participate from wherever the member happened to be.

The legislative process is one of the most complicated that we have seen in this place, given the detailed intricate work required for us to scrutinize and debate bills. However, MPs were able to do exactly this in a hybrid Parliament. The legislation that was passed is making a real impact on the lives of Canadians—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Things have been going well here tonight, but I would ask folks to keep some of their comments to themselves and allow the hon. member for Vancouver Granville to continue. I will also give him a bit of a warning to be careful.

• (1815)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-4, which was adopted in October 2020, created three new temporary recovery benefits to support Canadians who were unable to work for reasons related to COVID-19. Bill C-9 put in place new targeted supports to help businesses through the pandemic with the emergency rent and wage subsidies. Bill C-12 charted a course for clean growth for generations to come by legislating net-zero emissions by 2050. This is essential to avoid the worst impact of climate change, some of which we have seen in British Columbia, and fully seize the economic opportunities that it presents.

There are concerns that private members' bills may not make their way through the House. The reality is that, in the second session, these were in no way impeded by the hybrid process. There were 46 recorded divisions taken on private members' bills and motions. Six received royal assent, and six of the motions were adopted. Of the private members' bills that were passed, five of the bills were introduced by Conservative members and one by a Bloc Québécois member.

These are just a few examples of bills the House passed by working together, but in a physically distanced way. A total of 28 votes took place on opposition day motions. Of the 24 motions they debated, 16 were adopted. As members are aware, House committees also met in a hybrid format during the second session of the 43rd Parliament. The motion before us today would allow this to continue in the 44th Parliament.

Standing committees also played their important accountability function in our system of responsible government by reviewing government bills and estimates and issuing reports on government policy and actions. All of these functions were carried out in a hybrid format, and would be again under the proposed motion.

There are those who argue that conducting parliamentary business using video conference is too impersonal and that the cut and thrust of good debate is lost. I understand these concerns, particularly as a new MP. However, the reality is that COVID-19 is spreading in our communities, and too many people are still being hospitalized. Case counts are not going down.

Members of Parliament must lead by example. We have the means to be flexible and safe in how we conduct our business, and I believe it behooves us to use them. Technology is not perfect, and there is nothing that replaces in-person engagement, but these are extraordinary times, and we must find ways to adapt and to reflect the realities that we face today. Nothing in the motion that we are debating today would limit members' ability to participate in any parliamentary proceedings, and it would in no way infringe on their privilege.

In fact, this motion would facilitate greater participation in the face of ongoing public health restrictions. Members can imagine a scenario where a member has to isolate at home because of potential exposure to COVID-19. In a hybrid model, that member could still participate in House proceedings.

Canadians did not send us to this place to debate our needs as members of Parliament, and they certainly did not elect us to potentially contract and/or transmit COVID-19 in our home communi-

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ties. They elected us to address the issues that matter most to them and their families, and the government has an agenda to do just that. I am hoping that all members in the House will work together to pass, before the winter adjournment, the crucial legislation the government has forthcoming.

While Canada has the enviable position of having recovered jobs to a level higher than that at the beginning of the pandemic, there are still sectors that are adversely affected by the pandemic and need support, and the government is bringing forward legislation to provide targeted support to the tourism and hospitality sectors and other hard-hit businesses.

Particularly during a global health crisis, it is vital that federally regulated workers have access to 10 paid sick days, so they do not have to make the difficult choice of whether they should go to work sick or not pay their bills. Frontline workers, many of whom live in Vancouver Granville, always deserve our greatest gratitude, especially during a pandemic. This is why it is so disappointing that there are those who are harassing and threatening frontline workers at their places of work. The government will legislate protections for these vital workers and their facilities.

We are so close to finishing this fight against COVID-19. Indeed, this very week we have further reason to be optimistic. Thanks to the government's efforts, vaccines for children aged five to 11 are arriving across this country. As much as we all want to be done with this pandemic, we now have over a year and a half of experience working within it, and we can draw on this experience during the 44th Parliament.

The second session of the 43rd Parliament showed us that a hybrid Parliament, with members participating in person and online, can produce real results for Canadians. It is the safe and responsible thing to do to keep using this flexible approach. For those of us who were not here, we watched with awe as the House functioned remotely.

I encourage all members to join me in supporting this motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member tried to dress this up as a temporary measure, but the last three speakers, two NDP and one Liberal, really tipped the hand of the agenda of this new coalition. They want a permanent hybrid Parliament. They see it as a tool for advancing what they see as family-friendly to permanently replace Parliament with a Zoom call.

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I speak as a member with four young children. I have a fifth on the way. My wife works as a physician, and our due date for the fifth is when Parliament is sitting, so I understand the sacrifice that families have to make. Obviously, virtual Parliament would be easier for me personally, but it was worse for this institution.

When I ran for office, I understood that personal sacrifice. My family understood that family sacrifices were required for us to be able to do the kind of jobs that we needed to do to be here. I will also say that members have the option of bringing their families to Ottawa. They receive good support in terms of a housing allowance to do it. Certainly there were many Liberal ministers, in fact all of them, who consistently did their work outside of this House, not coming here to be accountable.

I do not understand how, if we are family-friendly for ministers with no children, they are communicating from their parliamentary offices instead of being on the floor in the House of Commons.

• (1820)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the question was, but I hear the hon. member's concern. I think the important thing to remember is that this process allows for accountability regardless of where individuals are. It enables people to participate in the activities of the House without endangering their communities, without potentially causing super spreader events and perhaps most importantly. It also ensures that Canadians can see their Parliament function as an example during COVID-19.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating you on your new role. With immeasurable solemnity, Atlantic Canada proudly greets the sun each day before it casts its light across central Canada. Light comes from the Atlantic. With an Acadian in the Speaker's chair, the beautiful star that graces our Acadian flag shines even brighter.

That said, during the election campaign in which we all participated, not a single individual, association, municipality or stakeholder expressed dissatisfaction with the hybrid Parliament that was operating in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. On the contrary, people congratulated us for being more present on the ground in our constituency.

Without straying too far from the exact purpose of this motion, I would like to emphasize the fact that people talked to us about COVID-19 and about recovering from the crisis, and they congratulated us on the work we accomplished while hybrid sittings were in effect.

I would like to ask my young colleague, who was recently out there campaigning, if he heard the same thing during his campaign.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, the answer is no, never, not even once.

[*English*]

The reality is that most Canadians wanted to know that government was functioning and that their parliamentarians were doing their work. That was the question, not where we work.

It is important to remember and note that, while we have heard the concerns of the members opposite, they are also the party that often talks about learning from the private sector and learning best practices. That is what this Parliament has done, and that is what this motion intends to do.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my colleague about being a woman with children and the argument being made today that it is hard. I know it is hard. I have three children. It is excruciating being away from them, but this is not about us. This is about something bigger than us. This job is not a normal job.

We took this job on to serve Canadians. Anyone who has worked on Zoom or virtually knows that the smallest technical glitch can squeak anything through. We are here to represent democracy. This is not about us. When we took this job on, we knew that we were representing something so much bigger than us. It is not about us, and members can bring their families here.

Why are they not open to pairing and negotiating here? How is it one or the other?

• (1825)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, again, I hear my hon. colleague's concerns. I think the reality is that we have an example from the last Parliament of when things can work and when things do work. I do not see anything in this motion that steps into play anything sinister or anything long term. This is a motion to deal with this session of Parliament.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to rise in the 44th Parliament and to be back here in the House of Commons.

Three hundred and thirty-eight Canadians are elected to represent their constituents from coast to coast to coast and this is my third time being sent here to Parliament to represent the wonderful, innovative, entrepreneurial and very generous residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge as one of the three MPs in the city of Vaughan. I wish to thank them for placing their trust, faith and hope in sending me here. It is a real honour to serve them, and I commit to them to do the best that I can to represent their interests here in Parliament and to be their strong, local voice.

Before I begin commenting on the motion in front of us, I also wish to thank my wife, Rose, my daughters Eliana and Natalia, and my six-week-old daughter Leia, who came into this world with God's blessing as quite a surprise for our family, probably the best surprise any family can have. I am not up to speed with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, as that member is up to number five. I think we will be stopping at three.

Nonetheless, on to the motion at hand. The last 18 months have been trying for Canadians. We represent Canadians and it has been trying because lives have been disrupted. Lives have been lost in all of our constituencies across Canada.

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We are recovering. I want to thank the residents of York region where, as of tonight, 88.2% of residents 12 years and older are fully vaccinated. I applaud them for heeding public health advice. I applaud them for doing the right thing. If they can do that, I encourage all members of Parliament here this evening, all the ones who have come and are so happy to be back seeing their colleagues and their friends, to please get vaccinated. It is the right thing to do. Canadians are doing it. My residents are doing it, and that is the way we will return to normal.

I am pleased to participate in debate on this reasonable and pragmatic motion. We are considering an important matter, which is whether to adapt the proceedings of this House to allow members to participate either in the chamber or by video conference. The context for the motion is one that we have been living with for more than 18 months. The pandemic has affected our lives, our work in Parliament and our work in our constituencies. This is in addition to the impact on Canadians and Canadian businesses. Canadians have responded by respecting the guidance given by our public health officials: maintaining physical distancing, wearing masks, adopting new handwashing habits, and staying home and self-isolating when they have symptoms, when they have come into contact with someone who tested positive or when they have tested positive themselves.

Our high vaccination rates, combined with these public health measures, have allowed us to make significant progress in protecting ourselves from COVID-19 and contributed to the economic recovery from the pandemic. Yes, we have met our target for a million jobs, and yes, we will create hundreds of thousands more in the months ahead.

Today we have an opportunity to advance the fight against COVID-19 in our workplace, this House, which all 338 of us have the privilege to serve. Today we have an opportunity to do such a thing.

This motion would adapt our proceedings to protect not only members, but also the people who support us every day in this House: our staff, the House of Commons administration and the parliamentary protective service. Having the option to participate remotely means that members who are exposed to the virus or who test positive can still participate in House proceedings while they self-isolate, which is very pragmatic and very reasonable.

This is a reasonable and pragmatic motion that ensures that all members are able to participate in the deliberations of this House. It builds on the decisions of this House in the 43rd Parliament. In the last Parliament, this House chose to adapt its procedures, practices and technology in response to public health guidance. Eventually, the House was conducting all regular business in hybrid sittings. This allowed all members to fully participate in proceedings either in person or via video conferencing while respecting public health guidance. These changes were implemented incrementally as the extent of the pandemic became clear, and as technological and procedural solutions were developed.

• (1830)

There were four distinct phases in the House's response to the pandemic in the 43rd Parliament.

First, in March 2020, there was considerable uncertainty about the extent of the pandemic and how long it would take to get COVID-19 under control.

The first phase of adaptations began on March 13, 2020, when the House decided to adjourn until April 20, 2020, and cancel all committee meetings due to the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic.

When the House was recalled, it sat with a reduced number of members in the chamber, in proportion to party standings, to allow for physical distancing to keep our members safe.

On March 24, the House began to adapt its proceedings to provide for parliamentary accountability during the pandemic. The House held a modified question period, where members could ask questions on the pandemic for up to five minutes over the course of an hour. Arrangements for a modified question period were continued each time the House sat until the end of the session.

The House also authorized the health committee and the finance committee to meet on matters related to the pandemic and the government's response. I had the honour of also participating in the finance committee at that time.

The committees were granted authority to meet virtually. This was the first use of technology to support the remote participation of members during the pandemic.

Further, the House could only be recalled to consider legislation to respond to COVID-19. This measure would continue through the spring and summer of 2020.

Later in the spring, the government shared draft legislation with opposition parties in advance of its introduction, to obtain unanimous consent for motions to expedite passage of these bills to assist Canadian workers and to assist Canadian businesses. The duration of the pandemic became more apparent and further technological and procedural adaptations were agreed to and implemented.

In these early days, we came together in a team Canada approach, and I emphasize that for all sides of the House, to provide support for Canadians and business. I hope members can come together in the same way to support the important measures that the government is proposing to address in this phase of the pandemic.

In early April 2020, the government recognized the need for additional adaptations to allow the House to exercise parliamentary accountability, while respecting public health guidance. This is why the former government House leader wrote the Speaker to seek advice and assistance on the capacity for House administration to support virtual sittings.

Government Orders

When the House met on April 11, 2020, it adopted a motion to instruct the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to examine how members could fulfill their parliamentary duties while the House stood adjourned due to the public health concerns caused by the pandemic, a pandemic that is not over yet.

The procedure and House affairs committee tabled two reports on this issue that provided invaluable guidance to the House as it developed and implemented further adaptations.

To support ongoing parliamentary accountability, the House expanded the number of committees authorized to meet virtually. By the end of the session, there were nine standing committees meeting virtually to examine COVID-19, the government's response to the pandemic and other matters. I had the honour of sitting on two of those committees, plus assisting on finance.

On April 20, 2020, the House took a remarkable step in adapting its procedures, practices and technology. On that day, the House established the Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic. All members of the House were members of the special committee.

The special committee held 25 meetings from late April to mid-June. These included in-person, virtual and hybrid meetings. These were the first hybrid and virtual proceedings in the chamber during the pandemic. The House also agreed to hold four hybrid summer sittings with modified order of business.

The special committee meetings and summer sittings adapted many elements of regular House business in a virtual or hybrid format. This included debate, question period, statements by ministers, statements by members, tabling of documents and presenting petitions electronically.

These adaptations had benefits that supported parliamentary accountability and the role of members. The modified question periods during the special committee, the summer sittings and other sittings were longer than regular question period and allowed members to ask questions for up to five minutes. As a result, opposition members were able to ask over 80% more questions than if the House had held regular question periods during the spring of 2020.

• (1835)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to debate very carefully today and member after member on the government side has stood and said that this motion is about COVID, it is about protecting MPs, protecting the public and that is why we should have a virtual option. However, my problem is that when I read the motion, it does not say that. It does not say that members can Zoom in if they are diagnosed with COVID. It does not say that members can Zoom in if they have been in proximity of someone who has had COVID or has had to self-isolate. It does not say any of those things. It just says that any member can Zoom in for any reason.

I am wondering if the intention is, and I take my colleague at his word, that if members have one of those conditions, if they are diagnosed with COVID, been in proximity or had an alert, that under those circumstances they can Zoom in, and not for any reason.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, it is great to see my colleague from Manitoba. The riding name is quite long. I had the

pleasure of working with that member on the finance committee. I welcome him back, and I congratulate him.

In the motion as written, hybrid sittings would go through until June 23, 2022. We are in the fourth wave of a pandemic. We know what is happening in Europe currently. Thankfully, Canadians from coast to coast to coast are receiving their vaccinations, disclosing that, ensuring the safety of their families and friends, and allowing them to get back to work.

We are getting back to work. It is so great to be here. I love being in the House of Commons. It is a privilege for myself and for the people who supported me, and I thank them.

The motion would allow individuals who may be exposed to COVID, who do need that flexibility to have it. In case members do get COVID, they would be able to work from home during that time. Hopefully they would be all right and would be able to come to work safely.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my esteemed colleague on his speech. He and I went on a magnificent trip to Italy together some time ago.

Unfortunately for me, the arguments advanced by the Liberal Party and the NDP really do not hold water. Fundamentally, we are elected to perform important legislative work, and that work is done here. Because of an exceptional situation, we pivoted to a hybrid model, but that should be over now. We are starting to get the pandemic under control.

If we managed to make it three or four days this way without anyone getting sick so far, I think we can carry on. We have rules here in Parliament to protect us. The problem is that the rules are not always adequately enforced.

My question for my colleague is this: How can he extrapolate and say that next June 23 will be the right time? Why not two months from now or next week?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend for his question. I have been practising my French.

[*English*]

In response to my hon. colleague from the province of Quebec, I believe it is very reasonable to have an end date of June. We continue to be in the fourth wave of this pandemic. We do not know what the future holds. We do know that Canadians from coast to coast to coast are getting vaccinated, and that is the best way to recover and move forward.

I encourage all members of the House to get vaccinated as well. I look forward to working with my hon. colleague, who I have gotten to know over the years, on future legislation, debating it and working for all Canadians.

Government Orders

• (1840)

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on being in the chair. I also congratulate my friend, the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge, on his re-election, and his lovely wife Rose and his, now, three beautiful children, particularly his youngest daughter Leia. Although, given the timing of Leia's birth, I wonder if a hybrid Parliament is in the member's best interests if he really does want to cap the family at three children.

However, we have heard much debate over the last 24 hours about why this is appropriate. People are using examples of hockey rinks and concerts as well as a variety of other totally irrelevant analogies, in my opinion. What the motion does not say is that I cannot be prevented from coming into the House.

As I said earlier today, I plan on being here at every opportunity. What is the hon. member's intention?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election.

My great friend from Etobicoke—Lakeshore is a very good friend of mine. My intention is to do the good work of the residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge who voted me in for the third time. My intention is to come to Parliament as often as possible, most important, following public health guidelines and being safe. Yes, I am fully vaccinated.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on being in the chair. It is great to see you there. I hope, together with the Speaker, you will vigorously defend the rights and authority of parliamentarians in this Parliament as much as he did in the last Parliament.

I will be splitting my time with my esteemed colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

As this is my first speech in Parliament since the election, I want to quickly thank my family, particularly my wife Raechel for supporting me always.

I also want to thank my campaign team, my manager Luke Inberg; my board president Susan Evans; and members of my team, Rick Solomon, Tom Cox, Barb Costache, Imelda McLaren, Kristine Alex, Rebecca Van Middelkoop, Roger Hebblethwaite, Scott Hawkings, Julia Roy, Scott Brummet and many others.

Finally, I want to thank the good people of Sturgeon River—Parkland for placing their faith in me a third time. I will not let them down.

Today, we are debating a motion that would govern at least the next seven months of our nation's Parliament. We have a clear choice. We can move forward with a hybrid system that we have used for the past year and a half or we can move back to the traditional system, with enhanced safeguards to protect public health.

It is important to reflect on what we saw under the hybrid system imposed in the last Parliament. That is the best indication of what we will see going forward should this system be restored.

In the last Parliament, I remember sitting in the House on multiple occasions with over a dozen members from my party and sever-

al members from other opposition parties, and yet only one, sometimes two members of the government caucus would show up. Of those one or two physically present members, there was rarely a minister or any member who could speak with authority.

This is not what accountability should look like, seeing one or two of the same MPs taking questions, while the rest of the government caucus and the ministers look on over Zoom or do not show up at all.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Members on the other side of the House know full well it is not appropriate to be talking about the absence or presence of members. I can assure the member that I took the days in which we were hybrid very seriously and I showed up. I might not have been physically in this seat, but I was in the House of Commons. That is why we had the hybrid, and I worked.

The Deputy Speaker: Throughout the day, we have been working our way in and out of the fact of who is here, who is not here and who is online and who is not. We are in a real grey area on this, so be careful on all of it. The same goes for my hon. colleagues to be careful when we are trying to set the stage on this.

Whether someone is online or not online is not exactly the case today. It is not whether someone is here today or was here before. It is whether someone was here in the past. This line of offline or not online is a very difficult one that we would have to look at. I hope that provides a bit of guidance.

The hon. member for Gatineau.

• (1845)

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I respectfully want to point out it is not a grey area. It is black and white that a member logged in virtually or a member present in the House is a member in full, is a member with all the rights and privileges afforded a member of Parliament. I humbly submit, sir, it is not a grey area at all. Whether members are logged in or whether they are in person, they are in fact participating in the deliberations of Parliament. In any event, it should not and cannot be the subject of discussion in the House whether a member is present or not.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Gatineau for that intervention as well.

As we continue to finish up this debate, it is going to maybe pop up a couple more times, so I ask my hon. colleagues to be careful when they are doing that.

Government Orders

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I actually anticipated that the government would be bringing up a point of order on that subject. I am not referencing the absence of any members who are in Parliament today, and this is substantive to the debate that we are having here over the quality of Zoom virtual Parliament versus in-person Parliament. If we are not allowed to talk about that, then that is making a mockery of the House of Commons. However, I will continue.

We need a critical mass of members in this House to ensure that it functions as it was envisioned to function, as a vibrant marketplace where ideas are presented and challenged vigorously for Canadians to reflect upon. Canadians expect to see their members of Parliament and their government members physically in this House, dealing with the matters before this country. While we made hybrid Parliament work for the sake of continuing this important business, this situation cannot be allowed to continue to the detriment of the interests of Canadians and our democracy.

There is something so special and important about being together physically in this House, with the opposition and the government benches participating in great debates over the direction of this country. How often have we seen in the past that a well-appointed and executed question or response has shifted the entire direction of this country, or when an impassioned plea rallied parliamentarians and our nation to take action?

In our hybrid Parliament, we did not see these things happen. Though many significant points were made and important debates were had, there was no one here to listen, to be inspired or to be drawn to take action. Instead, this became a dead place where members, from the comfort of their homes and offices or even their mobile phones, signed in to listen but not meaningfully participate, a place where a few members came in person and heard their statements echo off the walls. That is not what we should want and it is not what Canadians want for the most sacred chamber of democracy in this country. It is evident, however, that this is what the government wants.

I find that disturbing. It is always tempting for a government to undermine an effective Parliament, because without Parliament, the government is free to govern without accountability from the people's elected representatives. Under a hybrid system, the government got away with keeping Parliament going on life support, giving it barely enough oxygen to function but not enough for this institution to thrive.

We know that the Liberal government has impressive resources at its command: entire departments, bureaucracies and the bully pulpit of the Prime Minister. However, Canadians have only their parliamentarians fighting for their interests in Parliament. Under this hybrid system, our ability to vigorously fight for Canadians and hold the current Liberal government accountable has been severely limited.

For example, we saw numerous times that critical committee studies and exchanges were interrupted for lack of resources. This was very convenient for the government, because we know that committees are a vital tool to enable opposition parties to get to the facts, to hold ministers accountable and to advance alternative solutions. These disruptions did not happen when parliamentarians

were meeting in person, and they should not be allowed to happen again under a hybrid system.

After many months of working out technological challenges, we did manage to create some semblance of a working hybrid Parliament over Zoom. However, the fact is that Parliament did not function in a way that the Canadians who elected us would expect. Unfortunately, the system remains flawed, with many casualties that are not spoken of enough.

I think about the interpreters, many of whom suffered from auditory injuries because of this hybrid system. Well over 100 have had issues, and this has placed tremendous strain on Parliament's ability to function. I want to thank our hard-working interpreters for the difficult work they do every day and for their very real sacrifices in terms of their personal health.

I do not know if we have a solution to these auditory issues. I know there are many people who have had to go on leave, but I am not confident that the government has done all it can to protect the health of interpreters. By pushing for a virtual Parliament, we are putting those interests above the interests of some of the people who work here.

It is time to get this Parliament back in session in person. Other parliaments around the world have already gone back, and if it is safe enough for the Prime Minister and his delegation to attend a climate change summit in Glasgow in a room full of thousands, often people not wearing masks, then it is safe enough for 338 members of Parliament to meet in this House.

● (1850)

I am not advocating that we ignore the realities of the pandemic or that we throw caution to the wind. We have put in place a system of tests and a system of vaccination. We have instituted one of the strongest protections for public health in any workplace in Canada. These are the rules that the government set and they are being followed by everyone in the House, and now government members are complaining that they do not like the rules. Well, they made the rules.

In fact, the system for parliamentarians is so strong, stronger than the system for federal civil servants, and yet this government is asking civil servants to prepare to go back to work. What kind of message does it send when the government is saying that it wants to give parliamentarians the right to work from home for the next seven months at least, yet civil servants will not be afforded that same treatment? Why are the Liberals demanding special treatment and accommodation that regular Canadians could never hope to receive?

Government Orders

Speaking personally, I know first-hand how a hybrid Parliament can be beneficial to families. I welcomed my daughter in May 2020, just as the pandemic was beginning, and in the last 18 months, it has been a blessing to be able to use hybrid Parliament during this pandemic. I know how convenient it is to vote at the touch of an app or to log in from my home office or my work office, but I am not here to vote for my self-interests. I am here to represent the interests of my constituents and the common good of my country. I believe today that this common good calls for a return to traditional Parliament, where we can focus on bringing real accountability for Canadians.

The Deputy Speaker: We have been going a little long on our questions and answers, and I just want to make sure that we keep them concise and short.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, “hypocrisy” is a word that is unparliamentary, so I will not use it. Having said that, I can tell members that the Progressive Conservative Party, the NDP and the Liberal Party—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the joking there, but members cannot do something indirectly that they cannot do directly. I will ask the member to just retract that and start again.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I should have known better. You are right on the ball.

The Conservative Party in Manitoba, the Liberal Party in Manitoba and the NDP in Manitoba are today sitting in a hybrid system. They are having question period. They actually have members of the legislative assembly who have COVID-19, and they are able to continue on. It seems it is just the Conservative Party, and I do not know how they coned the Bloc into it, that has made the decision that somehow this is anti-democratic. However, the hybrid system is something we can all benefit from.

The pandemic is not behind us, and my question to the member is: Will he not recognize what the Province of Manitoba and other jurisdictions have? There is nothing wrong with having a hybrid, and this has a sunset. It ends in June.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising to me to hear a Liberal talking about how they could benefit. That is what Liberals like to do.

When we have these members talking about these provincial legislatures, the fact is that there are a number of provincial legislatures that are also sitting, and there are a number of parliamentary bodies across the world that are sitting. If the member wants to cherry-pick individual jurisdictions and say that we should be like them, he is welcome to do that; this is a debate.

However, what I am here talking about is what I think Canadians want to see from our Parliament, and they want to see a Parliament that is back in session, where there are safeguards for public health, and where we can vigorously fight, present our views, challenge the government and have the government bring forward legislation so that we can actually move forward as a country.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I generally agree with his points, but I just have to ask him about one thing that is bothering me.

The vaccination status of our Conservative colleagues has been an issue throughout this whole debate. How many Conservatives have medical exemptions?

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member and his party for largely collaborating with Conservatives on what we both agree is a very fundamental issue for Canadian democracy.

The fact is that the Board of Internal Economy met and imposed a set of rules, and those rules are in place right now. There are people in this country who receive medical exemptions, and I trust our non-partisan, impartial, professional House administration to do the best job possible to keep members and staff safe. I completely trust our House staff to take care of us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment.

I have a question for my colleague.

All day long, the Liberals have been asking questions about the fact that certain provinces or places have a hybrid Parliament. The Quebec National Assembly is 100% in person, and it is completely safe. We can do the exact same thing here, in the Canadian Parliament.

Some significant safety measures have been implemented here so that we can do our jobs.

My colleague referenced them, and I would like to hear more about these measures.

[*English*]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his re-election. It is well deserved.

I am very confident in the House administration and the safety protocols that we put in place, and I think we should keep them going forward. There may be cases where COVID-19 comes up, but we know that vaccination rates in this country are high and thankfully getting higher every day, so we can look forward. We need to lead as a Parliament. We cannot just wait for all the provincial legislatures and all the other Parliaments around the world. We should not be the last Parliament to move forward. We should be taking a leadership position.

Government Orders

Maybe it was a slip of the tongue, but it is irresponsible of the government House leader to suggest that folks who were vaccinated but contracted COVID-19 should still be allowed to come to work. It is very confusing to Canadians when they hear things like that, and we cannot have that. We need clarity from the government on what the rules are, not changing the goalposts every time they do not suit the government's needs.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook was standing earlier, and I missed one of the members from the NDP who stood to ask a question, so I will ask the member for Vancouver East to ask her question now.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I note that the member actually did not answer the question about how many Conservative members have gotten some sort of medical exemption.

That is as an aside, but I want to bring this debate back to the issue at hand, which is about health. The reality is that we are still in the fourth wave and COVID is still very active in communities. The other clear health measure is that if a person has any symptoms at all, a sore throat, a scratchy throat, anything at all, they are not supposed to go to work, but that does not mean to say that they are not able to work. The hybrid system would allow members to continue to participate and do their work. That is the beauty of the system, that it allows us to do that. There is a sunset period until June, when this will end, but in the meantime it allows members to continue to participate.

Would the member not even acknowledge the importance of that?

• (1900)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that the party in the House that claims to stand up for the rights of workers and organized labour is suggesting that we need to create a system to ensure that sick people continue to work. Sick people should be taking time to get better, not forced to show up to work. That is what I think.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to thank the people of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for allowing me to return to the House, in person, for a third time to debate and pass important legislation for Canadians.

First, I would like to know the real reasons behind this motion that we are debating and voting on today. If the motion were intended to provide a tool for the House of Commons in the event of another widespread lockdown or an emergency, I would be the first to adopt it. Admittedly, the hybrid format did allow us to do part of our work when we were under lockdown.

However, we are in a completely different situation today. I have huge doubts about the real reasons for this motion. If we listen to the speeches that the Liberals and some of the NDP members gave today, it seems that the Liberals want to give themselves a political tool.

However, Canadians can now watch a Canadiens game at the Bell Centre, in a venue that seats 15,000 to 18,000 people. They

can fly south on a plane packed with over 300 passengers for five or six hours.

Some claim that the House is a danger zone, but this chamber is massive and there are only 338 MPs. The argument was raised that we spend 12 hours a day here, but the only time all 338 MPs are in here together is during question period or during a vote. The rest of the time, we are either in an office or in committee, where we are well separated.

There is something else I find ridiculous. People from different families or who are simply friends are allowed to go to a restaurant in a group of six to 10 and can sit together for two or three hours drinking wine and eating without a mask. People can do that outside the Ottawa bubble. However, here, sitting next to my colleagues every day, all facing forward wearing a mask, is considered dangerous. That is why I wonder about the real reasons behind this motion.

I would support this motion if the government wanted to use this tool in the event of a lockdown during a potential fifth wave, but that is not the real reason.

The ministers are supposed to take questions from the opposition parties, but we noticed in the final months of the last Parliament that the ministers do not like to be in the House of Commons, because they found out in the last two years that it is much easier to be in a virtual Parliament. When we ask a question in front of a screen, seated at a computer, it has the same legal value as if we were asking it in person in Parliament, but the emotion is not the same. During a face-to-face meeting, the reactions are not the same. It is impossible.

We have enough experience with it now to know that the effectiveness of Parliament, question period and parliamentary committees is greatly diminished in virtual mode. In committee, for instance, our only way to communicate with colleagues is texting because it is impossible to talk to each other in a Zoom meeting. We text each other, but that is not fast enough and it does not work. How many votes, motions, committee proceedings failed because we could not communicate effectively?

The hybrid Parliament helped us out during the critical period of the pandemic. It created a semblance of the parliamentary system. However, that period should now be over because things have changed. I ask again, what are the real reasons for this motion?

Government Orders

• (1905)

The Liberals should be honest enough to say that this tool is to be used in a total lockdown or a return to the red zone. How could we forget the orange zones and the red zones? If we were told that we had to go back to Zoom sittings because we were in a red zone, I would not have a problem with that. In this case, however, we know full well that it is because some want to hide behind cameras. They will wait for the questions only to say they did not hear properly or there is a problem with the video, so they do not have to answer them. That is the real reason.

I was talking earlier about the importance of human relationships. Even when you ask a minister a tough question, there is an important human relationship. This is not available or accessible through Zoom. This destroys the very essence of what it means to be a parliamentarian.

Another thing that really bothers me about the rhetoric I hear is that it creates fear. We are often accused of fearmongering and being divisive, but the way the Liberals have approached this matter is creating fear. They are creating fear by talking about the vaccine status of my colleagues.

I do not even know how many of them cannot be vaccinated, but that is a private matter. However, there are tools in place. The Sergeant-at-Arms conducts checks, and I am sure that our health is protected. These people are taking rapid tests. They undergo more checks than those who are vaccinated. That must stop. They are the ones running the risk of becoming ill because they cannot be vaccinated on medical grounds. They are the ones who will experience problems, not us. People who are tested three times a week cannot pass on an illness to us. That is ridiculous. It must stop. These are media distortions created by the Liberals.

Another thing that is bothering me is the NDP's viewpoint. The NDP is making changes to the way we do our work as elected officials. They say it would be much easier if we could stay at home and not have to travel to Ottawa. I can understand this argument in a case such as that of my colleague who had a child two years ago. Family obligations are not easy.

We all had different experiences with work, but that system could get too comfortable. When someone finishes work, they just need to turn off the camera and they can go be with their wife and children. That is obviously easier. However, someone who chooses to run for office is not looking for easy. As a parliamentarian, they are looking to do their job well and do it efficiently, knowing that it comes with some inconveniences. That is what we are paid so well to do.

If we gradually change the way we work so that we simply have to plug in a computer, I would call that remote work. Some people would like this system, even once the pandemic is over. If someone wants to work remotely because they live far away and are tired of taking the plane, they should simply not run for office. Others would be happy to do so. Members are voted in and paid to take on these responsibilities. It is as simple as that.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize what really matters to me. I agree that we should have a tool in case of a lockdown, but I do not want a political tool to help people avoid answering questions.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to describe a scenario that will likely come up at some point. Imagine an MP is exposed to the virus or contracts it even though he is double-vaccinated and has to stay home in quarantine. Is the fact that he is unable to vote because he is not given the opportunity to debate or vote remotely not akin to removing his privilege, given that a tool exists and it is not being given to him for reasons I fail to understand?

• (1910)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very good question. Currently, there is the case of the member for Beauce who is double-vaccinated and who caught COVID-19. He cannot participate in the debates this week. That is an example.

That is part of a much broader debate that could be held. Yes, there are technological possibilities these days. Could we decide that in future only people who are sick and have to stay home for other reasons could participate in the debates by video conference and vote electronically and that people who have no problem have to be here? That is another question. Yes, it is possible.

That is not what is happening right now. People are manipulating the situation and using the final days of the pandemic to try to create another political issue.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we can continue using the member for Beauce as an example. He was around other members of the Conservative caucus, which means there are members who no doubt have to potentially self-quarantine. The opposition House leader indicated that he was getting his second test today. We could have a situation where we could have many members of the official opposition, because of the pandemic, being completely disengaged without a motion of this nature passing.

Would the member acknowledge that is not a healthy thing for our Parliament?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I will give him the same answer I gave his colleague earlier.

In the context of the pandemic, with the possibility of contracting COVID-19, the tool should be reserved for those who become ill, like the member for Beauce. They should be able to work with us virtually.

This same approach is used by private businesses and industries. People with a specific medical issue can telework. However, once they are all better, they must physically return to work. There is a distinction.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. I am certainly a strong believer in Parliament being here and it being accountable. The problem is that the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP have all committed to being vaccinated, but the Conservatives are refusing. In fact, they seem to think they are above the law, and that they have the right, the privilege, to come in here unvaccinated.

I would like to ask the hon. member this. Will he tell us how many of his colleagues who are part of this libertarian caucus are using bogus exemptions to claim a right to come to work and make other people sick? I have to be in a lobby with them where they sit without their masks on when the staff or I walk in there. They have no respect for the people around them. How many of them are fully vaccinated? That is the question we should be debating.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is offensive when he says that our caucus is libertarian and that we do not wear masks.

First of all, we follow the rules. We are allowed to remove our masks when we sit down to eat. When we are finished, we put our masks back on. No one walks without a mask outside the House except at mealtime.

Second, the insinuation that my colleagues are creating a situation that is dangerous to public health is completely false. As I mentioned in my speech, these people are tested regularly and have certain health conditions. No one in this place and only a doctor can assess health. The Sergeant-at-Arms assessed the situation and gave permission. Members must stop judging situations that they know nothing about.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to let you know that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your new position. By the way, it is nice to see an Acadian in the chair.

Since this is the first time I am speaking in the House in this 44th Parliament, I would like to begin by thanking the citizens of Gatineau for once again placing their trust in me. It is the honour of my life to serve them and to represent them here in this chamber. I want them to know that I will do my best. My colleagues and I will work together to fulfill the commitments we have made over the years and during the election campaign.

I would also like to thank my family, who have been supporting me in this political adventure for quite some time. They have been a tremendous support. I would also like to thank my supporters, the people around me. All of my colleagues and I have people in our ridings who volunteer to support us. I would also like to thank our staff who do so much for us. I want to thank all of those good people as well.

As chief government whip, I am happy to work with my colleagues. I see my role as helping to make Parliament work and ensuring we can stand up for our interests and ideas and achieve our goals and objectives for Canada, our regions and our ridings. As whip, I am committed to making sure my colleagues on this side of

the House and I take a collaborative, constructive approach to achieving our shared goals as we strive to create a better Canada.

That brings me to the motion we are debating today. The pandemic rocked our country and the whole world. It has been a trying time for all our fellow citizens. To survive, we have had to follow code red, yellow and green rules that changed from day to day. The member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles talked about that. We were not sure our kids would be able to go to school, and we did not know if we had to follow a given rule from one day to the next.

People had to adapt. It was difficult. We saw the consequences of that. People are eager to get back to some semblance of normal life, but they also want their government to set the example and for their institutions to reflect their primary interest, which, in my opinion, is to keep everyone safe. We need to keep our children, constituents, seniors and the people around us safe.

That is the crux of what we are debating today. Like any organization, social club, sports association, educational institution or business, we had to take rather extraordinary and exceptional measures for a set period of time. The measure that we are discussing today is also for a set period of time. We had to take extraordinary measures to meet the sole objective of keeping everyone safe.

There are a lot of people who depend on us, and I want to thank them. I am talking about the people in Parliament, the clerks, support staff, IT team, pages and interpreters.

All of those people also had to take special measures and work twice as hard without infringing on our rights and responsibilities or undermining our ability to do our job, so that we, as parliamentarians, can enjoy our privileges, be present, talk and give speeches safely. I repeat that these measures are for a set period of time.

● (1915)

The return is happening quite slowly. In my region, there is obviously a lot of talk about the public service, mandatory vaccination and the mandate given to deputy ministers and heads of federal agencies to decide when employees will return. Some are eager to get back to the office. Others want and need to continue working remotely, virtually. That is the case here as well.

We do not know what the pandemic has in store for us. We hope it will end some day, but it is clear that we also need to take the necessary precautions and lay the foundations for a virtual system, without debating it every two weeks, that ensures that we can continue our work.

Government Orders

My colleagues are eager to get back to work in this Parliament. They are looking forward to being here in this place and to participating in the debates, interacting with colleagues from all parties in the House and adding their voices to the great debates that occur in this place. However, they want to make sure that it is done safely.

As for the government team, the Liberal government caucus, we will ensure that our members can participate in the work of the House here in person, but also in virtual mode and via teleworking, in order to continue that work. Our only goal is to ensure the safety of everyone, including our colleagues, the staff I mentioned, all parliamentarians and everyone around us.

Today, I am listening to the speeches and I hope to be able to bring the debate back to the main issue. We are not undermining the democracy cherished on this side of the House and by all the other political parties. We are not trying to indirectly change something that has nothing to do with the pandemic.

We are trying to make a slight change to our democracy with the tools provided by the people who work very hard to support us so that we can continue the great work of building our magnificent country while ensuring the safety of all those participating in this work. I tip my hat to them.

I implore all our colleagues to vote for this measure that seeks to protect us and ensure the continued functioning of democracy in a safe manner.

• (1920)

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been fascinating to listen to this today and to hear my colleagues continue to complain about the personal health information of my colleagues on this side of the House. I think it is deplorable. The Personal Health Information Protection Act is there to protect us.

What if, as a physician, I stood at the doorway and started asking members how many people had heart disease, diabetes or even worse things such as erectile dysfunction or sexually transmitted illnesses? Would that be appropriate? I do not think so.

Why do my colleagues on the other side of the floor continue to think it is appropriate to ask about personal health information?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, apparently my hon. colleague did not listen to the very last part of my speech, where I said not to make this into more than what it is. We are living in an extreme and unique pandemic. The last one happened over 100 years ago, and I think part of the problem of the debate we have had today is to try to impute grand principle into what is basically a simple calculation: ensuring the pursuit of our ancient parliamentary democracy, which is so dear to us, while ensuring the personal safety and security of all of us in this chamber and all of those thousands of people who surround us daily.

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to acknowledge all of my constituents in

Thérèse-De Blainville and to thank them for placing their trust in me once again.

I was listening to my colleague opposite say that every member on the other side of the House was looking forward to coming back here. I am pleased to hear that, because we had to wait 72 days to come back to the House.

The election was held on September 20, and we only came back this week. I believe in good faith. However, this is the same government that rushed to call an election in August, that said it was anxious to end the pandemic yet put up no barriers when we were campaigning.

I do not understand what is happening today. I am not surprised, but I am disappointed. I do not understand how it can justify starting the 44th Parliament in full hybrid mode.

I do not understand why it is suggesting making the exception the rule when every condition is being met, in the current pandemic context, to ensure that we can safely sit here in the House of Commons.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her intervention.

Again, I think that we need to move away from these arguments and come back to the motion we are debating today, which seeks to bring in a temporary measure to adapt to our reality.

The member is talking about health conditions that can change at any time. I invite her to look at how the number of cases is soaring right now in Europe and around the world. It is very sad.

This is about bringing in a temporary measure to adapt to the pandemic reality we are in.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think one of things that is most disturbing is that we saw the Conservatives promoting hydroxychloroquine as a medical treatment for a pandemic. Now we have the latest out of YouTube.com telling us that diabetes and heart disease are somehow spreadable when we are dealing with a pandemic.

Could the hon. member explain to the Conservatives that their anti-vax propaganda in the House is actually doing real damage to the fight that we are leading across the country, along with the medical community, to keep people safe? It is not diabetes we are worried about. It is a pandemic.

Government Orders

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, we have always sought to be guided by the science. What do we know? We know this is a spreadable disease. We know that this is a highly contagious disease. We know that it is an incredibly dangerous threat to our public health and, indeed, I do not think anyone is served by obscuring any of those essential facts with more extraneous facts. We have tried to be guided by that science. We have tried to be guided by those measures. Like every other organization in the world, we have taken measures to adapt our day-to-day reality to the unfortunate reality of this pandemic, and tried to terminate those measures at an appropriate time. We will continue to do that.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene in today's debate. I want to start by recognizing how difficult the last 19 months have been for everyone.

It has certainly been difficult from an economic point of view, and I will be talking a little about that tomorrow in the debate on Bill C-2, and also difficult in terms of coping with the consequences of some of the public health measures that have had to be taken.

It has been difficult to be shut in our homes. It has been hard not to be able to go out and get together. I fully understand people's desire to get out and reunite with people. Indeed, I have enjoyed being able to come to this place and see some colleagues, even as I have some reservations about whether it is the appropriate thing to do and whether we are really there yet.

We know we are in the middle of a fourth wave. Depending on where we are in the country, our experiences of COVID are very different right now. There are provinces where ICUs are full and they are worried about the consequences for their medical system, and there are other provinces that are faring relatively well for the moment but are wondering what the future holds. We just heard the premier of Saskatchewan, today or yesterday, express some regret for not having implemented more strict public health measures earlier in the province's own fourth wave.

What have we done? We have followed the advice of public health officials, which is the right thing to do. I am an electrician by trade. I would not take kindly to somebody doing some research on the Internet and then coming to tell me how to wire something. I would tell them that I am a Red Seal electrician: I have the experience, and if anybody is going to correct me it would be somebody with similar training and experience, not somebody who had been investigating things on the Internet.

It has been right and good to follow the advice of public health authorities throughout the pandemic. They have told us to wear masks. They have told us to socially distance. Sometimes they have told us to stay home. They have told us to get vaccinated and that vaccination is our way through this. We are getting closer to a normal time, because more people are accepting that advice and choosing to get vaccinated. I commend them for that, and I encourage those who have not done that to do it soon.

For every person with some medical credentials out there who is a COVID denier, there are many more who accept the science. I do not believe there is any great conspiracy. Frankly, having spent six years here, I do not think the government is capable of the intelli-

gence, discipline and coordination it would take to orchestrate a conspiracy that vast, nor do I think the so-called government-in-waiting is capable of such a thing. I find these conspiracy theories simply unbelievable.

If vaccination is part of the way for us to get back to normal, then I think it is incumbent upon us as elected officials to show leadership in that. One of the principal barriers to us being able to talk about how we conduct ourselves properly here, or to get back to some kind of normally functioning Parliament, is that the Conservative Party in particular has not been forthright about how many of its caucus members are vaccinated and how many are not.

The Conservatives say we should simply trust the system. I think we should expect more transparency from people who are elected to public office. We often hear from them about the transparency they want from the government, and about the right to demand more transparency from the government. We have to show that in the way we behave ourselves. We have a leadership obligation to get vaccinated and to show, be honest and report our own numbers. Every other caucus here has done that.

I take the Bloc's argument for an in-person Parliament to be a little different. The Bloc members are coming from a different place. They are saying that they did the right thing: They all got vaccinated, and they want to come and meet in person. I think that reasonable people can disagree about whether it is the right time to do that and whether we should have a hybrid Parliament. Their argument comes from a different place, because they have been transparent and have shown that leadership. I thank them for that, even as I disagree on the issue of whether a hybrid format should be available.

The member for Vancouver East made the point very well earlier when she talked about many of us having to get here on a plane. The fact is that if I am showing any two minor symptoms or one major symptom, I have to fill out a COVID screening on my phone to get my boarding pass.

● (1930)

If I have a scratchy throat and a runny nose, which happens often in Winnipeg in the winter, I either have to lie and get on the plane, doing the wrong thing, or I have to stay home. I would be glad for the opportunity to participate in Parliament from home, and do the right thing by avoiding getting on a plane when I am presenting symptoms.

I did a lot of work in the virtual Parliament. I was frustrated by some of the things that other members have raised. I was frustrated by committee meetings that were disrupted by technical difficulties. I was frustrated by problems with interpretation. I felt for and talked about and stood up for our interpreters who were facing a disproportionate amount of injury as a result of the hybrid format. All of those things are true, but I was able to get a lot of work done.

We got a benefit of \$2,000 per month for people who could not go to work. We got a student benefit that would not have happened if it had not been for the interventions of the NDP. We got a sick leave program that would not have happened if it had not been for the interventions of the NDP.

Government Orders

It is not just what we managed to accomplish for Canadians in their time of need, but it was also some of the accountability work that we did. Some people around here may remember a guy by the name of Bill Morneau, who did the wrong thing with respect to the WE Charity scandal. It was in the virtual summer sittings and virtual committee meetings of 2020, which the NDP negotiated, that testimony came to light that brought Bill Morneau down for his wrongdoing on the WE Charity scandal. That summer, he resigned his position and ultimately left the government. If that is not accountability, I do not know what is.

The idea that there cannot be good parliamentary work in a virtual Parliament, both in terms of helping people and in terms of holding the government to account, simply is untrue. I do not accept those arguments.

As I alluded to earlier, in the lead-up to this Parliament feelers were put out to the Conservatives and the Bloc to talk about what our Parliament would look like, whether we would have a hybrid Parliament and, if so, what shape that might take. However, they chose to abstain from those discussions. We might have had a hybrid Parliament where committees met in person. That might have alleviated some of the burden on our interpreters. We might have had some kind of understanding about how many Liberals might be in the House. However, instead of being able to have a constructive conversation, the conversation was about the disorder in the Conservative caucus and whether the Conservatives were going to require their MPs to be vaccinated. They were splintering off into a bunch of subcaucuses, and we could not have the kind of real conversation that we needed to have in the lead-up to this moment, because now we are back.

Finally, Parliament has met again after the election. It took too long, but now we are here. Parliament is in session and there are things to do that are actually about the people we were elected to represent. Therefore, we should not spend all our time debating this. There was a window to talk about how we were going to do this. Some chose not to participate, so then what is the most reasonable thing to do?

The most reasonable thing to do, if parties are committed to having a hybrid Parliament in this time when the pandemic is not yet over, is to adopt the same rules that those parties once agreed to. If we were going to do something different, that would be worse from the point of view of forging a new path. This at least is what they once agreed to, so our hands are somewhat tied by the fact that they would not engage in good-faith conversations about what kind of alterations to the hybrid Parliament we might make or if there were ways that we might scale back the hybrid element in certain parts of Parliament.

I imagine this may happen again. This has a deadline, and the pandemic may not be over by June 2022. The next time we discuss this, I invite these parties to come to the table and talk about how to make Parliament work with the 21st-century tools that we have, in a way that makes sense during a pandemic.

• (1935)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Congratulations, Mr. Speaker. It is good to see you in that chair.

My colleague's father was here for many years and was here as the Speaker as well, I believe. I would be interested to know how this would compare with his father's day, and the struggles he had with travelling such a long distance to get to Parliament to participate and vote. We are now looking at trying to move things forward to modernize Parliament, to have some flexibility for many people throughout our Parliament session. I am sure my colleague has had many discussions with his father about the modernization of Parliament, and I would be interested to hear some additional comments on that.

• (1940)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, it is true that when I was growing up my father was often in Ottawa. That is one of the reasons why, when I ran, my own family was very aware of the challenges of the job. Those were challenges that we accepted, as they are challenges that we accept now as well.

We heard some excellent arguments for perhaps making some more permanent modifications to the House of Commons from the member for Victoria earlier, but we are talking about the pandemic. We are not out of the pandemic yet, and we are still dealing with public health matters.

The day will come when we can have another conversation about what the House of Commons looks like on a go-forward basis, and how we might be able to accommodate families in a way that makes it possible for more women to participate in this place, but for now we are still in a pandemic. That matters for how we do business, and I would like some more acknowledgement of that on all sides of the House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague agrees with me.

I have been listening, and the concern I keep hearing has to do with the safety of all members of Parliament with respect to COVID-19. Our concern, however, is holding the government accountable.

Does my colleague agree that, if the government wants a hybrid Parliament, it should make a firm, formal commitment that all ministers will be in the House for each question period, unless they have a good reason for being absent, for example, if they are abroad on government business or have a medical certificate stating that they cannot be here?

Would my colleague agree that that would make things better?

Government Orders

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I do think that is possible, and I think that such an agreement would have been possible if the opposition parties had had a unified voice. This cannot happen if the other parties refuse to have a discussion on how a hybrid Parliament should run. Without that conversation, without a unified voice, it is difficult.

We believe that a hybrid Parliament is more important, in light of the pandemic. We support the model that we had and that the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives supported in the previous Parliament.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to this debate for hours and my colleague, the member for Elmwood—Transcona, perhaps made the best speech of the day. He has touched on all of the issues. One thing that has not really been a highlight in the discussion here is leadership, and what our role is to show leadership to the public to say how we can work together and support each other to beat this thing.

Can the member extrapolate and elaborate just a little bit more about the importance of that point?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, we talk a lot about leadership here and what leaders should do. It is always very important that people who are going to critique leaders show that leadership themselves.

I think that is what has been absent on the Conservative side of the House. When we talk about going back to work safely, that means people knowing what they are getting into. We cannot know that. The Conservative members talk about personal health information. I agree that people should not have to share their personal health information, but this is a public health issue. This is about something that is highly contagious. It is not like heart disease or diabetes that a person cannot catch by sitting next to somebody else who has it.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House to speak about this very important issue. Congratulations to you on your placement in the Chair. I know you will do a wonderful job.

As this is the first opportunity that I have had to speak in this Parliament, I want to thank the voters and the residents of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock for putting their faith in me once again, for the third time electing me to be their voice in this chamber. I hope to continue to earn their vote and their support as we move forward.

As we know, no matter where we sit in the House, we do not get here alone on this journey. It takes a lot of people to help us, and I want to thank first of all my staff in the constituency and in Ottawa: Kate, Marnie, Lisa, Andrew, Jay, Paul and others who have helped ensure that the job is as easy as possible. Of course, all our staff do their best to make us look good. I also want to thank my campaign team and the volunteers who worked tirelessly to ensure that we are able to keep the seat blue. I want to thank my campaign manager, Paul Secar, my treasurer, Margaret Meyer, and her trophy house-husband, Oliver Meyer, who helped out so much during the cam-

paign. Also, on communications, we had Elizabeth Beauchamp, Jay Park, Andrew Weston, Lisa Rodd, Marnie Hoppenrath, Kate Porter, Petra Verary, Chris Mills, Janice Wood the office manager and so many others, as well as the EDA president Cheryl Battum and many more. I hope I am not missing people, and I apologize if I am.

The debate that we are here to discuss today is about returning to a hybrid Parliament, and a lot of what the debate is talking about today revolves around trust. How do we trust the Liberals? If we think back to the beginning of this pandemic, what is the first thing the government did? It tried to create absolute power for the next few years. That would have given the government the power to tax and spend wherever it wanted and not necessarily with any input from its backbench, because that was basically shut down. It was transferring the entire power into the executive branch.

Before that, we had Motion No. 6 in the 42nd Parliament. What did that do? That stripped the opposition of the very few tools it has to hold the government to account. That, of course, led to what is now infamously called “elbowgate”.

We have that issue of trust in the government. Of course we had the WE scandal during it all, where they were trying to reward their friends and punish their enemies. We have massive inflation going on right now. The cost of living is out of control for many Canadians, and it is getting worse. The plan the Liberals seem to have is to add another government program.

What programs is the government administering now that are going so well? Are veterans still waiting in line to get service? Yes. Are indigenous communities still waiting for clean water? Yes. Is there a housing crisis, such that people cannot seem to afford housing anymore? Yes. The answer of the government is, “Let’s take on something else because we’ve just done a bang-up job.” The irony of this is that it is going to be deficit financing. Sadly, the kids going in day care will actually be paying for their day care; it just will not be until many years down the road.

As these problems continue to add up, the choice of the government is to go into hybrid, and we all know we had challenges during that last Parliament. We had connectivity issues and problems with ministers not knowing what questions they were going to answer, or who was going to answer. It was not a suitable alternative. While it did the job at the time, we have started to move past this.

The other issue we have when we are talking about trust is that the messaging coming from the Liberals and the NDP has been going back and forth all day. If the issue is totally around those who are unwell, who are not able to come in and who are going to use hybrid as an alternative, one can see that working. However, the messaging we are getting as the day rolls along and the truth finally comes out, is that they want it as a permanent alternative, which is absolutely unacceptable.

We all have unique challenges. We have young families or grandkids, and maybe some are trying to start a family. However, we just had an election during a pandemic, which is something the Liberals promised they would not do. It was a very expensive cabinet shuffle.

• (1945)

We all knew the challenges. We all knew what we were signing up for. We all signed on the dotted line, knowing that federal laws are made here in Ottawa. These debates are happening here in Ottawa and should be here in Ottawa. We all stepped forward knowing that we might be called upon to go to the nation's capital during a pandemic. Nobody put a gun to our heads. We had the opportunity to say no, but each and every one of us is one of 338 in a country of 38 million.

Before I continue, Mr. Speaker, I will let you know that I am splitting my time with the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

I also want to talk about the tourism industry. In my area, the tourism industry has been massively hurt by the pandemic. We have travel and tourism industries that are being left behind. Had Parliament been in session, a lot of the time it could have happened. We know that the programs that were introduced at the beginning of this pandemic had problems. We, as the opposition, were able to push back and the government was able to make some changes, although there were a lot of people left behind.

I will point out that the independent travel advisers need sector-specific aid. They have been left out of this. The programs that have been unveiled by the government are just not working for them, and that is why we need parliamentarians in this place, advocating for those Canadians being left behind by this pandemic. This is what we are here to do. This is what we want to do. Again, we all signed up for this. We know the job. Let us get it done.

• (1950)

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your new role, and I welcome my friend in returning to this House.

I noted some disparities in the comments the member made, so I wanted to correct two things and then pose a question.

First of all, work was not evaded and duties were not evaded either. Unprecedented supports were actually meted out during the hybrid Parliament. Second, the notion that somehow a prospect of the motion is that this would exist in perpetuity is categorically false. The motion text itself indicates that the termination date is June 2022.

The question I have for the member opposite is this: Do we not need to ensure that all constituents have their voices heard in this chamber? By virtue of the fact that a member of his own caucus has contracted COVID, is it not incumbent upon us to pass a motion like this so that member of his caucus can participate via hybrid Parliament to give voice to his very constituents?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my friend across the way, but that is exactly what I said in my speech. If the hybrid Parliament was being used as an alternative

for those who are ill or unable to get here due to potential symptoms, I think that would be an acceptable option. However, that is not what was coming out in the speeches today.

What we heard today was the fact that members want to make hybrid Parliament permanent. While we have had sunset clauses in the past, in previous motions, this goes seven months into the future. We should be looking at it as temporary, for those unable to make it, and not for those who just do not want to come to Ottawa.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, although I am pleased to hear the position of my Conservative colleagues on the hybrid Parliament, I find that their refusal to disclose the number of members with medical exemptions is very detrimental to the current debate. It makes people afraid. Are there five, ten, fifty? Having this information would considerably enhance parliamentarians' sense of security.

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, first of all I would say that the government set the rules, and one is allowed in the parliamentary precinct if one is double vaccinated or if one has a medical exemption. Those medical exemptions, to my understanding, are analyzed by the House of Commons administration, and they confirm that they are valid exemptions. I trust those institutions, and I would hope that members in the House on the opposite side also have that trust in those staff members keeping us safe. I know I do.

• (1955)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned running in an election and knowing what we were signing up for. I ran in 2019 knowing that there is a lot of sexism in Parliament. Within a few months of being elected, one of the Conservative members asked me if I had ever considered sex work. Just because I signed up knowing this, does not mean that I do not want to make a change.

As for my question to the member, you ran under a banner where you knew not all of your colleagues were vaccinated. Is that not something you would like to change? Would you not like it if all of your colleagues were vaccinated?

The Deputy Speaker: I will take a moment to remind members that they cannot use “you”. They cannot address a member directly. It is always done through the Chair.

The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, as I said during the campaign, I am double vaccinated. I trust vaccines, and I encourage Canadians who are not currently vaccinated to get vaccinated.

Government Orders

I would also say that if the true goal is to get the majority of Canadians vaccinated, we should not be politicizing this issue anymore. Two seconds into the campaign this was not an issue, but when the Prime Minister's poll numbers started to fall, it became an issue. He politicized the issue, dividing Canadians, when it did not have to be so. That is shameful.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is my first speech in the 44th Parliament, so I want to start by briefly thanking my constituents and my family, and recognizing that the riding I represent is on Treaty 6 territory. I will share more about the rich history, present vitality and bright future of my riding very soon.

Today, we are addressing a very striking matter of parliamentary business. The fact that the first motion the government has put before the House, Motion No. 1, ironically is about undermining the effectiveness and functioning of Parliament itself. The Liberals' first act in this Parliament is to attack Parliament itself. Rather than moving one of the many pressing challenges facing Canadians, inflation, lack of economic growth, mental health challenges and attacks on fundamental freedoms, instead of addressing these issues, the government is starting this Parliament by moving to neuter the tools that people have put in place for making their voices heard.

We, as Conservatives, are committed to standing up for Parliament, because Parliament is the only means by which the challenges facing Canada can be effectively heard and adjudicated.

During the speech I gave at my swearing in, I committed to my constituents that I would fight to make Parliament work again. Sadly, since the beginning of this pandemic, we have seen a clear decline in the effective functioning of Parliament as a result of the wearing down of this institution by the government. This decline has had profound consequences for the people we are supposed to serve.

On May 10, 1940, Nazi Germany invaded western Europe. On the same day, Winston Churchill became prime minister. He would go on to inspire a nation and lead the free world to victory against the odds.

Our struggle against COVID-19 has been compared by many to a war, but while the Liberal government has chosen to malign, marginalize and ignore Parliament, Winston Churchill understood that in the face of a great struggle facing his country, it was right and necessary to go to Parliament, to go to Parliament to explain the steps that he was about to take and to seek its support.

On May 13, three days after ascending to the highest office in the land, in the middle of the Second World War, Churchill addressed Parliament in person and asked for its confidence. He told the House that day:

To form an administration of this scale and complexity is a serious undertaking in itself. But we are in the preliminary phase of one of the greatest battles in history... I hope that any of my friends and colleagues or former colleagues who are affected by the political reconstruction will make all allowances for any lack of ceremony with which it has been necessary to act.

I say to the House as I said to ministers who have joined this government, I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat.

Winston Churchill took three days to go to Parliament. Our Prime Minister, who was after all not a new prime minister, took

over two months to summon Parliament. Moreover, in previous sessions, the Prime Minister has always sought to actively minimize the role of Parliament, proroguing to shut down important committee work investigating his own ethical scandals; expediting complex omnibus bills through draconian programming motions; preventing Parliament from sitting at all during the early phases of the pandemic; and refusing to hand over documents ordered by Parliament, in defiance of all convention and in defiance of the Speaker's clear ruling.

Make no mistake that this is a government that is trying to manage the decline of our Parliament, because Parliament seeks to constrain the government's arbitrary exercise of power.

Today, again, we have before us a motion designed to allow ministers to avoid Parliament at will. In well-functioning parliamentary democracies, ministers must take to the floor and defend themselves, extemporaneously and on their feet, from the substantive challenges of all comers.

However, the Liberal government has devised a scheme by which ministers can instead participate remotely, often from their own parliamentary offices just a short elevator ride away, and thus mute and ignore Parliament, while reading pre-crafted talking points off a screen. We cannot replace Parliament with a Zoom call and expect it to fulfill the same functions. I believe the Prime Minister understands this, but he also perceives how the decline of effective parliamentary government advances his strategic interests by reducing avenues for ministers to be effectively held accountable.

The government has noticed, correctly, that a strong, effective Parliament with members elected by all Canadians can rhetorically and procedurally constrain the exercise of power by a government elected by less than one-third of Canadians. As a result, the Liberals want less Parliament and they want Zoom calls instead.

During his remarks yesterday on this matter, the government House leader defaulted to a well-worn logical fallacy; that is, he used the exceptional case to defend a rule that would apply to all. Exceptional cases can be accommodated through exceptions, but general rules overall should be applied in response to general circumstances.

● (2000)

The Liberal House leader says that members who are immunocompromised should be able to make the choice to join by Zoom, but in practice we saw that during a hybrid Parliament, 100% of Liberal ministers participated remotely in order to avoid meaningful accountability.

He says that it is statistically improbable that more than one Conservative MP has a legitimate vaccine exemption. Of course, he has no idea whether the number of Conservative MPs who have vaccine exemptions is zero, one or some other number because the advice that members receive from their doctors is none of his business. However, I might suggest, in light of the failure of any Liberal minister to attend question period last spring, that it is quite statistically improbable that 100% of Liberal ministers are immunocompromised.

If individual members have to miss votes in the House, there is a well-established parliamentary convention of pairing, whereby two members of Parliament from opposite sides agree to mutually absent themselves to ensure that one member's unavoidable absence does not upset the balance of the vote. Other targeted accommodations could—

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order by the member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, my understanding of proceedings that take place on such a motion is that debate concludes at eight o'clock and we go to the vote. If I am mistaken on that, perhaps you could explain to me the mechanism by which that is not the case.

The Deputy Speaker: The rule is that once a member starts their 10 minutes, they get to finish their 10 minutes. There will be no debate after that happens.

The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has another four minutes.

There is a point of order by the member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the members for their role. In my 18 years, I have never seen a situation where just because someone has time to speak, they are allowed to keep walking the clock out. That is not how it works. The understanding was that at eight o'clock the debate would end and we go to the vote. Is there a standing order that exempts this?

The Deputy Speaker: When there is closure, members get the opportunity to complete the time assigned to them.

I thank members for the interventions, although I heard some interesting stuff at the back that I do not appreciate a whole lot.

The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has four minutes to finish his debate.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, it is a bit ironic that in the midst of a speech about declining respect for Parliament we would have such flagrant disregard for the authority of the Chair from NDP members.

As I was saying, we are also in a different position today from where we were a year and a half ago. Large public events are taking place now. People are travelling. Most workplaces are up and running. A year and a half ago, we did not fully understand the kinds of strategies that could be deployed to protect people from this virus.

However, today we have the knowledge and the tools to deploy multiple strategies at once for maximum assurance. Members can

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get vaccinated, wear masks and socially distance, while also taking periodic rapid tests. For greater certainty, I would be very supportive of a system that asked MPs to take regular rapid antigen tests, regardless of vaccine status.

The government should also start recommending vitamin D as another tool for combatting this virus. People generally get vitamin D through sunlight exposure, and many recent studies suggest that those with higher levels of vitamin D exposure have reduced severe outcomes from COVID-19. Increasing the awareness about this is especially important as we head into winter, when Canadians are ordinarily less likely to spend time outside.

Increasing vitamin D is not an alternative to other methods of responding to the virus but the benefits of higher vitamin D levels are increasingly evident in the scientific literature and are well established in general, regardless of the particulars of the impact on COVID-19.

No single method for managing this issue is the magic bullet on its own, but if members are deploying a broad range of strategies simultaneously, then we are certainly in a much different position than we were a year and a half ago. If this was really about the safety of a small number of immunocompromised parliamentarians, the government House leader would have proposed special accommodations, mechanisms for distancing or new testing requirements.

Ironically, we have not even heard the word “testing” from the government during this debate. It is like the government has forgotten it exists as one of the important strategies for managing our response to this virus. It is sad to see the government trying to shut down in-person Parliament when it is not even deploying all of the tools available to make it safe.

Based on the inaction of the government on many fronts, we can see clearly that this motion is not, and never was, about making Parliament safe. This motion is about making Parliament weak. It is about allowing the vast majority of ministers, who probably are not immunocompromised, to continue to read their talking points while sitting in their parliamentary offices. It is about the Prime Minister's desire to replace Parliament with a Zoom call.

I began this speech talking about Winston Churchill. Why was it important for Churchill to meaningfully engage Parliament during a national crisis? It was because he understood the role of Parliament as the deliberate assembly of the entire nation. If a nation is going to go to war together, then Parliament must be fully engaged so as to ensure that the approach taken reflects the best judgment of the nation, and so as to ensure that the nation as a whole can confront the challenge together.

When the Prime Minister speaks, he speaks for one-third of Canadians, but when Parliament speaks, we speak for all Canadians. A parliamentary response to a national crisis is more likely to be effective, and a parliamentary response to a national crisis builds national unity. Winston Churchill understood this. He was able to unite and lead a national response to a national crisis because he came to Parliament.

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Canadians want us to respond to the challenges they face: COVID-19, inflation, threats to our freedom. We can only respond effectively to these challenges if Parliament is working. It is not from arbitrary attachment or nostalgia that Conservatives defend tradition, rather we defend tradition because tradition is the means by which we draw on the wisdom of history to solve the practical problems of everyday people.

We defend Parliament, parliamentary democracy and parliamentary traditions not because we are concerned about our own privileges but because we understand that a great nation must have a great Parliament. No nation can succeed in the long run unless it has an effective national deliberative assembly which asks the right questions, analyzes critical issues from all angles, and which holds the powerful to account.

Canadians can count on Conservatives to stand up for Parliament at every opportunity.

• (2005)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 8:08 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 1 now before the House.

The question is on the amendment.

[*Translation*]

All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (2010)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (2035)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 2*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett

Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	d'Entremont
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gallant	Garneau
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Généreux
Genuis	Gerretsen
Glada	Godin
Goodridge	Gould
Gourde	Gray
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hallan
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Kelly
Khalid	Khera
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche

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NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment carried.

The next question is on the main motion, as amended.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion as amended will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: I believe the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (2050)

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

(Division No. 3)

YEAS

Members

Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKenzie
Maguire
Martel
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod
Melillo
Mendicino
Michaud
Moore
Morrice
Morrisey
Murray
Naqvi
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Rodriguez
Romanado
Ruff
Sajjan
Samson
Scarpaleggia
Schiefke
Seeback
Sgro
Sheehan
Shiplay
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Small
Soroka
Steinley
Stewart
Stubbs
Tassi
Therrien
Thompson
Tolmie
Turnbull
Valdez
van Koeverden
Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Yip
Zimmer

Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysse
Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLean
McPherson
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morantz
Morrison
Motz
Muys
Nater
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Petipas Taylor
Powlowski
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Robillard
Rogers
Rood
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scheer
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sorbara
Spengemann
Ste-Marie
St-Onge
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Thomas
Tochor
Trudel
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Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer

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Garneau	Garrison	Caputo	Carrie
Gerretsen	Gould	Chabot	Chambers
Green	Guilbeault	Champoux	Chong
Hajdu	Hanley	Cooper	Dalton
Hardie	Hepfner	Dancho	Davidson
Holland	Housefather	DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Hughes	Hussen	d'Entremont	Desbiens
Hutchings	Iacono	Desilets	Dowdall
Idlout	Ien	Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Jaczek	Johns	Ellis	Epp
Joly	Jones	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Jowhari	Julian	Fast	Ferreri
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Findlay	Fortin
Khalid	Khera	Gallant	Garon
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Gaudreau	Généreux
Kwan	Lalonde	Genius	Gladu
Lambropoulos	Lametti	Godin	Goodridge
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Gourde	Gray
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Hallan	Hoback
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Jeneroux	Kelly
Lightbound	Long	Kmiec	Kram
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)	Kusie	Lake
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Lantsman	Larouche
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada	Lawrence	Lemire
Masse	Matyssen	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
May (Cambridge)	McDonald (Avalon)	Liepert	Lloyd
McGuinty	McKay	Lobb	MacKenzie
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod	Maguire	Martel
McPherson	Mendès	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Mendicino	Miao	McLean	Melillo
Miller	Morrice	Michaud	Moore
Morrissey	Murray	Morantz	Morrison
Naqvi	Ng	Motz	Muys
Noormohamed	O'Connell	Nater	Normandin
Oliphant	Petitpas Taylor	O'Toole	Patzer
Powlowski	Qualtrough	Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Robillard	Rodriguez	Perkins	Perron
Rogers	Romanado	Poilievre	Rayes
Sahota	Sajjan	Redekopp	Reid
Saks	Samson	Rempel Garner	Richards
Sarai	Scarpaleggia	Roberts	Rood
Schieffe	Serré	Ruff	Scheer
Sgro	Shanahan	Schmale	Seeback
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Shields	Shiplee
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Sorbara	Spengemann	Small	Soroka
St-Onge	Sudds	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Tassi	Taylor Roy	Stewart	Stubbs
Thompson	Turnbull	Therrien	Thomas
Valdez	Van Bynen	Tochor	Tolmie
van Koeverden	Vandal	Trudel	Uppal
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Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

It being 8:50 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:50 p.m.)

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