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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 11, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)
[English]

BROADCASTING ACT

The House resumed from December 10 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are debating Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act.

I want to wish everyone in the House and those watching a very merry Christmas.

The bill that we are debating today is a potential gift for all Canadians, something we all hold dear, and there needs to be a timely change to the Broadcasting Act. Things have changed so much in the last few years with digital content that change is something I think we can all get behind.

Being as it is a potential gift for all Canadians, I tried to consult the expert on gifts for all Canadians at Christmastime. Who did I try to get in touch with? It was Santa Claus. I have to say that it was a little more difficult this year. I want Santa to know that I tried to get in touch. I am wearing my favourite Christmas tie that he gave me and I want to thank him very much. It reminds me of Christmas. I wanted to get Santa's opinion on this bill, because this is a potential gift for all Canadians.

As kids around Canada are watching this debate intently, I want them to know that Santa is working hard this year. He is making sure the elves in the factory are kept very safe. He is following all of the protocols. He wants people to remember the Christmas message of being kind to our neighbours, to reach out to somebody who may be in need, and that this is a time about love and community. This year has certainly been a tough year, so I think all parliamentarians can get behind that statement.

Because I could not get in touch with Santa, I have to give my own opinion on this bill we are debating today. As I said, I would

love to be able to support it because it is a great gift, but I think I am going to have to give it a lump of coal, unfortunately, that might increase greenhouse gases too. Because there are so many faults in this bill, it really is very difficult for me to figure out where exactly I can start.

Maybe I will start with last night. Like many Canadians, my wife and I were at home doing things that Canadians do. We were not drinking Sortilège and eating tourtière. I think everybody would like to be doing that, but we were streaming a series that my wife likes. We were bingeing on a series called *Virgin River*. It is a very interesting romantic drama series, a series I would normally not want to watch, but when wives say they want to watch a romantic drama series, it is really important that their husbands pay attention to that.

I was watching the show and I suddenly realized I knew actors and actresses. It was set in northern California, but it was beautiful.

As we were sitting around binge-watching, I thought I recognized what I was seeing. I googled it and I found out this show *Virgin River* actually has numerous Canadian actors and actresses in it and takes place in British Columbia. I thought how appropriate it is we are actually debating this bill, because Netflix is a company that already knows the quality of Canadian actors, sets and scenery. As far as it doing business in this country, there are not a lot of rules.

I have listened to some of the debates, and some of the parliamentarians here feel that big giants like Netflix are actually the bad guys. I actually think it is a great business. If someone had asked me a few years ago how I would watch TV, this was not the way I thought we would be doing it. It is the new way. If we can attract more of its investment in this community to take Canadian scenery and Canadian actors and actresses and spread it out around the world, would it not be wonderful for Canadian culture?

In this House, I think most of us disagree with the Prime Minister when he said that Canadians have no core identity, we have no distinct culture, we want to be the first post-national state. We are proud of our culture and we want to make sure going forward in this new technology, this new digital format, we will be winning in the world and not being set behind.

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For companies like Netflix, one of the reasons I cannot support this is because this bill is not clear on the rules. We know Canadian providers need to have 25% to 40% Canadian content and participate with 5% of their profits into the Media Fund, but new technologies need new rules and this legislation falls short.

I want to talk about the vagueness of this bill. It is really important to have fairness and equity put into our system, but this bill would not ensure web giants such as Google and Facebook, for example, would have to compete on the same playing field as Canadian companies. Because it does nothing to address the inequity between digital and conventional forums, it is very difficult to support this bill.

On decision-making, while other countries have an arbitration board, decisions would be made with orders in council. In other words, the Prime Minister and his cabinet would be making decisions on this bill. Right now, Canadians are a bit edgy about the government making all these decisions.

This bill would also allow the CRTC new broad powers, with no clear guidelines, which increases the uncertainty. Like I said, for Canadians to flourish in this new environment, they need certainty. Investors need certainty. When we are competing around the world, if Australia has its system figured out but Canada does not, where do we think these large international platforms are going to be doing their work?

I want to talk about fairness. In the last couple of weeks I was contacted by the local newspapers in my riding. There are two really great local newspapers in Oshawa. One is The Oshawa Express, run by sisters Kim Boatman and Sandy McDowell. It is a great entrepreneurial business run by women. The other one is Oshawa This Week, and I was contacted by Barb Yezik.

They were talking to me about this legislation and how important it is to get it right. Right now with COVID, these businesses are struggling. We need to make sure when we implement a new piece of legislation we get it right, but also that it is done in a very timely fashion. They explained to me that the primary issue is how their business model is disrupted by the web giants like Facebook and Google.

For example, Oshawa This Week and The Oshawa Express are not paid for their content. As far as the process of which they are a part, it really is not transparent on revenue sharing and advertising splits. A statistic that really concerned me when I heard it, and I think it concerns all of us in here, is that Facebook and Google pocket up to 80% of the ad revenue in Canada. Think about that. That is a huge amount of money that goes outside of this country. It is huge, and especially during this time of COVID, it is affecting them more severely.

The Oshawa Express and Oshawa This Week basically have their bricks and mortar in my community of Oshawa. They pay their local taxes, pay their national taxes and pay reporters to go out and get these stories.

• (1010)

It is so important that we support these small businesses, these entrepreneurs. Right now we are stuck with so much uncertainty

and lack of traditional income. I am really happy we are acting on this, but again, this bill does not provide a framework or certainty as to how these businesses are going to be able to continue. We need to make sure they are viable, because it is local media that really tells the truth about our communities. They come out to our events. They support Canada and Canadians in everything we do in our communities.

I only have one minute left, but I want to mention that I think yesterday Australia passed its legislation. That has given businesses that operate in Australia clear guidelines and a way to arrange their competitiveness not only in Australia, but to get an idea of how they will be able to compete around the world, because the world is getting smaller every single year.

We wanted this bill to talk about fairness, competitiveness and how it would ensure content producers are treated fairly. Unfortunately, we do not have that.

Madam Speaker, I would love to talk a bit longer, with a bit of time to talk about Santa Claus, but with that, I wish a merry Christmas to you and all of my colleagues in the House.

I am available for questions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in the spirit of Christmas, I want to add a few thoughts of appreciation and thanks. To the individuals who protect the House of Commons, those looking underneath the clerk's table on their hands and knees, walking around making sure we are in a safe environment, to those who record our Hansard and whether they like it or not have to listen to my speeches, to those who provide us the meals, especially the one kind lady who produces that special fudge, which is the best fudge in the world, to our pages, to the clerk table officers, to those in television and in particular the people who make the hybrid system work, there are so many people who make our democracy work here in Ottawa, and I know I am missing so many, on behalf of myself and the Liberal caucus I want to express our appreciation for all the things they do to make this work.

• (1015)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, whenever the parliamentary secretary gets up, it is always very difficult to add to what he says, but I want to take this opportunity to add a few of my own thoughts about the Christmas season.

We know this has been a very difficult year, and I want to say thanks to all of my colleagues in the House. This has been a tough year, and I think all of us have worked together. Just like Santa is making sure the elves are safe in the factory to make sure they can get things out and everybody can have a wonderful Christmas, we have been working together very well to make sure that Canadians have a wonderful way forward in 2021.

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[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to ask him if he agrees with the Bloc Québécois that the francophone portion of production should be significant, around 40%. Does my colleague agree with the Bloc's position on that?

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, I think all my opposition colleagues believe, as I do, that Quebec culture is Canadian culture, and that it is very important to support Canadian culture.

[*English*]

I said in the opening of my speech that we would love to be sitting at home having some Sortilège and tourtière. That is one of my family traditions and part of my culture.

This relates to one of the flaws of the bill, and I want to thank my colleague from the Bloc for bringing it up. Quebec culture is Canadian culture, and we love our country. We love Quebec and every province in our wonderful country. We need to support that moving forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to hear the Conservative Party rally to the NDP position this week and say that web giants should have to pay tax too.

We agree that the 28-year-old Broadcasting Act needs to be changed, updated and modernized. Everyone who benefits from the system should contribute to content production.

Unfortunately, the Liberals' bill is only a partial solution and does not apply to many of the players, such as internet service providers, social media like YouTube, and future broadcasting platforms. Does my colleague think these players should also do their part and contribute to the system?

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Madam Speaker, we want to have a level playing field. I am going to say something that is a little controversial, perhaps, to the NDP and the Liberals: There are other ways of doing that.

As I mentioned in my speech, this is a new world. We have to be competitive internationally. One of the ways we could do that, as my colleague said, is maybe to increase taxes and tax everyone. However, there is another approach. Traditionally the Conservatives say that we should lower taxes and allow the playing field to develop the way it should in that regard to make Canada, all across the board, more competitive.

How do we move forward on this to level the playing field? I know we are in huge deficits right now and we may have to work together in this challenging environment to come up with a good solution. However, what is important is that everyone is treated fairly and equitably, and Canada becomes competitive. We have the talent here and have the resources to compete around the world. Would it not be great to see more Canadian talent around the world?

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad the government has finally brought this long-awaited modernization of the Broadcasting Act, also known as Bill C-10. Too often government regulations have fallen far behind human innovations and progress, such as those for unmanned aerial vehicles, also known as drones, and various forms of the sharing economy, and it is definitely encouraging to see, 15 years after its founding and 10 years after YouTube reached one billion views, that the act is being updated for social media platforms. However, my initial excitement was doused with a bucket of cold water when I saw some of the half-hearted measures and the complete abdication of responsibility. We missed a great opportunity to genuinely reform the act for the 21st century, and I therefore find it challenging to cast my support for it.

Let me explain. In my research preparing for this speech, I came across Dr. Michael Geist's criticism of the faults of the proposed changes in Bill C-10. In fact, there are so many problems, he has a daily blog called "The Broadcasting Act Blunder". Allow me to mention a few highlights from this blog.

First, Bill C-10, as a broadcast reform bill, could spell the end of Canadian ownership requirements by removing Canadian ownership and control requirements from the Broadcasting Act, yet the heritage minister says the bill would safeguard cultural sovereignty. Second, the bill in no way prevents online streaming services from operating in Canada or requires them to be licensed. It instead requires registration, which may result in nondescript additional regulations and conditions that are "virtually indistinguishable from licensing requirements".

When the Liberals claim it ensures that online broadcasting is covered under the act, why is it covered in such indecisive terms? The bill creates uncertainty, increases consumer costs and creates a risk for tariffs and blocking content from Canada. However, the government calls the bill a matter of fairness.

Michael Geist is not one of those regular Canadians who the elitist government looks down upon. He is a Canadian academic. In fact, he is the Canada research chair in Internet and e-commerce law at the University of Ottawa and a member of the Centre for Law, Technology and Society. He holds multiple law degrees from prestigious institutions and has taught around the world. It would be fair to take his misgivings on the bill seriously.

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Let us take a closer look at fairness. The Liberals say they are updating broadcasting and regulatory policies to better reflect the diversity of Canadian society. How is it fair to virtual signal with much empty aspirations about gender equality, LGBTQ2+ people, racialized communities, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples without specifying how the changes will help them? Is it fair to arm the CRTC with new enforcement powers through an administrative monetary penalty scheme that, when translated into English, means government's overreach could potentially end in a windfall of cold hard cash?

Speaking of cash, is it fair that the government has used the pandemic to repeatedly seek more unchecked power for itself, all the while drowning Canadians in a projected \$1.2 trillion in national debt? That is a credit card debt of more than \$63,000 for each of Facebook Canada's alleged 19 million registered users in this country. Estimates indicate that if online broadcasters are taxed for Canadian content at a rate similar to that of traditional broadcasting, the new framework would create an \$830 million government windfall in three years, by 2023.

In addition to power grabs, the government also wants a cash grab, but the obvious other side to this is increased costs. When someone is going to pay for fees that are projected to run into hundreds of millions of dollars, it is only obvious the burden will fall on Canadian consumers. None of this is fair to Canadians, and Bill C-10 follows a pattern we have become all too familiar with this year: bold intentions, little clarity, empty promises and a failure to deliver meaningful changes.

● (1020)

I, for one, am tired of seeing our government feeding Canadians word salad for every meal. It is past time for a meaty and substantial policy to be put forward.

Bill C-10 would hand massive new powers to the CRTC, Canada's telecommunications and broadcast regulator, to regulate online streaming services, opening the door to mandated Canadian content, also known as CanCon, payments; discoverability requirements, even though we have no issue discovering Canadian content on any capable search engine today without it; and confidential information disclosures, all backed by new fining powers.

Many of the details will be sorted out by the beefed-up CRTC bureaucracy long after the legislation is gone. The specifics will take years to unfold, meanwhile leaving Canadians in uncertainty and insecurity. Some are estimating it will take nine months alone to undertake the very first regulatory phase.

Thankfully, from where I am sitting, it appears that Canadians are not being fooled this time. They are calling for beneficial legislation that would tax multi-billion dollar foreign corporations such as Google and Facebook. They realize the bill would kick the legs out from under small content creators. They know the bill would be the surrender of any meaningful priority.

My office has been receiving notices from online campaigners asking to compel the CRTC to regulate online broadcasters, update the CBC mandate and governance structure and make sure social media companies are responsible for the illegal content they broadcast. They say, "Any updated Broadcasting Act that doesn't tackle

these key issues isn't doing enough to defend Canadian broadcasting, culture and journalism."

The bill also lacks definitions to clarify applications for social media services and user-generated content. For example, if a friend of mine sets up a subscriber-funded online broadcasting app to live-stream programs of Canadian current affairs and commentaries, unlike the author of this act seems to assume, he is doing this on his own and not relying on any of the big box social media platforms. His single-operator platform would be subjected to CRTC's mercy to allow his exercise in freedom of expression and speech, at best, or it would get buried out of business under the mounds of bureaucratic red tape, at worst. It is clear Bill C-10 does not meet the concerns of regular people.

I believe government control should be adequate and not overreaching. As Andrew Coyne writes in *The Globe and Mail*, "But just how far the state's regulatory tentacles will now extend will depend in large part on how the CRTC interprets its new powers—and the bill's language gives plenty of room to worry." I agree.

He is not alone in holding this view, though. Laura Tribe, executive director of OpenMedia, an Internet watchdog group, has issued an urgent warning, saying, "[The minister] has created an artificial sense of crisis around Canadian cultural content—content that is surviving and flourishing in the 21st century." Amid all the other crises we have experienced this year, I hardly think now is the time or place to be manufacturing a new one to hive that policy.

When it comes to bills, like Bill C-10, that make claims as bold as they do, I agree with Andrew Coyne when he says, "You can lead a horse to culture, but you can't make it watch."

On the last sitting day of the House, I wish you, Madam Speaker, and every member of the House of Commons a merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and happy holidays.

● (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I tend to disagree with the member's comments about the CRTC and the importance of Canadian content. I believe the CRTC has done exceptionally well for Canadians over the years. When we look at the importance of Canadian content, we see that not only does it provide opportunities for the wonderful, talented people whom we have from coast to coast to coast, but it also creates thousands of jobs.

This is the type of legislation that will move us forward in ensuring we have Canadian content. Good, middle-class jobs will even flow out of it. There is so much good within the legislation.

I wonder if the member could indicate whether, after the bill gets to committee, where we hope to see it go, he will have some amendments that would make it better legislation, from his perspective.

• (1030)

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, perhaps, unlike the member, I do not live in a zero-or-one world. I believe there is a balance that we have to strike. The CRTC definitely has historically been delivering value to Canadians, and we have seen that it does good work, but that does not mean that we should give all the powers to the CRTC, even overarching powers. It is interesting that the movie I enjoy most about Canadian cultural duality is actually a Hollywood movie called *Bon Cop, Bad Cop*, and I am still rewatching that.

I thank the member for his suggestion. I will take it to heart.

[Translation]

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

There is one rather important aspect that is not addressed in Bill C-10.

The current crisis has been particularly hard on artists. Quebec has a fairly large dubbing industry that provides a living for artists, and I spoke with someone from that sector. She was telling me that if all the taxpayer-funded, English-language productions, like the ones produced in Toronto and Vancouver, were dubbed in Quebec, that would provide artists with work for years to come, and we would not even need American films. It is incredible.

However, that is not happening. Films and TV series that we pay for ourselves are dubbed in France. That makes absolutely no sense.

Does my colleague not think that, any time Canadian taxpayers' money is being invested, films should be dubbed in Quebec to provide work for our own people?

[English]

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, I believe Quebec is a nation that is a great part of Canada, in a united Canada, and that is why, if there is any way we can bring jobs back to Canada, I will be in full support of it. There are other provinces, I might add, that also have francophone Canadians living in them, like New Brunswick and northern Alberta, just like there are many anglophones living in Quebec as well.

I think together we are stronger in the cultural duality of Canada. I think the francophone and anglophone cultures will make us win more contracts and create more jobs in Canada.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing that my colleague did not really talk about is the monopolistic anticompetitive practices of Facebook and Google and how they are taking over the share of revenue. We know that in the bill it is not captured how we can protect the lifeline of newspapers and journalists in our country, but Australia has put forward new

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legislation that will require no government funding to ensure that local content is protected, and they get a share of revenue from those web giants.

Does the member agree that the web giants are not paying their fair share and they need to pay more and protect local journalism, like Australia is doing?

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Madam Speaker, I think it is a worthy consideration for any Canadian government to take into consideration.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I take this opportunity to wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

I thank my constituents for all of their support. It is a great honour to represent them in the Parliament of Canada.

I welcome this opportunity to express the concerns of my constituents regarding Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

The challenge I have as a legislator is this: Do the changes to the Broadcasting Act, which was originally enacted under a previous Conservative government, outweigh the concerns of Canadians regarding the steady erosion of free speech in Canada?

When the Minister of Canadian Heritage started talking about hate speech and fake news, it pandered to the less tolerant, the alt-left crowd. Their agenda is to silence the diversity in the voices in Canada. Canadians have every reason to be concerned. The Prime Minister goes to the United Nations and says one thing, and then denies his own words when questioned about his version of the great reset he has planned for Canada. It is not in the best interests of Canadians to turn the CRTC into some kind of censor board beyond the reach of Parliament.

I proudly speak today as a member of Parliament for the Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke riding, which is rife with Canadians and their stories, together with the storytellers. Canadians are proud of our stories. The storytellers want to share their stories with the world. The government claims Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act, would support the Canadian storytellers. We all know that it would not support all Canadian storytellers, just the government-approved storytellers.

What is the price to support these government-approved storytellers? According to the government, the financial price is close to \$1 billion, but what about the cost to freedom of expression, regulating the Internet, demanding control over algorithms and restricting foreign programming? Is this really a price Canadians wish to pay to not watch central, committee-approved, bland television productions? If Canadians knew the real costs and consequences of the Liberal bill to regulate the Internet, what they are really were, they would reject it entirely.

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There are three things that Canadians need to understand about the bill. First, it is a deception. The Liberals would change the very definition of the words in order to grab some money for their friends. Second, it is an attack on freedom of expression. Mandating speech is the same as restricting speech. Third, in proclaiming to support diversity, the government would reduce the diversity of stories that Canadians have access to, and this would have a particular set of consequences for new Canadians and refugees who speak neither of the two official languages. This is what happens when governments strip our liberties away. The least powerful pay the highest price, but we all bear a cost. That is the reason for this deception. The Liberals cannot be honest about what they are doing, because what they are doing violates the charter. It violates freedom of expression.

We have the deception, the attack on free speech and the attack on diversity. I will begin with the deception, and for that we need to go back to why we have a Broadcasting Act.

Why is there a Broadcasting Act regulating television and radio but not a newsprint act regulating newspapers? It is because newspapers use their own print and paper to express their views. Broadcasters use public airwaves to broadly cast out electromagnetic signals that televisions and radio receivers can pick up. Airwaves are a classic public good. Broadcasters cannot use the same frequency or their signals become lost. Frequencies have to be allocated by the government or else everyone would broadcast on every frequency and nobody would get a signal.

For-profit broadcasters cannot charge customers for the signal after they have already broadcasted out, but the broadcasters were introduced to advertisers, and they all made a lot of money. The government later told these broadcasters that, in return for making huge profits from public airwaves, they would be required to support Canadian storytellers, artists and musicians. Canadians were largely supportive of using Canadian airwaves to support Canadians.

• (1035)

Even when cable came along, the government had a role in regulating cable monopolies for the public good. This arrangement was good for the companies, good for the government-funded, committee-approved storytellers and good for the advertisers. Any Canadian with a radio, TV and some rabbit ears could watch or listen to the free entertainment. The business model was simple: Cast out the programs to the broadest audience possible and then sell the viewership to advertisers.

Canadian consumers of music and stories received quantity over quality. Then the Internet came along and changed everything. It changed everything for advertisers. Just ask the newspapers that, ironically enough, are now lobbying for a newsprint act to bail them out. It changed everything for musicians and storytellers. Just ask Justin Bieber if he would have his globe-spanning career were it not for YouTube. It changed everything for consumers. No longer did they have to sit at a specific time to watch a somewhat decent program. Now they can watch when they want but, more importantly, they can watch what they really want.

For nearly 70 years, the biggest change in broadcasting was colour TV. Then in the last 20 years, everything from production to distribution has been revolutionized. In response to this tremendous

revolution in technology, entertainment and opportunities, in response to all this change, the government's only play is to fall back on 1970s-era protectionist talking points and slap 1930s-era legislation on a 21st-century technology. It is old, it is tired and it is a deception. These companies do not use public airwaves to broadcast out a signal. It is ridiculous to call them broadcasters.

The only reason the government is doing this is to stretch the justification of regulating public airwaves into a justification for regulating private viewing. As I said in my initial remarks, it has to commit this deception to hide the truth. This is regulating expression. It is a limit on speech. Our freedom of speech and our freedom of expression are not just about the right to be heard. It is also about our right to hear, to listen, to see and to understand. It is a human right, not a Canadian privilege.

What is a privilege is to live in a time and place where we can experience stories from any human on earth. The Internet has turned all of us into both broadcasters and receivers. The government seeks to regulate that. It seeks to control it. It wants to put the toothpaste back into the tube and turn the clock back to the seventies. It wants to bring back *The Beachcombers*, but it is not going to happen. It is 2020 and if there has ever been a year when Canadians appreciate the ability to watch what they want when they want it, it is now.

The government has different plan. It wants to regulate what people can watch. They want to charge a tax on these streamers to even have the opportunity to offer Canadians any kind of programming.

These new taxes and regulations will cut Canadians off from a growing, rich, diverse array of new streaming services from across the world. The Liberal attack on freedom of expression is an attack on diversity. The Liberals claim that this tax will help them fund a new film school of grads with diverse backgrounds, but what about the thousands of diverse Canadians who lose out?

Does the Liberal government really believe an Indian Bollywood streaming service is going to stay in the Canadian market if it is required to produce an unprofitable amount of programming? The grandmother who recently arrived on a family reunification visa had sure better hope so. She might be in luck, due to the millions of Canadians who watch those films, but what about new Canadians from different countries? Will every foreign-language streaming service in every country be required to produce Canadian content?

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• (1040)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-210, or Bill C-10 is a good piece of legislation to amend the Broadcasting Act. We need to recognize that things have changed since many of the shows the member referenced were filmed. When we factor in the Internet and the importance of ensuring there is Canadian content, the member needs a better realization of how important it is for the Government of Canada to recognize that Canadian content matters to Canadians. The government has a role, and Bill C-10 would ensure there is an ongoing role.

I wonder if the member could be a little more transparent in what she believes. Does she believe that the CRTC and the Government of Canada have any role in ensuring Canadian content?

• (1045)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, my colleague does not realize we are discussing Bill C-10, not Bill C-210, and does not seem to understand either that it is a bit like apples and oranges. The government can pass a law renaming oranges as online apples, but it will not cause oranges to grow in Canada. It is not just the diversity of languages, but the diversity of genres. There are streaming services for anime, horror, documentaries and classic movies. It is going to be quite a challenge for a classic movie service to produce new Canadian content.

The Liberals might be hoping these protectionist barriers will allow Canadian-owned streaming services to start up. They think these Canadian companies will be able to afford the rights to stream all of our foreign shows. That may be for some of the big genres, but they will never have the same catalogues of shows.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech on this critical issue.

Bill C-10 has a direct impact on radio and community media. In my riding, there is a co-operative radio station, M105. News stories broadcast during the pandemic showed just how hard this station had to work to survive, but they also proved that this model can work with the help of the government. When I met with representatives from the radio station, however, they talked about how the government invested more in social media than in community media. I would like to hear my colleague's comments on that.

Again in my riding, a journalist from La Voix de l'Est wrote an extraordinary book entitled *Extinction de voix: plaidoyer pour la sauvegarde de l'information régionale*, which does a great job of explaining the importance of maintaining local news coverage. It helps to preserve our democracy and ensure the survival of local businesses. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that as it relates to Bill C-10.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, that was the rationale behind the taxpayer-funded CBC, but CBC pulled out of all the local communities and is now broadcasting out of Toronto. Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke lost its only local broadcaster, which then went to Ottawa and became part of another conglomerate. This

is a way to get local news. Many Facebook groups and start-ups produce the local news that people are interested in hearing. This broadcast act would do nothing to help local content.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague spoke about the CBC and the fact that the CBC is no longer in local communities.

I wonder if the member would be supportive of contributing more funding to the CBC and doing more to protect our cherished public broadcaster so that it does not have to minimize its participation in our local communities, but also does not have to resort to tandem broadcasting on our public platforms.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, what I would really like to see is perhaps a CBC station back at the empty radio station that we have right now.

Insofar as wanting to fund CBC more, it is already rebroadcasting CNN and not doing anything with the money it has right now. It is just copying news from the States. We might as well be watching those other stations. CBC is not putting any original content on.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise and speak to Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts. Bill C-10 comes out of the Yale report that was filed in February of 2020. There were 97 recommendations in it, which deal with communications in Canada, social media, copyright, taxation, web giants and advertising fees to ensure the sustainability of traditional media. However, Bill C-10 is limited to one portion of that, which is the Broadcasting Act.

We have all sat through this debate and we have talked about it time and again. The last time the Broadcasting Act was amended was 28 years ago. In 28 years, a lot of things have changed. I probably had hair way back then, believe it or not. I was not a grandfather yet, but I was a father.

The Internet was just coming through and I can still remember the sound of the dial-up at that time. Did I get through? No, I am still waiting, and uploading took some time. Amazon was not available. Netflix was not available. We could not dial our phones to call for Popeyes chicken, as my office did just the other day to surprise us. There are a lot of things that have changed.

Government Orders

As Conservatives, we believe this act should be changed and amended to bring us into the modern age. Sadly, what we have seen is that there are a lot of flaws in this piece of legislation. It does not go far enough. Just as we have seen time and time again, we are getting the “just trust us” line. They are saying we will get the amendments through and work together.

I mentioned some of the online companies, such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and Google. There is nothing to force companies like Facebook and Google to pay their fair share. The bill does not address royalty sharing by these companies for content delivered via their digital platform.

Our colleague from the Bloc mentioned local content. I live in a rural area, and I remember we could turn on CBC Radio and there would be messages from one community to the next about road closures and to families about somebody being sick. Giving a heads-up is what local content is for when one lives in a rural area. That is what our national broadcaster served us in those days.

I remember fondly locally produced movies and television shows, such as *The Beachcombers* and *The Littlest Hobo*. Does anybody remember *The Littlest Hobo*? We are getting away from our roots, and we all believe and know there should be more Canadian content. Bill C-10 just scratches the surface as to what we should be looking at more.

The minister will no doubt argue it is difficult to amend legislation quickly, which I will agree is a tough job to do. As legislators, as the 338 members of this House, we are sent here to do a job. We are sent here to be the voices of those who do not have a voice. We are sent here to ask hard questions of the government, and we are sent here to work collaboratively with the government on issues that matter most to Canadians.

Over the last while in working on the mental health file as the special adviser on mental health and wellness to our official opposition leader, I have been looking at the CRTC closely for the last little while. One of the things Bill C-10 does in this latest iteration is that it would give the CRTC a lot of powers.

I bring members back to 2006. In 2006, the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention went to the CRTC and asked for changes to the Telecommunications Act to allow Canada to have a three-digit suicide prevention hotline. I ask members to imagine all the lives we could have saved in the last 14 years. When minutes count, help should be only a simple three-digit number away.

• (1050)

Suicide is a non-partisan issue for me. I have spoken to it in this House a number of times, whether it is related to mental health, mental illness or mental injury. I believe that as parliamentarians, we can do more. We can leave a legacy of action. Legislatures and Parliaments from across the world are filled with shelves of books and studies that just collect dust.

I remember prior to coming to the House in 2015, my predecessor, the former MP for Cariboo—Prince George Dick Harris, told me that we never know how long we are going to be in this role, so we should make it count and leave a legacy of action. I hope people see that that is what we do every time we are here, and every time

we speak. We speak with sincerity, and we speak with the passion of those who do not have a voice. We bring their voices to this House.

Now, more than ever, the mental health of Canadians is being tested. Throughout this pandemic, we have seen higher rates of anxiety, depression, domestic violence, substance abuse and alcohol abuse. We are seeing higher rates of suicide and suicidal ideation.

The suicide crisis within our first nations communities is getting close to epidemic levels. I remember my very first emergency debate in this House. It was on the Attawapiskat first nation suicide epidemic. There was a member across the way who said he had been in this House for about 10 years, and sadly, the very first emergency debate that he participated in was on the suicide epidemic in our first nations. His comment was that not much had changed in the 10 years that he had been in the House.

I believe we can leave a legacy of action. I do not believe in doing things in half measures. Bill C-10 is a half measure. The Conservatives believe that there are things we should look at and changes that need to be in place. Ten Canadians will die by suicide today alone. That number is rising. We know the statistics are likely higher. When there is an emergency, dialing 911 is instinctual. We know that. When someone is in need of help, in times of a crisis, they do not want to dial a number and be put on hold, or get a recording.

The same could be said for someone who may not want to end their lives. They may be seeking help. When they are ready to seek help, they should be able to access it immediately. Let us clear up the confusion and give Canadians a simple, easy-to-remember, three-digit number to turn to. That is real, concrete action that will save Canadian lives. Help should only be three digits away.

Now, getting back to Bill C-10, if the CRTC had said yes to the original request to have a three-digit suicide prevention hotline back in 2006, we would have been miles ahead of the United States, our counterparts. They have managed, in the crazy partisan way they have down in the U.S. with their politics, to come to an agreement in a bipartisan way to secure and launch a national suicide prevention hotline, a 988 suicide prevention hotline. However, as I stand here today, 14 years after the very first time it was presented to the CRTC in 2006, the U.S. is ahead of us. I think we can do better.

One of the issues that we have in terms in Bill C-10 is that it does nothing to get social media sites, such as Facebook and Google, to pay their fair share. There is nothing to address the issue of royalties, sharing to media content and sharing digital media. It does nothing to actually provide guidelines to how we are going to increase our French content.

It just skims the surface. As I said before, in 2015 I came here not to do things in half measures, but to do things in full measures. I also believe that we should continue to examine this bill. I hope the minister will accept the various amendments that will be brought forward by all opposition parties. Let us bring 988 to Canada, and let us do better with Bill C-10.

• (1055)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have five minutes for questions and comments after question period when we resume this debate.

It is now time for statements by members. The hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

MISSISSAUGA—LAKESHORE

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the many individuals in Mississauga—Lakeshore who have demonstrated so much generosity during these difficult times.

My heartfelt thanks go to our local health care professionals at Trillium Health Partners and all other health care and front-line workers in the fight against COVID-19 for their service and courage; Armagh House; Interim Place; The Compass food bank and our faith-based groups and community organizations for their work to protect the most vulnerable; local businesses, restaurants and initiatives like Feed Mississauga for preparing thousands of meals for those in need; Mississauga—Lakeshore Constituency Youth Council for its leadership; and the Mississauga Seniors' Council for its tireless advocacy for the rights and needs of seniors.

Let us draw comfort and strength from all the amazing ways in which our community has come together in the face of this pandemic.

Merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and happy Kwanzaa, and my very best wishes to everyone for the holiday season and the new year.

* * *

COVID-19 VACCINE

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan is home to VIDO-InterVac, Canada's very own solution for a COVID-19 vaccine.

Last January, VIDO-InterVac researchers were among the first in the world to isolate the COVID-19 virus and were testing a prototype vaccine in animals by March. VIDO asked the federal government for funding to speed up its development timeline, but its request has not been approved.

Why have we not heard any more about this made-in-Canada vaccine, while massive multinational companies are getting theirs approved? The simple answer is this. The Prime Minister has de-

cidated not to support made-in-Canada vaccines and has instead signed billion dollar contracts with foreign multinational corporations.

The Liberals are putting the financial gain of the pharmaceutical industry first, at the expense of Canadians, Saskatoon and VIDO-InterVac. The result is that the United Kingdom and the U.S. are producing their own vaccines. In Canada, the Prime Minister has put us at the mercy of other countries. Shame on him.

* * *

[Translation]

GATINEAU

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.): Madam Speaker, 2020 was not the year we were expecting.

In response to the pandemic, our government took exceptional measures to provide assistance. In Gatineau, that represents \$6.8 million for seniors, a more generous Canada child benefit for nearly 20,000 children, emergency assistance of more than \$1 million for food banks and community organizations, 211 summer jobs for young people and invaluable help, such as the CERB and the wage subsidy, for businesses and workers.

These measures would never have been possible without the extraordinary work of our federal public servants. Gatineau has also made significant progress on a number of projects, including the Gatineau 2 Project preservation centre, the Rapibus Lorrain station, the redevelopment of a Service Canada centre and the confirmation of the need for a sixth crossing through an NCC study.

Once again the people of Gatineau have shown great resilience in 2020 and thanks to everyone's efforts, better days are ahead.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, V2V Black Hops Brewery is an amazing social enterprise in my riding that raises funds to help with military and first responders PTSD programs. However, because it is a relatively new business, it has not qualified for the wage subsidy and was prevented from accessing the commercial rental assistance program. It is also unable to qualify for the new rental subsidy.

In July, I raised this issue with the Minister of National Revenue. I gave a copy of that letter to her parliamentary secretary in September. I followed up with both of them with an email in October. I also notified the minister of small business of this issue in November. Here we are in December and I have still yet to receive any reply, let alone an acknowledgement.

Statements by Members

The Liberals quickly provided billions of dollars for large corporations, but have not budged when asked to improve the programs for new small businesses. This is an unacceptable lump of coal for this Christmas and I again urge the government to step up and fix these programs.

* * *

● (1105)

HEART LAKE BAPTIST CHURCH

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this holiday season has been unlike any other and has brought unique challenges while exacerbating older ones.

Food insecurity in Brampton and all across Canada has only increased due to the pandemic. While our government has invested another \$100 million to support food banks and food security groups, I am grateful to all our local organizations working hard to provide the essentials that families need to get by.

In my riding of Brampton North, the Heart Lake Baptist Church food pantry has done amazing work, providing fresh, healthy foods, handmade scarves and hats, and baby supplies to those who need it most.

The Heart Lake Baptist Church is a prime example of how important faith-based organizations are in helping us get through this pandemic. The Heart Lake Baptist Church truly embodies the Christian principles of generosity of spirit and of helping thy neighbour. I thank all of them for their hard work. I wish them all a very merry Christmas.

* * *

THE YEAR 2020

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, this year has been hard on everyone across our great country, so with my last 60 seconds of 2020, I wanted to offer a few insights.

This year 2020 is not the new normal. We will get back to our regular lives. Our children will return to their normal lives at school and have sleepovers with their friends. Their activities and sports will return to being actual games and competitions.

This Christmas we will be coming together as families and friends over Zoom or Skype. This is not normal and it should never be accepted as normal. Our lives should be our lives. We should and will be able to have friends and families in our houses and backyards again.

For the constituents in Regina—Lewvan and people across the country, there will be a few more tough times ahead, but there is a flicker of light and hope that the end of all of this is coming near. We need to show and know that there is optimism and opportunity in 2021. I have no doubt that with the first backyard barbecue or the opening day of our kids' flag football, soccer or dance, 2020 will slowly begin to fade and the possibilities and bright futures for us will come into view in 2021 and beyond.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas.

MARCOS MARCOS

Hon. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House to share the sad news of the passing of Father Marcos Marcos.

Father Marcos was born in Sohag, Egypt. He attended Hartford University in Connecticut where he received a bachelor's degree in divinity and then went on to receive a master's degree in psychology.

In 1964, Father Marcos was ordained by Pope Kyrillos VI and came to Toronto. He became the first Coptic Orthodox priest in North America. For years, Father Marcos travelled across North America to serve members of the Coptic community. He was instrumental in establishing the first churches in Toronto, Montreal, Los Angeles and New York. Last year, he was honoured for 55 years of faithful service. He was beloved by everyone.

When I offered my condolences to Father Angelos yesterday, he told me that "Father Marcos was truly an inspiration and role model for all of us."

I extend my sincere condolences to the family of Father Marcos and the entire Coptic community in Canada and around the world.

* * *

[Translation]

LORIO ROY

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to congratulate a great Acadian builder, Lorio Roy.

Mr. Roy lives in my riding, Acadie—Bathurst, and just became a member of the Order of Canada. Mr. Roy is the former president of the Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick and was appointed to the Order of Canada for his ongoing commitment to improving post-secondary education and his dedication to the Acadian community.

Mr. Roy's numerous accomplishments include serving as principal of the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick and as assistant deputy minister responsible for French-language community colleges in New Brunswick. He was also the secretary general and vice-president of Coop Atlantique, publisher and executive director of the daily L'Acadie Nouvelle, and manager of Acadie Presse. He currently sits on the board of directors of the Port of Belledune.

I would personally like to thank Mr. Roy for his major contribution to education, his dedication to our communities and his steadfast support for Acadians.

I offer him my sincerest congratulations for this well-deserved honour.

Congratulations, Mr. Roy.

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, last September, the memorial of the late Edmonton Police Constable Ezio Faraone, who was murdered in the line of duty, was desecrated. Sadly, this is not an isolated incident but part of a trend in which memorials dedicated to police and other first responders are a target.

In response, I have worked with Senator Leo Housakos in drafting Bill S-221, which Senator Housakos introduced earlier this week. It would add significant penalties to the Criminal Code for anyone convicted of vandalizing a memorial dedicated to first responders. This legislation would ensure that perpetrators of such reprehensible acts would be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law, while honouring the legacy of first responders who have given their lives.

* * *

[Translation]

VAUDREUIL—SOULANGES COMMUNITY

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we head into the holiday season, I would like to take a moment to thank the residents of Vaudreuil—Soulanges for their efforts to make the COVID-19 pandemic a little less difficult.

[English]

I am talking about small business owners like Jim Beauchamp and André Dumas, who raise spirits and goods for families in need; local artist Andy Cook and Hall of Fame artist Brian Greenway from April Wine, playing free online shows to brighten up our evenings; and Gurinder Singh Johal and Sarvdeep Singh Bath from the Punjab Sports and Culture Association, who delivered pallets of foods to our food bank Moisson Sud-Ouest.

[Translation]

Susan Laventure and Madeleine Turgeon are part of a group known as the “masked angels” who stepped up and began making masks for our community. Dominic Larrivée is working every day to raise funds and bring people joy. Maella is 12 years old and has been making toques herself for people in need.

The list is long, which is why our community will come out of this stronger than ever.

I wish everyone in my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges a happy holiday season. The year 2021 cannot come soon enough.

* * *

• (1110)

[English]

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, 2020 has been a tough year for our communities and for many families. During this Christmas season, local food banks need the support of those able to lend a helping hand. I am proud to celebrate Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon's local organizations, emergency services and business associations that have

Statements by Members

faithfully rallied residents to stock the shelves at local food banks. I wish I could name them all, but thankfully there are simply too many in the short time I have today.

However, I would like to highlight St. Joseph's food bank in Mission. It has joined forces with Mission Community Services and the Christmas Bureau to amplify its efforts. During this holiday time, I invite everyone to donate to St. Joseph's at missionfoodbank.com to help others.

To all the constituents of Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, I thank them for their generosity, and I wish them and theirs a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

* * *

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, this year, the holiday season will look quite different. As we prepare to celebrate safely at home, I encourage my constituents of Kildonan—St. Paul to continue their spirit of generosity, to love their neighbour and to support those in need in our community. Many of our beloved Winnipeg organizations have stepped up over these past nine difficult months.

Siloam Mission recently opened the Buhler Centre, which provides additional room for more beds, health services, employment and spiritual care supports. Gwen Selter Creative Living Centre created a program that delivers hundreds of hot meals to seniors in the community. The Knowles Centre and Marymount continue to provide youth in need safe places to live, with 24-7 professional support to help them overcome challenges from difficult childhoods. Harvest Manitoba is preparing thousands of hampers to be distributed across Manitoba over the holidays.

I am so proud to represent such a generous community, and I wish my constituents a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

* * *

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, as we gather on this last sitting day of the year, I am reflecting on the way our communities have pulled together over the past nine months. In Northwest B.C., we have seen it before. In 2018, wildfires tore through and people risked their lives to save their neighbours' properties.

Oral Questions

No matter our differences, when the chips are down, we can count on rural folks to take care of each other. Last night, I spoke with a group of doctors in the tiny community of Fort St. James. They have dozens of COVID cases there right now and expect things to get worse. They are working day and night to save their neighbours' lives, just like health care workers in communities all across Canada. We need to have their backs.

I am thinking today about families in Fort St. James, Binche, Tache, Nak'azdli and every tiny remote community across Canada who are struggling to safeguard their loved ones in the face of this virus. In every gesture of mutual support, every act of care and concern, we are writing the story of who we are as a country. It matters now more than ever.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas.

* * *

[Translation]

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, supply management is central to our agricultural industry and we must protect it.

In spite of the promises Canadian political parties have made, our trading partners will always have demands. They will always want more. To wit, the ink is not even dry on the agreement with the United States, and Washington has already embarked on a new legal battle against our dairy producers. This means that, even though the federal government already sacrificed supply management in the agreement, the Americans want to flood our market even more.

That is exactly why the Bloc Québécois has introduced an iron-clad bill that would block any further breaches in supply management. Our farmers have already paid dearly for free trade. The holidays are approaching, and I urge all farmers and people who want to maintain the vitality of our regions to contact their member of Parliament to ensure that they will support Bill C-216. We cannot miss this opportunity to ensure the survival of our agricultural model.

Happy holidays, everyone.

* * *

[English]

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker,

'T was the Christmas of COVID
And interest was keen,
In our nation receiving
Its promised vaccine.

The stockings were spaced by the chimney with care
Though half of the family couldn't be there,
The children were snuggled (but sad) in their beds
Cancelled trips to see Santa Claus still in their heads.

Mama in her 'kerchief and I in my mask
Had just hunkered down for the winter-long task,
Of reading each book from Homer to Seneca
While awaiting a booster from AstraZeneca.

But we can't let the wait crush our spirits by inches
Or transform us into a nation of Grinches,
Let's reach out to each other, the tall and the small
Like the Grinch, let our hearts grow three sizes—that's all.

Christmas came to the Whos without ribbons and tags
It came, just the same without boxes and bags,
By reindeer or by Zoom, it can come to us too
Merry Christmas to all, merry Christmas to you.

* * *

• (1115)

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL WINTER FAIR

Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair is an annual event that celebrates the best food, livestock and horsemanship this country has to offer. This November, FedNor supported the royal in Toronto with nearly \$600,000 to enable northern Ontario agri-food businesses and organizations to expand, reach new markets, and create jobs throughout northern Ontario's agricultural pavilion.

Many local Ontario producers participated, with the best maple sugar in Canada. The sugar bush in Lavigne in my riding of Nickel Belt took home the prize for the best amber grade maple syrup.

[Translation]

Congratulations to the Séguin family and their team.

I thank our food producers, who supply nutritious and delicious food for our tables and our shops, especially during the pandemic.

Let us continue to support local organizations and businesses and local producers.

Merry Christmas and happy new year to all.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday, the provincial premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada met to come to an agreement on health care funding.

Unfortunately, what could have been a historic meeting that benefited all Canadians turned into yet another demonstration of the Liberal Party's arrogance. The Prime Minister said that the government would address the issue later. If we go by what the government has done in recent years, then we should be very worried about what is to come.

Oral Questions

Is the government prepared to commit to supporting stable, predictable and unconditional health transfers?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, governments at all levels are working together to keep Canadians safe from COVID-19. As part of our response to the pandemic, we announced \$19 billion for a safe restart agreement to help provinces and territories restart their economies safely while we continued to respond to COVID-19. This funding is in addition to the \$40 billion we already provide the provinces and territories each year through the Canada health transfer.

We will keep working with the provinces and territories so we can fight COVID-19 together.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, the problem is that the Premier of Quebec clearly stated yesterday that this was a missed opportunity.

Yesterday's meeting was a unique opportunity to reach an agreement on health transfers. All of the provinces, all of the political parties are asking for stable, predictable, unconditional transfers. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister really dropped the ball yesterday.

Why is the Prime Minister always so quick to lecture everyone and tell the provinces what to do in the health care sector but never ready to commit when it comes to funding?

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, from day one our government has been focused on supporting Canadians and jobs during this pandemic. We have provided more than eight out of every 10 dollars spent to fight COVID-19. Our government's total support for provinces and territories during this pandemic includes \$322 billion in direct measures to fight the virus and help Canadians.

We will work with our partners to do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, until we get through this pandemic.

* * *

[Translation]

PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have been working in a hybrid House of Commons for three months.

Today it is safe to say that it is a success, it works. It worked with the support and co-operation of everyone, under an agreement that expires today.

Since this was done with everyone's support, since it worked, we believe the agreement should be renewed as is until June 23. Does the Government of Canada agree with us?

• (1120)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with my col-

league about the fact that we were able to collaborate. Collaboration is extremely important, especially during a pandemic.

As for what comes next, we sent out a proposed motion to all the parties, including the Conservatives. This motion includes the voting application. It should be obvious why, considering how long it can take to vote on Zoom.

Now the Conservatives seem to have problems with the voting application, and I for one would like to know why.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals' delays in ratifying the Canada-U.K. trade agreement have caused U.K. trade officials to state, in their own words, these will cause "damage and destruction" to businesses on both sides of the Atlantic. This represents \$29 billion a year in trade between our countries. Weeks ago at committee, the minister would not commit to any timeline on legislation through Parliament or the Senate. Canada's key business, agricultural and manufacturing organizations are calling on the Liberals to provide stability and predictability on trade with the U.K.

What is the plan? We are out of time.

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, now more than ever our businesses and all Canadians are looking for stability and predictability. Our first priority is implementing the legislation. This is why we are looking forward to working with all parliamentarians on the timely passage of this important legislation.

That being said, we are also actively working with the United Kingdom to ensure a smooth transition for businesses to prevent any disruptions.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have had years to work on this trade agreement, which they knew was expiring at the end of 2020. Instead, they pulled out of negotiations early in 2019 and did not restart them until this summer. For weeks the minister has been talking about trade mitigation ideas for businesses, and now U.K. officials are saying that the Liberals' plans may not even be possible. The minister left exporters out to dry with only 12 business days left before tariffs could potentially be applied.

I have asked the minister several times now. What is the plan to mitigate these disruptive tariffs?

Oral Questions

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me be clear. Our message to businesses is that they do not have to prepare for a worst-case scenario, because we have a trade continuity agreement with the United Kingdom. We are working hard to ensure that there are no disruptions and that there is a smooth transition. Nothing is more important to us than providing stability and predictability for Canadian exporters. We work for businesses, and we will always work for businesses to ensure that they have this continuity.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, a person could make money publishing an anthology of the Prime Minister's nonsensical quotes. However, we have to hand it to him, because yesterday he outdid himself.

Yesterday, the Premier of Quebec and all the provincial premiers asked him to increase health transfers. His answer, and I am not making this up, was that it was premature to be having this discussion because of COVID-19.

For the information of the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party of Canada, COVID-19 is a health crisis. Health care staff are overwhelmed, and 900 people are in hospital with the virus. There has never been a better time in history to increase health transfers. What does the Prime Minister not understand?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Quebecers are worried.

They are worried about their physical and mental health, and about their loved ones. That is our priority. We want to continue working with Quebec and all the provinces to fight COVID-19, which is the greatest health crisis since the Spanish flu and the greatest economic crisis since the last century.

We do this every day. We work with the provinces. We provide transfers. We worked with them on personal protective equipment and vaccines. These are positive accomplishments, but the Bloc seems unwilling to acknowledge this.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, neither the Prime Minister nor the government House leader understands.

What we want is for the government to increase health transfers significantly, permanently and unconditionally. The premiers of Quebec and the provinces and the Quebec National Assembly have unanimously called for this, as have the House of Commons, 81% of Quebecers and 73% of Canadians.

The Prime Minister and the government House leader are the only ones who do not understand. They stand alone. They do not understand that the time to invest in health is during a health crisis. They are the only ones who do not understand that they need to support health care workers and that 53 people died yesterday.

What is it going to take for you to understand?

• (1125)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member to address her comments through the Chair.

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

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have taken such strong action with Quebec and all of the provinces precisely because we are experiencing a crisis and because so many people have been infected and have lost their lives.

We have worked on the health care system, and we transfer billions of dollars a year for health care in general. During the pandemic specifically, we have transferred money for testing and PPE, not to mention the vaccines, which are our top priority.

Instead of being happy about that, the Bloc is looking for yet another thing to bicker over. We are working together, and that is the priority for all Quebecers and Canadians.

* * *

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, while Canadians struggle, billions of dollars in COVID-19 funding have been spent by profitable corporations on dividend payments, executive bonuses and stock buybacks. These companies do not have to pay back a cent.

However, it is a different story for regular Canadians who applied in good faith for emergency benefits, such as artists and the self-employed. They are being told to pay back thousands of dollars. Once again, the Liberals are putting big business profits ahead of everyday people.

Will the government end the double standard? Will Liberals stop this vicious clawback from vulnerable, struggling Canadians?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me begin by wishing the hon. member and all members of the House a happy holiday season and merry Christmas.

To address the question, our approach from day one has been to ensure that we provide enough support to Canadian households and businesses to keep them afloat so they can contribute to the economic rebound once this pandemic is over.

With respect to the wage subsidy, I would point out that the only companies eligible for that are the ones that can demonstrate a serious drop in revenue, and that are using the money specifically to keep their workers on the payroll. I am pleased to share with the hon. member that almost four million Canadians still have jobs as a result of that program.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, at the start of this pandemic, the Prime Minister called on Canadian industry to step up and produce protective equipment, and step up they did.

Distilleries and breweries across Canada scrambled to start producing much-needed hand sanitizer. Their hard work and initiative saved lives. However, instead of buying hand sanitizer from these Canadian businesses, which produced thousands of litres of it, the Liberal government sent over half a billion dollars to multinational corporations.

Can the minister explain the rationale behind the decision to buy hand sanitizer from outside of Canada, when small businesses in this country worked so hard to start producing it?

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is so proud of the exceptional efforts by Canadian companies all across this great country to produce all of the materials that we needed to address the COVID crisis.

In every single province, small businesses, large businesses and transformed businesses got us where we needed to go. That is exactly what we invested in all along. Yes, there was equipment that could not be purchased here, and purchases were made outside of the country. Everything was done absolutely properly, and we have made sure that our manufacturing sector has been transformed as a result.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, top secret government documents revealed the Liberals put pressure on the Canadian Armed Forces to train Communist Chinese troops in Canada.

Despite warnings from our Five Eyes partners not to let China steal our military secrets, the Deputy Prime Minister was more concerned with her image in Beijing than with Canada's national security. Kidnapping our citizens, bankrupting our farmers, violating human rights, cyber attacks and spying: which of these security threats is the Deputy Prime Minister willing to compromise by training Chinese troops?

Whose side is she actually on?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all let me say that the protection and safe return of the two Canadians currently detained by the Chinese government is our top priority, and we will continue to make that clear to China.

Let me also be clear that we do not train with the Chinese military. Perhaps the member opposite is confused by a planned co-operation initiative that he was a party to signing, which was designed to guide the further development of bilateral defence relations with China. The Conservatives signed that in 2013.

Let me say once again that we do not train with the Chinese military.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, we know the Prime Minister expanded that agreement for military training in 2017, and let us be clear, the invitation to the Chinese army to come to Canada for winter training happened in February 2018, under the Liberal government.

Oral Questions

The hero of the story is the Chief of the Defence Staff, who stood up for Canadian values and axed the Liberal government's plan. He should have been able to count on the Minister of National Defence to have his back. Unfortunately, the defence minister hid under his desk and let the Deputy Prime Minister walk all over him.

Why did the defence minister allow the Deputy Prime Minister to dictate military policy with communist China that compromises our national security?

• (1130)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as is so often the case, the member has the story completely wrong. In fact, although there have been agreements put in place by the Conservatives since 2012 intended to develop strategic, reciprocal military-to-military talks between government and military officials, we have been very clear. Our relationship with China has continued to evolve, and we recognize the hostile activities of that particular government.

Let me be crystal clear. We do not train with the Chinese military.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Rural Economic Development accused Conservatives of spreading misinformation, but here are some facts about rural broadband. Despite having half a million underserved residents in southwestern Ontario, not a dime, and not a single project, was approved through the connect to innovate program for that area of the country.

Very simply, my question to the Minister of Rural Economic Development is this. Will she commit to regional funding through the universal broadband fund for southwestern Ontario programs like SWIFT and for eastern Ontario programs like EORN?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand in the House and talk about all the tools in our tool box to connect Canadians, and Canadians in New Brunswick. Applications for the new universal broadband fund, with the rapid response stream, are coming in daily. I encourage the member opposite to work with his local Internet service providers and his communities to make sure they put applications in, so we can get all Canadians connected.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the parliamentary secretary has left all the tools in the tool box. These projects are not going forward because of the lack of support from the Liberal government.

Oral Questions

Again, \$186 million was left on the table last year, unspent by the Liberal government. Fewer than 9% of households connected, and fewer than 10% of Canadians connected despite what was promised by the Liberal government. Its service availability maps are completely flawed.

My very simple question to the minister is this. Why has she failed Canadians in connecting rural Canadians to high-speed Internet?

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was privileged and pleased to be part of the announcement this morning of over \$60 million for rural southern Ontario. We are getting projects delivered, but I need to remind all members in the House to please get their applications in. The federal government depends on applications from communities and Internet service providers to get Canadians connected. We will get all Canadians connected, and we are getting all Canadians connected.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadian distillers quickly retrooled and donated thousands of litres of hand sanitizer to fight COVID-19, yet the government bought \$570 million worth of hand sanitizer from China. My private member's bill supports our distillers and their workers by allowing Canadians to ship their products through Canada Post.

Will the Liberals support my bill that lets Canadians buy direct from Canadian producers, or will they side with the liquor monopolies that stop Canadians from getting the Canadian products they want?

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government worked hand in glove with Canadian industries all across the spectrum, whether it was for ventilators or test kits. For all of the different products that were necessary to tackle this crisis, we worked with our industry. We transformed the industry all across Canada, and so many companies have contributed to this made-in-Canada effort. We know how hard Canadians are working all together. This is just another great example.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pretty sure the government did not transform the manufacturing industry in Canada, but we will talk about that on a different day.

The agriculture minister continues to hammer farmers with the carbon tax and does not give the farmers any credit for any of the environmental work they do on the farm: environmental farm planning, planting cover crops, no-till drilling, manure management, taking marginal land out of production, managing on-farm water and planting millions of trees. At the same time, she ignores the fact that crops and trees are natural carbon sequestrers.

When is the minister going to take this carbon tax off farmers?

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am well aware of the price on pollution. We analyzed it in great detail.

That is why there are exemptions for our farmers, such as exemptions for the fuel used on farms and exemptions for greenhouses.

We are working very hard. We have a number of programs to help our farmers access better technologies for sustainable agriculture. In the economic update, we also announced \$98 million for sustainable agriculture programs.

* * *

● (1135)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, everyone was disgusted when they saw Donald Trump separating migrant children from their parents two years ago. That is why I was appalled to find out that it is happening here too.

Last year alone, at least 182 children were separated from their families at the border, even though the best interests of the child are a key principle that must guide all of our decisions. That is why the Canada Border Services Agency was instructed not to separate children from their families.

What happened? Can the government assure us that this will never happen again?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the welfare of children is a top priority in our asylum system and, as such, CBSA does not systematically separate children from their parents or legal guardians.

I am pleased to advise the member and the House that there are currently zero children in immigration detention. Immigration detention is only used as a measure of last resort. Alternatives for minors are always considered first, which include release into the care of a parent or legal guardian and placement with alternate arrangements. Only in such extraordinary circumstances is a child allowed to remain in detention with a parent, but those circumstances are strictly limited by ministerial directive. I will repeat that currently there are zero children in detention.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I said “at least” 182 children were separated from their families because the truth is that we have no idea of the exact number. The government does not keep any statistics on that.

One hundred and eighty-two is the number of families that contacted Action réfugiés Montréal for help. We have no idea how many others there were.

Did the minister launch an investigation to find each child who was separated from their family? If not, what is he waiting for?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate very much the member opposite's question, but clearly she wrote the question before she heard my answer. I will repeat for her what I have already said twice.

There are currently zero children in immigration detention. We track this very carefully. Direction has been clearly given to CBSA, and CBSA will only use immigration detention as a last resort in exceptional circumstances. Those circumstances have led to a significant reduction. The actual number of children in detention peaked in 2014. We have worked tirelessly to reduce that number and today it is zero.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadian agriculture producers have worked hard this year to keep food on our plates during an unprecedented crisis. They are at the top of Santa's good list this year. I think they deserve some long-awaited gifts, like broader trade access, an exemption from the carbon tax, BRM reform and a fair hearing for neonic insecticides.

Will the government deliver or can farmers and ranchers expect another lump of coal from the Liberal government?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very proud, a couple of weeks ago, to put a clear offer on the table to my counterparts from the provinces to improve AgriStability by 50%. The Government of Canada is ready to remove the reference margin limit in the AgriStability program and increase the compensation rate from 70% to 80%. I am waiting for a response from my counterparts in the provinces.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, jobs are what people in western Canada want. The Prime Minister promised the USW 5890 workers, when he did a photo op with them last year, that he would protect their jobs.

Without the Care Bear stare, without mentioning what Mr. Harper did or did not do, there is one simple question that oil and gas workers across this country want to know the answer to. In the

Prime Minister's reimagined economy, is there room for them to raise their families, support their families and put food on the table?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we approved TMX, with 7,000 jobs created so far. We approved the Line 3 pipeline, with 7,000 jobs created. We are supporting Keystone XL on the Canadian side, with 1,500 jobs created. We approved NGTL 2021, with thousands of jobs to be created. With respect to LNG Canada, there are thousands of jobs there. We have invested \$1.7 billion in orphaned and inactive wells, with thousands of jobs created in Alberta and Saskatchewan. With the wage subsidy, more than 500,000 workers kept their jobs during the pandemic in Alberta alone.

That is our record. We will keep working to make sure people are working in western Canada.

* * *

● (1140)

HOUSING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, Parliament rises today, but small municipalities and not-for-profits will work through Christmas trying to meet the December 31 deadline for rapid housing funds. Big cities, however, can simply collect their promised cheques. That is one set of rules.

I know for a fact that small communities are still trying to make sense of the fund, never mind being in a position to submit an application. That is the second set of rules.

Why is the government excluding them from having a reasonable shot at helping their homelessness issue before Christmas?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is committed to ending chronic homelessness everywhere right across Canada. The \$1-billion rapid housing initiative targets where the situation is most severe, where COVID is strongest and where public health dictates we invest quickly. All municipalities, communities and indigenous-led governments can apply for the rapid housing initiative.

We are committed to ending homelessness. This is the first installment. We are working just as hard over Christmas to make sure all communities, whether small, large, regional or northern, get the support they need to help vulnerable Canadians in difficult situations.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadian ownership and control of our radio and television broadcasters are crucial to ensuring the continued support of Canadian content and cultural programming, but the Liberals have decided to open the floodgates to foreign outlets by removing the long-standing legislative requirement that radio and television broadcasters shall be effectively owned and controlled by Canadians.

Why is the government throwing Canadian ownership requirements into the wind?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think most members in this place agree that we need to modernize our Broadcasting Act to make sure the web giants pay their fair share.

Our broadcasting system predates the digital era and unduly disadvantages Canadian broadcasters. That is why we introduced legislation that would ensure that online broadcasters contribute their fair share to support Canadian music and Canadian stories. A modernized bill would also mean more creative opportunities for Canadians and by Canadians.

We are ready to work with our colleagues and opposition parties to protect our culture and promote Canadian workers and creators.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have missed every single climate target. They have not planted a single one of their promised two billion trees, and they are spending billions of dollars on a pipeline that contradicts their own climate plans.

We are in a climate crisis. Along with ambitious targets, we need action. Cities like Montreal are showing real leadership, with bold, concrete plans, but the Liberals just keep rehashing versions of old plans with excuses about why they have not gotten around to them yet.

When will the Prime Minister stop reannouncing things and start actually doing them?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, perhaps my hon. colleague is unaware, so I will remind her that we are the first government to put in place a 50-point plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; we are the first government to put a price on carbon pollution; we are the first government to invest in planting in two billion trees; we are the first government to invest in zero-emission vehicles; and we are the first government to invest historic amounts in green infrastructure.

We are not done yet. Very shortly, we will be announcing our plan to show how we are going to not only achieve our Paris targets but surpass them. We are going to do it for our kids and we are going to do it for our grandkids.

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Liberals gave Quebec and the provinces a slap in the face. If there is one thing the pandemic has taught us, it is that our health care system is fragile. Scarce resources and difficult working conditions are the direct result of cuts to transfer payments that the Conservatives started and the Liberals continued. This is putting terrible pressure on the provinces, and it is simply untenable.

Why are the Liberals having such a hard time understanding that Quebec and the provinces need sustainable health transfers not just this year, but permanently?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are working hand in hand with the provinces, and we are transferring billions of dollars for health care.

Throughout this pandemic, we have transferred considerable amounts of money for equipment, for all kinds of measures, and for the vaccines that are on their way.

Naturally, we will keep talking about this with Quebec and the provinces. For now, we are focusing on the worst health crisis since the Spanish flu.

We are there for Quebeckers and will continue to be there for Quebeckers.

* * *

● (1145)

[English]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the J.A. Douglas McCurdy Sydney Airport in Cape Breton is a critical and essential piece of infrastructure that supports communities in my riding and surrounding areas.

This week, Air Canada announced the suspension of its remaining services to and from the airport, resulting in no commercial flights available for my constituents, jobs lost and uncertainty for the future of the airport.

Could the parliamentary secretary please tell the House, Canadians and the people in Cape Breton—Canso what our government is doing to support regional airports such as my airport in Cape Breton—Canso?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a tireless advocate for Cape Breton. We are disappointed by Air Canada's decision to cancel more regional routes. We know how important regional airports are for communities in Cape Breton and across the country.

Oral Questions

Over the next few years, the government will invest more than \$1.1 billion to support key players, such as airport authorities and regional airlines. Any further discussions about taxpayer support for major airlines will prioritize retaining and reinstating regional routes that connect our communities, just like Sydney.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, they say history repeats itself from time to time. With the government it seems to happen all too often. We are dealing with yet another eleventh-hour trade deal with the United Kingdom, our closest ally.

With only one day left in this parliamentary calendar, how can the government expect this deal to be subject to thorough scrutiny in Parliament before the December 31 deadline, and how much will this incompetence cost Canadian taxpayers in mitigation measures?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know that all of us on all sides of the House care about our exporters who are exporting to the United Kingdom. I am very pleased that we have a trade agreement with the United Kingdom that will preserve the terms of CETA, a high standard agreement that protects the environment. It removes 98% of tariffs for Canadian exporters. It completely protects our supply-managed sectors.

This is a good agreement, and we are going to work with Canadian exporters to make sure that they experience a smooth transition.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, Industrial Process Products in my riding makes wire mesh pads for the energy sector. They are high-quality wires manufactured in Asia before being upgraded in Calgary. Now a CITT ruling is forcing the company to purchase inferior wire from its multinational competitor, which is 10 times its size, or face crippling tariffs for importing raw materials. Local manufacturing jobs are at stake.

Why is the Liberal government allowing big business to take out its local competition using government rules?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are, of course, committed to not only full value procurements in Canada, but also to respecting the trade deals that we have honoured. I would be happy to inform myself of the circumstances that the hon. member replies to and get back to him.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, the busiest duty at my office is helping people with immigration issues, but there is a problem: civil servants tell me that cases people filed online are being processed as usual, but cases people filed as paper applications, which are most immigration files, are hardly moving at all. We are told it is because civil servants working at home do not have access to those paper files. This is unfair to people eager to start a new life in Canada.

Will the immigration minister fix this problem immediately?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been a challenging time for loved ones, but we have reunited tens of thousands of families, notwithstanding the pandemic. This progress is the function of a carefully executed plan that has added resources to the border, introduced effective health protocols and created new pathways for unification. When it comes to our service standards, we are not only keeping our 14-day turnaround on completed applications, we are exceeding it.

It would be inappropriate to comment on any individual case. I would be happy to work with the hon. member, but I can assure members of the House that we are doing everything that we can to reunite as many families as possible, while protecting the health and safety of Canadians.

● (1150)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, last month, I asked the Minister of Immigration about the unacceptable delays in processing applications for workers who are already in the country, spousal sponsorship cases, and other foreign workers who are still waiting their turn. Canadian businesses are losing contracts because of these delays.

The minister talked about increasing capacity in order to process 6,000 applications a month. At that rate, it will take 10 years.

Can he explain his math and guarantee that businesses will have access to foreign workers in 2021?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, we acted quickly to bring in a family reunification process that helped several families in June, but many families are still navigating our immigration system.

I am pleased to have announced new measures to process applications more quickly. These efforts will contribute to reducing wait times and processing 6,000 spousal applications a month, leading to roughly 49,000 decisions by the end of the year.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, let me provide a clear example of how little Quebec means to the Liberal Party of Canada.

Ottawa withdrew a contract to build an icebreaker from Seaspan in Vancouver because it was unable to build it. It simply did not have the necessary production capacity. I have nothing against British Columbia, but it was not prepared.

The Davie shipyard in Quebec offered to take over the contract and build the icebreaker immediately. The Liberals are not only transferring the contract to Davie, but they are spending an extra \$1 billion to improve the production capacity of the other shipyard. That is just great. They are prepared to pay \$1 billion more to keep the contract out of Quebec.

How do the Liberals—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Davie shipyard is an essential partner of the Government of Canada.

There is a contract to refit a frigate and a second interim icebreaker has been upgraded thanks to the workers at Davie shipyard. Beyond that, we are also considering its inclusion as the third shipyard in the national shipbuilding strategy, something the Conservatives ignored and did not do when they were in power.

We will continue to work with the Davie shipyard.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is obviously not enough.

The federal government needs to get an icebreaker built. It can choose between, on the one hand, a Vancouver shipyard that had the contract taken away because it could not fulfill it and, on the other, Davie shipyard in Lévis, Quebec, which is ready to get to work right away.

The Liberals have decided to give another \$1 billion to the Vancouver shipyard so it can finish the contract late and over budget, and do the job that Davie can do right now.

It is a bad political decision, a waste of public money and an insult to Quebec.

Why are the Quebec Liberals not speaking out on this?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Quebec Liberals work on behalf of Quebec workers. That is why we are working on including Davie shipyard in the national shipbuilding strategy, which opens the door to new contracts on top of those Davie already has, like the \$22.1 billion in contracts it has already been awarded.

We will continue to work with this shipyard and we will not listen to the Bloc's twisted facts and fabrications. We have not awarded more contracts to Vancouver and we will work with Davie.

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, on March 23, the Prime Minister announced, with much fanfare, that Canada would be producing its own vaccine at VIDO-InterVac in Saskatoon.

VIDO-InterVac has since presented to the Clerk of the Privy Council a plan to manufacture not only their vaccine but all vaccines licensed by Health Canada. VIDO has heard nothing but crickets while large multinational companies get billions.

Has the Prime Minister abandoned the idea of manufacturing vaccines in Canada?

Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government has been led by scientists and the best expert advice that we can get from the vaccine task force at every single step during this COVID crisis. VIDO-InterVac has been a key part of that. There have been many other Canadian companies and Canadian research enterprises that have been doing that exact work: \$170 million in the National Research Council and \$46 million for VIDO-InterVac.

The investments are going to continue, and we are always going to make decisions on the basis of expert scientific advice. It is not going to be partisan, and it is unfortunate that the member opposite is politicizing this.

● (1155)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, amid the COVID crisis Canada is facing another health crisis: opioid overdoses. There are over 100 illicit drug toxicity deaths in British Columbia every month. That number has been going up due to the COVID pandemic. These are ordinary Canadians, hard-working people, moms, dads, brothers, sisters, and every one with a heartbreaking story to tell.

There is no vaccine for addiction, but why is the government failing to take effective action to curb this crisis?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for the very important question. The opioid crisis is the most significant public health issue in Canada's recent history. Our hearts are with those who have lost a loved one.

We have responded. We have taken action by investing over \$425 million in emergency responses, restoring harm reduction, approving over 40 supervised consumption sites, and cutting red tape and removing barriers to treatment. We will continue to tackle this epidemic by expanding access to a safe supply of prescription opioids and committing over \$700 million towards treatment in the next decade.

* * *

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, a resident of my riding who meets all the criteria and met the deadlines was denied her additional \$200 guaranteed income supplement payment.

The government's deadline was September 11. Service Canada acknowledged that it received all of this resident's paperwork on August 12.

I would ask the Prime Minister to send the guaranteed income supplement to all seniors who have been victims of the system. Our seniors deserve better treatment.

[English]

Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for raising this very important question. Guaranteed income supplement payments, we know, are critical for seniors. We know that it is important that everybody who should have gotten the payment was able to get it. That is why we were managing this very carefully and making sure that those who could get it and may not have gotten it were assessed, evaluated and got it.

However, there were some of those who missed the deadline for being able to get it and it is unfortunate. Maybe the member could please bring this specific case to our office and we will make sure—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

* * *

[Translation]

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very excited about the throne speech promise of a Canada-wide child care system.

Parents have been calling for affordable, accessible child care—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

I would ask the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier to please mute his microphone.

Would the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel please repeat her question?

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio: Madam Speaker, I was saying how excited I was about the throne speech promise of a Canada-wide child care system.

Oral Questions

Parents have been calling for affordable, accessible child care for decades. My constituents were also impressed by the investments announced in the 2020 fall economic statement.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development tell us about the next steps in setting up this very important program?

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am sure the member is as proud as I am to be part of a government that has advanced \$420 million for staffing and training for early learning and child care in the next year. It builds on close to a billion dollars, a historic amount of money invested in the child care and learning system this year, which builds on a \$7.5-billion investment and accords with provinces and territories as we move toward a national system.

I was here in 2005 and watched the NDP keep families locked in a house as they gambled for seats in this House. I hope this time around the NDP does not play those childish games, but it will have to wait for its leader to get off TikTok and stop playing video games before we actually find out.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety continues to brag about taking away firearms from law-abiding firearms owners. He has stated that the firearms he banned have no place in a civil society. With all due respect, gangs, criminals and violence have no place in a civil society.

Can the minister inform Canadians how many criminals will be impacted by his firearms ban?

● (1200)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am always happy to answer questions from the gun lobby and to respond to NRA talking points. There are weapons that were designed for the sole purpose of killing people. We have now prohibited those weapons in Canada. It is only one of many measures that we will be implementing to strengthen gun control, to invest in law enforcement and to invest in our kids and communities to keep them safe. There is no greater responsibility for any government than the protection and safety of its citizens and we will do everything necessary to keep them safe.

*Oral Questions***AIR TRANSPORTATION**

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Madam Speaker, while the airline industry lobbies the government for a taxpayer-funded bailout, this very same industry is forcefully demanding that travel agents, 82% of whom are women, return over \$200 million in commissions that they made from the sale of airfares and vacation packages. While the airline industry has turned its back on these women, the Liberal government should not.

Will the Minister for Women and Gender Equality do her job and stand up for the women of this country?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have also heard from the industry and share the member's concern.

We know the airline sector needs support, but I want to assure the member that before we do, we will not spend one penny of taxpayer dollars on airlines until Canadians get their refunds, until regional communities retain their air connections to the rest of Canada and Canadian air carriers maintain their status as key customers of Canada's aerospace industry.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, my gift to the government is a very easy question that it knows is coming because I asked it just a couple of weeks ago. It is a yes or no question, but when I asked it a couple of weeks ago, I got an incomprehensible list of numbers and words unrelated to the question.

Can the government commit that the tens of millions of barrels of oil coming from Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Nigeria will be subject to the same rigorous regulations as oil coming from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland in terms of upstream and downstream emissions?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, certainly we are committed to making sure that we have the cleanest oil in the world being produced in Canada and being supported from Canada. That is why we have supported the TMX pipeline. We have supported the workers who are creating that pipeline, as well as Line 3, Line 5 and LNG. We are supporting western Canada, western jobs, and are continuing to make sure we have the highest standards so that when we export, we make sure we have the highest standards in the world.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Madam Speaker, investing in nature is an essential tool the government can use to combat climate change. Canada's grasslands, wetlands and peatlands are incredibly important for their ability to absorb greenhouse gases.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change explain how the \$631-million investment in the fall economic statement will help conserve our nature?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member of Parliament for Kitchener—Conestoga for his deep commitment to taking action on climate change.

Our government recognizes the important role of nature in addressing climate change and our significant new investment of \$631 million will help our government put in place natural solutions that reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the loss of ecosystems. This is good news for our environment, good news for biodiversity and, of course, good news for future generations of Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, Vancouver has seen 329 overdose deaths so far this year, making 2020 the worst year on record. To address this escalating crisis, city council voted unanimously to decriminalize personal possession of substances. Premier Horgan, the Vancouver police, Dr. Bonnie Henry and many other experts agree that this will save lives and improve public health.

The federal Liberals rightly listen to public health experts about COVID-19. Will they do the same here and swiftly grant the requested exemption to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act?

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the ongoing opioid crisis. All levels of government must reaffirm our efforts to save the lives of Canadians. We are working with B.C. and Mayor Stewart on options that respond to their local and regional needs, guided by the recommendations of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

We will review this request. We will continue our work to get Canadians who use substances the support they need.

• (1205)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, during this pandemic, some private long-term care home operators used government assistance money to pay millions to shareholders and CEOs, and some corporations used wage subsidy programs to pay employees, while their wealthy owners raked in billions. However, this holiday season, the CRA is going after low-income, self-employed Canadians for taking the CERB based on unclear rules.

Will the government stop taking the Conservative approach of punishing the poor, while giving the wealthy who game the system a free pass?

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our focus since day one has been on supporting Canadians through this crisis. When Canadians needed support the most, the Canada emergency response benefit was there to help nearly nine million Canadians pay their bills and be there for their families.

In some cases, Canadians applied to the CERB in good faith but were not eligible. In those situations, we recognize the financial situation that many people face. That is why the CRA has reached out and will make every effort to work together with Canadians to find a responsible way forward that is responsive to individual needs and circumstances.

* * *

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, 2020 has been a challenging year. Lives and livelihoods have been lost. We have begun to see the devastating impacts that COVID has had, through isolation, on the mental health of Canadians. The rates of suicide are growing at alarming rates. As elected officials and as leaders, and especially during this period of difficulty as a nation, Canadians are counting on us.

I know, like me, many of our colleagues have experienced the pain, loss, guilt and anger of suicide. My office has received countless messages, calls and emails from friends and families of those who have taken their lives. I have heard from those who are suffering silently. They have reached out to say, “thank you” for fighting for them, for giving them hope. Their stories are heartbreaking, but we must do better than just give them hope. We can leave a legacy of action by breaking the stigma associated with mental illness and mental injury and eliminating unnecessary barriers for Canadians who choose to seek help.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. I hope that as leaders and parliamentarians, our final act in our most challenging year is one of action, because, when minutes count, help should only be three digits away.

There have been consultations, in fact I have consulted every single member of the chamber, and if you seek it, Madam Speaker, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

Oral Questions

That, given that the alarming rate of suicide in Canada constitutes a national health crisis, the House call on the government to take immediate action, in collaboration with our provinces, to establish a national suicide prevention hotline that consolidates all suicide crisis numbers into one easy to remember three-digit (988) hotline that is accessible to all Canadians.

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

[Translation]

I therefore ask all those who are opposed to the hon. member moving this motion to please say nay.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, this is a beautiful moment.

You will find that there is unanimous consent for the following motion, since it was given to all members of Parliament just a few moments ago.

The motions is as follows: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, paragraphs (a) to (o) of the order made on Wednesday, September 23, 2020, regarding the safe and effective hybrid sittings of the House and its committees during the COVID-19 pandemic remain in effect until Wednesday, June 23, 2021, provided that (a) in subparagraph (n)(iii) the words “Friday, December 11, 2020” be deemed to read “Wednesday, June 23, 2021”; and (b) from Saturday, December 19, 2020, to Sunday, January 17, 2021, the meetings of standing, special and legislative committees be convened only if done so in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 106(4) and if the members making the request are from at least two recognized parties.

• (1210)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This being a hybrid sitting of the House, for the sake of clarity, I will only ask those who are opposed to the motion to express their disagreement.

[English]

Accordingly, all those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

[Translation]

There is no consent.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I also rise on a point of order. During the question period today, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, in responding to the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, basically utilized the term “gun lobby” to talk about an hon. member.

We are all hon. members in this place and we are supposed to use the official titles. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate and the hon. member can raise it the next time we are debating in the House.

Before I resume, I want to wish a very merry Christmas and happy new year to not only all my constituents of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, but to everybody in the House.

I also want to thank every department and every worker here who ensures we are in a safe environment and that everything functions well so we can do our work, and all our staff who make such a big difference in our lives.

I wish all of you and your families a very merry Christmas and happy new year.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government’s response to 13 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in relation to Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy).

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah, happy holidays and a hope-filled new year.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs entitled, “Clearing the Jam: Addressing the Backlog of Disability Claims at Veterans Affairs Canada”.

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

To you, Madam Speaker, and to all members of the House, all residents of my riding of Cambridge and all Canadians, merry Christmas and a very happy new year.

● (1215)

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs entitled, “Interim Report: Protecting Public Health and Democracy During a Possible Pandemic Election”.

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

I wish everyone a merry Christmas, happy holidays and happy new year.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to rise today to present a dissenting report to the PROC committee report on conducting an election during the pandemic.

Elections belong to all of us, so the Conservative members approached this study in the spirit of collaboration and in good faith, which we all should do. The committee finished this report on Tuesday morning. Then the Liberals gave notice of their elections bill that night, showing that they did not care to see even what witnesses had to say during our month-long study. It has become clear that this study was about avoiding, at all costs, a study of the real reasons why the Liberals prorogued Parliament during the WE scandal.

The Conservatives want to thank all the witnesses for sharing their views. We also want to apologize sincerely to all the public health officials who took time away from their responsibilities during the pandemic to appear before the committee and have their time wasted because of the government’s arrogance.

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-262, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (capture and utilization or storage of greenhouse gases).

He said: Madam Speaker, every environmental report that addresses the concept of how we mitigate greenhouse gas emissions speaks strongly to the necessity of carbon capture, utilization and storage. The reason is simple. All human activity results in greenhouse gas production. Capturing that output and using it effectively is the only real path forward.

Routine Proceedings

The bill I present today brings forth the means to incentivize carbon capture, utilization and storage by working with Canada's strengths, which are its world-leading environmental industries.

[*Translation*]

This will set a new path for Canadian businesses in the fight against global warming. Like all Canadians who will benefit from advancing technologies, I ask everyone here to join us in building a better strategy to achieve our environmental targets.

[*English*]

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

* * *

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC) moved:

That the report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, entitled "Maloney Report", tabled on Thursday, November 19, 2020, be concurred in.

He said: Madam Speaker, the Ethics Commissioner sought to determine if the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore had contravened subsection 20(1) of the Code. All members have now received a copy of the "Maloney Report" and I want to share some of those details with the House.

The report says, "Under subsection 20(1), Members must fully disclose their private interests and those of their family members to the Commissioner as the first step in their initial compliance process after they are elected." We all know this as members. The Code requires us to do this within 60 days of notice of our election having been published in the Canada Gazette.

All members received a letter from the commissioner, just as the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore did. This member, of course, was reminded of his obligations, including his obligation to file a disclosure statement and provide all required supporting documents by January 7, 2020. No disclosure was received by that deadline.

After multiple reminders to the member to properly complete his disclosure, which went ignored into late February, the commissioner had to go to the government whip to try to have the member's obligations fulfilled. I will note that on March 18, when the commissioner again tried to have the member fulfill his obligations, the commissioner's office was met for a second time with a very harsh response for having the audacity to contact the member and ask him to complete his obligations under the Code, which are important ethical obligations of all members.

For the rest of March, all of April and May and into June, there was no reply to many inquiries by the commissioner. At the end of June, the commissioner informed the member to make himself available for an interview, but he ignored the request. However, when media started asking questions, the member reached out to the commissioner on August 5. At long last, the disclosure that was originally due on January 7 was finally completed on September 14. After months of ignoring repeated communications from the commissioner, the member finally complied.

What was his excuse? He said he was busy dealing with the pandemic, as if all members had not been dealing with the exact same thing, yet they found time to comply with their obligations. I will note that, of course, this disclosure was due before we knew that the pandemic had started. If the member knew in November, December and January that we were due for the pandemic and that was why he was unable to fulfill his obligations, he could have at least informed his colleagues in the governing party. Of course, it is an excuse. It is not the reason the member was unable to fulfill their obligations.

It is no surprise that, with all of these details and facts, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore was found guilty of breaching subsection 20(1)(i) of the Code. The "Maloney Report" clearly demonstrates the lack of respect the Liberals have for the Ethics Commissioner and the ethical rules and laws of this place. If a fish rots from the head down, this is the tail.

The problem has gone unaddressed with these Liberals for five years. The Prime Minister himself, now under investigation for a third time, has been already found guilty of breaking ethics laws twice. We know those details from the "Trudeau Report", with the Prime Minister's trip to billionaire island, and the "Trudeau II Report", which details the Prime Minister's interference in the criminal prosecution of his friends at SNC-Lavalin.

The Liberals need to have respect for Canadians. Frankly, they need to get their act together. This year, the subject of what will be the third report is incredibly concerning for many Canadians. With the culture that we see around the cabinet table with multiple breaches by the former finance minister Mr. Morneau, by other ministers and friends of the Prime Minister, and findings of guilt by the Ethics Commissioner, it is no wonder that members who sit behind the government front bench feel they do not need to follow the rules. The top-down example is a complete disregard for the ethical rules of this place. It sows a distrust of our democratic institutions into the national conversation and the public discourse, and Canadians are rightly concerned.

● (1220)

This summer, we saw with the WE scandal that half a million dollars had been paid to members of the Prime Minister's family after we had first been told by the Prime Minister's Office that, of course, no money had been paid. That turned out to be untrue. We know that half a million was paid. Later we learned, with pictures of the Prime Minister's family in the documents presented to cabinet, a half-billion-dollar contribution agreement had been approved for these same folks who had given the Prime Minister's family huge sums of money.

Routine Proceedings

When that investigation started to damage the government, the Prime Minister broke another promise. While he had promised a transparent and open government, and we certainly have not seen that, he also promised not to prorogue Parliament to avoid scrutiny. Of course, that is exactly what he did on the eve before documents were to be released to the ethics committee. Immediately following the prorogation of Parliament, he illegally dumped redacted documents on the finance committee.

The fact that the government did this is a demonstration of its understanding that what it was doing was wrong. The committee had ordered the documents unredacted and to be reviewed by the parliamentary law clerk. This is the contempt shown by this government for the rules of this place, for a lawful order of committee. They are just like the rules that we are all bound to follow under the code for members, as is detailed in the "Maloney Report", where we see the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore disregard those rules for nearly a year, and we have now seen it under the act where the Prime Minister has been found guilty of breaking those laws.

Once Parliament resumed, of course, we had filibuster after filibuster from the Liberals. This, of course, was after the Prime Minister promised to allow for all questions to be asked once Parliament resumed, but that is not what happened. For dozens of hours at the ethics committee and dozens of hours at the finance committee, Liberals obstructed the work of parliamentarians to get to the truth, during a pandemic no less. While we should be focusing on what Canadians need, and how to protect Canadians' lives and livelihoods, we are left having to also follow up on the inability of Liberal members to follow the rules of this place.

The Liberals have said before that we should ignore these transgressions and that we should wait until the pandemic is over, but, frankly, that would be irresponsible. The Liberal members suggest that the official opposition is not able to walk and chew gum at the same time, we are able to hold the government to account on multiple fronts, but it is unfortunate that we find that this rot of corruption and inability to follow the rules has spread from the front benches of the Liberal ranks into the backbenches. It is important to note that we find ourselves in a unique position with the Prime Minister found guilty not once or twice, but under investigation a third time for breaking ethical rules.

We will hear from Liberals today that it was, of course, the previous prime minister who brought these rules into force. Well, it is also interesting to note that the previous prime minister was never found to have contravened the act, and that is because there was no contravention. These rules were put in place to ensure that Canadians can have confidence in their democratic institutions. That is essential to the function of this democracy. It is shameful that the temporary office holders, and we are all placeholders in our constituencies, just like the occupants in the Prime Minister's Office are temporary, doing this disservice to the legacy, to the institution of this place, with their disregard for the rules.

Frankly, if the Liberals have such contempt for the rules, why do they not put forward a bill in House to repeal them? Then we would see if they have the courage of their convictions, and it could be laid bare for all Canadians to see the true contempt for the rules of this place that these Liberals have. I hope that in 2021 the Liberals

have a New Year's resolution to finally show respect for Canadians and follow the rules of this place.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is almost like a continuation. It was not long ago that my friend and I were participating in a late show and he wanted to talk about the issue of corruption. The Conservatives, virtually since day one, have been consistently trying to focus the House of Commons on the issue of corruption. It does not matter what issues Canadians are facing: For them it is all about looking under every little rock, wherever they can, and if they cannot find anything they create something. Just because a Conservative says something is corrupt does not mean it is not corrupt. I could give some examples of corruption, and I might just do that when I get the opportunity to address this issue.

Why is it that when Canadians are concerned about the pandemic and we are coming together in all different ways, the Conservative Party is still out of tune with what Canadians want us to do as a House of Commons: to focus on the pandemic and the negative impact it is having on society? Why can they not focus on what Canadians are asking of us?

• (1230)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, we have been focused on the Liberals' corruption since the start of their mandate in 2015 because they immediately started breaking the rules. During the pandemic, they could not help but to help their friends. That is why they allowed insider access. When Canadians were looking the other way to take care of their families and their businesses and look after their neighbours and themselves, the Liberals could not help but look after themselves and folks who have insider access.

Therefore, the official opposition is doing its job to hold the government to account, and we are going to continue to do that.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the question that was just asked by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Why is it so often that every time Canadians are focused on the things that really matter to Canadians, especially now during the pandemic, the Liberals still cannot find it in themselves to act ethically? Why is it that every time Canadians decide what is important, the Liberals act unethically? I would like to hear comments on this from the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, it really is baffling. As the official opposition's shadow minister for ethics, I thought that once we were in a global pandemic, I would be put out of work as a shadow minister and the Liberals would finally decide to keep their sticks on the ice and focus on helping Canadians. However, that is not what happened. Instead, they still repeatedly found ways to try to skirt the rules and put their toes over the line.

It is tremendously disappointing for Canadians, and really does damage to our democratic institutions, when we have repeated and flagrant violations of the ethical rules of this place. However, we are going to keep letting Canadians know when they occur and keep giving the Liberals the opportunity to do the right thing.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear more about the member's position.

What does he think of the current situation with regard to transparency, ethics and conflicts of interest? What measures could be introduced to strengthen these fundamental aspects of our democracy?

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, we are in a position now where we need to put in place penalties and real meaningful consequences for members who are unable or unwilling to follow the rules of this place. Canadians expect us to come here and, at a minimum, follow the rules and set an example. If members are unable and unwilling to do that, there needs to be meaningful consequences in place so there is a strong deterrent and members work hard to follow the rules.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 10 minutes is barely enough time to spend on this issue and trying to hold the opposition accountable for what I believe is, in many ways, very irresponsible behaviour. The Conservatives are not doing Canadians well by focusing their attention on issues such as this, especially during a pandemic.

I understand why they do it, though. It is because nothing has really changed. When Stephen Harper was the prime minister, and the leader of the Liberal Party was first elected as the leader of the Liberal Party, take a look at some of the S.O. 31s. Take a look at the hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of advertising the Conservatives targeted at the leader of the Liberal Party back then.

Fast-forward to when Canadians threw out the Harper regime and brought in a majority Liberal government. Virtually since day one, nothing has changed. The Conservatives have been so preoccupied with the character assassination of the Prime Minister, and if it is not the Prime Minister, they will look for the Minister of Finance. They will look for other ministers too. They are more concerned about the personalities than the policy.

That is the fine. They are the official opposition, and they can set their agenda and have their agenda all they want. However, I have been talking about this for a number of years already, and this government will continue, as it did from day one, to focus our attention on Canada's middle class and those aspiring to become a part of it. That has been the number one focus of this government since day one, and it will continue to be a priority for this government—

• (1235)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes is rising on a point of order.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I ask for a ruling on the relevance of the parliamentary secretary's comments. The debate we are having deals specifically with the Maloney report concerning the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. As the parliamentary secretary is raising questions about parliamentarians who have not been elected to this chamber for many years, I am looking for a ruling, or direction to the member, regarding relevance with respect to the violation of the ethics code by the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, which is the subject of the Maloney report.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is rising on the same point of order.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member might not necessarily like what I am saying, but it is not irrelevant to the debate. All one needs to do is read the member's comments to see what he was talking about. He talked about ethical standards and continued his character assassination during his speech. In no fashion whatsoever could he even remotely say that I am not being relevant, because everything I have said today so far has been completely consistent with the types of things he said in his comments.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The arguments raised are matters of debate.

I invite the hon. parliamentary secretary to continue his speech. He has seven minutes and 26 seconds remaining.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is so important, for the people following this debate, for us to talk about what has been a priority of the government. I made reference to the middle class and those aspiring to join the middle class, but things changed earlier this year.

In the beginning of 2020, we began to recognize that there was going to be worldwide pandemic, called COVID-19. All Canadians and people from around the world recognized that governments needed to work together and work collaboratively to focus our attention on that issue.

The member talks about the WE issue. The Conservatives, in good part supported by other opposition parties at times, have tried to label it as an issue of corruption. I do not believe there was anything corrupt. I do believe some mistakes were made, but that does not make it corrupt.

Routine Proceedings

The member referenced the prorogation of the session. For the first time in 30 years, the House sat during the summer. We sat in a committee format, but it was a committee in theory. In reality, members were sitting inside this chamber, and hundreds if not thousands of questions were being asked of the government.

One would think the focus of the discussions, debates and questions at the time would have been the coronavirus. I was here. I listened to the many questions being asked, the hundreds or thousands of questions. I cannot recall members of the official opposition asking about the vaccine issue. I cannot recall them asking who the government was consulting, whether there were agreements or anything of that nature. Instead, opposition members wanted to push on other issues. That is fine. As they are in the opposition, they get to ask the questions they would like to ask. However, they have tried to give a false impression, one that tries to tell Canadians that the Liberal government is not transparent and accountable, and I take exception to that.

I could give examples related to the Prime Minister that go all the way back to when he was first elected leader of the Liberal Party when it was the third party. He attempted, through unanimous consent, to bring in proactive disclosure for all members of the House. We know how that went. The Conservatives said no to it. The hon. member's former leader, former prime minister Stephen Harper, actually said no to proactive disclosure. He had to be brought into it.

The Conservatives have been consistent with regard to wanting to avoid talking about the issues that Canadians have to face. I find it amazing. Here we are on the last day of the year, and what do members think is on the minds of our constituents in Canada? I believe it is still the pandemic. I believe, in this holiday season when people are going to be celebrating Christmas and the birth of Christ, they are thinking about family and friends and not being able to be together.

I think Canadians are also concerned about the economy. I think they are concerned about the many different issues we have had to face in 2020. Those are the issues that Canadians are concerned about, and one would think this is the type of discussion we should be having, especially given that it is the last sitting day of the year.

A week or so ago, opposition members were hung up on the issue of the vaccines. That is good. It is good they were talking about vaccines. It is so encouraging.

● (1240)

It is interesting that not one country in the world, from what I understand, had a vaccine for its people in the month of November. It is only now, in December, we are starting to see people being vaccinated around the world. Canada will be one of those countries. Canada has a wide number of companies, so we have the best opportunity to ensure our people in our country will be vaccinated in a timely fashion.

We have done some incredible work in that area. Issues of that nature do not mean we have to stand up and applaud the government, but we can still provide constructive criticism and critique the government on issues of that nature. Instead, the Conservatives stand alone. It will be interesting to see the take of my New Demo-

cratic or Bloc friends on this. Is this the most appropriate debate we should be having today? I would say no. I believe we should be listening to what our constituents are saying.

I only wish I had more time, I believe I have about 30 seconds left, to expand on all the good things that Canadians have done over the last number of months in that team Canada approach to dealing with the negative impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. We have seen so many heroes in so many ways and different levels of government co-operating and making a difference. Have mistakes occurred? Yes, there have been mistakes made. However, let there be no doubt that we have independent officers of the House of Commons who are there to ensure there are standards that are respected. That is something all of us have agreed to with respect to the independence of the commissioner.

● (1245)

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of quick questions for the parliamentary secretary. Because of these ethical questions, does he believe damage has been done to the confidence of Canadians in the government with respect to this important job it is doing during a pandemic? Does the member not believe the House should concur in the report of the independent officer of Parliament who found this violation of the code in the “Maloney Report” by the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore?

Those are two very important questions. Does he think that when ethical rules are broken and those contraventions are verified by an independent officer of Parliament we should concur in that, and if so, will he vote to concur that in? Does he think this hurts the confidence of Canadians in the ability of the government to do its job if they see repeated ethical violations, not in 2011, but today, in 2020?

Hon. Mary Ng: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am tabling the government's responses to Order Paper Questions Nos. 206 to 208.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would concur that in 2020 we have seen a very unusual year because of the pandemic. There has been a very strong call to arms to fight the pandemic. We have seen a wide spectrum of society, different levels of government, non-profits, for-profits and all types of individuals coming together to do whatever it takes to minimize the negative impacts of the coronavirus.

To believe there are not going to be any mistakes would be somewhat naive. Mistakes have occurred, but to take a mistake, especially once there has been an apology, and try to turn it into a mountain, I believe is inappropriate, especially given the times and the gross exaggerations that have taken place in this situation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think a lot gets blamed on the pandemic.

Routine Proceedings

I myself heard from Mr. Dion during the pandemic. Even though I was very busy with my constituents, I do not think I worked any less hard than the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I took the time to answer him, and everything was dealt with.

I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary's thoughts about how the pandemic and the exceptional circumstances in which we find ourselves are no excuse for failing to fulfill our obligations as elected representatives.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think that there is an expectation that the public has, both of government and opposition parties of whatever political stripe they might be. We have an independent office of ethics, we have a commissioner, and I believe the commissioner has done a good job. When the commissioner, whether the current or the former commissioner, has come to us and said that there has been a mistake, there has also been guidance in terms of how we rectify that, and we have respected that.

My concern is that sometimes opposition parties will be overly focused on something that just might not necessarily be there. I wish I had more time to go into it in more detail. I am not trying to tell opposition members what they can and cannot do, but I do believe there has been a gross exaggeration, in terms of the whole ethics issue, coming from the Conservative Party of Canada.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He is always good at making lengthy statements, but ultimately, the issue before us is quite simple. The parliamentary secretary is right about how we need to focus on more important issues.

Should the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore not simply accept the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's decision and apologize so we can move on? I would like a simple, brief and, most importantly, honest answer.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when the report came out, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore apologized right away. That is the way the system is set up. Mistakes will happen on both sides of the House, and the honourable thing to do is exactly what the member in question did. It is unfortunate that people do not accept it, because, after all, we are all human and mistakes will be made. We take ownership of those mistakes and act accordingly.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will spare members the suspense and announce right away that the Bloc Québécois will support the Conservatives' motion.

However, we will take this opportunity to further discuss ethics and the role of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. We will talk about what the commissioner should have the right to do, the possibility of future amendments and the suggestions that we will make to strengthen the commissioner's power, which is something he himself is asking for.

Before that, I will briefly remind members of the facts. The reason for this debate is the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's November 19 report with regard to the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. In his report, the commissioner found that the member contravened subsection 20(1) of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons by failing to fully disclose his private interests and those of his family members within a reasonable time even after the initial deadline was extended from January 7 to February 7, 2020.

As the first step in the initial compliance process, members must fully disclose those interests to the Commissioner within 60 days after notice of their election is published in the *Canada Gazette*. That is what we all had to do at the beginning of the year. We had to declare our real and potential interests by January 7.

The member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore submitted his statement, but it was incomplete. He therefore asked for an extension, as did other members, and he was given until February 7 to submit the required information. However, even with this extension and after some information was sent, his file was still incomplete. His initial statement remained incomplete and did not meet the requirements of the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Ultimately, it was not until September 1, 2020, that the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore provided the last of the missing information, which he had not done until then, despite numerous requests from Commissioner Dion. Mr. Dion did contact the member several times to move the file forward, but without success.

It took the media getting involved and newspapers asking him why his report was incomplete to spur the member to action. As my colleague mentioned, the member used the pandemic as an excuse. However, as many will recall, the House was still sitting on January 7 and February 7, as the pandemic was escalating in other countries. We were not yet facing a health crisis here in Canada.

The hon. member knew his obligations to the Ethics Commissioner because this was not his first election. What is more, the member was a lawyer before entering politics. As lawyers we are required to be diligent and respond quickly when we are asked to do something. That is the minimum that can be done, not to mention simple common courtesy.

The hon. member waited until September 1, 2020. That is no longer a matter of carelessness. It is outright negligence. That is why the commissioner finally recommended a sanction. It is provided for under the code, but this is the first time this has been done in such a context, which illustrates how annoyed the commissioner was by the hon. member's lack of respect and diligence.

Routine Proceedings

In his report, the commissioner reminded members of the importance of obeying the rules, saying that the report should serve as a reminder to all members of the House of the importance of fulfilling their compliance obligations under the code. The compliance rules in the code ensure transparency and accountability to the Canadian public.

No pandemic can be used as a justification for not fulfilling one's obligations to transparency. On the contrary, it should be more important than ever to ensure that hon. members meet these obligations during a pandemic.

● (1255)

That said, this is not the first time that the Ethics Commissioner has made comments about his role. In September 2018, the commissioner mentioned that the intergovernmental affairs minister at the time had violated the ethics rules by granting a fishing permit to a fishing company that stood to make millions of dollars from it. A member of his family was employed by that same company.

It was already an issue at that time and the commissioner wanted more powers, in particular the power to intervene in cases where there was a breach of trust and a breach of ethics.

The comments of the then ethics commissioner are even more relevant today. We need only think of certain ethical breaches that have occurred in recent years. I am thinking in particular of what happened in the Aga Khan file. The Prime Minister and his family had the privilege of a paid vacation, which earned him a reprimand from the Ethics Commissioner.

He received a second reprimand from the Ethics Commissioner for allegations of interference in the SNC-Lavalin case.

More recently, WE Charity paid for a vacation taken by the former finance minister. The whole WE Charity case caused the government to prorogue Parliament this summer in order to deflect attention from the case. Furthermore, some members of Parliament hired family members in their riding offices, which is a breach of ethics.

The Bloc Québécois is therefore suggesting that members further discuss the role of the Ethics Commissioner, as the commissioner himself has requested.

We are suggesting that members look into four ideas based on what the Ethics Commissioner himself wants to be able to enforce.

For example, when the wrongdoing is quantifiable and has a monetary value, it should be reimbursed. This is what we saw with the finance minister. He reimbursed the \$41,000 for the trip that had been paid for him, but he was not obligated to do so. If the rule had been enforced on the trip to the Aga Khan's island, the amount of the reimbursement would have exceeded \$100,000. That could become an incentive to follow the ethics rules more closely.

Another suggestion could be imposing a more substantial fine on those who violate the code of ethics, since it is currently only around \$500. The Ethics Commissioner suggested that it should be more like \$10,000, which would serve as more of a deterrent than what we currently have.

In some cases, parliamentary privileges could be suspended outright, thereby ensuring that the higher a person is in the parliamentary hierarchy, the more transparent and accountable they must be. Sanctions could be tougher for those who must exhibit perfect transparency and perfect adherence to the integrity and ethics rules.

Finally, work could be done on the issue of parliamentarians' immediate family members. Perhaps a code of ethics is needed for them, as well. A code of ethics should also be imposed on them, as though they were an extension of the MP's duties. Perhaps that would have been a deterrent in some of the more recent cases that history has brought to light.

In closing, we suggest that the Ethics Commissioner be given increased powers, including the ability to intervene more, as the commissioner himself has suggested. This would avoid the need for us to strike a committee every time there is a breach. It would ensure that the Ethics Commissioner would be given more power so that parliamentarians would no longer feel that they can walk away every time with a simple apology.

● (1300)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member cannot have it both ways. She cannot say that she likes what the Ethics Commissioner is saying and quote something to her advantage, and then, on the other hand, when the Ethics Commissioner says something that she does not like, misrepresent it.

For example, the member made reference to Bill Morneau. What did the Ethics Commissioner say about Bill Morneau and the expenses? He believed what the minister at the time explained and said that there was no conflict, yet the member just put on the record that the former minister, Mr. Morneau, did, in fact, violate. She cannot have it both ways.

The idea of an Ethics Commissioner is to take the politics out of it, and we see that as a good thing. I wonder if the member would recognize what she has just done. Is that not a conflict in itself?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, the fact remains that the minister ended up stepping down, which seems to confirm in and of itself that there was a breach of ethics, but that was what the minister chose to do at the time.

In any case, I do not think that I am in a position of conflict of interest myself when I say that we should give more power to the Ethics Commissioner, regardless of the situation. That would enable us to take the politics out of ethics in the future, which would not be a bad idea in some contexts. It would also make it possible to give the Ethics Commissioner more independence and especially more power so that his recommendations are not simply recommendations and so that the sanctions are more effective.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saint-Jean for her speech.

Routine Proceedings

I think we are on the same page. She gave clear direction, despite the somewhat confusing comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

I want to come back to the sanctions. Take, for example, former finance minister Bill Morneau. When he was found guilty of violating the Canada Elections Act, he was fined \$300. When he violated the Conflict of Interest Act, he was fined \$200.

That is about how much a multi-millionaire Bay Street banker spends on coffee every morning. It is not very dissuasive.

I would like the member from Saint-Jean to talk to us about these completely ridiculous fines.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question.

He is right. It is not a deterrent at all. Considering what all parliamentarians get paid, a \$500 fine is ridiculous, which is why the commissioner himself recommended increasing the amount of the fine to something more substantial, like \$10,000.

In addition, as I said, the commissioner should have options other than monetary penalties, specifically penalties that really hit home and affect our parliamentary privileges, such as the ministerial roles that some members have.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question for the member is whether she believes that repeated contraventions of the Conflict of Interest Act and the code for members affect the confidence that Canadians have in members of Parliament and the Government of Canada to effectively deliver on our responsibilities, particularly in the context of the emergency situation we are in with the pandemic. Record amounts of money are being spent and there is a need for vaccines and rapid testing.

Are Canadians not convinced that the Liberal government can handle the task in front of it when we know that it cannot act ethically?

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I know for sure that people are sick and tired of all these endless ethics scandals.

The fact that they keep happening is proof that sanctions may not be appropriate because they do not serve as deterrents.

Maybe the reason we are seeing repeated violations of the code of ethics is that the sanctions are not commensurate with the ethical violations. That is why it would make sense to give the commissioner the latitude and power he is asking for.

[*English*]

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is fortuitous, I suppose, that I am in the House today. I am here for another reason. I did not know we were going to be having this discussion today, but I am glad that I am here because somebody has questioned my honour. I am going to stand here and defend it.

I will issue a challenge right now to any member in the House, to any member who is listening online or to anybody who hears about this later: I will stand with them anywhere, any time, and defend my ethics and my honour.

Sometimes politics gets reduced to people playing dirty. They get cheap. When the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes presented this today that is how I would categorize it: nothing more; nothing less.

Let me start by saying that I have total respect for the Ethics Commissioner, the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and the process they use when going through reports and preparing reports. When the report was tabled in the House of Commons a few weeks ago, at 10 o'clock, I stood up virtually and did what the Ethics Commissioner recommended. I apologized and I apologized unconditionally because I respect him and his office. To now ask for a concurrence of the House can only be characterized as an assassination of my character or using me as an assassination of the character of this government. I am glad I am here to defend myself.

I do not know whether the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes or other members have actually taken the time to read the report in its entirety. It appears to me that they have not, because if they had they would feel ashamed for some of the remarks they have made today. Let me tell the House those facts.

When we were elected in the fall of 2019, we were all required to file our compliance statement. My statement was due in early January. The House was not sitting, if colleagues recall. I emailed the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, apologized because I was late and said that I would be filing it in short order. I returned to Ottawa in January when the House resumed sitting. I had my information hand delivered to his office on January 23, 2020.

On January 24, 2020, I returned to my office from question period and a member of my staff said that there was more information needed. I asked her how she knew that. I walked over to her computer and I was looking at an email from the Ethics Commissioner's office that had scanned my complete report and all of my financial personal information that I had submitted the day before.

Let me ask every member in the chamber how they would feel if that happened to them. It is a rhetorical question because I know the answer.

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I immediately picked up the telephone. I called the Ethics Commissioner's office. I expressed my dissatisfaction with what had just taken place. I said that I expected to have a conversation with the Ethics Commissioner himself because I would like an explanation and I would like an apology. I subsequently received an email from a staff member in his office with an "I'm sorry", but no word from Mr. Dion. I again put in writing that I would like to hear from Mr. Dion to explain to me how this could have happened and to explain to me, more importantly, how he will take steps so that it does not happen again in the future.

Over the course of the next weeks, I had another email from the office, several of them, in fact. Some of them are laid out in the report, if people care to read it. I said, "I have given you all of my information. I don't have any more information".

What had not been provided was my tick mark in five boxes on one page of the very long disclosure statement. I told them the reason that I did not tick those boxes was that I did not truly know the answer. I was not hiding anything because they had then all of my financial personal information, which answered the questions asked in the disclosure statement that they said was outstanding.

● (1310)

I reiterated that position several times, until early March when I got a response from his office saying, "Here is the information that is outstanding." I responded, "I still expect to hear from Mr. Dion, but if you want it again, I will send it to you."

Perhaps that is where I fell down, because I did not send it. It was on March 5, and everybody will recall that on Friday, March 13, the House adjourned for five weeks, which at the time we thought was a lengthy period, because of the pandemic.

Over the course of the next several months, I did what every other member of Parliament was doing. I worked with my constituents to make sure they were safe, to make sure they were able to be brought back to Canada safely, and to make sure they got the services that were available to them. That was my total preoccupation at the time.

Mr. Dion sent me three letters over the course of three months, to which I did not respond. I apologized to him. Nonetheless, I did not hear from Mr. Dion, nor did the office ask for further information. It was asking me to tick those five boxes. Ultimately, in August of this year, I ticked the five boxes and sent them back. There was no additional information.

However, by this point an investigation had been opened. According to the process, it cannot be called back once it is started. I had to go through this process with Mr. Dion and his counsel in his office. I explained all of this to them. Through that process, I explained to him that I respect his office. What happened after that is getting into the details and repeating myself.

There was nothing new. What I did in January was what was done in August. On the Ethics Commissioner's website are columns that read "you have not submitted your disclosure statement", "you have submitted but there is some outstanding information", "there is outstanding information with the office", or "complete."

My status on that website, until about August 20 of this year, was "you have not submitted". This was factually incorrect, because I did. That is what gave rise to this whole issue.

Members can read the report. Nowhere in there does it say that I hid anything or I failed to disclose anything. I handed it in late.

Somebody may stand in the House and tell me what the job of a lawyer is. In my previous life, before I came to the House I took great pride in practising law for over 20 years. Ethics and responsibility were two of my hallmarks. I will line up people to back me up on that. Someone might use the word negligence. How dare they?

When I was practising, if somebody in my office inadvertently disclosed the confidential information of one of our clients, I would expect the most senior person in my office to pick up the phone and issue a formal apology, and explain how it happened.

I stood in the House and apologized, because that is what I was required to do. I am here doing it again, but do not let anybody dare to question my ethics or my integrity.

● (1315)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, since my hon. colleague is referring to the report, I would like to do the same.

On June 1, the commissioner sent him a letter. On June 25, having received no response, the commissioner requested an interview. On July 10, having still not received a response, the commissioner sent a second copy of the letter of June 25 requesting an interview. Again, he received no response. Finally, on August 5, the commissioner published the list of members who had yet to fulfill their obligations. The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore was the only one on the list. That is why he called the commissioner that day.

Can he confirm whether this attitude is respectful to the Ethics Commissioner?

[*English*]

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, maybe the member did not listen to my remarks.

I acknowledged receiving those three letters, and I said that I did not respond to those three letters. I explained why today, and I explained why to the commissioner. It was not indicated in August that I had not complied. It was done in January.

The member should look at the website now. I can assure the House that there are members who have not fully complied in all parties.

I am not going to repeat it. Please read the report, because members will learn the facts as I presented them. I gave the commissioner all of the information in January. I acknowledge not responding to those letters, but there was no new information. As I said, I was not intending disrespect.

If somebody deserves to be punished for handing something in late, I am guilty because that is what happened.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking our colleague and acknowledging his courage in being here in the House to face the music. That is not easy. These are difficult situations.

As far as statements to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner are concerned, I must be one of those who do not get them in on time, and I am not usually the one to get them in first. However, many reminders are sent, and we are given many opportunities to provide all the documents that are requested.

I admit that it is not fun, but is it not true that the hon. member got a bit huffy and confrontational with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner by refusing to respond to his letters and questions, which is how he ended up in the situation we are discussing today? I think he could have answered the questions and the requests of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and had more than enough time to do so.

[*English*]

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question and for his kind remarks.

Believe me, courage is not the emotion I am feeling right now. It was not confrontational at all. I did not choose overtly not to respond to the commissioner. I will say again that I believed then, as I do now, that I had provided all of the information. Yes, those letters went unresponded to, but keep in mind what was going on at the time. I am not saying that is a valid excuse, but I am telling the member what happened. It was not intentional. It was not a sign of disrespect to the commissioner. I was preoccupied doing what we were all doing at the time.

I was not trying to pick a fight with the commissioner by any means. In fact, I was trying to work with him to get this process completed, and it could have gone in a different direction. Based on the facts, I hope people here today understand what I went through and how unfortunate the discussion is that we are having here today.

Again, I thank the member for his comments.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I, too, thank the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore for answering questions and giving his statement today.

I have read the report in its entirety, and it says that the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore "... submitted a disclosure statement but it was missing some information, which he was given until February 7 to provide".

The member said that the report was late, but the commissioner has said that the information provided was incomplete. Does the member disagree with the commissioner's findings?

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, I will take the member at his word that he read the report, but maybe he was not listening to what I said earlier.

What was outstanding was not information: it was answers to questions on the form, which I had told the office I did not know

the answers to. The supporting documentation was all there. There were five boxes.

I am happy to sit down with the member at any time he wants to go through this. I would love to know what he would have done under the circumstances.

• (1320)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has risen and stated his case, the report is public and the information is before Parliament. Canadians can render their own decision.

I, too, add my voice those who thank him for showing up here and making his case in person. I know that must not have been an easy thing to do, but it takes courage. I thank him for carrying out his duty to hold government accountable and to the highest standard of ethics.

That being said, the controversy is about the disclosure of financial assets, so I would not be parting very far from the subject at hand if I were to talk about the government's non-disclosure of its financial assets. If we are going to require a Liberal MP, or any MP, to disclose assets and therefore interests, surely the assets that belong to the Canadian people should be equally disclosed.

The subject here is ethics and transparency, so I turn the House's attention to the hundreds of billions of dollars's worth of assets that are owned by the Canadian people but for which we have not experienced adequate transparency. The government spent \$80 billion without giving serious transparency to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, and further to that, the Bank of Canada has purchased 400 billion dollars' worth of assets without disclosing all of the financial implications, the costs, the buyers and the sellers for which those transactions occurred.

This represents a monstrous transfer of wealth. Since the crisis began in March, the bank has begun purchasing financial assets, mostly government bonds. This has driven up the value of those assets and therefore the wealth of the people who hold them. It has been noted in the House that the 15 wealthiest billionaires in Canada have seen their net worth rise by over 30% since the pandemic began, and that cannot just be pandemic profiteering, because many of these billionaires have assets in fields that have not done well during the pandemic.

What has caused these assets to inflate in value? The answer is that whenever the government, through its central bank, prints 400 billion dollars' worth of money and pumps it into the financial assets of the system, those who have assets become wealthier. That would be just wonderful if there were no consequences for anyone else. However, the historical experience is that when governments print money to pay their bills, which is effectively what the government is doing here, eventually it raises the cost of living for everyone else.

Routine Proceedings

The bank claims it is technically not printing money. Well, the data that is available tells exactly the opposite story. In fact, the number of banknotes in circulation, which are the \$5, \$10 and \$20 bills that one can purchase things with, is up 8%, even at a time when people are using less paper cash than ever before. This is the largest percentage increase since the mid-1980s.

M1 money supply is up 17%, even while the economy shrinks, and when the supply of money exceeds the production of goods and services, eventually, though not immediately, we experience inflation. It is a phenomenon, the Governor of the Bank of Canada admitted to me before the finance committee, that falls heaviest on the shoulders of the poorest people. Why is that? It is because they deal disproportionately in cash. Whereas the wealthy can protect themselves from inflation by shovelling their money into assets that inflate in value, the poor deal mostly in cash and therefore have their very limited net worth eaten away.

Here we have a monstrous policy of transferring wealth from wage-earners to asset-holders, from the working class to the wealthy. The Prime Minister should know this, because when he was asked his definition of rich versus middle class, he said the middle class are the people who live off wages and the rich are those who live off assets. Here we have a policy that is specifically designed to transfer wealth from those who earn wages to those who earn capital gains through their assets.

• (1325)

There is no doubt that this phenomenon will lead to a greater concentration of wealth, that the wealthiest 1% who own the most expensive and luxurious real estate and have in their portfolios the most stocks and bonds and other financial instruments will continue to see their net worth expand, having done nothing, by the way, to deserve that expanded net worth. It is not because they invented a new product or delivered a new service; it is simply because they sat back in their rocking chairs, while the Governor of the Bank of Canada and the banking system that it creates pumped air into those very same assets.

Members should try talking to a young person who is attempting to buy a house these days. The asset inflation of real property has put that out of reach. Whereas the wealthy who are already landed and in possession of luxurious real estate properties become wealthier and wealthier still. Here we are debating the disclosures of one member's personal assets and I cannot get the Bank of Canada to give me information about the amount it paid and what it got for its purchases of these assets.

One of the very interesting things about how this all works is that the Bank of Canada is the financial agent of the government. Therefore, when the government runs these huge deficits, it raises the money by selling bonds into the marketplace to investors. However, with this new program of printing money and purchasing assets, the bank is now buying back the very same bonds that it sells out. It sells a bond to a wealthy investor to raise money for the Prime Minister to spend and then, sometimes in the same week or month, purchases the same bond right back from the same investor.

I have asked the Bank of Canada officials if there have been cases where the bank sells a bond and then buys it back at a higher price, thereby profiting the investors at the expense of the taxpayer-

owned bank. In other words, the investor gets rich by arbitraging the difference between the price at which he or she purchased the bond from our central bank and the price for which the bank bought it right back.

The bank will not tell me that this is happening, but when we are talking about \$400 billion worth of transactions, that is bigger than the normal program spending of the Government of Canada for a year. It is twice as much as the governments of Canada spend on health care, to put it into perspective. It is an absolutely enormous sum of money, yet the bank will not release information on who is profiting and at whose expense.

Therefore, I asked the finance minister and she said that I should ask the Bank of Canada. I did ask the Bank of Canada and it will not give me the numbers.

Therefore, we have in the House of Commons MPs who are squabbling. The NDP is squabbling over a \$6 billion wealth tax. The Liberals are bragging that they brought in a new tax on stock options that will raise \$50 million. We are talking about \$400 billion here that the central bank is playing with, many orders of magnitude larger in sum and consequence than the chicken scratch that Liberals and New Democrats are fighting over.

They always tell us they are so worried that the rich are getting richer, but when our central bank, which is supposed to be accountable to us and whose \$5 million in shares are held in the name of the finance minister, pumps \$400 billion into financial markets and enriches the wealthy and powerful at the expense of the working-class wage earner, we hear nothing but silence from the social justice warriors on the other side of the House of Commons. They are just fine seeing the wealth gap get bigger as long as government gets bigger along with it.

We, on this side of the House, believe in financial transparency and in merit-driven wealth rather than crony capitalism. We call on the House to demand greater accountability and transparency from our central bank and from our government, because this money is Canadians' money and we are their voice.

• (1330)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings on the motion at this time. Accordingly, the debate on the motion will be rescheduled for another sitting and the hon. member for Carleton will have five minutes for questions and comments at that time.

It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

IRISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the important contributions that Irish-Canadians have made to building Canada, and to Canadian society in general, and should mark the importance of educating and reflecting upon Irish heritage and culture for future generations by declaring the month of March as Irish Heritage Month.

He said: Madam Speaker, 2020 has been a year we will all remember. It has been a year that at times brought us together and a year that challenged us as a nation in ways that we never thought possible. It is always great to find a way to come together in the chamber and it is my hope that this motion will be one of those cases, a sentiment that has become more important within the last hour.

Today I ask the House for its support for my motion to recognize the month of March as Irish heritage month. I am grateful that the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles as well as the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona will speak today. Of course, I would like to thank my colleague from Long Range Mountains who hails from Newfoundland, which is about as close to Ireland as one can get without actually being there.

To start and to be clear, this is not a motion to celebrate Irish ancestry as we do on March 17. Rather, it is a motion to recognize the many contributions that Canadians of Irish descent have made in building this country into what it is today. It is to ask the Parliament of Canada to say thanks and to recognize how much they have contributed. This is not to say they do not know, but it is to say that while making these many contributions, the Irish community has displayed a level of modesty that I wish to recognize and thank. They carry the pride of knowing how much they have contributed and I want them to know we know it too.

Throughout this speech, I will do my best to make this point by talking about my country, my city, my family and my friends. We are a country of immigrants. One of those immigrant communities is the Irish and it is one from which everyone knows I come. There are so many stories to choose from across the country, but I will speak briefly about my own.

In 1840, three brothers, Patrick, Michael and James, arrived in Canada. They settled in a beautiful place not far from here called Mount St. Patrick in the heart of the Ottawa valley. My father spoke fondly of visiting many times a place called Maloney Mountain. I never made it there with my dad, which I will always regret.

Then three years ago St. Patrick's Parish celebrated its 175th anniversary and I went at the invitation of my friend Rob Jamieson. It was a special occasion. I saw Maloney Mountain and found the resting place of those three brothers. Those brothers were my ancestors and my father was clearly proud of his heritage, because he has three sons who he named Patrick, Michael and the hon. member for Etobicoke Lakeshore.

I am far from alone in having Irish heritage. According to the latest census data, over 4.6 million Canadian residents lay claim to an

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Irish ethnic connection. This is 14% of our total population, higher even than the proportion of Irish Americans in the U.S. The influence of Irish heritage in Canada and the depth of the Irish's affinity with Ireland is the pre-eminent factor in Ireland's successful nurturing of its relationship with Canada over decades. Our Irish population almost matches Ireland itself.

A number of high-profile Canadians have been actively involved over the years in the Irish peace process, including General John de Chastelain, former chief of the defence staff, and former police ombudsman for Northern Ireland, Al Hutchinson. Other notable Canadians who contributed to the peace process include Lord Justice Hoyt, Professor Clifford Shearing and Mr. Justice Peter Cory.

Many Canadians of Irish ancestry form part of the Canadian political establishment, too many to name here, but some of them are here. They represent all parties and some have risen to great heights. I think of our former finance minister, the late Jim Flaherty. Two current cabinet members regularly remind me that they have Irish blood flowing through their veins. Former prime ministers Paul Martin, Brian Mulroney and our current Prime Minister come from Irish heritage, a fact I validated on a trip to Dublin just three years ago. Of course, I have to mention one of Canada's founding fathers, D'Arcy Thomas McGee.

Ireland and Canada share the same values. We have a long history of promoting democratic values and human rights. Over the years we have co-operated closely in these areas at the UN and elsewhere, both in challenging times for global democracy and political stability and during times of great peace.

The political friendship between our two countries is strong. Just last week, I had a call in my capacity as chair of the Canada-Ireland Interparliamentary Group with my Irish counterpart. We discussed the ways in which we could safely explore how to strengthen our bond in the COVID environment and after. Our economic relationship is strong because of CETA and our own bilateral economic agreements.

● (1335)

I would like to say a few words on that, because the economic ties are important, just as the cultural and historic bonds that exist between us are strong. CETA is eliminating tariffs. In the first year of its provisional operation, prior to COVID-19, trade between Canada and Ireland increased by one-third.

Ireland presents a great opportunity for Canadian business and investment in the coming years, and it is the perfect gateway to the 450 million people in the European Union. The number of jobs provided by Canadian companies in Ireland has grown by 25% since 2018, and the number of new Canadian companies expanding into Ireland has more than doubled since Brexit was passed. Well, we think it has passed.

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We have been in Ireland a long time. The first Canadian company in Ireland was Canada Life in 1903. With over a century of Canadian investment in Ireland, other notable Canadian companies in Ireland include Couche-Tard, Brown Thomas, Irving Oil and Air Canada, to name a few.

As far as Ireland in Canada, the value of Ireland's trade surplus to Canada is over \$2.1 billion. Canada is Ireland's 12th largest trade partner and the fourth largest outside of the EU, and, as of the end of 2018, the stock of Canadian Direct Investment Abroad in Ireland reached almost \$15 billion, ranking Ireland as the 10th largest destination for direct investment abroad.

We have a blue skies agreement: currently Aer Lingus, WestJet, Air Canada and Air Transat operate daily flights between the two countries. We have a treaty for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and capital gains.

Cultural collaborations are endless. In 2021, Ireland and Canada will make a joint application for UNESCO heritage status for the Valentia Island cable station and the cable station in Heart's Content, Newfoundland. These sites mark where the first successful transatlantic cable was laid in 1867, thus revolutionizing global communications.

We have an Ireland-Canada co-production treaty to encourage the co-development of audiovisual content between producers from Canada and Ireland, signed in Ottawa in 2017. I had the honour of being there.

Our roots run deep and go back in time. It is no secret that Canada became a refuge for Irish immigrants from 1830 onward. The immigration started at a time when major cholera and smallpox epidemics were prevalent. Ships flying the flag of disease were forced to dock at the quarantine station on Grosse Île, downriver from Quebec City.

Many Quebeckers were eager to help the Irish in their hour of need. Doctors, nurses and Montreal's Grey Nuns volunteered to treat sick arrivals, risking their own lives in the process. For many Irish immigrants, it would be their only glimpse of the new land. In 1847, 50 people a day died of typhus.

Many children whose parents died were adopted into French-Canadian families, but their Irish names lived on: Doyle, Murphy, Ryan and Johnson. Their descendants are among the 40% of Quebeckers who claim Irish ancestry.

Another Canadian destination was Toronto. During the summer of 1847, almost 100,000 migrants left Ireland with over 38,000 arriving in Toronto, which had a population of 20,000 at that time. Members should think about that: almost double the population arrived on the shores of Toronto over a period of a few months. Toronto opened its arms to those immigrants.

Dr. George Grasett and his team set up hospitals, or fever sheds as they came to be known, and provided essential medical services. In doing so, Dr. Grasett and many other Canadian nurses, doctors and hospital orderlies lost their own lives when they contracted typhus.

The Ireland Park Foundation remembered the legacy of kindness with Dr. George Grasett Park, which will open in Toronto in 2021. I was proud to be part of advocating for that project. This is in addition to Ireland Park, which was established earlier with the support of the Canadian and Irish governments. Both of these commemorative sites were built by the Irish community, and I want to thank Robert Kearns in particular.

Working-class Irish immigrants soon became the largest ethnic group in almost every city in Canada. It was not always easy. They faced challenges, as all newcomers do. These challenges were racial, religious and economic, but they persevered. It is a testament to their strength and values. There is no shortage of evidence in every province and every town.

They found work building many of our country's iconic landmarks. Irish immigrants helped to build the Rideau Canal, the Lachine Canal and Saint Patrick's Basilica in Montreal, as well as the colourful heritage buildings of St. John's, Newfoundland, just to name a few. Approximately 14,000 Irish citizens moved to Canada each year during the last recession, whether on a temporary or more permanent basis.

● (1340)

Irish-inspired events occur across the country and include the Féile Séamus Creagh music festival in St. John's, Newfoundland, and the Celtic Colours International Festival in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

The month of March in Toronto is busy to say the least. Most people think that March madness is a basketball tournament. I assure everyone, they are referring to Toronto in March. The month starts with the raising of the Irish flag at Toronto City Hall. The community comes in droves, again not to put on party hats and green sweaters. They are there to remember all those who worked so hard to give them the opportunity they now have.

The Irish person of the year then kicks things off, celebrating a person from the Irish community who has been leader dedicated to the benefit of others. With well over 1,000 people, the Ireland Funds lunch, another event, is the world's largest Irish luncheon. There are the parades, of course, and those are too many to mention, but I do want to give a shout-out to my friend Shaun Ruddy who has not just kept the Toronto parade alive, but thriving.

The Irish Canadian Immigration Centre welcomes all new arrivals to this day and is named after the late, and truly great, Eamonn O'Loughlin. The Toronto Irish Players theatre group also makes sure that the Irish culture is preserved and shared with the rest of our community.

The folk music of Canada owes a great debt to musicians of Irish descent, particularly in Newfoundland, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In fact, most Canadian folk songs take their inspiration from centuries-old Irish tunes and follow Irish verse patterns. Alan Doyle, of Great Big Sea fame, is just one example of a Canadian musician who can claim Irish roots. Stompin' Tom Connors, Denny Doherty of The Mamas and the Papas, Leahy and the Next Generation Leahy all came from families of Irish descent.

Radio programs keep the spirit alive and help maintain the strong link between our two great nations. In Toronto, Ken Tracey and Mark O'Brien nurse us through Saturday mornings and Hugo Straney raises our spirits early on Sunday.

St. Patrick's Day is a statutory holiday in Newfoundland and Labrador, but this day commemorating Irish contributions is held throughout Canada every year. Canada is home to many celebrations on March 17, one of the most prominent being Montreal's St. Patrick's Day parade, the oldest of its kind in North America.

The point is that Irish heritage month is not about green beer, funny hats or shamrocks. It is about honouring the close bond between our two countries that is deep in our past. It is about celebrating a bright future between our two countries. I simply do not have enough time today to cover it all, but there will be a second reading.

There are several people I need to thank for getting me here today and helping me along the way with my own Irish awakening. Recently, and locally, I would like to thank our Irish ambassadors. Ray Bassett welcomed me upon my election in 2015. Jim Kelly stewarded me through the past four years. Together, we created the annual Irish Night on Parliament Hill. This never would have happened without his guidance and support. Today, we are grateful to welcome ambassador Eamonn McKee. These men arrive here as ambassadors to Canada and leave here as great friends to our country and to many who live here. Of course, then there is Ethna Hefferman, the grande dame of the Irish community of Toronto.

I have mentioned my own family who, like me, are proud of their Irish heritage, like my brothers, along with Kaitlyn, Brogan, Keira and Teigan, who are my nieces and nephew. Last and not least are my in-laws. I want to mention Eddie, my father-in-law. He is the epitome of all things Irish. He is kind. He is generous. He is funny. He is modest and he is proud of his Irish heritage. He is also a source of wisdom. He always reminds me that if someone does not know where they are going, any road will take them there. There are people who are players in our community and there are people who are spectators. I can assure members that Eddie Brett is a player, not a spectator.

Every Irish dad wants their Irish offspring to find an Irish partner. Well, Dad, I did that and she is the best. Deirdre Brett is more than that. She is my friend and my anchor. I am lost without her.

It is clear to me that this country would not be what it is today without the great contribution from our Irish community, both past and present. In true Canadian fashion, they love the country where they were born and they love the country in which they chose to build a new life. I stand here today to in this chamber to say thanks as a profoundly grateful person of Irish heritage.

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Again, I ask this House and all its members to support this motion, and as an expression of that gratitude, to declare the month of March from this point forward as Irish heritage month in Canada.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for his speech. It will be my turn to give one in a few minutes.

There is something I am curious about. Ireland must deal with sovereignty on three fronts: first with respect to the Republic of Ireland, then with respect to the European Union, and lastly with respect to the United Kingdom. I would like to hear my colleague's view on that.

[*English*]

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, the hon. member's question raises a complex set of issues, as I believe he knows. Ireland, Northern Ireland and the U.K. have a unique relationship. That relationship is being tested right now through the Brexit process and the ongoing negotiations.

Answering that question in the amount of time I have right now is simply not possible and frankly, I am not sure that it is possible to answer it in the short term given that matters continue to be discussed. We hope it will be resolved in due course.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, there will be a lot of Irish folks in my community who will really appreciate that.

Is there a recipe for green beer? That is all I need to know.

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, the easy answer is that I only drink it; I do not make it. The honest answer is that I think it is food colouring.

To the member's point, there will be a lot of Irish people who are very proud of this. Someone asked me recently what this means. I said it does not confer rights on anybody that they do not already have, but it is recognition of the great contributions that Irish Canadians have made to this country, and we want to show them how proud we are.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this forward today. He mentioned the fact that it is a bit of a trying time right now with Brexit and the border between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

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Canada played an important role in working toward the Good Friday Agreement and getting that implemented. We are on the cusp right now of cementing a new trade relationship with the United Kingdom, and I wonder if the member wants to offer some reflections on what role Canada can play in trying to have a positive influence on the outcomes at the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, my hon. friend and I had the occasion to travel to Ireland and the north of Ireland a few years ago, where we had first-hand exposure to the issues he is talking about.

The Good Friday Agreement he referred to is the agreement that is, frankly, holding the ground firm, so that as the Brexit negotiations move forward there continues to be no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland itself. That issue is of incredible importance to people who live in Ireland. To this moment, and we will see by the end of this calendar year, the true strength of that agreement and the true strength of the resolve of the Irish people in making sure that it stays the case.

• (1350)

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for this great initiative. Thousands of families from my region of Miramichi, including my own, have Irish roots. That is why we claim the title of the Irish capital of Canada. Miramichi has also Canada's longest running Irish festivals, including the celebration for St. Patrick's Day.

Would my hon. colleague agree that Irish descendants from my region and across the country will be totally on board with celebrating their heritage for the full month of March?

Mr. James Maloney: Madam Speaker, I have no doubt that the member's constituents will take great pride in this motion passing and will take full advantage of celebration in the month of March.

The only thing I might say is that the people where I come from might take issue with which region is the most Irish, if I can put it that way. However, I will say that we all are, and we are all here to celebrate Irish heritage across Canada.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to speak in support of the recognition of the month of March as Irish heritage month in this country.

I first want to thank the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore for bringing this important motion forward. The two of us have worked together for a long time on the Canada-Ireland Interparliamentary Group and I know this is an area that is very important to him, as well as many Canadians from coast to coast.

Irish Canadians, as we all know, have much to be proud of. In truth, they did a lot of the heavy lifting in putting this massive country together and building it into the great country it is today. Some Irish Canadians can trace their roots all the way back to the 17th century, when many Irish arrived in what was then New France. Some French Canadian and Acadian surnames are evolutions of Irish names that evolved due to the French influence.

Irish immigration to this country continued throughout the 18th century as well, as New France and Newfoundland continued to grow as colonies. However, the main wave of Irish immigration came in the 19th century, which saw hundreds of thousands of Irish immigrants arrive on the shores of what is now Canada, many of them settling in the Maritimes and spreading throughout inland Canada. These immigrants would be crucial to the growth of major port cities like Halifax and Saint John. They were a large part of the labour force in this country that constructed the Rideau and Lachine canals.

Today, the Canadian Irish community is one of the largest ethnic groups in Canada and has spread itself across the country. According to the most recent census, Irish is the fourth largest ethnic group in the country, with more than 4.5 million Canadians claiming to be of either full or partial Irish lineage. No matter what province we find ourselves in, we can be sure there is a thriving and proud Irish community there.

As the member of Parliament for Saskatoon—Grasswood, I know it is always a treat to visit the Irish pavilion at the annual Saskatoon Folkfest, which is put on every year by the Saskatoon Association for the Promotion of Irish Culture. The pride the Irish presenters have in their heritage and the celebrations of that heritage are certainly infectious and truly represent the vibrant Irish Canadian community in our city of Saskatoon.

In truth, there are few communities who were as important to building Canada into the country we have today as the Irish. We need look no further than our history in this chamber to set the rule, such as Thomas D'Arcy McGee, one of the most well-known fathers of Confederation and a very close adviser and friend to our first prime minister of this country, Sir John A. Macdonald. Others include Sir John Thompson, our fourth prime minister; Louis St. Laurent, our 12th; Brian Mulroney, our 18th; and Paul Martin, our 21st; not to mention dozens of cabinet ministers and members of Parliament like the great Jim Flaherty. Jim always wore a green tie and I wear one today in his honour. Of course, I cannot forget our current Leader of the Opposition, who will be the next of Irish descent in the House of Commons to be our prime minister.

I would be remiss if I did not take time to specifically mention Nellie McClung, one of the Famous Five who launched the person's case and is perhaps the woman of Irish descent who has had the greatest impact on Canada and women's rights in this country. McClung and the others of the Famous Five, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney and Irene Parlby, fought for women's rights all the way to the British Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, the highest court for Canada at the time, and succeeded.

Indeed, without these important Canadian leaders, we would not be the country we are today, but political leadership is not by any means the only way to make important contributions to Canada. Our country has a rich history of Canadians of Irish lineage leaving a lasting and profound impact on this country.

• (1355)

We can look at groups that have been mentioned, like the Great Big Sea, the band famous for songs like *When I'm Up* and *Ordinary Day*, and the Juno-award winning Irish Descendants. They are prime examples of great Canadian artists of Irish descent.

I left out a very notable exception there, because it is a perfect segue into the next topic that I would like to talk about: Stompin' Tom Connors, the legendary Canadian singer-songwriter of Irish descent, famous for his songs about our beautiful country, like *Sudbury Saturday* and *Bud the Spud*.

His incredible work and contributions to Canadian culture earned him the Order of Canada in 1996, the Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award from the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards, honorary doctorates from a number of Canadian universities, multiple Juno Awards and many other honours. He was truly one of the greatest artists in our history.

That brings me to my next point. Amongst all of his achievements and his incredible work, Stompin' Tom may very well be best known for a song that is played worldwide. For my money, as a former sportscaster, this, without question, was the greatest sports anthem in the world: *The Hockey Song*. The Good Old Hockey Game, as Stompin' Tom would call it, is full of Canadian and heritage descent. I have it right here. It is our last day sitting in the House of Commons, and I am going to save this—

An hon. member: Sing it.

Mr. Kevin Waugh: I could sing it, and everybody knows our feet are stomping all the way.

Hello out there, we're on the air, it's 'Hockey Night' tonight.
Tension grows, the whistle blows, and the puck goes down the ice
The goalie jumps, and the players bump, and the fans all go insane
Someone roars, "Bobby Scores!", at the good ol' Hockey Game
OH! The good ol' Hockey game, is the best game you can name
And the best game you can name, is the good ol' Hockey game.

Going further, the NHL legends who have performed on ice in this country, like Lester Patrick, Owen Nolan, King Clancy, Brendan Shanahan, Terry O'Reilly, and of course, Don Cherry, are all of Irish descent. Who could forget the big guy, Pat Quinn, beloved across the NHL as the "Big Irishman"? He received the Order of Canada in 2012 for his contributions to Canada.

There are some historians who point to the origin of the Irish game known as the the big hurling. What could be more important to building our country than that?

With all the talk of artists and athletes, let us not forget the legends of the Canadian stage, screen and comedy who have made such a huge impact in the Irish ancestry. I think of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, Mary Walsh, the actress behind Marg Delahunty. I think of Martin Short and Catherine O'Hara of SCTV fame, who have gone on to major careers in Hollywood and received many awards for their fantastic work.

There are many more names I could get into here today, many areas that I could sit and talk about, however, as I run out of time I am confident that the names and some of the examples I have

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talked about in today's speech will hit home with many in this country.

Irish Canadian communities of this country can be proud of what they have accomplished in 152 years of this country.

As it is our last speech on this side of the House, I want to wish you, Madam Speaker, and your family a merry Christmas. I want to wish every member in the House of Commons a merry Christmas, a happy new year and a joyous holiday season. It has been particularly tough on every Canadian and this place in particular since March 13 when we left and found out about COVID-19.

On behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada, I want to wish Canadians, coast to coast to coast, merry Christmas, happy new year, keep the faith and we cannot wait for 2021.

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thought we were not allowed to sing in the House. In that case, I will make you dance. Just kidding.

Today we are debating a motion placed on the Order Paper last January by our hon. colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. This motion would designate March as Irish heritage month. Here is the text of the motion:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the important contributions that Irish-Canadians have made to building Canada, and to Canadian society in general, and should mark the importance of educating and reflecting upon Irish heritage and culture for future generations by declaring the month of March as Irish Heritage Month.

The Bloc Québécois is fully in favour of this wonderful motion, and we support it because it will allow us to highlight the fundamental contribution of the Irish to Quebec society since their arrival in New France.

I remind members that in the 2006 census, more than 400,000 Quebecers reported being of Irish heritage, and some experts have even claimed that 40% of Quebecers have Irish blood. That is not nothing. Plus, Quebec has had five premiers with Irish ancestry: Edmund James Flynn, from 1896 to 1897; Daniel Johnson Sr. and his two sons, Pierre Marc Johnson and Daniel Johnson; and Jean Charest.

The first waves of Irish immigrants rolled into Quebec's capital in the early 19th century. In 1833, religious affiliation was almost exclusively tied to language, so the Irish set up their own English-language religious institution. St. Patrick's Church in Old Quebec was different from the churches attended by the British Anglicans and Protestants.

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More Irish immigrants arrived in 1840. Many of them died of disease, sadly, or continued on to other cities, such as Montreal and New York. By 1871, Quebec City already had a population of 12,000, and over 20% of those inhabitants were Irish.

Today, their descendants primarily live in the beautiful upper town neighbourhood of Montcalm, in the area bordered by Avenue de Salaberry, Rue de Maisonneuve, Avenue de la Tour and Grande Allée, centring on St Patrick's School, an English-language school. This neighbourhood is the heart of the community, and it is also the where the famous parade starts every year.

The City of Montreal's flag bears a green shamrock, the national symbol of Ireland, in recognition of all that the Irish have contributed to the city. The shamrock is joined by a fleur-de-lys, representing the French; a Lancaster rose, representing the English and the Welsh; a thistle, representing the Scottish; and a white pine, representing the first nations.

Irish immigrants quite literally built Quebec. In the 19th century, they dug canals, worked on railroads and built the Victoria Bridge in Montreal, which was inaugurated in 1859. This architectural masterpiece spans the St. Lawrence from Pointe-Saint-Charles to the opposite shore. At the entrance to the bridge on the Montreal side is the Montreal Irish Monument, which commemorates the deaths of 6,000 Irish immigrants, most of whom died of typhus. As a matter of fact, last year, archeologists working in the area for the construction of Montreal's Réseau express métropolitain unearthed some remarkable discoveries.

Since we are talking about the contributions of Irish Canadians, I would also like to remind members of the Montreal Shamrocks, an Irish hockey club that was around from 1886 to 1924 and that won the Stanley Cup twice, in 1899 and in 1900. That happened about 10 years before the Montreal Canadiens hockey team was formed.

• (1405)

We owe the wonderful architecture of Montreal's Notre-Dame Basilica to Irish architect James O'Donnell, who is actually buried in the cathedral's crypt. He gave five years of his life to the building of that cathedral.

A number of quintessentially Quebec surnames that sound French are actually of Irish origin. Take, for example, the last name Dion. It actually comes from the Irish name Dillon. The same is true of the Sylvains, the O'Sullivans, the Bourques, the Duquettes and the Barrettes.

From 1849 to 1980, more than 32 Irish judges sat on the Quebec Superior Court. From 1867 to 1973, 44 Irish Canadian MPs were elected in various ridings across Quebec. From 1867, the year of Confederation, to 1978, no less than 57 Irish Canadians were members of the Quebec National Assembly. Another important contribution made by our Irish friends was the creation of the Laurentian Bank, formerly the Savings Bank, which came about through the efforts of French and Irish Canadians. The boards of directors were made up of Morins, Lafontaine, Papineau and Cartiers on one hand and Ings, Drummonds, Curans, O'Briens and Wolfmans on the other.

Let's not forget Montreal's famous St. Patrick's Day parade, an annual event dating back to 1824. It is one of the oldest parades of its kind in the country. The first St. Patrick's Day was celebrated in Montreal in 1759 by Irish soldiers from the Montreal garrison, and that was three years before the first edition of New York's famous parade. Montreal's St. Patrick's Day parade draws crowds of 250,000 to 750,000 people every year. National Geographic even ranked it among the 10 most impressive parades in the world.

In conclusion, Quebec loves the Irish and Ireland. Both are proud nations, which may explain our sense of kinship. Perhaps one day, we too, like the Irish, will experience the joys of independence. We hope that day will come soon.

Merry Christmas to all!

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am quite pleased to join the debate today and speak in support of the motion to establish March as Irish heritage month, in recognition of the contribution of the Irish to Canada.

Celebrating Irish contributions is not something new to people here in Winnipeg. For many years, we have had, during our Folklorama festival, not one but two Irish pavilions in order to be able to experience and celebrate all facets of Irish culture here in Canada. Up to four million Canadians claim some form of Irish ancestry.

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

I have to say that it is not just anglophones in Canada who have been influenced by the Irish and have ties to Ireland. The Irish also played an important role in the development of Quebec. I thank the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for sharing several details about Quebec's Irish heritage.

[*English*]

Of course, many Canadians will have heard of figures like Thomas D'Arcy McGee, who helped forge a compromise between Catholics and Protestants and cleared a path for the creation of Canada, earning him a place in history as one of the fathers of Confederation. Canadians will also have heard of Timothy Eaton, who created a retail empire that served people right across the country. The Eaton's building was a very important landmark in Winnipeg until the turn of this past century when it was demolished to make way for what became Bell MTS Place, the arena that brought the Jets back to Winnipeg.

One contribution I have not heard spoken of yet today, which I think is really important, is the contribution of the Irish to Canada's labour activism. They brought a real class consciousness to working people in Canada and were active in the Winnipeg General Strike. Bob White, a former president of the Canadian Labour Congress who did a lot for Canada's labour movement, hailed from Ireland. In fact, he was born in Northern Ireland.

I am particularly pleased to speak to this motion because of my own Irish heritage and connection. In 2023, it will be 100 years since my Irish great-grandparents followed the path of so many of their compatriots and set sail for Canada, in this case from Belfast. The years just previous to their departure for Canada had been tumultuous and had led, without going into detail, to the partition of Ireland into what we know as the independent Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, with the latter continuing to be part of the United Kingdom. My great-grandparents sought refuge from the ongoing sectarian tensions in Northern Ireland in the peace and stability of Canada. Initially employed by the CNR in Transcona, my great-grandfather eventually found his way into a vocation often associated with the Irish and retired many years later as chief of police for Transcona.

I note this personal history not just as an interesting family narrative, but because 100 years after my grandparents were married in December 1920, the world's attention has been once again turned toward the future of Northern Ireland as a result of Brexit, shorthand for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. It is not like this would be first time the world's attention has been turned toward Northern Ireland since the 1920s. Indeed, for the last three decades or so of the 20th century, what was often referred to as "the Troubles" claimed many lives and damaged many others.

The Troubles came to an end at the turn of the century as a result of the peace process that depended for its success, in part, on the practical elimination of the once heavily guarded and heavily symbolic border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. For the last 20 years, the ordinary people of both the north and the south have been able to relate to all of Ireland and go back and forth as they please without reminders at a border of the recent violent past or the ongoing debate about their future.

Brexit, by threatening a hard border between the north and south, puts the recent peace at risk by creating conditions and appearances that could potentially be exploited by those who would return to a nastier political time. Therefore, as we celebrate Canada's Irish heritage with the eventual passing of this motion, I hope we urge all parties to the negotiations surrounding British withdrawal from the EU to act in such a way that no one ever again feels the need to leave Northern Ireland because of sectarian tensions.

I note, with some happiness, that just before I came to the House today, I was in a meeting of the international trade committee, where a motion was passed recognizing Canada's important contribution to the conclusion and implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. It calls on the government to ensure that, as we navigate a new trading relationship with the United Kingdom, we do that in a way that affirms and supports the Good Friday Agreement. I note also, with pleasure, that a similar motion was passed at the foreign affairs committee late last week.

I am glad to see there is an ongoing commitment by parliamentarians to the ongoing peace in Ireland. I think one of the best ways we can celebrate that heritage is to continue to play whatever positive role we can in ensuring that peace is long and prosperous on the other side of the pond.

I am thankful for the opportunity to share those remarks.

Private Members' Business

• (1415)

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to address Motion No. 18, sponsored by the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, which seeks to have the House recognize March of every year as Irish heritage month.

Over the course of our history, we have seen the many ways of Irish immigration to Canada. Some have put forth a theory that Irish explorers came to Canada before the Norse. I have to say this is a bit of a stretch because half my ancestry is Irish, and the other half is from the Vikings.

Even though the historical records show that Irish immigrants came to Canada as early as the 16th century, I want members to know that the Irish fishermen first came to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. As a matter of fact, Canada is home to the only Irish-language place name outside of Europe. When fishermen from southern Ireland arrived in Newfoundland in the 17th century, they called it Talamh an Eisce, or land of the fish, and this name still survives today.

Seeing as Newfoundland is my home, let me tell members a little more about this. I am sure members did not know that over 20% of our population today is of Irish descent. We have more in common with our friends in Ireland than one might think, but when we look at the map we are the first place west when they depart from Ireland. Between 1770 and 1780, more than 100 ships and thousands of people left Irish ports for the lucrative fishery off Newfoundland and Labrador. These migrations were some of the most substantial movements of Irish peoples across the Atlantic in the 18th century.

Over the years, they created a distinct subculture in Newfoundland and Labrador, and their descendants carried on many of the traditions. In certain places around the province, Irish culture is still richly evident. Between people, culture and, yes, even the landscape, I have five reasons why Newfoundland and Labrador has often been dubbed the most Irish place outside of Ireland.

The scenery and the landscape in my province are often compared to that of Ireland. The towering cliffs, rugged coastline and rich greenery make it easy to see why the Irish felt at home when they first arrived here in the 1700s. It can be hard to distinguish between the two at times.

Do members know what to scrob means, or what a sleeveen is? There are more varieties of English spoken in Newfoundland and Labrador than anywhere else in the world. Our dialects date back four centuries, and most of the accents are flavoured by southern Ireland. Some Irish settlers only spoke Irish Gaelic, and while it disappeared from the island early in the 20th century, it left a number of traces that are still found today.

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There are a number of places in my province where the Irish connections run deep. Located in the southeastern part of the Avalon Peninsula, the Irish Loop is the heart of Irish culture and heritage in Newfoundland and Labrador. Tilting, a small community nestled on Fogo Island, was the home to the first Irish settler, Thomas Burke, who arrived in 1752. To this day, the town of Tilting is adorned with Irish flags by groups of people who are proud to display their heritage. Tilting is both a national historic site and a provincial heritage district, and for very good reason.

With scenery and landscape so similar to the Emerald Isle, it is easy to see why so many compare Newfoundland and Labrador to Ireland. However, it is really the people of the province where the true connection lies. Beyond the lilts and the accents and the songs and the jigs, there is a sense of camaraderie and pride akin to a place where people leave their doors unlocked all the time, as we still do today, and we stop to have a chat with everyone we see. They are real, genuine people, friendly and welcoming, which is all the more powerfully felt because of the historical undercurrent of hardship and self-reliance.

Also in Newfoundland and Labrador, St. Patrick's Day is a public holiday. Across the islands, pubs and houses and sheds are filled early with people celebrating over hearty breakfasts, which then lead to an evening of green beer, as my colleague mentioned, and plenty of Irish song and dance.

Global Greening, an initiative by Tourism Ireland, sees a host of major landmarks and iconic sites across the world turn green on St. Patrick's Day. The greenings are emblematic of the relationships that Ireland has built with countries around the world in the spirit of friendship, respect and partnership, so it is fitting that we will see many buildings aglow with green lights on March 17, and many of them will be in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That is enough on my province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We know that records from New France include many Irish names and it has been estimated that perhaps as much as five per cent of the population of New France was Irish.

The period starting from 1819 onward to the last quarter of the century is when the beginning of the intensive immigration from Ireland started. During that period, the majority of the thousands of immigrants who were arriving each year in Canada was from Ireland.

● (1420)

These large groups of Irish immigrants continued to pour into Canada until well after Confederation when their numbers began to decline to a much smaller, but still steady flow.

A sizeable group of immigrants arrived between 1823 and 1825, creating a 2,000-strong settlement in Peterborough, Ontario, named after Peter Robinson who commissioned the 12 ships that carried them to Canada.

In 1871, the Canadian census provides a snapshot of the numbers of Irish in Canada in the late 19th century. It shows that in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia over 846,000 persons were of Irish origin. I have to remind members that Newfoundland

and Labrador had not joined Confederation then, hence why our numbers are not included.

There is a popular misconception, though, that immigration from Ireland to Canada only began with the Irish potato famine, also called the great hunger, that began in 1845. The potato was the main form of sustenance in most Irish households and the catastrophic failure of the potato crop over successive years resulted in farmers being unable to produce sufficient food for their families' needs. The devastating disease rotted the potatoes in the ground, rendering their entire crops inedible and destroying that primary food source for millions of people. The potato crops would not recover until after 1852.

Those who could, left Ireland. They did so through dangerous and overcrowded ships. The crowded, unsanitary conditions to which people lived on the ships crossing the Atlantic created the uncontrolled spread of disease, such as cholera and typhus, as was alluded to earlier. Thousands ended their journey across the Atlantic in a watery grave or in the graves in Grosse Isle, Quebec or in Partridge Island off St. John, New Brunswick, where the immigrants were quarantined upon their arrival.

Through there is a partial record of those who died at sea, the complete record will never be known. Thousands of those who made it to Grosse Isle but later died had their resting place marked with a striking Celtic cross erected to their memory. On Partridge Island, a Celtic cross also stands as a memorial to the Irish immigrants who died there.

The history of the Irish in Canada is not just of the disaster of the potato famine, but also a story of economic and social success. The Irish recognized the opportunities that their new homeland offered. In the early years of their arrival, the Irish naturally gravitated toward the ports, the cities and areas of high employment in the eastern provinces as well in Quebec and Ontario.

However, as their prosperity increased, many would venture even further west. An early cluster of Irish ranchers was recorded around Fort Macleod in the 1870s and 1880s. By 1916, Alberta had over 6,500 Irish immigrants and another 51,000 who could trace their ancestry back to Ireland. That was according to the federal census at that time.

In that same period, Winnipeg had a population of over 19,000 people of Irish heritage. Out of the almost 59,000 people living in British Columbia in 1881, over 3,000 listed their ethnicity as Irish in the Canadian census.

According to David A. Wilson, who authored *The Irish in Canada*, the Irish quickly adapted to Canadian life and by 1871, the percentage of Irish who were merchants, manufacturers and professionals, white-collared workers and artisans was virtually identical to that of the population at large.

While it would be naive to think that there were not struggles during the early decades after their arrival, like many immigrant communities that came after them, the Irish endured and pushed forward to become an important part of the foundation of Canadian society.

Our history books are filled with the names of many people of Irish descent in every occupation one can imagine, but especially in the music world. Perhaps one of the best-known Irish names and a person who significantly influenced our history is Thomas D'Arcy McGee, an early visionary of Confederation, who my colleagues before have mentioned.

Born in Ireland, he arrived in 1857 and was elected the next year to the legislative assembly of the Province of Canada. He was a key player of Charlottetown and the Quebec City conferences that laid the groundwork for Confederation in 1867. He was known for his advocacy for minority rights and his opposition to extremism. Some of the goals that McGee aspired to for our country have become government policies, most notably, our emphasis on immigration as a means to build and strengthen Canada.

The establishment of an Irish heritage month would provide Canadians of all backgrounds the opportunity to learn, appreciate and celebrate the many contributions that Canadians of Irish heritage have made to Canada and—

● (1425)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the member's time is up. It is a very important topic and one that we could go on and on about. I know the hon. member for Oshawa would like to weigh in now. He only has five minutes at this point and he can have the rest of his time the next time this matter is before the House.

The hon. member for Oshawa.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore for standing in support of Motion No. 18. Frankly, it brings back memories of my family, and I want to thank the parliamentary secretary who spoke before me, because my Irish side of the family landed in Newfoundland as well. I am sorry to say that I do know what a sleeveen is. I have been called one once or twice.

I look at the contributions of the Irish here in Canada and I am often quite conflicted. On my mom's side, the O'Rourkes are very strong Irish Catholic, while on my father's side the Carries are strong Scottish Presbyterians. I remember my uncles joking with me when they found out I had been elected as a politician. My one uncle told me he thought I was going to be a drunk or very cheap. He said now as a politician I could be a cheap drunk. I say that not to insult anyone, but the reality is the Irish have always been there

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to have a good laugh, to welcome people from all around the world, and to go around the world sharing Irish culture.

My own family came over in the early part of the 19th century and moved to Sydney, Nova Scotia. With their work ethic, the Irish community really shared in the building of our country. It makes me so proud. In my family there are eight kids. We never had a lot of money, but there was always room at the table for one more. It did not matter if someone came from out of town. In my family it was an insult for them to stay at a hotel or a motel: They had to stay with the family.

When we think of celebrating our Irish culture, there is a joke that says there are two types of people: those who are Irish and those who want to be Irish. That comes from the *joie de vivre*, the ability of the Irish to look into sometimes horrible obstacles, but to always strive and move forward and have the tenacity to celebrate themselves, their families and their culture.

Today, I look at my own family, and the culture and values of the Irish side and also the Scottish side, and how they brought that welcoming culture to our country. I was born an Irish Christian. My wife was born Jewish. My two aunts are gay. My sister-in-law, who was born into the Muslim community, is a woman of colour. We all get together here in Canada. Religious or cultural things may have separated us in the old country, but as we came to this country, we made a Canadian family and a Canadian statement.

The Irish brought their principles, their culture and their welcoming nature to everyone in their community or in their household. There was no difference. I feel that, for my colleague for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, bringing this motion forward was a personal thing. The parliamentary secretary said something like 4.5 million Canadians feel their family goes back to Irish roots, and it gives us the ability to celebrate Ireland and Canada together.

● (1430)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have six minutes the next time this matter is before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, January 25, 2021, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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