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# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, February 5, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[English]

### BROADCASTING ACT

The House resumed from December 11, 2020, 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. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be joining the debate on Bill C-10. There is a Yiddish proverb that says when one sweeps the house, one finds everything. I am not sweeping this House, as I am sure it is the cleanest house in Canada right now. I am sure the staff is doing amazing work.

In reading the legislation now before the House, I had to sweep over articles of what the minister and the government believe Bill C-10 would achieve, especially as conditions have changed over the past four weeks. I hope to demonstrate to the House that the intent of the government, with Bill C-10 and what it hopes to achieve, is confounding two different issues.

There is a role for the government to play in ensuring that regulations and laws are in place to offset disinformation and attempts by foreign governments, or entities with a nefarious purpose, to spread disinformation with the objective of achieving discord or chaos in our country, or causing economic harm.

I do not think there is as much of a place for the government to deal with misinformation, because Canadians are excellent at dealing with it themselves. A headline about an interview the Minister of Canadian Heritage gave states, "Regulation of online hate speech coming soon, says minister". This is regarding Bill C-10, the legislation that was suggested. Hate speech is already banned by the Criminal Code. There is a way for police to monitor and go after individuals who spread hate speech. Nobody on this side of the House, or any side of the House, agrees with hate speech. I do my best to make sure that when I see it online I address it, whether it is directed at ethnicities or religions, and whatever the purpose is behind it.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage also said that the government wants to block messages on the Internet and social media that might undermine Canada's social cohesion. It is a lofty goal for the government to want to do these things with legislation like Bill C-10 and the vast extension of government powers that it is allowing. I will go through some of the proposed government powers that I find questionable.

I question whether ensuring the social cohesion of a country is the right role for the government to be taking on. Our citizens, NGOs and civic organizations do the job of protecting our civic virtues already. It is not the job of the government to be proposing such legislation as I see here. What I see in Bill C-10 is the government opening the door to state regulation of the Internet. While people define the Internet in different ways, we interact with it every single day, whether by watching streaming services online or interacting with others on different platforms. This is an area that I think the government is erring by getting into.

The same minister went on to say that he wanted to prevent media platforms from sowing doubt in the population with regard to public institutions. I find the government does an excellent job of sowing doubt in public institutions itself. We were told months ago that vaccines were going to be distributed and everybody was going to be vaccinated by September 2021. Then we saw an announcement for AstraZeneca vaccines from a facility that is not even built yet. It will be finished in July, and then we are supposed to believe that in two months somehow this facility will save the day, and also that Pfizer vaccines will be available now that its facility has been upgraded.

It sows doubt among people in my riding who trusted the government at the beginning, who had faith in public institutions and public servants and believed that the government had a handle on this. They do not believe that anymore. I had a digital town hall yesterday and the majority of the questions I had to field from over 600 constituents back home, at one point, concerned the government's driblets-and-drabs approach to the travel restrictions that it has introduced, and how confusing they are. To be honest, I am just as confused as everybody else.

*Government Orders*

The government does enough of a job of undermining public trust in public institutions. When it botches the rollout of the vaccine to the provinces and introduces random restrictions, it does not need legislation like this. I will go into some of the aspects of what this legislation would do that give me concern.

First, I am concerned that the bill chooses to limit the oversight powers of parliamentary committees with respect to directives and regulations that would be adopted by the CRTC. At the end of the amendments to the Broadcasting Act, the bill states that it would go around the powers Parliament rightfully has to oversee what is being done. I get constituents asking me, all the time, to intervene in the actions and regulatory activities of the CRTC. I have concerns about this.

The Broadcasting Act says that broadcasting undertakings include distribution undertakings. The proposed legislation would add online undertakings. About a dozen people in my riding have successful YouTube channels, such as toy channels and travel channels, when travel was easy to do. YouTube is one of those platforms I think the government is targeting for regulation. YouTube is both a streaming service and a platform. It is sort of a commons area like this chamber, for people to put up videos, whether funny or serious, and share their opinions. Whether or not one likes their opinions is totally secondary.

This is an expansion of what the government is trying to do. A lot of independent media are saying they are very concerned that they are going to be regulated directly by the government. Who gets to decide what is misinformation? What I see happening, mostly from parties on the left but all over the spectrum, is that misinformation is now whatever someone does not like, or whatever opinion one does not agree with.

A lot of Liberal caucus members have opinions I disagree with, but I do not want to censor them. I want to debate them, preferably on the floor of the House. I do not want to do it over Twitter. To me, Twitter is one of the lowest of all platforms. It is where people get attacked, mobbed and treated like second-class citizens. When I talk to constituents about it, I generally refer to Twitter as a sewer with its activities. Bots are all over the place, and there are vicious attacks on both Liberal and Conservative politicians. I think all members have been victims, at some point, of nasty online commentary, either calling for violence or treating the members very poorly. We can all agree that this is something awful and unique to that particular platform.

Another part of the legislation I am worried about would amend a portion of the intention behind the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It reads, “the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as the national public broadcaster, should provide broadcasting,” which is the new amendment, “services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains”. I have a hard time believing that a lot of the material being broadcast right now by the CBC, or its online platforms, informs, enlightens or entertains, unless it is a high form of satire it is producing in its news section.

Bill C-10 does not achieve the modernization of broadcasting, which was the idea the government had months ago when the bill was tabled. Generally, many members agree with that idea. In my

lifetime, with the advent of the Internet, we have seen a lot of people migrate away from cable providers. Cable used to be the “it” thing in the 1990s. I would not know, as I never had cable. My family could not afford it.

Everybody has migrated to online services. The government is catching up to regulate these, but it is going way overboard and has missed the mark. This is not the way we should go about regulating it, nor should we take away from Parliament the ability to question and oversee regulators such as the CRTC.

I consistently get complaints about the CRTC and I do not think more government power over what Canadians share online, the discussions they are having at home and online, is an area the government should be getting into. It does not have the wisdom or the ability. It will always be catching up to society and civic institutions not attached to government. The government is erring, and I will not be supporting this particular legislation.

• (1010)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am a bit confused. The member just spoke at length about a bill that has not been tabled, which is an upcoming bill on issues of online harm, child pornography, incitement of violence—

• (1015)

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the individual was not on the screen. I just realized now he did add himself to the camera, so I appreciate that.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The minister was on screen from the start here.

The hon. minister will please proceed.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault:** Madam Speaker, as I was saying, I am a bit confused. The member spoke at length about a bill that has not been tabled, which is a bill that will be dealing with online harm, such as child pornography, incitement of violence and terrorism. It seems the member has not read Bill C-10, which deals with how the government wants to legislate to ensure that online platforms do their fair share when it comes to cultural investments in Canada. It has nothing to do with online harm, which is a very important subject, and in fact, many members of the opposition have asked us to—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I have to give the hon. member for Calgary Shepard an opportunity to answer.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Speaker, to the minister's point, on November 18, 2020, in a House of Commons speech, he was referring to this legislation and talking about tackling these issues, saying “voluntary self-regulation does not work”, and “several other countries, including Canada, are concerned about misinformation, online hate and web giants' blatant inability to self-regulate.” He went on and on.

The two issues are together. We are handing massive powers to the CRTC and taking powers away from Parliament. I look forward to seeing this other legislation that the minister proposes to table before the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I must admit that I am wondering whether my colleague actually read the bill, because there is nothing in there about online hate. However, I was struck by his comment about how people are able to distinguish fact from fiction on their own.

I am wondering if my colleague remembers what happened south of the border on January 6. Does he think that those events could have been the result of the dissemination of misinformation? I would like to know what he thinks about that. I would also like him to tell me what evidence leads him to believe that people can distinguish between accurate information and misinformation. That being said, this does not pertain directly to Bill C-10, which is before us today.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Drummond for his question.

In my opinion, the events that occurred in January south of our border, that is in the United States, or more specifically in the capital, Washington, are the result of a misinformation campaign led by the former president of the United States for nearly two months. According to many conservative American newspapers, there is nothing to indicate that President Trump was right in saying what he did.

I believe in Canadians. They know how to distinguish between accurate information and misinformation online. Ultimately, they are able to separate fact from fiction.

[*English*]

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, as a member who represents a more rural and remote riding, one of the things I know about the local content makers in my region is that they really tell us about what is happening in our communities. I also know that the larger media platforms, such as Facebook and social media, use a lot of that content without any sort of support to regional content makers.

For example, the North Island Eagle, which represents the northern part of the region that I represent on the island side, does a lot of work to bring forward those stories.

Does the member have any feedback on how we can support these folks? I do not think this is an aggressive enough bill to support those small businesses that really keep us connected to our own Canadian story.

**Mr. Tom Kmiec:** Madam Speaker, the support should not come through the social media platforms because they are spreading good journalism and good stories. I will give the member an example. I think we can all agree that the National Observer is mostly independent media of the centre-left. I am a reader. I am a fan of its journalism and work. I would have never found it if it had not been for a social media platform.

### *Government Orders*

• (1020)

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to give an overview of some of the inadequacies of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

The Liberal government has once again said one thing in its messaging and preamble about what this bill would do, in contrast with what the content of the bill actually enacts. Its message to Canadians is that the bill would ensure online broadcasting is covered under the act. It indicates that the bill updates broadcasting and regulatory policies to better reflect the diversity of Canadian society and that it modernizes and provides the CRTC with new enforcement powers through an administrative monetary penalty scheme.

Updating and modernizing the Broadcasting Act is very important, as it has been almost 30 years since any significant change has been made to Canadian broadcasting regulations. Many of my younger colleagues have commented during their speeches on this topic on how old they were when changes were last made to the Broadcasting Act, even speaking to the fact they were but a glimmer in their parents' eyes.

I cannot say I was there when Maurice Cole was the essence of radio, but I do share a birthday with CKSW, a country music radio station in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, which serves southwestern Saskatchewan and first began broadcasting in 1956.

I grew up enjoying Saturday morning cartoons with the Flintstones, the Road Runner and Bugs Bunny. Saturday nights we watched *Hockey Night in Canada*, and on Sunday evenings we had popcorn for supper as we were entertained by Red Skelton and Carol Burnett. Movies filmed a detective as he slowly crept along an entire block, and advertisements for headache relief lasted a full 60 seconds. We do not know what we have until it is gone.

That being said, boy, do I love getting to watch what I want, when I want and as much as I want. That is where we are at today, in the blink of an eye. However, that is enough of precious memories. We will move on to the task at hand.

This act provides the guidelines for everything in our media industry. It is a crucial vehicle for determining fairness in the way the industry is regulated, while ensuring it is vibrant and growing with opportunities for Canadians. The Broadcasting Act covers everything from how our Canadian broadcasters operate to how we support Canadian content and production.

### *Government Orders*

The arrival of the Internet and online streaming services has been a reality for a long time now, and they have been competing with Canadian broadcasters on an uneven playing field. Unfortunately, Bill C-10 does not meet the need to set the policies and standards required to level that playing field. The bill is vague. It does not address important aspects of issues important to industry stakeholders, such as ensuring that the web giants Google and Facebook have to compete under the same rules as Canadian companies. It does not explain how digital platforms and conventional players would compete on an even playing field.

Bill C-10 also does not require broadcasters to contribute to the creation of Canadian content or the Canada Media Fund, as is currently the case for Canadian broadcasters.

In the previous majority Liberal government, the then minister of heritage championed the decision of Netflix to support Canadian content with a \$5-million commitment. However, I could not help but notice that this generous contribution was immediately followed by an increase in monthly consumer fees, which smacks of Canadians paying outright for this supposed act of generosity and appreciation for investing in Canadian content.

The issue of proprietary content that is shared on digital platforms is also not addressed. The bill does nothing to address the inequity between digital and conventional media; the regulation of social media, such as Facebook; and the sharing of advertising royalties demanded by traditional media.

As well, the absence of language guidelines in the bill disadvantages francophone communities by failing to ensure that online broadcasters create content in both official languages. There are no guidelines to regulate French content, and the specificity of Quebec culture is not mentioned.

The one and only measure to increase the place of French language is the reference in paragraph 3(1)(k) of the act, which states, “a range of broadcasting services in English and in French shall be extended to all Canadians as...[means] become available”.

This is to be replaced by simply removing that last part so that it will now read, “a range of broadcasting services in English and in French shall be progressively extended to all Canadians”.

• (1025)

This does not better reflect the diversity of Canadian society. It changes it, for sure. However, it is unacceptable and represents a much weaker approach than the act provides for aboriginal, racialized and LGBTQ content. It is important to note I am not saying that their content should be minimized in any way, but simply that there is not an even playing field here, even within the act, for French and English content. It is important we do this.

I have children who home-school, and they watch French-language television to increase their French capabilities, which is something I wish I had had the opportunity to do as I was growing up. It was much more difficult for this lady who shares a birthday with a radio station.

The bill also does nothing to modernize the copyright law. With Bill C-10, the government has introduced a broad delegation of powers to the CRTC, without including clear guidelines, on the per-

centages of Canadian content required, fees and contributions, expenses, French content and so on.

The CRTC's powers have not even been clearly defined at all. In fact, the bill even chooses to limit the oversight powers of parliamentary committees with respect to the directives and regulations adopted by the CRTC. It also limits broadcasters' ability to appeal a decision. This is not acceptable. The message the government is sending is for us to trust it, and we will see it later. The government will, therefore, wait several months for the CRTC to act, and with very limited parliamentary oversight.

This is very poor governance on behalf of Canadians. Canadians expect and deserve accountability in and oversight over their government, and any and all laws, regulations and public institutions governing their opportunities as individuals and peoples. Taking authority away from committees' capacity for oversight and from the Auditor General, and increasing state control of information and conversation is regressive, not progressive. It is a serious overreach by the Liberal government.

In a minority situation, it would have been much more appropriate to come up with a clear bill, detailing in concrete terms the government's approach to all of these issues, rather than simply giving the CRTC more discretion and telling Canadians to wait and see how it would be exercised.

Stakeholders have outlined the many shortcomings I have mentioned today, and in their defence, Bill C-10 is not supportable without significant amendments in response to those requests. I can only hope that the Liberal government has been listening to our stakeholders.

Media has changed forever, and Canadians have changed how they gather information and find entertainment. They have also come to realize that there are no limits on the opportunities to choose where they go for their content.

Apparently I am having trouble with my audio. This is something I deal with all the time, and I apologize. Saskatchewan, for connectivity, comes and goes. I am very frustrated with that. I want what I have to say to be heard.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would just ask the member to verify her microphone. Please proceed.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Speaker, I apologize, especially to those from our Canadian public who are listening in. I wish I had caught that earlier.

I will end by saying that Bill C-10 does not succeed in making the changes to our broadcast system that are needed to ensure that who we are, what we say and how we say it within Canada and to the world is going to be available in the way it should be going forward.

• (1030)

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I was very interested to hear the member's comments on the importance of French productions. The member asked a question about consultation with stakeholders. I am wondering what she has to say in response to all of the francophone witnesses who appeared at committee on Monday, as well as l'ADISQ, which said:

[Translation]

“Canada is finally joining the ranks of countries that have the courage to take action to protect their cultural sovereignty and support diversity. This is a great day for the funding and discoverability of our homegrown music, especially francophone music.”

[English]

What does the member have to say to those stakeholders who work in the industry, and who are francophone, who are applauding this act?

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Speaker, I am saying that it is important that it have the same level of priority as all other languages and perspectives in Canada. My impression from what I have read and heard is that this is not the case. I am affirming the fact that this is something that needs to be a priority for our Broadcasting Act and for the way that we communicate as Canadians.

We need to ensure that these other large platforms do their part in ensuring that content is accessible for Canadians and for others who would like to have that opportunity. That applies to me as much as it does to indigenous opportunities, as well as those of other ethnic and language groups within Canada.

Private and smaller stations, radio stations and television stations in remote areas need to be protected. That is the responsibility of government. Handing things completely over to the CRTC, the way this legislation does, is not taking full responsibility for our—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It is time to continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Shefford.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments on Bill C-10.

She said herself that the act is being modernized at the expense of francophone communities. The other member who spoke just now also mused on the importance of “discoverability” for francophone culture.

What does my colleague think of the Bloc Qu b cois's more specific proposal to allocate 40% of the fees collected from online distributors to the creation and production of francophone content?

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[English]

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Speaker, first of all, what is most important is that something needs to be done. I think we need to follow in Australia's footsteps when it comes to these larger platforms, which are not being required, in many places around the world, to contribute in the countries where they have viewers.

We need to take a stand here in Canada the way that they have there. We cannot allow these platforms, which are so large that they, like many large corporations now, seem to think that they have more power than our governments. It is our governments that should be representing Canadians, whether they are francophone or English speaking.

I would love to be bilingual, and I am giving it an attempt, but it is not going as well as I would like. French content is important. That is a direction we need to go to make sure that within Canada that is always an accessible language.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I enjoy working with the member on the veterans committee, and I am happy to hear from her today. My question for her is on the CRTC consultations. It is very important that those be very transparent. When I look again as a member who represents a more rural riding, with small newspapers and radio stations that really do a fantastic job at reflecting to our region what is happening in our communities, it is important that it be transparent, independent and take into account the particular needs of Canadian businesses and workers. I wonder if the member could speak to that.

• (1035)

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall:** Madam Speaker, I, too, come from a rural riding. Local content is incredibly important to us. I used to go with scenarios where there were small radio and TV stations that struggled and they should have full support. In the same way I talk about language fairness, that applies here to regional needs across the country as well.

**Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to address Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts. In short, Bill C-10 would create a regulatory mess of our streaming and broadcasting industry in Canada.

I understand that one of the main reasons the bill is being brought forward is because it has been so long since our broadcasting regulations have been updated and our current policies are extremely out of date. Therefore, we need to update the Broadcasting Act. However, Bill C-10 as it currently stands is a regulatory mess. Real harms could come from the legislation, and I will use my time today to focus on how the bill is far broader than many realize and certainly broader than the minister has claimed. This has led to a lack of understanding of the consequences of the bill as it relates to the general public.

I will start with addressing the limitations that the government claims are integrated into the bill so that it is not too overreaching.

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The minister said in the House of Commons, “user-generated content, new content and video games would not be subject to the new regulations. Furthermore, entities would need to reach a significant economic threshold before any regulation can be imposed.” This claim by the minister is false, as no specific economic threshold would be established by the bill, which means that all internet streaming services carried in Canada, domestically and foreign-owned, would be subject to Canadian regulation. This means that if someone has Canadian subscribers, this law would apply, regardless of where the service provider is located.

The limitations the minister is referring to are that the bill would give the CRTC the power to exempt services from regulation. It would also leave it entirely up to the CRTC to establish thresholds and regulations once the bill is enacted. However, members should make no mistake; handing this half-baked legislation to the CRTC is not a fix or the same as claiming that the bill contains significant economic thresholds.

It is probably fair to say that the CRTC will not limit its regulatory approach to companies that generate large revenues in Canada as they will want to generate more tax revenue in order for the CRTC to determine who might be exempt. It is only likely to require that smaller foreign service providers register with the CRTC and provide it with confidential subscriber information, revenue data and whatever else the CRTC may ask for.

This policy could have unintended consequences and internet streaming services thinking about entering the Canadian marketplace could put their plans on hold until the legislation has been implemented for some time and until they have a better understanding of what they will face from the regulatory perspective. This could lead to less competition, less choice and an oligopoly market where Canadian consumers are overcharged.

Further on this economic threshold, the bill would leave the CRTC open to establish its own thresholds. Then what happens if they establish a high threshold that limits it to targeting a handful of large companies like Netflix, Prime Video, etc.? These are American companies, and the policy then would invite a trade challenge.

As I quoted earlier, the minister said that there would be exemptions for user-generated content, news content and video games and that none of those would be subject to new regulations. There is a reference to the user-generated content in the bill, but it covers the individuals, not necessarily the sites themselves.

YouTube, as an example, is only exempt if it limits itself to user-generated content. Once it moves outside that realm and has subscription services, as the site currently does, then it would be caught by this legislation. Therefore, there would not be as many sites and services that are 100% completely excluded from this legislation.

Maybe now members can see what I am getting at when I say the bill is a regulatory mess.

Continuing to the video game side, there is no reference in the legislation, just an assurance by the government that video games will be exempt. However, we have heard assurances from the Liberal government before and know its assurances do not carry much weight.

On the issue of news content, the minister said that would be excluded too, but once again that is not the case.

• (1040)

Online sites that offer news in video and audio format fall into this grey area, where they could be interpreted to fall under the bill. The language surrounding news content in the bill is confusing to say the least.

For example, it says that news sites that do not predominantly display text are not captured by the act. What it does not say is that those same news sites that rely on audio and video would be regulated by the act. The potential scope of news site regulation under the bill is wide-ranging as it covers everything from small local media sites to podcasts. Therefore, when the minister said that news content was excluded, that is just not true.

Whether we are talking about Rebel News, PressProgress or anything in between, it is important that online news not be affected by regulatory burdens intended to target large companies. That would be doing the exact opposite of levelling the playing field as the government claims this bill is supposed to do. Regulating Internet content in any way sets a dangerous precedent and is a threat to the freedom of expression. We must ensure the bill would not do that.

I have only a few minutes left and I have not even begun to address the massive costs associated with the implementation and enforcement of Bill C-10. I am sure some of my colleagues will go into further detail on the costs, so I will leave it with them. However, the massive cost of this program will no doubt be passed along to the consumers.

Since the legislation was introduced to the House, several of my constituents have emailed my office expressing their concerns with the legislation. Constituents fear that in attempting to level the playing field, the government would only make things worse. They say, “All [Bill] C-10 will accomplish is further entrenching the power of the legacy media companies who already benefit from today’s rigid CanCon/Canada Media-Fund structure, while leaving small and indie new media Canadian creators without meaningful government support.”



I absolutely agree that it is important we level the playing field. I think most members have the same sentiment. However, how we do that is where the Conservatives differ from the Liberals. As always, the Liberals want to bring in more taxes and punish ordinary Canadians who like to unwind and watch TV and movies. The Conservatives, on the other hand, have a leader who is committed to levelling the playing field, but to do so by eliminating the goods and services taxes on subscriptions to Canadian digital platforms.

The government needs to step up and make clarifications in some of the areas I have outlined. As I have said, it seems we are trying to achieve the same goal here, but have different ideological approaches on how we get there. It is important that the legislation define the term “significant economic threshold”, and stop passing the buck to the CRTC.

I welcome questions and comments from my colleagues, and hope we can work together to pass a bill that would benefit the majority of Canadians and does not have unintended consequences.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, it has been some time since the Conservative Party campaigned to stop any Netflix tax. The first time I thought about the Netflix tax was when Stephen Harper campaigned against it. I wonder what the current Conservative Party policy is. We know it is not in Bill C-10 to have a tax. It is, as described, a different forum through the CRTC in the form of fines. What is the current Conservative Party policy in relation to taxing digital giants?

• (1045)

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Madam Speaker, that is one of the things we always want to talk about. We want to ensure no one is over-taxed, but we want to ensure Canadian content is treated the same as any of the big Internet providers. We do not want to be giving more benefits to Internet giants such as Netflix. We need to ensure we treat everyone equally and fairly. That is why we would like to remove the tax for our local providers.

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there seems to be a confusion. The broadcasting bill deals with cultural issues and has nothing to do with issues such as online harm or disinformation. The member for Yellowhead talked about the increase in cost. Netflix has increased its subscription in 20 different countries. Does the member think that increases in subscriptions in those 20 countries are a result of Bill C-10?

The previous Conservative member spoke at great length about how the Conservatives really liked the Australian model. Believe it or not, the Australian model has regulators to enforce the legislation. I have in fact spoken with those regulators. I would like the member to tell me the difference between what Australia is doing, by using regulators, and what Canada is proposing. How is that different?

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Madam Speaker, I do not think we should necessarily be looking at following somebody else's examples. We need to ensure we have our own Canadian-made that fits Canada. A lot of options have to be available to us.

When we are looking at whether service providers, such as Netflix in this case, are raising their fees, it could be for a multitude of reasons. I do not want to get into whether the bill is starting to have

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an effect on these things, but there is potential when we look at whether the regulatory process will be followed. They possibly do know that they will have to put out more money out to do this. That could be the reason for their increases.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He seems to be arguing for as little regulation as possible.

Does he not think it is important to have certain restrictions, especially rules around francophone content percentages, as the Bloc Québécois is calling for?

I would also like to hear my colleague's thoughts on the fact that community-based media outlets have been all but forgotten in this bill and on the importance of making sure they get at least some recognition. Those media outlets will only get funding if they are mentioned in the bill. There also has to be some element of control and revenue generation.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerald Soroka:** Madam Speaker, one of my biggest concerns is how Bill C-10 treats local media. When we talk about the Francophone, we need to ensure we have culturally sensitive information. We are a bilingual country. We have to ensure it is entrenched in our communications that we have the proper amount of representation, in English and French, as they are both official languages. I would like to see this strengthened in the legislation. I do not think the bill does enough to strengthen our Francophone communities, and that is another area on which we need to improve.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, this is one of my first times speaking over Zoom, so it is a new experience for me. I appreciate much more being able speaking physically from the House, but given the pandemic, that is not possible, so here I am speaking in the House in the Commons from northern Alberta. It is kind of a weird thing. Nonetheless, I have seen many of my friends on Zoom, who are all smiling, so I know they must be doing okay around the world.

Bill C-10, I must admit, is a tough bill to get through given that it amends a whole bunch of other pieces of legislation. It always drives me a little crazy when we are dealing with stuff like this, because there are all of these little chunks of law in the bill that amend this act and that act. It takes a long time to pull it all together and get a full picture of what we are all trying to achieve. What is clear is that it is giving the CRTC new powers and new responsibilities.

*Government Orders*

I do hear a lot of frustration about the CRTC, about its not doing what it is supposed to be doing and doing other things that people do not appreciate. This is going to be interesting one way or the other. I know that with Internet installation and whoever is bringing the Internet to certain communities, the CRTC gets involved and many times whenever that is happening, there is paperwork to be filled out, phone calls to be made and folks get frustrated with how the CRTC responds, like they do with many other government organizations, such as the CRA. Folks end up in my office saying that the government is not doing what it is supposed to be doing. I have to sort all of that out. Regardless of where this bill goes and how it ends up, there will be more folks showing up in my office complaining about the CRTC's doing something or not doing something when it is supposed to be doing something else. I know that will be a challenge going forward.

Bringing Canadian content to Canadians has been an ongoing challenge. We live next door to a media giant, the United States, which has the budget, the population and Hollywood. They are able to bring content to the world. I do not think this is a unique problem to Canada. Although we are very close to the United States and our culture is similar to theirs, I would imagine that the entire English-speaking world is dominated by American media. We often end up with American content on our local channels, because it is easy and we can get it for a relatively low price.

What is interesting about this is that we do have a national broadcaster dedicated to Canada, paid for by our taxpayer dollars. Over a billion dollars a year goes to the CBC. Canadian content sometimes is very minimal. I never watch the CBC, but I do listen to it on the radio in my pickup. Often, American politics and American stories take up the majority of the news cycle on our national broadcaster. I always find that fascinating. Nevertheless, I do listen to the CBC in my pickup. I have to admit that. I am Dutch. I know that I am paying lots of money to fund the CBC, so for as long as I can stomach it, I listen to the CBC because I think I should get something for all of that money we are paying for the CBC. The CBC comes up in this bill from time to time and I hope that it will be a part of it as well.

● (1050)

The bill talks about the CBC, our national broadcaster, playing a role in our Canadian content. I know that is an important piece of what the national broadcaster is there for and I hope that we start to see a culture change at the CBC so that Canadian content, Canadian topics and Canadian interests are covered and that 75% of the news cycle is not American stories. That drives me a little nuts, to be sure.

I am a unique member of Parliament in the fact that I live hundreds of kilometres from the American border. Many Canadians live within 100 kilometres of the American border and I live nearly 1,000 kilometres from the border, so I do not necessarily have as much to do with Americans every day life as maybe other Canadians do. I am not sure how much interaction the rest of Canada has with the United States, but I know that when I went to university in B.C., in the Fraser Valley, when I lived in Abbotsford, people could spit and hit the American border, as I would always say. We could see it. On the weekends, there would be a long line-up to buy milk and gas just up the road from where I lived, as it went across to the

United States. For those living in the Lower Mainland of B.C., interacting with the United States was a common occurrence.

Where I live, the interactions with the United States probably come in the form of Amazon and the things we order having to come across the border. Every now and then we have to pay a little more money because something happened to the package at the border, such as agents opening the package, having a look at it and then charging \$12 when we picked it up. That is more typical of the interactions we have due to our relationship with the United States.

I do see a need for local content. The billion dollars we spend on the CBC could definitely be put toward that. The CBC infrastructure where I live, in many cases, is the only radio station people can pick up. That is the repeater infrastructure across northern Alberta. I value that. People do not have cell service for stretches when driving, but they do have CBC radio. It could be that we would have more regional content.

We talk a lot about the Laurentian elite. The CBC is very good and very representative of eastern Canada. It tells the stories in the voice of a central Canadian. Even when they are telling the story of the perspective of northern Alberta or the territories, it is always in the voice of a central Canadian. I do not think it is necessarily intentional, but that is the way it is. There is a central Canadian feel about it. Ironically, I do not think central Canadians even understand what that is, in the same way I do not necessarily know what a western Canadian is or does and an eastern Canadian does not necessarily know what an eastern Canadian says or does from the other perspective. I would love to see the CBC definitely speak with a western voice.

It comes down to the way that we talk and think about things. We see that often. I do not know if it is because the journalism schools are located out east or what the deal is, but we get the general sense that even when our stories from northern Alberta, northern Canada or the territories are being told, it is told in an eastern voice, if that is even a thing. I am not sure an eastern voice is a thing, but it is a term I am going to use that I like.

● (1055)

I am excited to see that the government is going to try to encourage national content. I am always concerned, however, when the Liberals get involved in trying to encourage or discourage anything. That usually means taxing and subsidizing something, which is always a fascinating thing. I think there is something to the effect that if there is a successful company, it should be taxed, but when it is struggling, it should be subsidized. There is a story about that. We have watched that over and over again. The oil sector here in Alberta was doing great—

● (1100)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have to interrupt for Statements by Members.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

### ROBERT LABINE

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we were saddened to learn yesterday of the death of Robert Labine, a former mayor of Gatineau and great champion of our city.

Mr. Labine served as mayor during years of strong growth. We have him to thank for several pieces of municipal infrastructure that define Gatineau's landscape, including the police headquarters and the Gatineau sector city hall.

His contributions to the development of our region continued over the years. For instance, he served as chair of the Outaouais urban community and co-chair of the Quebec Games in Gatineau in 2010.

Mr. Labine helped make Gatineau and our region the vibrant community it is today, recognized throughout Quebec. A man of vision who was passionate about politics, Robert Labine was close to the people and cared deeply about his community and the well-being of his fellow citizens.

My thoughts go out to his wife, Liette Tremblay, his family and his loved ones.

\* \* \*

[English]

### RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Ronald McDonald House Charities is looking to expand services for families across Canada. When a child becomes sick, it takes a terrible toll on the whole family. This burden is made so much greater by the fact that hospitals with pediatric services are often located a significant distance from the family's home.

This is where RMHC steps in to provide accommodations, meals, peer support and other services to the entire family while their child is being treated at a nearby hospital. RMHC is seeking federal funding to expand its network of houses across Canada, including a potential location near the Regina General Hospital.

On behalf of the people of Regina and southern Saskatchewan, I would like to salute Ronald McDonald House Charities and encourage the government to support this worthwhile cause.

\* \* \*

### INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, next week is International Development Week. Reducing extreme poverty, advancing gender equality, responding to humanitarian crises and increasing access to education and health care for the most vulnerable are some of the many global initiatives that Canada has moved forward.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the lives of Canadians in many ways that we could not have imagined, globally the pandemic has regressed advancements made in food security, health, education and gender equality, to name a few. However,

### Statements by Members

Canadians can rest assured in knowing that our government is steadfast in its approach to end this pandemic, not only domestically but globally, all while taking concrete actions toward achieving the sustainable development goals.

I hope my colleagues will join me in thanking all Canadian civil society organizations and Canadians, including public servants, in some of the most challenging places in the world who are making a huge difference in the lives of those most vulnerable.

\* \* \*

### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, on January 28, 1988, the Supreme Court handed down its landmark judgment in *R v. Morgentaler*, which held that the abortion provision in the Criminal Code violated a woman's right under section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to security of the person.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge some of the powerful women in my riding who advanced the rights of women, including affirming the right to an abortion: Linda Taylor, Susan White, Sandy Rubinfeld, Shelly Blanco, Randa Stewart, Muriel Smith, Myrna Phillips, Wendy Land, Ellen Kruger and the late Loa Henry.

They are icons who serve as some of the greatest mentors in advancing women's rights. We must always continue fight to affirm that abortion is health care. I know our work is not over. Our fight for reproductive justice continues today. These women broke barriers and changed the lives of women across the country. I thank them. I honour their courage.

\* \* \*

### DAMASCUS CAFE AND BAKERY

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, in Sudbury, the road to Damascus leads to 106 Beech Street. It is where a Syrian refugee who immigrated to Canada with his family years ago has set up shop.

The Qarquoz family's Damascus Cafe and Bakery offers both eat-in and takeout Mediterranean and Syrian cuisine. The menu is composed of spinach fatayer, falafel sandwiches, tabouleh salad and some of the best shawarma in Sudbury.

Five years ago, the Qarquoz family arrived to a huge welcome party at the Greater Sudbury Airport. Today the family has grown, has integrated wonderfully into the community and has become self-supporting. They are now giving thanks by giving back generously to the community.

When I stopped in recently for take-out, the owner, Hussein, wanted to talk about how we could work together to help feed homeless people.

*Statements by Members*

● (1105)

[Translation]

In Sudbury, our diversity is not a challenge to be overcome, or a difficulty to be tolerated. Rather, it is a tremendous source of strength. Our multiculturalism is our strength.

[English]

I am grateful Hussein brought his family to Sudbury and I am proud—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Richmond Centre.

\* \* \*

**LUNAR NEW YEAR**

**Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to send best wishes this lunar new year to all Canadians, especially to Canadians of Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese descent.

Lunar new year honours the history and ancient customs of one of the oldest civilizations in the world. This year is the Year of the Ox. The ox traditionally symbolizes prosperity through hard work. With economic uncertainty, all of us need to work tirelessly to bring stability to the economy, maintain jobs and care for the most vulnerable.

Lunar new year celebrations are important community events, not only in Richmond and the Lower Mainland but all over the nation as well.

From my family to yours, happy lunar new year.

*Gung hay fat choy. Xin nian kwai le.*

\* \* \*

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, February is Black History Month, when we recognize the contributions of Black Canadians throughout Canada's history.

It is also a chance to share the stories of today. I would like to pay tribute to Black youth in my riding, who are making their voices heard through "The House" podcast of the Britannia Woods Community House.

"The House" podcast is a platform where the authentic voices of young people are expressed. It takes on social issues and provides a forum to share struggles and success stories, and to build a sense of community.

[Translation]

During Black History Month, I am honoured to highlight the work of these young Black artists and entrepreneurs who play such an important role in creating a better world.

[English]

As we celebrate the stories of Black Canadians in our past, we must also ask ourselves what stories future leaders will tell us about today.

Let us make sure that it is a story of justice, inclusion and opportunity. Young people are speaking. Let us all take a moment to listen.

\* \* \*

**AMAR ERRY**

**Ms. Helena Jaczek (Markham—Stouffville, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Markham has lost a great community, cultural and spiritual leader. In January, flags were lowered to half-mast at Markham Civic Centre to honour the life and contributions of Amar Erry.

He was a cornerstone of Markham's Hindu community, a champion for diversity and inclusion, and a friend to many. President of the Arya Samaj Mandir since 1980 and president of the Vedic Cultural Centre's board of directors since 1996, he sat on numerous boards and committees, including the Canadian Federation of Intercultural Friendship.

He was a passionate and dedicated community leader who was well liked and well respected. He was thoughtful, kind, and gracious, and an inspiration to those around him. He will be missed by friends and family in Canada and around the world. I will miss him too.

I know these thoughts are shared by my colleague, the member for Markham—Thornhill. Our sincere condolences go out to his family, his friends and the community.

\* \* \*

**AVIATION INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, these have been hard years for Calgary.

Harder still was the past year for aviation workers. After the mergers and downsizing in energy companies, WestJet became our largest corporate headquarters, with 14,000 employees; 5,700 remain today. The job losses in aviation and related fields are in the tens of thousands, with temporary layoffs and furloughs hiding the enormity of the situation.

The former finance minister told the aviation industry that the government "had [their] backs" and were "ready to do anything and everything in [their] power to support those who are suffering."

Where is this Liberal government now? It is muted and silent. There is no specific support for aviation workers, only empty promises and damaging policies.

Canada's airline and aviation workers deserve better. They need a plan that will secure their jobs, secure the economy and secure their future. Canada's Conservatives have that plan: more rapid testing, evidence-based quarantining, and financial support for workers in airports, airlines and aviation.

• (1110)

[Translation]

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, 25 years ago, the hon. Jean Augustine moved a motion to make February Black History Month. This year also marks the 75th anniversary of Viola Desmond's challenge of racial segregation.

Less than a year ago, George Floyd was tragically killed. Since then, the Canadian government has brought in numerous programs to support the Black community, including young people, women, entrepreneurs and organizations run by Black people. However, a lot of work remains to be done to combat systemic racism.

To that end, I invite the various levels of government to do something tangible to ensure that all Canadians can fully contribute to a fairer, more equitable and, above all, more inclusive society.

Happy Black History Month.

\* \* \*

### ANTONY AUCLAIR

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the people of Beauce will be watching Antony Auclair and his team at the Super Bowl. Number 82, born in Notre-Dame-des-Pins, is an irreplaceable, passionate player whose determination got him all the way to the NFL. That is the ultimate payoff for Antony's efforts and hard work during his early days with the Notre-Dame-de-la-Trinité Tigers and the Polyvalente Saint-Georges Dragons.

Sunday, Beauce and the entire football community will be proud, as will all the organizers who watched Antony grow up, his coaches, his teammates, who were there for all the ups and downs, his teachers and especially his family, who made sacrifices to be able to guide and motivate him to achieve his goals.

Antony, if you only knew how much you inspire so many young and not-so-young people. Enjoy the moment. You have the privilege of playing with a future legend like Tom Brady. I hope you win the Super Bowl. Just remember, Beauce is rooting for you.

I wish him a good game. As one of my more enthusiastic colleagues would say, Go Tampa Bay, Go Antony!

\* \* \*

[English]

### RESIDENTS OF SOURIS—MOOSE MOUNTAIN

**Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris-Moose Mountain, CPC):** Madam Speaker, this last year has been an extremely challenging one, and I would like to recognize the great people of Souris—Moose Mountain for their strength and resilience throughout it all. On top of the pandemic, they have now suffered over five years of weak Liberal leadership that has done virtually nothing for the people of Saskatchewan and their communities. Despite this, my constituents have shown who they truly are: hard-working Canadians who want the best for their country.

These are the facts: Our energy workers want to get back to work and they want the option to do so through Canadian pipelines mov-

### Statements by Members

ing Canadian oil; our farmers and ranchers, who have shown incredible environmental stewardship, want credit for that, instead of being penalized with a carbon tax; and our small business owners want to know that they are supported by their government, pandemic or not, given how essential they are to the success of our local economies.

I will continue to fight to secure jobs for the residents of Souris—Moose Mountain and to secure our future.

\* \* \*

### FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, everyone knows that the financial circumstances of Newfoundland and Labrador are in rough shape. One reason, which we share with other oil-producing provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan, is there were no equalization payments because of a loss of revenue following the collapse in oil prices and the lack of demand. Changes to the fiscal stabilization program were held out by former finance minister Bill Morneau as one solution, but all we got was tinkering.

The per capita limit was increased, but the maximum for Newfoundland and Labrador is only \$90 million, and for Alberta and Saskatchewan there is not enough to make a dent in the crisis either. It was not retroactive and it was a flop when it came to the rules. Year over year, a drop in revenue had to reach 50% to qualify, so last year's drop of 46% in Newfoundland and Labrador yielded nothing.

The Liberal government could have helped provinces deal with significant revenue losses by sharing the burden with all the people of Canada, as with equalization, but it did not, and Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as Alberta and Saskatchewan, want to know why this government is not there when it is needed.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### NORTH SHORE WORKER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Madam Speaker, just recently, Action-Chômage Côte-Nord launched its campaign to raise awareness about the plight of seasonal workers on the North Shore. I am proud to support this organization, which is calling for the fair and equitable reform of employment insurance for all those who need to use this program at some point.

*Oral Questions*

Too many workers have to go into debt to get through the seasonal gap. The consequences are disastrous for families, businesses and communities, which become poorer or just leave the area. We have the power to change things, however.

I want to reiterate to the House that the Bloc Québécois and I want to work on eliminating the seasonal gap. The industry is seasonal, but the workers are not.

I invite my colleagues to view the Action-Chômage Côte-Nord video clips provided free of charge online, which remind us that elected officials, like employment insurance, must serve the workers.

\* \* \*

• (1115)

[English]

**WOLF WILLIAM SOLKIN**

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I regret that I am not standing in our symbol of democracy this morning to pay tribute to World War II veteran Wolf William Solkin. Wolf passed away at Ste. Anne's Hospital in Montreal on Wednesday, just days before his 98th birthday. He was the last surviving officer of Canada's Algonquin Regiment, which helped to liberate Europe during the Second World War.

"*NE-KAH-NE-TAH*" or "let us lead" is the motto of the Algonquin Regiment and lead Wolf did. In 2016, after Ste. Anne's was transferred from federal to provincial management, Solkin noticed a decline in service, so he took on a class action lawsuit that is still under way. He was fierce, determined and fearless in his advocacy for veterans' rights and dignity and he inspired a new generation of veterans to fight for what they have earned. There is a profound sense of loss today among Canada's veterans community.

To his wife Louise, sons David and Andrew and daughters Cindy and Suzu, on behalf of a grateful nation, please accept our condolences and sincere thanks for Wolf's service to our country and to his fellow veterans. Bravo Zulu.

\* \* \*

**FIRST RESPONDERS**

**Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wish to recognize the efforts made by first responders during a recent fire at La Coopérative Le Chez-Nous in Wellington, a seniors facility in my riding of Egmont.

A fire at a seniors residence is extremely frightening. Volunteer firefighters from across the area, in particular the Wellington firefighters, responded quickly, provided comforting words and placed themselves in harm's way to put out the fire and assist each senior resident to safety.

[Translation]

I thank all first responders for their dedication.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, exactly two months ago in this House, the Prime Minister rose, puffed up his chest and said that this government was delivering medications, that it was delivering the vaccines. That was two months ago. Today, with regard to vaccinations, Canada is the 34th worst country in the world, and it is moving down the list. The prestigious magazine *The Economist* estimates that if nothing changes, Canada and Canadians will not have access to vaccines until 2022.

Does the Prime Minister realize that rather than guaranteeing the delivery—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. As he knows very well, Canada negotiated with seven vaccine manufacturers. Five of those have shown promising results, and the other two have already been approved. We are receiving doses this week and we will continue to receive doses throughout the first quarter, for a total of six million doses by the end of March. Every Canadian who wants to be vaccinated will be by the end of September.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, for almost 10 days now, Canada has gotten hardly any vaccines. We are waiting.

People at *The Economist* know their stuff. They estimate that vaccination will not be complete before June 2022. England has already vaccinated 15.5% of its residents, while Canada stands at less than 3%. England has vaccinated 90% of people aged 75 and older, but Canada is nowhere near that.

Why is that? The Prime Minister made sure to get vaccines before Christmas, but then he dropped the ball on securing more. Why did the government not ensure that we would be getting daily vaccine deliveries?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, this government is motivated, and we are working quickly and diligently to secure the vaccines needed to vaccinate all Canadians. We signed agreements with Moderna and Pfizer. These companies manufacture the first two vaccines that were approved. We will be getting enough vaccines from these two suppliers alone to vaccinate all Canadians by the end of September. There are now three other promising vaccines. We are obviously awaiting approvals from the—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, 10 months ago, the government was in a big hurry to sign an agreement with China. Ultimately, that proved fruitless, and now we need vaccines.

Yesterday, the premiers got together and demanded transparency from the Prime Minister of Canada. They demanded access to all of the documents pertaining to the agreements. That is what we have been asking for since last September.

Why is the government not releasing the agreements with pharmaceutical companies so we can find out exactly why Canada has not received any vaccine doses for going on 10 days now?

• (1120)

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, transparency and accountability are top priorities for our government. We are committed to releasing as much information as possible about our procurement efforts throughout the pandemic. We are, of course, collaborating with the provinces and territories. Given the fierce global competition for vaccines at the moment, disclosing certain information about contracts with specific suppliers could jeopardize Canada's supply chain. I am sure the member would not want that.

We will continue to communicate with—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Carleton.

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#### EMPLOYMENT

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we are not talking about statistics today. We are talking about a human tragedy for the 213,000 families who have lost their paycheques. That is the number of jobs that have been lost in Canada. Meanwhile, 50,000 new jobs have been created in the United States. Our unemployment rate is higher than that of the G7, the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and the average for all advanced economies.

Why are foreign workers earning paycheques—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. minister.

[English]

**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, with respect to the job numbers, I would point out to the member opposite that there is a global pandemic that is impacting different parts of the country and different parts of the world. I notice that the recent jobs losses were concentrated in provinces that have been hit very hard by the second wave. The good news is that projections from private sector economists continue to suggest that this will be an excellent year for economic growth, with a projected average at 4.4% growth in GDP.

What is important is that during this time of need, the federal government is going to continue to be there for Canadian households and businesses no matter what it takes, no matter how long it takes.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member is right; it is a global pandemic. It exists in the United

#### Oral Questions

States, which has significantly lower unemployment and added 50,000 jobs last month. It exists in the U.K., in Japan, in Germany, across the G7. It exists across the advanced economies, but every single jurisdiction I just named has lower unemployment than Canada. We have now lost 213,000 jobs in just one month while the rest of the world is returning to work.

Why do foreign workers get paycheques and we get credit card debts?

**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, the shortsightedness of the member opposite is absolutely astounding. With great respect, if we wanted to have a short-term uptick in employment rates, we could talk to the premiers and tell them not to put in place public health measures that are designed to protect the lives and well-being of the people who live in our communities, but we know that short-term gain would do immeasurable damage to the long-term economic interests of our nation.

We are going to advance supports so the provinces can do what is right to protect the health and well-being of their residents and so we can prevent economic scarring and rebound from this pandemic on the back end stronger than any developed economy in the world.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### HEALTH

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Madam Speaker, yesterday will go down in history as the day when the whole world saw that Canada failed to quickly procure vaccines. That means that the pandemic will last longer here than it will in other countries.

The government has to shift into problem-solving mode. The first step is to admit that there is a problem. The government needs to admit that it dropped the ball. It has to start by being transparent with people.

When will it make the procurement contracts public and present a new and more credible vaccination schedule?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, obviously, we are having regular discussions with all of the provinces and territories, and we are talking about the vaccine deliveries that continue to arrive from Europe.

We signed agreements with seven manufacturers, two of which are currently delivering vaccines to Canada. As the member is well aware, we will be receiving 6 million doses during the first quarter and enough vaccines from approved manufacturers to vaccinate all Canadians before the end of September.

**Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ):** Madam Speaker, this member is actually not well aware, because she does not have a detailed schedule.

### Oral Questions

The government needs to acknowledge its failure. Denials like the one we just heard are useless.

It needs to tighten border controls to stop the spread. It needs to increase health transfers because of the extended state of emergency in our health care centres. It must increase pensions for seniors whose physical, mental and financial health is at risk. It must financially support seasonal industries, the arts, tourism, hospitality and fisheries. It must negotiate for vaccines produced in the United States.

When is the government going to shift into problem-solving mode?

• (1125)

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois would love to see Canada fail. The Bloc would hate for us to succeed at what we are doing.

Unfortunately for the Bloc, we are there for all Quebeckers and Canadians. We have agreements with most vaccine producers. We have been there to help people who lost their jobs by providing the CERB. We have been there to sustain small and medium-sized businesses and help them survive through the Canada emergency wage subsidy. We have been there for seniors, and we will continue to be there for them.

I know the Bloc would love to see us fail, but that is not going to happen.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, our seniors built our society, and we are lucky to reap the benefits. Unfortunately, the pandemic has demonstrated that the Conservative and Liberal cuts have undermined our health care system.

Seniors have been left to fend for themselves and sometimes abandoned. The staff are exhausted from working in deplorable conditions. It is a national disgrace. Our seniors deserve better. They deserve to grow old safely and with dignity.

Will the Liberals respond to our request to work with the provinces in order to guarantee the quality of care and quality of life of our seniors?

[English]

**Hon. Deb Schulte (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we are there for seniors, and we have been there since the beginning of the pandemic. We have made sure that we provided financial support through one-time, tax-free payments. We made sure that we put additional money into the community so that we could have community supports to help seniors through this terrible time. We are making sure that we are there, providing additional funding for health care support and for the long-term care sector.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the COVID pandemic has shown Canadians the cost of government inaction and neglect. Families have suffered devastating losses of loved ones in long-term care centres across the country, but instead of fixing the problems like they promised, the Liberals continue to underfund health care and protect the profits of big corporations and their wealthy shareholders.

Nobody should be profiting off the care of our seniors. Will the minister commit to improving Canada's long-term care system now so that residents, their families and long-term care workers no longer have to suffer?

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, regardless of where they live, those living in long-term care deserve quality care and to be treated with dignity. All providers need to be accountable for protecting those in long-term care. We need to protect those living and working in long-term care.

Let me be clear, no one is invincible to this virus. We will continue working closely with provinces and territories to control and prevent infections in these facilities.

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### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, yesterday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Procurement said that the Liberals chose the “second-best” vaccine procurement strategy for Canadians. I would argue that it is a bit of an understatement given that we are two million doses short this week.

People are dying. We need a path forward. I want the best for Canadians. I want a path to recovery. Why did the Liberals knowingly settle for second best when Canadians deserve far better?

• (1130)

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, of course Canada has done exemplary work in this pandemic, including getting billions of pieces of PPE to provinces and territories, collaborating on rapid testing with provinces and procuring from seven vaccine manufacturers enough doses to vaccinate every Canadian many times over.

Just with the vaccines we have already approved, we have enough doses to vaccinate every Canadian who wishes to have one, by the end of September, and six million doses, including those arriving this week, in the first quarter of the year.

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### HEALTH

**Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, just to correct my colleague, zero doses arrived this week, and Canadians should not have to settle for second best.



A year into the pandemic, tools like vaccines, rapid tests and therapeutics are being delivered around the world, and today, international outlets are reporting that 75% of a population receiving two doses of the vaccine would be a benchmark for a country achieving herd immunity.

When will the government tell Canadians how many need to be vaccinated before the unprecedented restrictions the federal Liberals have imposed will be lifted?

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we have taken action for Canadians throughout this crisis. Again, as we have said in the House many times, we have secured the highest numbers of doses per capita of any country in the world, with the most diverse portfolio of COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccines are in Canada, with more shipments and deliveries confirmed through February and March and ramping up through the spring.

We are working with the provinces and territories to support them in their responsibilities to deliver vaccines so that every Canadian can get vaccinated when they wish.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada has spent more than any other G7 leader. The deficit could reach \$400 billion this year.

Canada has one of the lowest vaccination rates among industrialized countries, behind the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy and Finland. Our unemployment rate is among the worst in the G7. The spending may be astronomical, but the results are pathetic. No vaccines means no recovery. No recovery means no jobs.

Why is the Prime Minister always the worst at everything?

[English]

**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, it is curious to me that the hon. member would suggest Canada's spending more to be there for businesses and households is a bad thing.

We knew at the beginning of this pandemic that we had the choice to either let households and businesses bear the cost of the economic shutdowns associated with COVID-19, or to be there so that we could ensure that families could keep a roof over their heads and food on the table, and businesses could keep their workers on the payroll.

If I had the opportunity, time and time again I would choose to be there for Canadians, and I am disappointed to see that the Conservatives would choose not to.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Madam Speaker, let us ask some simple questions.

Why is the Prime Minister not being upfront about the supply of vaccines? Why are businesses being kept in the dark while workers

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are forced to stay home? No vaccines means no jobs and 2% more unemployment in Quebec. No vaccines means a large number of small businesses will close.

Is it too much to ask the Prime Minister for a bit of honesty and less talk? We have had enough of empty talking points. Unemployed Canadians deserve to know what is going on.

Will the Prime Minister please admit that his plan is not working and tell the whole truth?

[English]

**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, it is difficult to take lessons from the prepared lines of a member who seems content to read his question off a piece of paper in front of him in the chamber.

It is not a prepared line that we stepped up to be there for nine million Canadians with CERB. It is not a prepared line that four and a half million workers still have their jobs because of the wage subsidy. It is not a prepared line that 800,000 businesses have had the emergency business account to help them keep their doors open.

With great respect to my friend and colleague opposite, we know this COVID-19 pandemic comes with an immense cost. The difference between our parties is that we knew that the government had a duty to be there for Canadians, households and businesses—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

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#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, not even a month in, President Joe Biden has stated that his administration considers the Chinese telecom giant Huawei to be a national security threat. Now, six years into his role, the Prime Minister has yet to make a decision on Huawei.

Will the Prime Minister stand with our international allies and say no to Huawei?

**Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, our government is going to continue to ensure that Canadian networks are kept safe and secure. We are never going to comment on specific companies, and everyone knows that an examination of 5G technologies and a review of security and economic considerations is well under way. We are going to carefully weigh these matters with our allies and our partners, including the Biden administration, and we are going to make the best decision for Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Madam Speaker, that is just not good enough.

Canada is the only allied Five Eyes country without a formal policy to ban or restrict Huawei from operating within it, and now it looks like our neighbours down south are ready to make a strong decision on this matter.

Why is the government choosing to stand with a company connected to the Chinese government, rather than our long-held strong international allies?

• (1135)

**Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is clear that our government recognizes the importance of protecting Canada's telecommunications systems. We are regularly engaging with telecommunications companies, with our allies and the security infrastructure on a variety of topics, just like this. We are not going to publicly discuss advice given by our national security experts, but I can assure the House that we are always going to be taking the steps necessary to protect Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**HEALTH**

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the federal government failed to quickly procure COVID-19 vaccines for Quebec. In other words, the pandemic is going to last longer than it should. That is bad news for everyone, but especially for seniors. They are the ones who would have been vaccinated by now, but Quebec was forced to slow down its vaccination campaign in seniors' residences since it has nothing to inject them with.

What is the government doing right now, not six months from now, to get doses more quickly and ensure that we can vaccinate seniors?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Canada has seven very solid vaccine procurement agreements. As the hon. members know full well, we will receive six million doses by the end of the first quarter, and we will receive enough doses of vaccines that have already been approved to vaccinate all Canadians by the end of September.

\* \* \*

**SENIORS**

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, we look forward to seeing the schedule and plans.

As the pandemic drags on, seniors have been isolated in their homes for 11 months, unable to see loved ones. The virus is obviously a threat to their physical health, but the isolation is taking a toll on their mental health, as well as their financial health. Seniors have received the least amount of support from the federal government, even though they are most affected by COVID-19. The meagre amount they received from the government this summer is not enough.

Will the government finally permanently increase pensions by \$110 a month for people 65 and older?

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, our hearts go out to our seniors, the pioneers who built our communities, who are living in residences and long-term care homes all across Quebec.

We are pleased that they have gotten priority access to the vaccine. Some vaccines have already arrived, and others will arrive this week, contrary to what the House just heard. We will be getting enough new doses to vaccinate all seniors and Quebecers by the end of September.

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[English]

**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Madam Speaker, yesterday, McKinsey & Company agreed to pay nearly \$600 million U.S. for its role in fuelling the opioid crisis in the United States. For almost a decade that firm was led by Dominic Barton, now the Prime Minister's hand-picked ambassador to China. It was a period in which McKinsey was advising opioid companies to pay rebates for drug overdoses just to boost the sales of OxyContin.

Before naming him to a key position in the Liberal government, was the Prime Minister informed of Mr. Barton's role at McKinsey and the firm's involvement in the opioid crisis?

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as I have said before in the House, Ambassador Barton's role is first and foremost about defending the Canadian people's interests and values in China. That includes securing the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, and that includes being active on every file that is of interest to Canadians in China. Canadians can be proud of the immense amount of effort the ambassador has devoted to all of these objectives.

Upon his nomination, Ambassador Barton worked directly with the Ethics Commissioner to set up an ethics screen. We can continue to be proud of his work in China for Canadians.

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is incredible that the Liberals are defending Dominic Barton and refusing to answer this question. Is it because McKinsey pleaded guilty to criminal charges for its role in the opioid crisis? That crisis has claimed the lives of more than 16,000 Canadians. Is it because the provinces have now filed civil suits against the opioid companies that McKinsey advised?

Again, they should answer yes or no. They should not be afraid to answer this question. Did the Prime Minister have prior knowledge of Mr. Barton's role at McKinsey and the firm's involvement in the opioid crisis?

• (1140)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I think that all Canadians and everyone in the House knows about the opioid crisis, which is gripping many parts of our country and causing great turmoil, stress and death. We still feel the impacts of Purdue's role in creating the opioid crisis. We are not denying that.

This crisis has been felt across our country. Too many communities are impacted and too many loved ones are left behind. The world wants answers. The world needs answers. It should get answers, but while we wait, we will continue to do our part to ensure the health of all Canadians.

\* \* \*

#### COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Madam Speaker, many Canadians who are out of work turned to the government for help. Unfortunately, the government is letting them down. People who have been denied employment insurance have been directed to apply for the CRB. However, due to a technical issue with the CRA's pay system, they were automatically being denied.

Can the minister please confirm on what day this ridiculous issue will be resolved?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I can assure the member and everyone in the House that we are making every effort to get this resolved as soon as possible. Understandably, we want to make sure people are not getting two benefits at the same time, but people need to get the benefits they are entitled to.

We are working on this. I cannot give the member a date, because right now we are all hands on deck trying to solve this. I will get back to him with further information.

**Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC):** Madame Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

The government has left parents in my riding in a catch-22. Home with their children, they applied for EI. Their claims were denied. They were advised to apply for the Canada recovery caregiving benefit, but those applications were also denied due to their having open EI claims. Proof has been provided to CRA, but its database is not able to bypass the error.

No more platitudes and no more buck passing. When can these parents expect this desperately needed income support?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that the CRA and ESDC, through Service Canada, are working to resolve this issue of people having two different claims in the system. From an integrity point of view, we want to make sure people are not being paid twice, but that is small comfort I know for citizens who are waiting for their payments. We are working very hard to resolve this.

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#### HOUSING

**Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, a 70-year-old woman was fatally injured in a home invasion. The suspect was found at the homeless encampment at Strathcona Park. As the homelessness crisis continues, safety concerns for the campers and residents have escalated to a breaking point. Emergency action is needed to house the campers and end this dire situation. The province has requested fifty-fifty cost sharing with the federal government to acquire distress housing or motels as an emergency pandemic measure. It has been over nine months and still there is no answer.

Will the federal government take immediate action and partner with the province to end the homelessness crisis?

**Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we have prioritized investments for the most vulnerable Canadians, including those who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Early during the pandemic we invested \$157.5 million to ensure additional dollars. We also launched the rapid housing initiative, in which the City of Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia will get significant funding to build rapid housing and find permanent solutions so the most vulnerable are not on the streets and have affordable housing options.

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#### TRANSPORT

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, freighter anchorages around southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands were established on traditional and unceded territories without the consent of local first nations. The area is also being proposed as a national marine conservation area, recognizing its vital marine ecosystem and precious coastal environment.

The Liberals often like to say that no relationship is more important than that with indigenous peoples, and that they genuinely care about our environment.

When will the Minister of Transport honour these commitments and put a stop to the Port of Vancouver using our waters as an overflow industrial parking lot?

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**Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the government's long-term strategy regarding anchorages is aimed at three things: improving the management of anchorages outside of public ports, ensuring the long-term efficiency and reliability of the supply chain, and mitigating environmental and social impacts. The new interim protocol for anchorages was developed in partnership with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, the Pacific Pilotage Authority and local communities. In fact, the new protocol was instituted to respond to the immediate concerns of those coastal communities.

I can assure the hon. member that the well-being of coastal communities is of the utmost importance—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, hatred and extremism often target diverse communities. We must stop anyone who seeks to harm others because of their race, religion or gender.

Unfortunately, we continue to see hate manifested in our country. Recently, a Montreal synagogue was vandalized. In my home province of Quebec, we just marked the fourth anniversary of the Quebec City mosque attack. These events remind us of the painful impacts hate can have.

Can the Minister of Public Safety let the House know what new measures our government is taking to protect people from extremist violence and hate?

• (1145)

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard for his very important question and his excellent work in standing up to hate and intolerance.

The listing of terrorist entities is an important legal tool in the fight against terrorism, and makes it clear that Canada will not tolerate such acts of violence. To be listed, an individual or group must meet a strict legal threshold determined by our national security agencies. This week, we added 13 new groups to the list, which includes four ideologically motivated violent extremist and white supremacist organizations, in addition to the two that were listed for the first time in 2019. We will remain vigilant against all—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

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**SCIENCE**

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Canadian Statistics Advisory Council says the Liberal government does not have the data required to make decisions on the pandemic. This is the type of data needed to support public policy decisions being made now. Canadians cannot trust government decisions when the government does not have data or

will not show what it knows, or maybe more accurately what it does not know. The government has gone from saying it has Canadians' backs to hiding things behind their backs.

When will the government provide Canadians with this data and share its plan for recovery?

**Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, in order for Canadians to benefit from the digital economy, we are going to need to ensure that Canadians have confidence that their data is safe and that they trust their privacy is being respected. That is exactly why our government is strengthening that trust by ensuring Canada has a world-leading privacy and data protection system and the companies that break the rules face severe consequences.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner is advising the Speaker that is not an answer to the question asked.

Could the member repeat the question?

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Madam Speaker, absolutely.

The Canadian Statistics Advisory Council says the Liberal government does not have the data required to make decisions on the pandemic. This is the type of data needed to support public policy decisions it is making right now. Canadians cannot trust government decisions when the government does not have data or will not show what it knows, or worse yet, what it does not know. The government has gone from saying it has Canadians' backs to hiding information behind their backs.

When will the government provide Canadians with data and share what its recovery plan really is?

**Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, from the beginning of this pandemic, the Government of Canada has relied upon the opinions of experts to guide all of our decisions, whether in relation to procuring vaccines, rebuilding our biomanufacturing capacity or manufacturing PPE. At every point of the way, we have been relying upon Canada's experts and making sure that the data upon which our decisions are made is solid.

The Government of Canada shares as much data as possible and we know that this is important because open science is important. Our government is going to continue to work with our experts and rely upon their opinions as we make our decisions.

## HEALTH

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, across the border and minutes away from my community, U.S. seniors are able to be vaccinated at their convenience. On our side of the border, we are locked down, uncertain about our health and unable to see our families. Many are uncertain about their livelihoods. Lockdowns were supposed to be a temporary measure to buy governments time, but the government has failed to widely deploy rapid tests and vaccines.

Our allies are getting vaccines for their most vulnerable, saving lives and allowing lockdowns to end. When will the Liberals do the same?

**Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to correct the member and give a few facts and figures. A total of 1.19 million vaccines have been sent to provinces and territories. The member speaks about rapid tests. Almost 19 million rapid tests have been sent to provinces and territories: 6.4 million to Ontario, 3.2 million to Quebec and 1.9 million to Alberta. We have delivered rapid tests and we are delivering vaccines.

\* \* \*

• (1150)

## PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Manitoba is ramping up its plans to vaccinate 20,000 people per day by April. There are 13 vaccine super sites opening up, as well as doctors' offices and local pharmacies, and all elderly in care homes have received their first dose. Provinces such as Manitoba are doing their part to ensure vaccines are delivered to people, but the province's efforts have been thwarted in part because the Prime Minister cannot provide a reliable vaccine shipment schedule. The shipments are not reliable thanks to poor vaccine contracts negotiated by the Liberal government.

When are Manitobans getting our next vaccine shipment, and how many doses will we receive? We deserve to know.

**Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, of course we communicate with the provinces, like the member's province of Manitoba, on a regular basis. We continue to receive vaccine shipments, and people in Manitoba would be receiving them as well. That includes this week.

We have doses coming by the end of March, six million in fact, that have already been approved, and enough to vaccinate every Canadian by the end of September. We are glad that Manitoba and the other provinces are ramping up their ability to vaccinate citizens, because as more and more vaccine doses arrive, we will want those deployed as soon as possible.

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## PUBLIC SAFETY

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Madam Speaker, all Canadians should welcome the government's addition of 13 new groups to the Criminal Code terrorist list, but the Liberals once again have

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failed Canadians, failing to fully ban Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The IRGC has sponsored terror around the world for decades and is responsible for the destruction of the Ukraine air flight last year that killed 55 Canadians and 30 permanent residents.

When will the Liberal government finally list the most deadly terror organization in the world today?

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I remind the member opposite that we are working, with respect to that particular regime, with all like-minded countries to ensure that Iran is held to account for its support of terrorism. I also remind him that the Canadian government has listed four of the proxy agencies of the IRGC, including the Quds Force.

We will continue to work with our allies to address the activities of the Iranian government in the sponsorship of terrorism, taking all appropriate measures against that regime, and we will continue to use all of the legal tools available to us based on the advice of our national security intelligence officials.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the federal government's incompetence has put some permanent residents in an inhumane situation. The government is granting families permanent residency and giving them a visa to come to Canada. These families quit their jobs, sell their homes, get on a plane and come to Canada, but once they get here, border services tells them to go back to their own country. The Minister of Immigration is inviting them here, but once they get here, the Department of Public Safety wants to send them away.

Can the two ministers talk and finally clear up this unacceptable mess?

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We have imposed border restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and safety of Canadians. We have also put exemptions in place to ensure our economic recovery and help reunite families. Anyone who receives a confirmation of permanent residency while the border restrictions are in place is sent a letter clearly indicating whether they are eligible to enter Canada. We will always follow the advice of public health experts to make sure that we protect the health and safety of all Canadians.

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**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, they get a letter, but they also get a visa. The left hand does not know what the right hand is doing in this government. One department invites immigrants to Canada and another tries to kick them out. We also have one department telling people not to travel and another authorizing cheap trips to sun destinations. People are not talking to each other.

How can the government be so lax with people who break the rules and travel south and so punitive with people who follow the rules and come to Canada upon being invited to do so?

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We have been very clear. If we are to keep Canadians and people who come to Canada safe, now is not the time to travel. CBSA officers can deny entry to anyone who shows up at a border crossing or an airport and fails to meet any of the exemption criteria.

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### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Canada gave money to an international organization to distribute vaccines to disadvantaged countries. Now we are asking that same organization to give us vaccine doses from that same supply to make up for the Prime Minister's failure. It is a disgrace, an embarrassment to proud Canadians. That is why we want to get to the bottom of the situation. When will the government release the vaccine supply contracts?

• (1155)

[English]

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of International Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, if I may, I will correct the record. The COVAX facility was actually designed to have the buy-in of wealthy countries. It has two tracks: one for self-financing countries to purchase vaccines through COVAX, as well as to make donations. In fact, Canada has done both. We have contributed \$220 million to provide vaccines for the developing world, while also purchasing on behalf of Canadians.

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### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the new American administration has stopped the Keystone XL pipeline dead in its tracks, killing thousands of jobs in Alberta. Now Michigan is attempting to shut down Enbridge Line 5, killing thousands of jobs in Ontario. The Liberal government has responded by rolling over and playing dead. All this is while energy workers watch foreign oil come into Canada from third world dictators and human rights abusers.

What specific action will the Liberal government take to reduce foreign oil imports into Canada this year?

**Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we take this issue with respect to Line 5 very seriously. Line 5 is vital to our energy

security. This line is a critical economic and energy security link between Canada and the U.S. and has safely operated for over 65 years. It provides good-paying, middle-class jobs for the thousands of worker at refineries in Sarnia and in Montreal and Lévis, Quebec.

I assure the House that we are looking at all our options. Line 5 is a vital pipeline for Canada's energy security, and we fully support it.

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### AVIATION INDUSTRY

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Calgary is home to proud entrepreneurs. Those risk-takers created WestJet, and after the devastation of our energy sector by malicious Liberal policy actions, it became our largest corporate headquarters. Now WestJet has gone from 14,000 workers to 5,700 due to a lack of support from the Liberal government.

What is the Liberal government going to do to save and secure aviation and airline jobs?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that Nav Canada is an independent organization that operates at arm's length. My heart goes out to all those who are affected by the current anxiety and uncertainty in this marketplace and in the pandemic. That is why our government has been committed to supporting all Canadians.

I can assure the hon. member that any decisions Nav Canada makes that may have an impact on safety and security will be reviewed by Transport Canada.

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[Translation]

### WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, from the start of the pandemic, many front-line workers across the country have seen a dramatic increase in domestic violence because, beyond other stress factors brought on by the pandemic, women are isolating at home with their abusers.

On behalf of organizations that serve the women in my riding of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine who are victims of domestic violence, could the minister inform the House of the status of the national action plan on gender-based violence?

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine for this very important question.

[English]

Every year, six million people benefit from the women's organizations our government supports, including 500 organizations we have supported with long-term funding and more than 1,000 that we have supported through COVID-19.

[Translation]

A Canada free of gender-based violence is what we all want to see. At the beginning of the month, the minister joined her provincial and territorial counterparts in signing a historic declaration to that end.

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[English]

### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Madam Speaker, 2020 was a terribly long year for Canadians, but especially for veterans. In response to my Order Paper question, Veterans Affairs is showing that 47% of disability applications are taking more than 27 weeks to process and almost 30% are taking over a year. For a veteran to wait over a year in a pandemic is inexcusable.

What does the minister have to say to veterans? Here is a hint: Start with an apology.

● (1200)

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I truly agree that veterans should not have to wait. That is why we invested nearly \$200 million to hire new staff to speed up the process to ensure veterans receive a faster decision. Veterans should receive the benefits and services they are entitled to in a timely manner. As I have said many times, this backlog is unacceptable and we are going to deal with it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Montmagny RCM has asked me about cell coverage, which is still not getting any better in the regions.

There has been a lot of emphasis on 5G, but in Haut-Pays, Sainte-Lucie-de-Beauregard, Saint-Fabien-de-Panet and Lac-Frontière we do not even have 1G. Worse still, the government has been radio silent, even though it raised \$3.5 billion from the 600 megahertz spectrum auction.

When selling public airwaves, why did the government not ensure that regional cell network development would not be sacrificed in favour of larger cities?

**Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, our government is the one that has invested the most money in high-speed Internet in rural Canada in the history of our country.

### Oral Questions

Certainly, a lot of work remains to be done and that is why, last November, the Prime Minister announced a \$1.75-billion investment to continue the work of connecting Canadians. Rural Canadians deserve to have this coverage. We are working on it with the provinces and we will be making substantial investments in the months to come because it is extremely important work.

[English]

**Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC):** Madam Speaker, when the minister announced the results of the 600 megahertz auction last year, she noted the government's set-aside policy had created more competition for Canadians. However, we now know that set-aside bidders have a poor track record of deploying spectrum in rural communities. There needs to be a "use it or lose it" condition to ensure that spectrum is deployed in rural Canada.

Why will the government not force service providers to deploy spectrum in rural Canada so we can get high-speed Internet?

**Mr. William Amos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Science), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, our government is taking every single measure in the policy tool box to ensure that all sorts of investments and new infrastructure around telecommunications can be integrated across Canada. Spectrum auction is just one of these sets of policies.

We are working toward a new spectrum auction later on this year. There have been delays due to COVID-19, but we are well aware that this is a very important mechanism to ensure that Canadians have the very best telecommunications infrastructure across Canada.

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### AIR TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as a member of Parliament for Gander, we are proud of our great contributions to international aviation. In particular, the Gander air control centre navigates air traffic in the North Atlantic for both domestic and international carriers.

Before the pandemic, it safely guided 10,000 to 12,000 flights per week. Now, with reduced air traffic, most layoffs have been in Gander. We know that air traffic will some day return, but I worry we will lose too many air traffic controllers to even meet our international obligations.

Could the minister please provide information about any discussions with Nav Canada?

**Hon. Omar Alhabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I know my colleague is a strong voice for his region and for his constituents. Let me join him in recognizing the talent and skills of air traffic controllers and other skilled aviation sector workers who enrich our country.

*Routine Proceedings*

He knows that Nav Canada is an independent organization that plays an important role in aviation safety. I understand the anxiety people are feeling today, given the pandemic and the circumstances around it. We will continue to be there for all Canadians who are negatively impacted by it.

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**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, wild salmon are the backbone of the communities I represent. The minister's Discovery Island decision was announced in my riding with no plan in place, leaving a significant void for the communities I serve.

My office is hearing questions like: What is the plan to rebuild the wild salmon stocks? What is the plan to help workers and businesses in the region? Most important, when is the plan coming?

Why did the minister not have a transition plan? Especially during a pandemic, should that not have been top of mind?

• (1205)

**Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her advocacy and for continuing to reach out to myself and my team to have these very important discussions.

This is a twofold question.

First, the decision to phase out fish farms in the Discovery Island was not an easy one to make, but it was made in consultation with the seven first nations in that area that had real concerns around aquaculture in their territory. We know this has had impacts, and we are looking at all ways that we can address these concerns. We are going to continue to work with the Province of British Columbia, industry, first nations and communities to ensure we are doing everything we can to address those concerns.

With regard to—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.):** Madam Speaker, Canadians have been alarmed by news of travellers returning home only to be welcomed by unknown authorities who refuse to identify themselves and shuttle them into unmarked vehicles on pain of arrest.

These officers are refusing to state their names, badge numbers, what organization they belong to or even where they are forcibly taking Canadian citizens against their will.

Does the minister feel this is an appropriate response to the quarantine order, and if not, what will the minister do about this abuse of Canadians' constitutional rights?

**Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would remind the member

that our most effective measures that we put in place at the borders for protecting the health and safety of Canadians are our quarantine measures. Ensuring that everyone who is directed and ordered into quarantine complies with those orders is an important element of our protecting Canadians.

We are working very diligently with the police of jurisdiction in every province and territory of the country to ensure there is compliance with those orders. Of course, it is always the responsibility of those law enforcement officials to respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We have great confidence in our police officers to do their jobs, and we support them in that effort.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs in relation to Bill C-8, , an act to amend the Citizenship Act (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's call to action number 94).

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendments.

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition in the House today highlighting the horrific treatment of Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in China.

The petitioners note various reports on this, one from the summer, that showed a dramatic forced decline in birth rates as a result of forced abortion, sterilization and insertion of IUDs. Members are also following recent reports that show systemic sexual violence in these concentration camps. These are matters of grave concern for these petitioners and for all members.

The petitioners call on the government to recognize that these crimes constitute genocide under the UN convention. Further, they call on the government to recognize that it has a responsibility to protect, according international law, and to take concrete action by using the Magnitsky act, sanctioning officials involved in gross violations of fundamental human rights in the context of the genocide taking place against Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims.

I hope members will reflect seriously on this issue and take appropriate action in response to the petition.



• (1210)

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am tabling a petition submitted by a group of Canadians who wish to draw Parliament's attention to an ongoing campaign of Uighur birth suppression by the Chinese Communist Party, which includes forced sterilization and abortions, as well as the evidence that Uighurs are being subject to ant-religious indoctrination, forced labour, separation of families and even organ harvesting.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to formally recognize that the Uighurs in China have been and are subjected to genocide and to use Magnitsky act sanctions against those who are responsible for these heinous crimes.

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens across Canada regarding the Chinese Communist Party's treatment of an estimated three million Uighur Muslims who are being subjected to atrocities, including forced sterilization and abortion, political and anti-religious indoctrination, arbitrary detention, separation of children from families, invasive surveillance, forced labour and forced organ harvesting.

The petitioners call on the House of Commons to formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are subjected to genocide and to impose Magnitsky sanctions on those who are responsible for these heinous crimes being committed against the Uighur people.

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Madam Speaker, today I am presenting a petition on behalf of Canadians who are very disturbed about the atrocious treatment of the Uighur Muslims by the Chinese communist government. These people have been subject to rape, sterilization, arbitrary detention, separation of children from families, invasive surveillance and forced organ harvesting. It is estimated that up to three million Uighurs and other Muslim minorities have been detained in what appears to be concentration camps.

The petitioners call for the imposition of Magnitsky sanctions on those responsible for these terrible crimes against the Uighur people and to formally recognize that Uighurs in China are being subjected to genocide.

**Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise virtually to present a petition to the House on behalf of concerned Canadians about the ongoing genocide the Uighur community is facing at the hands of the People's Republic of China.

This is the first petition I have presented in the House, and it is an important one. Millions of Uighurs have been sent to concentration camps, and there is a growing recognition that we are facing the tragedy of our era. Future generations will ask whether we had the courage to step up or not.

The petitioners call upon the House to recognize the genocide and impose Magnitsky sanctions upon those responsible.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I rise to present e-petition 2912, which has extraordinarily been signed by 27,720 petitioners. They are asking the House to

#### Routine Proceedings

take note of their deep concerns about the proposed Grassy Mountain coal mine in Alberta.

The petitioners point out in a lengthy petition with much data that there are significant threats from this coal mine for metallurgical coal against agriculture, tourism and water quality in the region. The petitioners are very concerned for the Crowsnest River and the Oldman watershed. They are concerned that the excavation and dumping of the overburden will contaminate the Oldman watershed and that there will be leaching of selenium, as well as other health risks to residents.

The petitioners call upon the government to reject the application to decapitate Grassy Mountain. They call for the project to be rejected.

**Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition, which was initiated and signed by my constituents in Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

The petitioners note that almost all community drinking watersheds on the east coast of Vancouver Island are privately owned because of the E&N land grant, which was part of the agreement to bring B.C. into confederation 150 years ago this year. They point out that the E&N land grant violated aboriginal rights and title. They also observe that there is a high risk of drinking water contamination due to industrial and human activity on these watersheds.

The petitioners call upon the government to work with first nations, all levels of government and private land owners to begin the process of bringing these community drinking watersheds under public ownership and control to maintain a secure source of drinking water into the future.

• (1215)

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from people in and around Calgary.

The petitioners are concerned about the way Falun Gong practitioners have been treated in China for more than two decades. They call upon the government to apply the Magnitsky act to end the largest and deadliest persecution of Chinese citizens since the cultural revolution.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petition states that Chinese Communist Party corrupt officials have orchestrated the torture and killing of large numbers of people who practise Falun Gong, including the killing of practitioners on a mass scale for their vital organs to fuel the communist regime's organ transplant trade. The petitioners want the Canadian government to take a more active role in ending this.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am tabling two petitions today.

The first petition is on behalf of constituents who are calling upon the government to support legislation that would ban the illegal harvesting of organs overseas and make sure that financial transactions done overseas without consent are banned in Canada. The petitioners draw the attention of the House to previous private members' bills that had sought to be passed.

HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the second petition I have to present draws the attention of the House and the Government of Canada to the internment and concentration camps in the Xinjiang Region of China of the Muslim Uighur Turkic people.

The petitioners are asking the government to formally recognize the genocide and to use the Magnitsky act to punish those who are organizing the genocide of the Turkic Uighur people.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

**Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured today to present petition e-2920, which has been signed by over a thousand concerned Canadians, not only from Haldimand—Norfolk but also from right across the country.

These petitioners are worried about the growing problem of the misuse and abuse of the Liberal government's current medical marijuana rules and the loopholes that exist in the designated grower program. The results are an infiltration of our communities by organized crime. There are also severe impacts on the quality of life for nearby residents.

These petitioners and I are calling on the government to take immediate action to address these loopholes. We also call for the Minister of Health to live up to the promises she has made repeatedly for over a year now to deal with this issue fully and promptly.

• (1220)

HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I, too, rise with respect to the Uighur situation in Communist China and on behalf of Canadians who are concerned with the ongoing atrocities there.

Canada cannot and must not remain silent in the face of this ongoing tragedy. This petition, like the other petitions presented today, is calling on the House of Commons and the government to take action.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first one is similar to some of the other ones that have been presented, and it is very pertinent, considering the news this past week bringing to light the situation against the Uighur population by the Communist Chinese regime. This includes forced rape, sterilization and separation.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling upon the government to formally recognize the genocide that is ongoing against the Uighurs in China, and calling for use of the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act to sanction those responsible for such heinous crimes.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians concerned about the increase in the international trafficking of human organs. This is something I think we can all agree is absolutely terrible.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling upon the government to move forward with the necessary legislation to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent or as a result of a financial transaction, and to render this inadmissible to Canada.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I had given notice to table a private member's bill this morning, and we kind of skipped over it, so I would like to ask for unanimous consent to return to the introduction of private members' bills to table the bill.

[*Translation*]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

I hear none. The House has heard the terms of the motion.

[*English*]

All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Hearing no dissenting voice, I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

TOXIC SUBSTANCES WARNING LABEL ACT

**Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-266, An Act regarding the right to know when products contain toxic substances.

He said: Madam Speaker, I thank my seconder, the member for Victoria, who is always a strong proponent of a better environment.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, Canadians are rightfully concerned about their health. That extends to being concerned about what toxic substances may be found in their households. Polls show that over 95% of Canadians believe that toxic substances should be labelled. This is why am I presenting today this right-to-know legislation. It has been developed with important contributions from Toxic Free Canada, Environmental Defence and Option consommateurs in Quebec.

The bill sets out, in lists established by the California EPA, the U.S. National Toxicology Program and the European Chemicals Agency, toxic substances to be banned in Canada unless they are clearly labelled. During the pandemic and after, Canadians are rightfully concerned about their health. I hope that all members will support this important right-to-know legislation.

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

\* \* \*

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1225)

[English]

#### BROADCASTING ACT

The House resumed 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.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock has five minutes remaining for questions and comments.

[Translation]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Shefford.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Peace River—Westlock for his speech, in which he spoke about the importance of local content and a strong regional press.

During the pandemic, my colleague from Drummond and I have met with local media representatives and representatives from a co-operative radio station. They shared their concerns with us, including concerns about community media.

Although Bill C-10 has its flaws, we look forward to it being studied and worked on in committee. We want this to move forward because the concerns remain.

#### Government Orders

I just had a request for another meeting, along with my colleague from Drummond, because representatives from local media have some suggestions for us.

How can the GAFAM of the world pay their fair share and how can local media get adequate funding?

We all recognize that local media is essential. It is important to move forward and send Bill C-10 to committee. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[English]

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I know that local content is a big concern all across the country. I think I addressed that well in my speech, particularly the tone and thrust of our content, as well as the perspective from which it is being brought to us.

I know that my hon. colleague shares my concern around just who is bringing this content to us and what kind of content is being produced. That is an important piece. At the ethics committee right now we are having the executives of Pornhub show up, and in the managing of that content I would like to ensure that the privacy of individuals is protected. I know that the government has introduced Bill C-11 as well for that, and I look forward to seeing how these two bills interplay to protect Canadians online.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the reality right now is that while we are in the middle of a public health crisis, many of our cultural sector workers fear the loss of their jobs and have to face unfair competition from web giants.

This member and I have worked together at the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs for many years. I think it would be important for us to seek concrete measures in this bill to support stories and content in indigenous languages and from indigenous producers. In my riding, the Raven radio station here has a lot of indigenous content.

Could the member speak to that?

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Madam Speaker, it has been a pleasure to get to know the member over the last few years. I know that in my riding as well there are 14 first nations communities, and many of them participate in their own local radio stations and things like that, but because of the vast distances, it does not go much beyond that.

The CBC, with its technology and its backbone of repeaters, could be broadcasting to many more communities, because its technology is powerful and useful. I would like to see that. I think it could provide, as I mentioned earlier, a western voice or an indigenous voice—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We have time for one more question.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

*Government Orders*

• (1230)

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I was happy to hear the member talk about the importance of having stories told from western provinces. Does he not agree that it is really important to have international web giants contributing so that we can have more content like *Corner Gas*, *Heartland* and *Little Mosque on the Prairie* to tell the stories of our country, rather than allowing all of those to be telling stories from other countries? Is it not important that we pass this bill quickly to make sure that we are investing in these important stories?

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Madam Speaker, I would say it is important that those stories be shared, but I am always a bit concerned when the government gets in the middle and takes money from one and hands it to another. That sounds like what this bill is attempting to do.

I think it is important to level the playing field and ensure that the content creators are getting paid. It does not—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am proud to speak today on Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act.

While this bill has some serious technical aspects, which I will get into in a moment, I would like to begin by highlighting the fact that at the end of the day, even though we are talking about regulations and broadcasting rules, we are ultimately talking about Canadian jobs. Today we can even look at some of the job losses. This morning we heard of the additional 213,000 job losses in Canada in the month of January, which once again has increased our unemployment rate, so while we are having this discussion we have to also focus on what this is all about, which ultimately is about people working here in Canada.

I also want to look back for a moment at what we have seen here in my own riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London and highlight some of the work that was being done here prior to the pandemic.

I remember the excitement in the community of St. Thomas when it was announced that Jason Momoa—and I probably said that wrong, as I am one of the few people who has not watched *Aquaman*—was coming to our area and that Apple TV was going to produce a show right in our own backyard at the psychiatric hospital here in St. Thomas, or actually in central Elgin, for those who are from here.

These are really important things to our community. Sean Dyke, who is our economic development agent for the City of St. Thomas, had talked about other companies coming to our area. Most recently, the Amazon movie *The Boys* was being filmed here, and Guillermo del Toro did *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*. Many people are choosing locations right here in our own backyard in the City of St. Thomas, and also in the community of Port Stanley. I know the village of Port Stanley has been used for sites, and I can think of Bayham in the Port Burwell area as well.

These are really important parts when we talk about productions. We have to look at what is being done in our communities and how

talent is being drawn to our communities, whether through production or acting, and how that is highlighting some of the great things we have in our own communities.

I talk about this with a lot of excitement because my son, who is an actor, has been part of multiple productions for Netflix, and this is an opportunity for actors to get their foot in the door. Many other companies are now coming in and producing well-connected dramas and shows in our areas, and we are receiving economic development from them.

I am not going to speak specifically on the infrastructure of the bill and what that looks like. The reason I am not is basically because of its lack of clarity. I am finding it very difficult to understand, so I have to just look at the impacts of Bill C-10 here in Elgin—Middlesex—London and how we can move forward from this.

I know that conversations about economic growth have unfortunately been falling on the deaf ears of the government for a while, and we know that many of these productions will not be able to get back in order until there are rapid tests, vaccines and the tools needed to get people back to work so they can resume the great work that is being done.

I am not trying to advertise for any of these movies or shows, but Bill C-10 will have a tangible impact on how the content will be classified. Filming movies and TV shows in the heart of my riding, within the Canadian economy and with Canadian actors, actresses and crew members, cannot be classified as Canadian content, because all of the financing and production is handled by American companies. That is why I talk about the clarity of this bill, the idea of Canadian content and what CanCon actually looks like. I will tell members that every single cheque my son brought home in 2020 was from an American company, yet he was a Canadian actor acting in Toronto, so what is happening in our own communities has to be looked at as well.

These massive companies are also not contributing back into the Canada Media Fund and are not being taxed in the same way as Canadian corporations. This is inherently unfair for local producers, small papers and broadcasters working to highlight Canadian content and provide reliable content for Canadians.

I want clarity in this bill so that I can read it and understand the impacts of what the Liberals are putting forward. There have been barriers in the past, and this is why it is really important to have this conversation.

• (1235)

While it is definitely important that we modernize the Broadcasting Act and introduce some fairness to the industry, including requiring web giants and social media to pay their fair share, we have to remember that getting this wrong can directly impact Canadian jobs and that over-regulation or lack of clarity in the rules will ultimately lead companies to film elsewhere, causing Canadians to lose out on these new opportunities. The more barriers we have, the more likely it is that people will wonder if it is worth doing in Canada.

I am not saying that there should not be some fair ground here; I absolutely believe that there needs to be, but I do want to put into this debate today the fact that the clarity just is not there.

Another worry I have from Bill C-10 is that it has placed limited abilities on parliamentary committees to oversee the directives and regulations that are being adopted by the CRTC. I do not have to remind everyone of the government's dismal record on accountability. I know I speak for many of my colleagues when I say that it seems that the government's overwhelming priority, even in the middle of this pandemic, is to avoid accountability.

Without even getting into the political reasons for its completely unnecessary prorogation, we have seen by time and time again the government running from accountability, filibustering committees, covering its tracks on things such as the WE Charity and covering for a Prime Minister who would rather hide at Rideau Cottage than face the music. The fact that there is not going to be accountability here in Parliament for these powers being given to the CRTC is an issue. We do not want to see the unintended consequences without a thorough debate.

The government has not earned the trust of Canadians when it comes to broadcasting. Let us not forget that this is the same heritage minister who seems to have no problem in demanding that news organizations be licensed. I want to talk about that because I can share my own concerns on this issue.

There was a situation that happened here in Elgin—Middlesex—London with a person I know who is a journalist in our region. His concern is whether putting online publishers under the same type of broadcast regulations lays the groundwork to regulate online news content in the same way that television and radio content is being governed by broadcast regulations.

The government says news publishers will not be affected by these changes, but the problem is that the government has a limited definition of who qualifies as news and as media. According to the legislation, paragraph (i) specifies that “a person shall not carry on a broadcasting undertaking, other than an online undertaking, unless they do so in accordance with a licence or they are exempt from the requirement to hold a licence.” Once again we are establishing so many unknowns, and once again we need clarity on this aspect.

Just prior to when this legislation came out, Andrew Coyne, a writer with *The Globe and Mail*, wrote:

If that sounds paranoid, consider the weight the government puts on its assurances that online broadcasters would not have to be “licensed”. That's true, as far as

### *Government Orders*

it goes. They would just be obliged to “register” with the CRTC, subject to certain “conditions of service,” enforced by “fines.”

We can talk about the fact that there will not be these limitations, but we have to look at some of the other language being used. This is very concerning, because at this time right now, it is really important that we have proper news agencies and proper news reporting and that we are ensuring that we are getting all sides of the story.

Finally, the bill does not provide any benchmarks to legislate the percentage of French content. We have heard from many of our members today, specifically from Quebec. I have been working on my French recently and I hope to one day enjoy the bounty of wonderful content filmed and produced in Quebec in French, but this bill does nothing to help French language content.

I know some serious modernizations are needed to help our Broadcasting Act here in Canada, but I do not believe that the bill exactly does this. I am very concerned with the bill, as I said, and I hope there will be much more clarity in it. I believe we do need to find a balance between our big corporations and our smaller corporations, the new players on the field and the players that have been there for years, but let us make sure that we are doing it with all players on board, because I believe we are missing out.

I am now happy to take any questions.

• (1240)

**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, as we listen to members, whether today or the last time the bill was brought forward, we find them reflecting on the industry and how much has changed over the many years. There is no doubt there is a need for us to update or modernize. The minister and the department have done a fantastic job in presenting the legislation.

Would the member not agree that the minister has indicated that he is open to ideas? One of the things we could do is to look at bringing some of these ideas to the committee to see if we could improve the legislation.

Could the member give us her thoughts, recognizing that things do change? As she pointed out, this is an incredibly important industry for many different reasons. The time to do it is now.

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Madam Speaker, I do not think we are saying it is not important to do this. As he indicated, the modernization is very important. I think it has been 28 years since this has been modernized.

As I indicated, I like to go back to the 1990s when I went to university and there was only person who had a computer in our residence. Look at where we are in 2021, where we have phones and tablets and all of those things.

*Government Orders*

We understand there need to be changes. However, we are looking at a lack of consultation. Everybody on the consultation list is a big player, except a few minor players. The opportunity to get into this business and industry is very complicated in the first place, and I do not know if the minister and the legislation are considering all avenues.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear our colleague emphasize the need to strike a balance between the players and the creation of a royalties system. I was pleased to hear her say that she would like a certain percentage to be francophone. From what I understand, she agrees with the Bloc Québécois proposal that 40% of the money should be allocated to francophone content.

However, I would like to hear her thoughts on community media, which have been completely overlooked in this bill. Does she think that, in committee, we could add these players to ensure that they get a piece of the pie? They are responsible for a significant portion of local and regional information.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Madam Speaker, I am all about community media.

Here in our own community, we have myFM, which is one of the organizations that came here about 10 years ago. We went through the licensing process to have a community radio. The Aylmer Express and the Dorchester Signpost are two small groups of newspapers that are out there working really hard. I would show the House my Aylmer Express, because it is truly the largest newspaper in Canada. If you are looking to expand a newspaper, it is physically the largest newspaper in Canada.

I look at the importance of other local media. Ian McCallum, a local reporter, who has been with the St. Thomas Times-Journal, has done local media for many years. That is what we are seeing shrinking right now. Each and every day, we ask where our local content is. We are seeing a lot of things being pulled from our local newspapers, just from the national owners of many of these media outlets.

I would really like to see more local news carried all the time. That is something that connects our communities and during this pandemic has really been beneficial to my community here in Elgin—Middlesex—London.

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member mentioned the layoffs we have seen over the past few weeks.

In my riding of Victoria, we have seen Bell Media laying off staff at Bell-owned stations, like CFAX, CTV News Vancouver Island.

Bell received \$122 million in pandemic relief-related subsidies and has paid out increased dividends to their shareholders, and then it turned around this week and laid off hard-working news staff. Bell received taxpayer support, paid out their shareholders and laid off staff. It seems like the government is willing to give big breaks to corporations at the expense of everyday Canadians.

Could the member speak about the need for accountability for the government, accountability for corporations, and the impact on our media and Canadians?

• (1245)

**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:** Madam Speaker, absolutely. That is one of the biggest things we need: accountability from both sides, including accountability from the government on how it is spending its money.

Wise spending is what we need, and the government has been lacking in that regard, especially over the last five years and specifically in this last year of the pandemic.

**Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in my past life before politics, I was an independent recording artist. I was inspired by the music of Dan Hill, Anne Murray, David Foster, Céline Dion and Shania Twain. I discovered them on radio and television. I do not think it is a coincidence that most of my favourite musicians are Canadian; we have a lot of talent here, but the stars whom I mentioned found their big break in the U.S. instead of Canada. I shared this story because I want to affirm the symbiosis of Canadian content creators and Canadian broadcasters in the lives of Canadians and the value of protecting these institutions to allow Canada's cultural and artistic identity to thrive.

Bill C-10 is important in spirit because it seeks to modernize a 28-year-old law that does not take into account diversified broadcasting platforms with the arrival of the digital world, including Internet, social media and streaming. It is critical to acknowledge the reality of new and growing digital platforms and the implications of a global market and of foreign players entering our system, and we must do so with consideration for the long-term sustainability of Canadian content and Canadian broadcasting platforms. This requires adapting the CRTC's mandates to maximize the success of Canadian entities in the broadcasting ecosystem for the furtherance of Canada's heritage and economic prosperity.

We cannot ignore the impact of the broadcasting, film and music sectors on the Canadian economy. Based on a November 2020 report on Canadian Heritage's website, the GDP impact of broadcasting was \$9.1 billion, with \$16.9 billion in revenues and 41,901 jobs; the GDP impact of film and video was \$4.3 billion, with \$13.39 billion in revenues and 71,027 jobs; and the GDP impact of music and sound recording was \$637 million, with \$577 million in revenues and 8,986 jobs.

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The trend is also clear. Over the last 10 years, Canadians have increasingly moved toward Internet streaming services for programs, while moving away from paid-subscription TV. These are both viable avenues for viewers today. The implications of these trends plead for a modernized Broadcasting Act. That is the intent of Bill C-10, but I am not fully convinced that the proposed amendments would accomplish what the bill purports to do. I hope to address these issues today.

Canadian content producers and broadcasters have a vital role in the production of quality Canadian drama, reality shows and news. *Property Brothers*, *Schitt's Creek*, *Kim's Convenience* and *Wall of Chefs* are top-notch Canadian shows that have garnered global attention. We are living in an exciting time for Canadian content, but content requires funding.

Canadian content creators have expressed concern that the proposed amendment to paragraph 3(1)(f) of the Broadcasting Act reflects a weakening of the crucial position of Canadian creative resources in the act. As the act currently stands without amendments, it does so under the assumption of a closed system wherein Canadian controlled and owned broadcasters hold a monopoly. Paragraph 3(1)(f) currently reads:

(f) each broadcasting undertaking shall make maximum use, and in no case less than predominant use, of Canadian creative and other resources in the creation and presentation of programming,

Bill C-10 excludes the phrase “maximum use, and in no case less than predominant” and other conditions. The amendment reads:

(f) each broadcasting undertaking shall make use of Canadian creative and other resources in the creation and presentation of programming to the extent that is appropriate for the nature of the undertaking;

Canadian content creators are concerned that this amendment would diminish the critical position of Canadian creators in the Broadcasting Act. My concern about proposed amendment to paragraph 3(1)(f) is its overall lack of clarity and accountability on the role of all broadcasters, whether traditional or modern, in contributing to the creation and presentation of Canadian content. I agree with Canadian creators that the amendment would undermine the value of Canadian content in the Broadcasting Act. In a time when Canadian stories are beginning to find larger audiences and are defining our artistic identity, the amendment to paragraph 3(1)(f) is a little disappointing.

I would like to add that the lack of copyright and intellectual property safeguards in the amendments in the midst of the current international environment does not reflect modernization. Writers, composers, publishers and other copyright holders depend on royalties for their livelihoods. It is already difficult for Canadians with artistic vocations to make ends meet. Many domestic talents move to the U.S., Europe or Asia to find a viable path. The lack of intellectual property protection in the growing and complex digital world and globalized markets is unacceptable in this age. The Broadcasting Act needs to include a modernized copyright law. If Canada does not work toward optimizing the environment for creators to thrive, our cultural identity suffers. Canadian content is not just a means to help Canadian works to reach audiences; Canadian content should be protected and supported to help our arts and culture sectors help establish our heritage and Canadian identity.

• (1250)

Bill C-10 is important in spirit because it seeks to safeguard equitable programming. Bill C-10 amends the Broadcasting Act to, among other things, update the Canadian broadcasting policies set out in sections throughout the act by providing, among other things, that the Canadian broadcasting system should provide opportunities for aboriginal peoples to provide programming in aboriginal languages that reflect aboriginal cultures, and to provide programming that is accessible to persons with disabilities and free of barriers while serving the needs and the interests of Canadians, including Canadians from racialized communities and ethno culturally diverse backgrounds.

The bill amends the CRTC's mandate to require more content in aboriginal, disabled, racialized and LGBTQ2 people. However, the bill does not address any guidelines to regulate French content. There is no provision of a benchmark to legislate the percentage of French language content. Equitable programming needs to also modernize the Broadcasting Act to ensure that French and Quebec culture content are given adequate opportunities to thrive.

Broadcasters are critical to fostering Canadian identity in the role they have with Canadian content. Whether they deliver Canadian news, reality shows and drama, or contribute to the Canada Media Fund to produce Canadian content, they are critical to our cultural identity, everyday life and our economy. However, in the current Broadcasting Act there are obligations and content regulations that mean well to safeguard Canadian content creators, but inadvertently put them at risk of losing in their competition with foreign digital players who have access to Canadian consumers with little regulation at this time. If Canadian broadcasters fall down, then their support for Canadian content also falters.

The broadcasting system is a delicate realm that requires a delicate balance for all to thrive. Providing an even playing field with foreign Internet broadcasters like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney, Apple TV+ will certainly help alleviate the unfair competition. Foreign companies should also contribute to Canadian content, but with that should also come the right balance of regulations so that all players, domestic and foreign, can flourish. If they thrive, their investment in Canadian content creation and presentation will inadvertently benefit the fostering of Canada's cultural identity and economy.

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In an age when many entities are competing for audiences in the digital world, Canadian news broadcasters are suffering from the added drop in ad sales caused by the economic downturn from COVID-19. A fair and modernized Broadcasting Act would benefit Canada's broadcasting sector. However, Bill C-10 is too vague and does not ensure that web giants like Google and Facebook are obligated to compete under the same rules as Canadian companies. That does not explain how digital platforms and conventional players will compete on an even playing field. It does not explain the guidelines that will be put in place for the production of Canadian content and contributions to the Canada Media Fund.

It would be incumbent on the CRTC to enforce regulations to reflect a modernized act. However, the role of the CRTC is vague. The lack of clarity raises concerns for all stakeholders as to how the CRTC will interpret its role. Will the CRTC over-regulate and stifle Canadian broadcasters among foreign digital counterparts? Will it over-regulate foreign players and shut them out of the system and thereby lessen opportunities for the relaying of Canadian content?

Based on the way the bill is written, it feels like the Liberal government is passing the buck to the CRTC for all decisions. They will then need at least nine months to undertake the first regulatory phase. In this COVID environment we need broadcasters and Canadian creators to have an assurance that they will survive and hope to thrive among international players.

I would like to refer to a conversation I had with one of my constituents, Rob, who owns Gearforce, a pro audio company that supports live concerts. He said that many of his technician friends in the entertainment industry are struggling not only because they are financially hurting because of shutdowns, but also because they are not putting their skills to work. They are afraid they will lose all of the skills they honed over their lifetime. There is a certain standard of excellence that circulates in the arts and culture sector, whether among writers, composers, artists, artisans or technical workers, who have had to work hard to get where they are in a sector where opportunities are very competitive.

A Broadcasting Act that is modernized with the right amendments is a small step forward to helping Canadian arts and culture sector workers and artists find their place in life. However, an ambiguous bill can be more damaging because of potential misinterpretations. If Bill C-10 passes second reading, I hope there will be fulsome discussions at committee to amend the bill.

• (1255)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I think that the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam and I agree on many things.

Regarding the importance of the sector in Canada, just one measure that we have announced in the context of COVID is an insurance backstop that will help to create 60,000 jobs. For every dollar the federal government is investing in that measure, the private sector will put in \$10.

Would the interests of the people we are trying to serve be better served if we were having these conversations at committee to try to improve the bill, which I have said from the beginning could be im-

proved, rather than in this context where people are just talking? We can ask a question, but we are not actually working on the bill.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Madam Speaker, I really miss being on the minister's committee.

I agree that we see eye to eye on a lot of things, and I am not averse to the idea of the bill going to committee. My desire is to see a fulsome discussion to make sure the ambiguities that have been expressed by many members will be addressed. The bill should bring us all toward a very balanced ecosystem in this sector and not leave any glitches that will undermine the role of any one of the players.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about artists, whose activities are often covered by the local media in our respective ridings.

These artists have not received adequate support during the pandemic. While the Quebec government understood the importance of the local press and was investing in traditional and community media to get its messages across, the federal government was supporting the Facebooks, Amazons and other web giants of the world by investing in online advertising rather than investing in our traditional media.

This was confirmed by local media outlets back home in Shefford during a meeting I had during the pandemic with my colleague, the member for Drummond. What does my colleague think of the importance of leading by example and reinvesting the money intended for web giants, for example by creating a fund for local media, local press and community media?

[*English*]

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Madam Speaker, I fully agree that local media is very important, especially at a time like this, for ensuring that details only local media can produce are accessible. That is part of my concern. If the bill does go to committee, there should be accountability and regulations for web giants so that we can provide the tools for our sector to flourish and not just give a free ride to web giants.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have been trying to follow this debate closely and it seems there is broad agreement that amendments to our Broadcasting Act are necessary after such a long period of time and that a level playing field should be created so that web giants like Netflix are not exerting undue influence and monopolizing our media and cultural markets. It seems like there is a lack of clarity.

The member used the word “ambiguous” and noted that perhaps too much discretion is placed with the CRTC. The previous speaker felt that the current definition of “Canadian content” was overly restrictive.



I am wondering if the member could expand on what specific amendments she would like to see if the bill makes it to committee.

• (1300)

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Madam Speaker, what I would like to see overall is a balance. Again, because of the ambiguity and what is presented, there could be better clauses to work with. In the big picture, I would like to see more balance and that no one is left out of how the Broadcasting Act moves forward.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont (West Nova, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise virtually today to speak to Bill C-10.

Like many of my colleagues, I appreciate this opportunity to speak to this bill. I am an Acadian, and this bill will have a profound effect on the survival of our wonderful Acadian culture and community, which is very important to me. It deserves being promoted and protected.

Digital media is bigger than ever, and the 28-year-old Broadcasting Act is in urgent need of modernization to address the evolution of the Internet and the overwhelming emergence of social networks and online services like Facebook, Google, Netflix, Crave and Spotify, among others.

Modernizing the act does not necessarily mean erasing the past, forgetting how it has shaped our history to this day or failing to take it into account in the future. We need to ensure the continuity of our past and our Acadian culture and preserve them for always.

In its brief to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission during the CBC/Radio-Canada licence renewal process, the Société nationale de l'Acadie, the SNA, noted that it has had to intervene repeatedly to get Radio-Canada to support Acadian culture and to remind the broadcaster about the obligations in its mandate.

As a proud Acadian, and on behalf of all Acadians, I want to point out that all Acadians, just like all Canadians, help fund CBC/Radio-Canada. That funding, together with the broadcaster's mandate, are all that guarantee these services, which must be not only preserved at all costs but also respected. To make that happen, we need effective enforcement measures to be very clearly indicated in Bill C-10, which is not the case.

The SNA is the official representative of all Acadian people. It promotes the rights and interests of Atlantic Acadians. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the SNA for its hard work and its efforts to preserve our magnificent Acadian culture.

The bill seeks to amend the Broadcasting Act in several ways, such as by adding websites that broadcast or rebroadcast programs as a separate category of broadcasting undertaking. It also seeks to update Canada's broadcasting policy set out in section 3 to, for example, provide indigenous-language programming for indigenous people that reflects their culture.

I believe that Bill C-10 needs to go even further to ensure the presence and preservation of certain cultures, such as Acadian culture. I absolutely agree that the act needs to be modernized, just as the Official Languages Act needs to be modernized. On this side of

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the House, we want to be able to vote on a bill that will be fair for Canadian producers and broadcasters.

For several years now, Canadians have been expressing concerns about how unfair it is that Netflix does not pay any taxes in Canada. The goal is to find a balance between conventional media and digital media, as well as with content.

I completely agree with that goal. The francophone population of Nova Scotia, which listens to the Radio-Canada station out of Halifax, is upset about the fact that they hear more updates on traffic jams in Montreal and on the Samuel de Champlain Bridge than they do content from Nova Scotia artists.

It is important to point out that the case of the Atlantic provinces is unique. There is only one television production centre, supported by three radio production centres, to serve the four provinces. We want more local content to reflect the unique nature of Acadia and to promote and protect Acadian culture.

Unfortunately, when the CBC does not keep its commitments, even when complaints are filed with the CRTC, it is generally not penalized because it is not subject to the same rules as other Canadian broadcasters.

• (1305)

In 2021, it is unacceptable that this exemption still exists. It needs to be removed through Bill C-10. It is vital that the percentage of Canadian content is respected to the letter and that each region of Canada can enforce its local cultural content quotas.

The Conservatives want an equitable regulatory framework for digital media and conventional broadcasters. My Conservative colleagues and I will only be able to support the modernization of the Broadcasting Act if it includes additional, clear, non-negotiable francophone content requirements.

During the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's licence renewal process, the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse noted in its brief presented on January 13 to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission that Acadians in Nova Scotia did not get access to a French-language elementary school education until 1981. It took a legal battle that went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada for them to finally, in 2003, get access to a French-language education in a system of homogenous secondary schools. Without that education in French, Acadians in Nova Scotia became assimilated at an alarming rate. Between 1981 and 1996, the number of French-speaking Acadians in Nova Scotia went from 80,000 to 42,000,

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In the spring and fall of 2019, the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse consulted extensively throughout the province on linguistic insecurity. Participants all reported experiencing language insecurity, discomfort or reluctance to express themselves in French, or even a feeling of inadequacy in French. I am quite saddened by these results. The lack of familiarity on the part of the broader Canadian public when it comes to Nova Scotia's Acadian community contributes to this linguistic insecurity.

Local content must be created so people can see themselves reflected in the media. The one and only measure to improve the place of French is to replace the reference in section 3 that weakens it further. This step backwards is completely unacceptable. It represents a much more vague and, more importantly, a much weaker approach than the act provides for indigenous content, for example.

This is another example of the Liberal government's contradictions. The government is further weakening an essential piece of legislation that is already weak, while making francophone communities across Canada believe that it will introduce a bill to modernize the Official Languages Act, which would focus on the promotion and protection of the French language for all minority francophone communities. That is nonsense.

In light of all these points, there is no way I can vote in favour of this bill without a firm commitment from the government to thoroughly review all the amendments needed to improve it in order to ensure that Acadian and francophone Canadian content has the kind of future it deserves.

• (1310)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we have been debating the bill for four days and it is very clear that most Conservatives are opposed to it. They have made that clear. However, it does not seem to be something people are fighting tooth and nail over.

I am just curious why the Conservatives will not let the bill come to a vote so we can either see it collapse or get it to committee to continue to work on the stuff that the member and other Conservatives have been talking about. Why are the Conservatives holding it up?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Madam Speaker, quite honestly, we need an indication from the government that changes can be made to the bill. As I said in my remarks, there needs to be a representation of francophone communities outside of Quebec, especially Acadian representation. We need to have a better idea of how the CRTC will work with or charge the CBC to provide the services needed for our community. As I said, in 1981, 80,000 Acadians said they spoke French, which was down to 42,000 in 1996. It is unacceptable, and the CBC and CRTC have a lot to do with this.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, would the member explore the question of what constitutes a broadcaster? A major concern for me is what would be defined as a broadcaster, who is in, who is out, and how these regulations could be applied to relatively small operators. If people start their own YouTube channels and get a large number of subscribers, do they become subject to all kinds of regulations

around, for instance, diversity and content, which may be beyond their scope to be aware of or include?

These subjective determinations are ultimately out of our hands as legislators. Does the member have concerns about that on which he would like to elaborate?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Madam Speaker, ultimately, there has to be some clear definition on what these would constitute. When we look at the small community radio stations, and in our particular case in Nova Scotia, there are only a few Francophone radio stations beyond the CBC, they can be in direct conflict or in competition with some of these smaller groups that have no regulations at all. They can say and do anything they want. We want to ensure we keep those small community radio stations available and not have them in competition with these smaller groups.

However, what does it constitute, what does it mean? I hope the minister will clarify some of those things.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from West Nova for his speech.

I wonder if he could expand on the importance of French-language content, especially on platforms like Netflix. Does he have any suggestions for ways to increase it? Should quotas be imposed, or should we use a carrot rather than a stick and create financial incentives? Should the measures be more coercive or more incentive-based?

**Mr. Chris d'Entremont:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

We really want to encourage this with a positive approach. There is not much francophone or Acadian content. We really need to see Acadians, francophones and indigenous people not only on our social media, but also in our traditional media, such as CBC and others. I believe that it is possible to find ways to get these media to agree to come to the regions.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure today to speak to Bill C-10, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts.

This has to be one of the most enjoyable debates I have had the opportunity to participate in this chamber. With such a vast and diverse country like ours, it is interesting to see the different local content from the far corners of our country.

This is near and dear to my heart, not just because of the content on the screen but because of the experiences of the persons who are involved in creating the content. That includes the background extras.

I had the very good fortune of being a background extra in several productions in my hometown in Regina, in the surrounding area. It all came about by chance, but it really did open my eyes to the so-called gig economy that has been in the news much more lately during the pandemic.

I was walking through the mall one day in Regina and I saw a guy, who has since become a good friend of mine, sitting at a table and a sign that said, "Sign up here to be in TV shows". I asked him what it was all about. He was the casting director for a local company called Partners in Motion, which makes movies and TV shows in Regina and in southern Saskatchewan. He told me that I looked like a police officer and he had a spot for me in the documentary series called *Crime Stories*. They needed background extras to reenact these crimes and they could cast me in the role of a police officer to arrest some criminal for the documentary series. It sounded like fun and a good way to make minimum wage on the side, so that is what I did. It really opened my eyes to how many people in my community had hobbies or gig jobs being background extras in TV shows.

Over the course of the following months and years, I arrested many different people in that crime series. I got to be a soldier in war. In a particularly memorable experience, I got to be a background extra in *Corner Gas: The Movie*. People tend to talk about *Corner Gas*, the TV show, but there was a major motion picture a few years ago, based on all the characters in Dog River, *Corner Gas*. It was certainly very memorable to walk up and down Main Street in Rouleau, Saskatchewan. I played towns person number seven in that movie. Much to my dismay, I was not nominated for an Oscar that year, but in the sequel perhaps my name will come up.

I have not seen anything in the bill to address the gig economy and people who work in the industry on a casual basis. I strongly suspect that this is something not specific to Regina, Saskatchewan, but specific to people who work in the industry all across our great country.

I think we could do Canadians a lot of good by withdrawing this bill and rewriting it from scratch to ensure that everyone is included in it and to ensure we have the best legislation we can for Canadians.

Therefore, I would like to move the following amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following: "Bill C-10, An act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be not now read a second time but that the order be discharged, the bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage."

• (1315)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The amendment is in order.

Questions and comments.

• (1320)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am a little disappointed. I know the minister went to great effort to ensure there was a great deal of consultation. We are in a process of modernizing something, and it really does need to

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be looked at. Why would he want move an amendment of this nature, given the importance of the industry?

He even talked about the importance of the industry. There is absolutely nothing wrong with finishing the debate. Once that debate has come to an end, it goes to committee. Members would be able to present amendments if they felt it was necessary. Even the minister has indicated his willingness to receive amendments.

Why would the member not follow that course?

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Madam Speaker, I have particular concerns about the delegation of authority to the CRTC and the lack of accountability in not just the CRTC, but in other arm's-length government agencies.

As the hon. member may be aware, I currently serve on the transportation committee. We have been having a considerable amount of difficulty with Nav Canada with respect to the closure of air traffic control towers. Although it is an agency created by an act of Parliament, there seems to be a serious lack of accountability for this government agency. I do not want to see the same situation transpire with the CRTC, so the best thing to do is to proceed with the amendment that I tabled a minute ago.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I too have a question for my colleague.

Generally speaking, when looking at the parliamentary schedule, the parties agree to the number of speakers they wish to work on a bill before it is referred to committee. I gather that these discussions took place with respect to Bill C-10 in order to advance it so that it could be studied, or not, depending on the decision made by the House. My colleague's approach intrigues me somewhat, given that parliamentarians usually agree amongst themselves on this schedule and the approach to be taken for bills.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for this question.

The most important thing is to have the best bill for Canadians. As I stated a few minutes ago, I believe that we should start over with this bill.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you deemed the amendment is fact in order, I would be prepared to speak to it. Therefore, I would rather you not call for the vote.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We are pursuing the debate. We are going to continue with speeches. There will be no call for votes on the amendment.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, we should be clear about what is going on here.

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The Conservatives are introducing this amendment, which they know will not get through, so they can reset the entire speaking roster and can continue to drag this debate on and on. We are already at day four of this. The Conservatives do not want to see this go to committee. They do not want anything to happen on this. It is very clear that the member has introduced this strictly for the purpose of dragging this on longer and longer. At least he can just stand up and admit that.

He did not answer the parliamentary secretary's question when he specifically said that if the member was so passionate about this, why would he not let it go to committee rather than try to kill it on the floor right now.

• (1325)

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Madam Speaker, the fundamental question we have to ask ourselves is whether democracy is a good thing or a bad thing. Is it good to debate these bills so we get the best laws for Canadians or is it not?

If this particular law has not been amended for many years, then four days do not strike me as a particularly long time to debate the bill. If we are going to be living with this bill for many decades to come, then four days do not strike me as a particularly long time to debate it.

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have been very impressed with the minister's openness to listen, his demeanour and his tone. A more partisan person than I might say that he could share that message with the member for Kingston and the Islands, but I would never say that.

I am honoured to speak on a subject I am very passionate about: the update to the Broadcasting Act. Before I get into my content, I will tell the minister directly that he seems very open, and I congratulate him on his tone. He has been great to work with. I want to put another plug in for the Capitol Theatre in Port Hope, if he could please help us out there.

My big ask, in terms of an amendment, would be protecting those smaller operators. We need tighter rules. We cannot leave this up to the CRTC. There are fabulous professionals working there doing the best they can, but we need to make sure there are solid protections.

There are some great arguments, and this act desperately needs to be updated because it has not been in 28 years. In that very long time, we have seen the evolution of the Internet, and the introduction of big players such as Facebook, Google, Netflix and Spotify. In light of this innovation, it is important that we upgrade the bill. However, as I said, I have serious concerns that the bill may inflict harm more than do good.

One of the fundamental changes in the communications sector in the last 28 years has been the democratization of access. Canadians are no longer limited to a couple of voices coming through their televisions. They can now listen and express themselves through Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and many other platforms. In many ways, these platforms are closer to going out to the public square in the 1800s and expressing oneself, and anyone who wants to listen, can.

Many of the individuals who participate through YouTube or other platforms contribute a lot to our national discourse on matters like politics, philosophy, culinary arts and health. Having this cacophony of voices that brings with it life experience and perspective not only enriches our lives, but makes our society better. Combatants enter the arena of ideas and have the opportunity to put their theories and ideas out there, and our society decides whether they are enlightened or maybe missing the point.

I am thankful for those who share their great ideas, because they make our country better. Those who lose in the battlefield of ideas can look at the Republic, and what Socrates says. He said those who lose an argument are the better for it because they walk away with knowledge, which often happens to the member for Kingston and the Islands. He should be particularly thankful.

Just like everything, there are bad actors in the world, and there are bad actors in the broadcasting sector. There are individuals who spread hate, lies and conspiracy theories. This behaviour is reprehensible, abhorrent and disgusting. The legislation has the laudable objective of curating online content to protect Canadians against hate and promote quality Canadian programming.

• (1330)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I have to inform the hon. member he will have six minutes to conclude his speech when the bill next comes up for debate.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### SAFE AND REGULATED SPORTS BETTING ACT

The House resumed from November 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-218, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-218 and the importance of single sports betting to my community and to Canada.

The bill would decriminalize new forms of sports gambling in Canada. While Canadians across the country are currently permitted to place bets on a series of sports events, a form of parlay betting, they are prohibited from placing a bet on an event in, or on an outcome of, a single game or match. These new forms of betting are referred to by many as single-event sports betting or single sports betting.

Let me begin by telling the House what single sports betting means to my community in Windsor—Tecumseh. It means jobs. This past winter, I invited the Prime Minister to join a discussion with local workers and labour leaders from Windsor—Tecumseh and Essex County. The Prime Minister wanted to hear directly from workers from Windsor-Essex. We discussed priorities, investments in the automotive sector, national child care to help parents get working again, investments in health care, including mental health, and protecting our environment.

Dana Dunphy, who is the Unifor Local 444 unit chair at Caesars Windsor Casino, took the floor and talked about the importance of single sports betting to Caesars Windsor and its 2,500 workers. She spoke very passionately and eloquently about the tremendous pain that Caesars Windsor workers and their families have gone through during COVID-19. Even before the latest lockdown, less than 10% are back at work.

Our government put forward a bill that would legalize single sports betting. That bill is for Dana and for the 2,500 workers at Caesars Windsor. The legalization of single sports betting would help keep Caesars Windsor competitive, especially against American casinos in Michigan that are literally a stone's throw away and have already legalized single sports betting. It would help protect these vital jobs in our community while at the same time introducing responsible gaming.

It has been a long road to get here. Many people have advocated hard in Windsor-Essex for this day, and it really was a true team effort. I want to acknowledge the work of my predecessor Joe Co-martin, who first raised this issue over 10 years ago, and my colleagues from across the floor, the member for Windsor West and the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood, who brought this issue forward as a private member's bill during this Parliament.

Back home I want to acknowledge and thank Dave Cassidy, the president of Unifor Local 444, who has advocated for single sports betting since my first week on the job. That is when we got together over a plate of bacon and eggs at Uptown Restaurant and talked about the priorities of Unifor members, priorities like single sports betting and protecting jobs at FCA.

A few weeks later, Dave and I sat across a table with Mayor Dilkens of Windsor, Mayor McNamara of Tecumseh and the the member of Parliament for Windsor West. We were joined by the CEO of Caesars Windsor, the CEO of Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island and the CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce. We were all united in our support for single sports betting and we made the commitment to work together to get it done, so here we are in sight of the finish line.

I thought I would start my remarks by discussing recent developments in the United States with respect to single-event sports betting.

Since a 2018 ruling from the Supreme Court of the United States, single-event sports betting has been proliferating steadily throughout our southern neighbour on a state-by-state basis. Today, 20 U.S. states have now legalized single sports betting. Along with this change in the law in the United States, we have seen a significant shift in the positions of major sports league. Rather than seeing sin-

gle sports betting as a potential threat to the integrity of organized sports, major league sports now see it as a viable commercial opportunity.

The American Gaming Association estimates that 7.2 million people will place online wagers for the Super Bowl alone and generate \$4.3 billion in bets from this one single game. In Canada, the provincial governments have long been supportive of legalizing single sports betting. Ontario, for example, called for the legalization of single sports betting by the federal government in its 2019 budget.

As a result of the current prohibition, it is estimated that \$14 billion a year is directed away from provincial lottery systems to underground providers of sports betting. Taxing this potential betting activity would not only help pay for important social services; it could also be used to assist people who suffer from gambling problems.

This legislation would not introduce something that is not already here. Canadians who want to participate in single sports betting are doing so in unlicensed markets. That money is funding the coffers of organized crime rather than those of governments that provide important services to Canadians.

● (1335)

Provinces and territories are losing revenue not just to organized crime, but to America and European countries that have already chosen to regulate single-sport betting. Now is the time for the government to act and begin competing on a fair playing field with the United States and other countries.

While putting forward strong arguments for the legalization of single-sport betting, it is important to consider at the same time the negative impacts of sports betting and, in particular, the potentially devastating impacts of gambling and addiction on vulnerable groups within our society. Mental health and addictions experts have come before Parliament in the past to provide advice on how single-event sports betting might affect our society. It can lead to loss of material possessions, physical health issues, job loss, intimate partner violence and other forms of criminal activity. We must listen to experts and be willing to learn. I very much look forward to a full debate on the impacts that these amendments could have here in Canada.

I know that the government takes concerns regarding vulnerable sectors of society very seriously, especially in light of the difficulties many Canadians have had that have been caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, continuing to criminalize this behaviour is not, in my opinion, the appropriate path forward.

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While the federal government primarily operates in this area using criminal law, our provincial and territorial partners are empowered to manage and conduct, or in other words regulate, what have been called lottery schemes. They use revenue from regulating and taxing these lottery schemes or systems to provide important social services, which are more important than ever due to the impact of COVID-19. Our provincial and territorial partners take great steps to educate the public with respect to gaming and betting products.

The only area in which the federal government continues to regulate gaming and betting is the unique pari-mutuel system of betting on live horse racing. All other gambling activities are now either directly regulated or licensed by provincial governments.

The Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency, or CPMA, is a special agency operating within Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Under the purview of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the CPMA not only regulates and supervises pari-mutuel betting on horse races, but also administers the national equine drug control program to ensure the stability of the horse racing industry through fair play.

As with all decisions we are called upon to make as parliamentarians, there is an appropriate balance that must be struck. I am looking forward to debating and studying all aspects of this issue and working with all members from all parties to ultimately decriminalize single-event sports betting and bring it into a safe and regulated space.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Bloc Québécois for giving me the opportunity to speak on this issue, which is all the more important now that ads for sports betting are becoming increasingly common during broadcasts of Canadian sports events on channels like TVA Sports. These ads are not just regulated by Loto-Québec, and we are seeing other initiatives. It is therefore all the more urgent to better regulate them.

Before I get into the meat of the issue, I want to say that my thoughts are with the front-line workers supporting people who are suffering. Their job has gotten even harder because of COVID-19 and all the emotional distress it is causing. I want to thank them for encouraging those people and express my sincere appreciation under the circumstances. The support they provide is also related to the subject we are talking about this afternoon.

To come back to Bill C-218, I want to thank my colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood, and I also want to recognize my colleague from Windsor West, who began this process a few years ago. In my opinion, the changes that would be brought about by Bill C-218 would improve transparency, better regulate sports betting and give the government additional resources to take care of vulnerable people struggling with addiction. I think that kind of support is key, regardless of the matter of revenue.

I therefore address the House today to express my support for Bill C-218, which seeks to amend the provisions of the Criminal Code on sports betting and sporting events to make it lawful to bet on a single sports event, rather than having to bet on a minimum of two events or more at a time. Single-event betting is already legal in many U.S. states.

This change would enable the provinces to regulate sports betting practices and give them the legal tools they need to keep bettors safe while limiting abuse. Provincial governments and communities will also benefit from economic spinoffs.

We in the Bloc Québécois believe that transparency is the best way to fight the scourges caused by organized crime. This easing of the legislative measures will allow Loto-Québec, a public corporation, to collect revenues associated with this type of transaction. The Canadian Gaming Association estimates that \$27 billion could be recovered from the black market every year.

The most important aspect of this is that, through the work of a public corporation, Loto-Québec, the Quebec government is in a better position to prevent pathological gambling problems than organized crime. Our public corporation has taken it upon itself to raise awareness and help people who have an addiction. Thanks to initiatives such as the Fondation Mise sur toi, the Quebec government is aware that it is best positioned to set up support mechanisms.

Our public corporation's approach gets us out of the infernal spiral of debt, organized crime and the suffering of illegal gamblers. When gambling happens on the black market, the identity of those with problems remains unknown and it is impossible to step in to help those who gamble excessively.

Bill C-218 would limit competition in the sports betting world, which is currently preventing Loto-Québec from competing with U.S. casinos. Even the Casino de Montréal is now advertising to attract players.

Our physical proximity to the United States makes it easy for people to place bets outside our borders. The member for Windsor West really helped us understand that, because his riding is close to Detroit and he has observed the phenomenon himself.

Bill C-218 will give Quebec and the other provinces the tools to better regulate sports betting, which will be impossible if it remains in the hands of offshore websites and underground casinos. Especially now in the Internet age, Bill C-218 will help our own Crown corporation, Loto-Québec, adapt to meet the needs of its clientele while also limiting the flow of capital abroad. I think online poker sites are among the biggest culprits.

Bill C-218 will enhance reciprocity between Canada's sports betting market and the United States'. Without that, it does not work. Specifically, Bill C-218 also protects casinos in Quebec and Canada. The casino in Plattsburgh, New York, competes with the Casino de Montréal in Quebec, just as casinos around Detroit, Michigan, compete with the one in Windsor, Ontario. We are talking significant revenue that our governments are missing out on, revenue that could support health care, for example.

● (1340)

Part of the money taken from sports betting transactions outside our borders would be used to structure our own support mechanisms or at least contribute to the well-being of our constituents.

Bill C-218 also helps weaken the funding of organized crime. It is a way to undercut them by taking away another source of income. It is also a way to prevent misfortunes like the one a young man in Quebec went through. I will read his story as reported in *La Presse*:

The young man went to an online site. At the homepage, the user has to enter a name and a password to access the site and then he can bet on the outcome of several professional sports games and even on the outcome of the U.S. presidential election. According to our research, the name of the site is registered to a corporation in Panama. The site has been hosted on a server in Costa Rica since March 2015, but did not become active until a year later. The corporation that owns the server hosts roughly 75 other online betting sites. We were told that the Montreal mafia's sports betting operation is run by a manager who has an assistant below him, and then some bookies.

It is sort of like a pyramid scheme. The *La Presse* article continues:

The bookies are responsible for the players they recruit. The interest charged on a debt can increase from 3% to 5% a week, and when a player has a large debt, an individual with ties to organized crime can purchase it and then collect the debt and interest from the player. "The player's family may end up having to take on the player's debt," a source explained. "Some people have lost their homes because of online sports betting."

It is obvious that the situation is more than tragic.

Bill C-218 builds on a long line of failures. Ten years ago, in 2011, a bill similar in every respect to Bill C-218 was introduced, and the Liberals were the only ones who voted against it.

Ten years later, it is rather odd to see the Liberals introducing Bill C-213 to amend the Criminal Code provisions on single-event sports betting.

Then, a new version of the bill was adopted in the House of Commons but ultimately died in the Senate, which was also rather surprising.

In September 2016, the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of Bill C-221, introduced by none other than the member for Windsor West. Oddly enough, however, a majority of Liberal MPs opposed the bill once again.

I have no doubt that my New Democrat colleague from Windsor West will vote in favour of Bill C-218, introduced by our colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood. He has already spoken to this bill and, I should note, I also had the opportunity to speak then.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-218, since it will provide a new revenue stream for Loto-Québec and will impede unfair competition from American casinos. It will allow Quebec and the other provinces to better regulate sports betting, which is currently left to foreign websites and illegal casinos.

The Crown corporation is in the best position to prevent issues with compulsive gambling and organized crime, and to provide meaningful support to those who have fallen victim to the slippery slope of compulsive gambling. This issue causes psychological distress. We need to take meaningful action, and the framework pro-

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posed in the bill introduced by the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood is the least we can do.

● (1345)

[*English*]

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a real pleasure to join the debate today on Bill C-218. To start, I would like to congratulate the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood for bringing forward for the House's consideration this bill and its important amendment to the criminal code.

I was a member of the 42nd Parliament, and during my time then I served as our party's justice critic in 2017. As part of my role, I became quite familiar with the Criminal Code and how out of date so many of its sections are and how important it is that the Criminal Code, as a very important federal statute with huge impacts on the lives of so many people, has regular reviews and revisions. To its credit, the Liberal government in the previous Parliament did try to revise many out-of-date sections, but because of the impact it has on institutions and so many individuals, it is important that we regularly review it.

That brings me to Bill C-218, because it would make a very minor, but I think important, amendment to the Criminal Code. It would amend paragraph 207(4)(b), which defines what lottery schemes are and explicitly prohibits provinces from allowing wagering on any "race or fight, or on a single sport event or athletic contest".

Criminal law is an area of shared jurisdiction. The federal Parliament has exclusive jurisdiction in amending the Criminal Code, and of course the administration of justice is conducted by the provinces. This goes to show members that the actions of the federal Parliament can sometimes have wide-ranging consequences for provincial jurisdiction. I know in my own home province and in provinces right across the country the regulation of casinos and the different lottery corporations is very much under provincial control. Therefore, this is an area where we as a federal Parliament can have a positive impact by allowing provinces to have a bit more control over this very significant sector, one that currently, under its regulated form, employs a lot of people and provides a lot of benefits to many Canadians and communities across the country.

In recognition of what the member has done with this bill, I would be remiss if I did not also recognize my friend and colleague, the member for Windsor West, who in the previous Parliament brought forward a bill that was exactly the same as this one. That was Bill C-221. I was there on September 21, 2016, when that bill, unfortunately, was defeated in a vote of 156 to 33. It was defeated at the time because most Liberal members of Parliament voted against the bill. Here we are in the year 2021 and this is an ongoing issue. We could have resolved this back in 2016. It is a real shame that we have had to wait so many years before we are finally coming to a stage where it seems like we might have enough support to get this over the line.

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I know that the member for Windsor West and his former colleague, Joe Comartin, who used to be the MP for Windsor—Tecumseh and another great New Democrat who first brought this issue to our attention back in 2010, had a lot of help in their respective ridings and from across the country. I know that the member for Windsor West is very appreciative of people like Dave Cassidy, the current president of Unifor Local 444, and the past president Ken Lewenza. Those two individuals and many others have really helped make the case for this bill, and as is often the case, it is our privilege as members of Parliament to take that strong collective community action and put it into a piece of legislation for our Parliament to consider.

I mentioned how most Liberal MPs contributed to the defeat of the previous bill back in 2016. I need to highlight that fact because we are now in a situation where we are debating this current private member's bill, but we also have a parallel bill that was introduced by the very same Liberal government in the form of Bill C-13. It was introduced on November 26 last year, but it is still stuck at first reading.

This gives rise to questions as to whether the Liberals are actually serious about this. When we come to a vote on this particular bill are they going to throw their support behind it? Are they going to slow play Bill C-13? I have heard some supportive speeches by current Liberal MPs, but we do not know where the vast majority of that caucus lies. It would be great to have some clarification on which way the Liberals are going to go this time.

● (1350)

With a closer examination of what Bill C-218 does, it is essentially amending the Criminal Code to give provinces the ability to allow wagers on single-event sports betting. I am certainly not an expert on this, but I think it is important to recognize that it is not only helping to modernize the Criminal Code in giving that jurisdictional responsibility to provinces, but is also a real recognition that this is a sector in the legal gaming sector that already employs so many Canadians. This sector contributes billions of dollars in tax revenues to governments of every stripe. It is one that employs thousands of Canadians.

I do not have any casinos in my own riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, but in the neighbouring riding of Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. In the town of View Royal, there is a casino there. It is having tough times right now because of COVID-19. If we were to make this important amendment to the Criminal Code, it would help that casino and its patrons, allowing them to reap the economic benefits when we get to the recovery phase.

It is important to talk about why allowing it is so important. We know that single-event sports betting exists in both Canada and the United States. The main difference is that in Canada it is illegal by virtue of this existing part of the Criminal Code. We are in a situation where speakers on this current bill and its previous iterations, including in 2016, acknowledge that single-event sports betting exists. If it is going on illegally, that means it is the black market that is taking all of the benefits.

When we are dealing with the Criminal Code and looking at how various sections of it are acting, we have to make a very thorough analysis of whether keeping an existing section of the law is even

worth it if so many people are in fact breaking the law and if most of the benefits from that activity are going to black markets.

If the revenues from single-event sports betting are funding illegal activity, such as the purchase of guns, and are contributing to the local drug trade, that is a bad thing and we need to find ways to properly regulate it under provincial authorities. I do not want to go into too much detail on this, but I think that in itself is an excellent reason for us to consider amending this section of the Criminal Code to bring it under provincial regulations. There are strong steps being taken to strengthen regulations in gaming as well.

In my own province of British Columbia, we have certainly seen some major inquiries into money laundering in casinos. I am not saying that casinos have not had their problems, but because of the actions of the people laundering money through casinos, the Province of B.C. has now stepped with tighter regulations. If we, as the federal Parliament, were to make this important amendment to the Criminal Code, provinces like B.C. and others, would bring in the necessary strong regulations.

If we look at the United States, Americans spent about \$150 billion on sports betting in 2016. Here in Canada, it is estimated that Canadians illegally wager between \$14 billion and \$15 billion annually on single-event sports. That is not a small sum of money, and it is something we have to take great account of.

I will end by noting that there is a list of great supporters of this, including the national Unifor union, the City of Windsor, the Canadian Gaming Association and, closer to home for me, the attorney general of British Columbia. We would do well as a federal Parliament to listen to those voices, from the private sector, labour and provincial governments, to make sure that we pass this bill.

I will indicate my strong support for Bill C-218 and hope to see us get it to committee where it can have that important analysis.

● (1355)

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Mosaic Stadium in Regina, home of the Saskatchewan Roughriders, sat vacant through 2020, empty of fans and their beloved players during the pandemic. It is my hope that some day in the not-too-distant future, Rider Nation will once again gather safely, sit shoulder to shoulder and cheer on the green and white as they pummel the Winnipeg Blue Bombers or any other inferior team. To get to that future moment in the bleachers under a bright blue prairie sky, the teams of the Canadian Football League are going to need sources of revenue, the lack of which led to the cancellation of last year's football season. That is why I am pleased to speak in favour of Bill C-218, the safe and regulated sports betting act.

Many of the merits of this bill have already been explained in detail in the House by my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood. One of the most persuasive arguments in favour of Bill C-218 is the good that could be done if the \$14 billion in revenue generated every year in Canada by single-game sports betting were redirected from underground or offshore entities to lawful distribution in Canada.



Currently, as the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood has pointed out, the governments of Saskatchewan and other provinces take revenues from lottery ticket programs such as Sport Select and Pro-Line to help fund amateur sports and other community activities. These gambling services, known as parlay betting, require bettors to place wagers on multiple sporting events.

For example, if I want to bet on the Saskatchewan Roughriders to beat the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, I cannot bet on just that one game. I also have to bet on one or two other games that I may not be interested in watching, and if I do not pick those other games correctly no payout is made. I can inform the House from personal experience just how annoying and frustrating that can be. Even with these limitations, parlay betting generates approximately \$500 million in revenue in Canada every year.

Let us consider the \$500 million generated annually by parlay betting, and then think about the \$14 billion generated annually by single-game sports betting in Canada. What could be done with that extra \$14 billion? One institution that could benefit from the extra revenue is the Canadian Football League and its nine member teams. If the CFL incurs all the costs of putting on the games that people are going to be betting on, it seems reasonable that the league and its teams would want to negotiate some sort of revenue-sharing agreement with their provincial governments for some of the revenues generated from single-game sports betting.

The Canadian Football League and its predecessors have been part of Canadian culture for almost as long as confederation, with the Canadian Rugby Football Union having been founded in 1884. The Grey Cup trophy has been around for over a century, having been donated by Governor General Earl Grey in 1909. Since then, this trophy has been presented every November to the winner of the championship Grey Cup game, with the only interruptions being for World War I, the Spanish flu pandemic, and the current pandemic, which cancelled last year's football season.

On a personal note, one of my fondest childhood memories is of watching the 1989 Grey Cup game on TV in my parents' basement with my older brother and the neighbour kids as the Saskatchewan Roughriders beat the Hamilton Tiger-Cats in the newly opened Toronto SkyDome. I apologize to any members from Hamilton if that brought back some bad memories.

As we come out of the pandemic, many Canadians, including me, would like to see life get back to normal. That includes seeing the Canadian Football League play the 2021 season. I would like to remind the House that another option to enable the CFL to play this season is simply to provide it with a massive taxpayer subsidy. In fact, this is exactly what the league was asking for last spring: anywhere from \$30 million to \$150 million.

● (1400)

I cannot help but think that it would be nice if we could have our cake and eat it too. It would be nice if we could save this great Canadian institution without being a burden to taxpayers. I believe that decriminalizing single-game sports betting would allow the Canadian Football League the opportunity to do exactly that.

I would like to now discuss how Bill C-218, once passed into law, could create a voluntary source of revenue to help the Canadi-

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an Football League, its member teams and other organizations recover from the major economic disruption of the pandemic.

Quite simply, many organizations, including some professional sports teams, had already negotiated revenue-sharing agreements in the past with their provincial governments for parlay betting, such as Pro-Line and Sport Select. If single-game sports betting were to be decriminalized and regulated by provincial governments, it would present a real opportunity for the Canadian Football League and its member teams to negotiate future revenue-sharing agreements for the revenues generated from single-game sports betting.

If such a framework had been in place prior to the pandemic, then perhaps last year's CFL season could have been saved. The problem faced last year by the Canadian Football League is that its business model depends on gate-driven revenues, such as ticket sales, concessions and parking. Other sources of revenue, such as TV contracts and merchandise, are just not enough to make the league economically viable.

This is why the 2020 season was cancelled, and this is why the 2021 season is in jeopardy. However, if single-game sports betting were legal in this country, and if the CFL had revenue-sharing agreements in place with their provincial governments, then this long-standing Canadian institution could be on stronger financial footing to come out of the pandemic and once again be economically viable.

The Canadian Football League is a benefit to many Canadians, over and above the players and fans. Every team at every stadium needs hundreds of workers to bring each game to life. I ask members to think of them all. Food and beverage vendors, security guards, tour bus and motorcoach operators, sports broadcasters, and camera operators all have a role to play in creating the contest on the field, the TVs and the tablets of fans all across the country.

I sincerely hope we will get out of this current pandemic as soon as possible, without a third or fourth wave. I would also like for there to be no more pandemics in the future. Then we can all get on with our lives, and there would be no need for the CFL to ask the federal government for a taxpayer-funded bailout to save the season or the league. If parliamentarians agree to pass Bill C-218 into law, then provincial legitimization of that \$14 billion in annual gaming revenues could help improve the lives not just of the players and fans of the Canadian Football League but also those who are involved in other sports, cultural and community organizations across the country, as these revenues would be distributed legally under various provincially regulated frameworks.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood for sponsoring this bill. Finally, if Bill C-218 is passed into law, I will bet \$50 that the Saskatchewan Roughriders win the Grey Cup this year.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to Bill C-218, an act to amend the Criminal Code with regard to sports betting, sponsored by the member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

[*English*]

Today, legal betting on sports events occurs throughout Canada in the form of parlay betting and pari-mutuel betting. Parlay betting allows individuals to wager on the outcome of multiple sporting events, and pari-mutuel is a unique form of betting that allows bettors to wager on live horse racing. These two examples provide individuals with the opportunity to participate in a safe and regulated betting environment.

Single-event sports betting is currently not permitted in Canada. This type of betting allows an individual to wager solely on the outcome of a single event or game, such as the Grey Cup. The premise of our criminal law in this area is a blanket prohibition on all gaming and betting activity. Betting, bookmaking, placing bets for third parties and similar gambling-related activities are all illegal. However, from the basic premise that all gambling activities are illegal, a series of exceptions have been enacted over time.

Bill C-218 is drafted as a short and straightforward bill. It proposes a single amendment to the Criminal Code to repeal paragraph 207(4)(b). This paragraph currently prohibits any form of betting on individual races, fights, single-sporting events or athletic contests. If enacted, the amendment would allow provinces and territories to create what is known as a lottery scheme to offer this unique type of betting.

[*Translation*]

On the surface, Bill C-218's proposal to repeal a paragraph in the Criminal Code seems fine. However, it raises a whole lot of issues that are likely to have repercussions, from the potential for significant revenue generation to unique health care consequences. Although my parliamentary colleagues will have to carefully examine all possible repercussions of this bill, I would like to start by focusing on one issue in particular. Although the vast majority of gaming regulations are enforced by our provincial partners, the federal government has jurisdiction over the supervision and regulation of pari-mutuel betting on horse racing in Canada.

[*English*]

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has within her portfolio a special operating agency: the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency, or CPMA. This agency, using revenues from its regulation of parimutuel betting, provides essential services to an important Canadian industry. Not only does the CPMA work with the provinces to provide a safe betting environment for Canadians who choose to wager on horse racing, but it also administers the national equine drug control program. This drug control program ensures fair play and the stability of one of Canada's oldest industries.

This is an industry that supports thousands of jobs across the country, from breeders and farmers to jockeys and trainers. Events

such as the North America Cup and the Queen's Plate, the latter starting in 1860 and being the oldest continuously run race in North America, are not only important Canadian cultural icons, but also important sources of tourism and other revenues.

I highlight the horse racing industry and the role of the CPMA because of the potential effect of Bill C-218 on the future of these two entities. Should single-event sports betting be legalized without careful consideration of the potential impact on one of Canada's oldest industries, the effects could be devastating.

A repeal of paragraph 207(4)(b) of the Criminal Code would not only legalize single-event sports betting, but also remove the prohibition on the provinces from regulating additional forms of betting on horse racing. As the CPMA currently funds its important programs through a levy on all bets placed through the parimutuel system of betting, a repeal of the protection found in paragraph 207(4)(b) may also result in removing the majority of CPMA's funding. Without this funding, we could very well see the collapse of this special operating agency, which is of special and essential importance to the horse racing industry.

At this time in particular, all parliamentarians should be clear on the impacts of their decisions on our economy and the impacts on the industry in all regions of our country.

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

That is why I think it is of vital importance that we take the time to examine, debate and study the essential role that the CPMA plays and the future of an industry that has always served Canada well.

[*English*]

We have a responsibility to the horse racing industry across this country to ensure that we make the right decision. We have a responsibility to vulnerable people in Canadian society to listen to experts in mental health and addictions. We have a responsibility to listen to police officers who investigate organized crime to see how the legalization of what was once seen as a moral vice might affect our modern system of justice and its impacts on illicit activities of organized criminal groups both here in Canada and abroad.

We must also listen to the indigenous peoples and communities as we work to re-establish Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples on a nation-to-nation basis. We must learn what potential impacts this could have on their communities and nations.

Some first nations, and other indigenous groups across this country, have entered into agreements respecting gaming and betting with many of the provinces to share in gambling revenues with the provinces and manage community activities. These agreements are the result of significant consultation, negotiation and trust. It is also my understanding that there are likely other indigenous governments that have expressed an interest in more direct management in gaming and betting. We have a responsibility to listen to indigenous peoples and communities on these important issues and how this industry may impact and benefit indigenous peoples and communities.

[Translation]

We find ourselves at a moment in time when a new form of gaming is being proposed as an exception to the blanket prohibition on gaming and betting.

As always, Parliament must carefully examine the potential repercussions on Canadians and industry stakeholders. We need to determine if it makes sense for Parliament to keep using its jurisdiction over criminal law to prohibit this activity.

The United States recently joined other countries in making this form of gaming possible in a regulated context. We have also seen major industry stakeholders alter their public positions over time. One thing has not changed though: Parliament's duty to take the time to examine the repercussions of such a change on our federal system.

• (1415)

[English]

On that note, I would like to extend my thanks for this opportunity to speak on Bill C-218. I look forward to working with all members of the House on this unique initiative.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, it is also an honour for me to speak to this bill. I think it is important to pass it at second reading and send it to committee. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the member from Saskatoon—Grasswood for introducing this bill and the member for Windsor West, who introduced it in a previous Parliament.

The objective of this bill is rather simple. Let us not overly complicate things. I did not hear many people speak who seem to oppose the bill. It would make a fairly simple change that would legalize single-event sports betting. It is currently possible to place a bet, but it has to be on more than one event. Anyone who wants to bet on a sports event can go to the Loto-Québec website, but they have to bet on a second event.

Does the law or the current situation prevent sports betting? The answer is no. Rather, it prevents betting on a single event. Obviously, when the government leaves an area of activity open, someone else will step in to fill the gap. Nature abhors a vacuum, and so, organized crime gets involved. I will talk a little about that later.

I would also like to point out that this is the fourth time this bill has come before the House. The time has come to pass it and move on to another issue. That it has been introduced four times speaks to its relevance.

### *Private Members' Business*

It is also important to note that the context has changed since the last time. A U.S. Supreme Court ruling overrode the federal government's power to prohibit states from allowing lotteries. This means the American federal government can no longer prohibit states from organizing single wager lotteries. This has implications for us. We can pretend that we are pure and do not do that, but it has repercussions because the United States is our close neighbour.

In fact, the bill introduced by our colleague from Windsor West was likely motivated by geography, for the industry in his part of the country. This is true everywhere. It is also true for Quebec. Plattsburgh is less than 90 minutes from Montreal. Gambling exists, and it is a competitive industry. If it is not done in American casinos, it will be done illegally somewhere else.

The Bloc Québécois supports this bill for four main reasons. It will provide a new revenue stream for Loto-Québec. It is as simple as that. There is revenue now, but it is going into the wrong pockets. This bill would allow Loto-Québec to collect that money. It will also prevent unfair competition from American casinos, which I mentioned earlier. In addition, the bill will provide new opportunities for gamblers in Quebec and Canada and will allow for better regulation.

It is right there in the name of the bill: the safe and regulated sports betting act. That is the objective. We are not trying to encourage people to gamble more. The idea is to provide a framework, come up with regulations and protect people. This bill is consistent with the movement towards legalizing gambling in North America. There are now 17 states, including New York, that have legalized it. We now have the choice to either hop on board or let this opportunity pass us by.

I should point out that the federal ruling in the U.S. was a game changer. Some people had objections that may have once been legitimate, but this ruling refuted most of those arguments.

Every time I rise to speak here, I cannot help but draw parallels to the political situation in Quebec. It is interesting to see that in the United States, it is the opposite situation from Canada. Here in Canada, section 91 says that federal laws take precedence over provincial and territorial ones, while in the United States, that ruling says the complete opposite. It is interesting. We might want to emulate that.

I mentioned that the purpose of the legislation is essentially to protect people. Earlier, my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue mentioned the specific case of an 18-year-old young man who committed suicide after getting into debt. That is one example.

• (1420)

How many families have been torn apart by one member's pathological gambling? How many material possessions have been lost to dishonest people? The fact that there are debt collectors who buy up debt is not good news. Government regulation could address that.

*Private Members' Business*

There is another reason to pass this bill. In Quebec, we have already tried to do something. It is not like we have been sitting idle. In 2016, the Government of Quebec tried to ban access to U.S. gambling sites. The Quebec Superior Court ruled that Quebec did not have the authority to do that. We cannot do it, and since the federal government is not doing it either, then the next logical step is to confront organized crime. When we talk about organized crime, we are talking about the mafia.

There is one figure that struck me, and that is that, in 2004-05, Operation Colisée estimated that organized crime in Montreal made \$27 billion in a single year from this type of betting.

What do members of organized crime do with that money, hon. members? They do not buy houses. They fund other activities. They extend their reach. We need to cut them off at the knees. The lives of everyone around these people are at risk.

Let us talk about cheating. One of the main arguments against this bill is that, if people are betting on a single event, it will be much easier to rig the event in question, particularly if it involves a single athlete. It could be very tempting to try to bribe him or her.

There is nothing stopping us from exerting more control over that aspect, since we do not have any control over the outcome of these events as it is. Nothing is stopping us from increasing penalties for that because, in any case, we have no control over the outcome of most of the big sports events that people are going to bet on. Many of these events take place in Quebec and Canada, but also in the United States. I therefore think that argument is not valid.

According to the president and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, legalizing and regulating these revenues take them away from organized crime and direct them to the government, which will be able to legally use this money to help people.

I should also mention that people will choose the legal alternative if one exists. In general, when people have a legal alternative, no matter what they may think of it, they will take it. Users will migrate en masse from illegal sites to legal sites, and this will give local governments money to intervene and prevent the risk and compulsive gambling in the same way as other programs mentioned earlier, such as those run by Loto-Québec. Of course, it is not a perfect system. We often wonder whether the government should really be encouraging gambling. However, at least the government has the means to help those with problems and to manage this in a fair manner.

Earlier, I mentioned that this is the fourth time that this bill has been introduced in the House. The first time, it was not debated. The second time, it passed unanimously, but then was blocked by the Senate. I hope that, if it is passed this time, it will not be blocked by the unelected Senate. It is an important issue.

Finally, the last time this bill was introduced, it was rejected by the Liberal government, which had a majority at the time. Their first argument against it was rigging, which I just refuted, and the second was that the bill promoted pathological gambling. I have addressed that as well. The government is better equipped than anyone to help victims of these systems.

Quebec and Canada have made a societal choice to legalize gambling in order to better regulate it. We prefer sound public policy over puritanism. I believe this is the path we should follow.

• (1425)

The only group that will benefit from the status quo if we do not pass the bill is organized crime. That is why we must pass the bill.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to conclude debate at second reading on Bill C-218, the safe and regulated sports betting act.

First, I want to thank all the members from all parties who have risen today to support this important legislation. It is not often we get members from the Conservatives, Liberals, NDP and the Bloc all rising in favour of a given initiative, but that is what we have this afternoon.

This Sunday is the biggest sport betting event of the year. It is the 55th Super Bowl. Millions of dollars will be wagered in Canada on everything from the win to the props, the point spread and then the coin toss and so on. Unfortunately, almost all that money will be going to offshore websites and criminal organizations. However, we can change that.

By passing Bill C-218, we can ensure that going forward, profits from sports wagering is put back into our communities, into health care, education, problem gambling programs, youth sports and other important services rather than the pockets of offshore companies or even criminals.

In December, the government introduced its own legislation to achieve the same goal as Bill C-218, and I supported that legislation. In fact, I told the Minister of Justice months before that he should adopt my bill as government legislation so we could get it through the process as quickly as possible. I did not care if my name was on the bill as long as the much-needed change was made in Parliament. Eventually, the minister finally took me up on my suggestion and introduced Bill C-13.

To show my good faith and desire to work with the minister and the government to get this single-event sports betting legalized, I traded down in the order of precedence to give the government a fair chance to bring its legislation forward. Unfortunately, though, the introduction of the government's bill has not sped up the process. In fact, if anything, it has slowed it down. Twice now the government has cancelled debate on Bill C-13 at the last second in favour of other legislation.

I get it. The government has priorities and there are other important pieces of legislation before the House. However, if the government cannot make Bill C-13 a priority, then it does not have to. The Liberals can support Bill C-218 and all the work can be done during the Private Members' Business instead of during government business. It is true that there will be some slight differences between my bill and the government's legislation, however, I am confident that those differences can be addressed at the justice committee and that amendments could be made if needed. I am sure that the justice committee can make the right decision on this.

Let us get the legislation passed at second reading, sent to committee, amended if necessary, and then back to the House so we can get it to the Senate. The legalization of single-event sports betting clearly has support from members of all parties and the government clearly realizes that we should legalize it. Let us not play politics; let us get this job done.

Sunday is the biggest betting day in the country and we are missing out on millions of dollars for our communities.

I want to thank all parties again for their support of legalized single-event sports betting. There is a little difference, as I mentioned, between Bill C-218 and Bill C-13, but let us pass the private member's bill that will come forward in the next two weeks and then we can have the discussion at the justice committee. We are open to the amendments. We realize the horse racing industry has issues.

*Private Members' Business*

It is a great privilege to bring the bill forward. As mentioned before, others from the NDP also brought it forward. Together in the House of Commons this will be for the betterment of the country if we can pass Bill C-218.

● (1430)

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

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

The hon. member for Regina—Wascana.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès) :** Pursuant to an order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 17, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*Translation*]

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 16, at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

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

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