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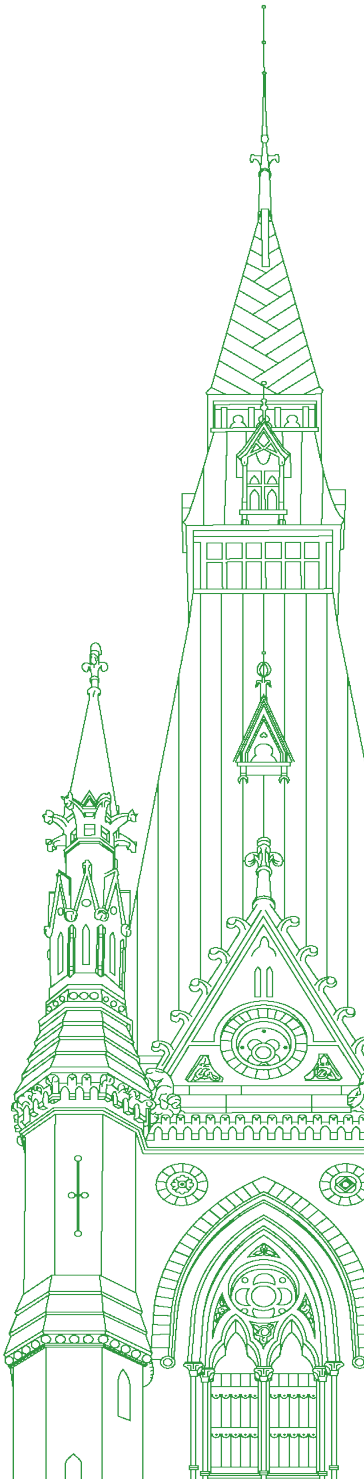

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)

[*English*]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Speaker: Pursuant to section 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled "Labour Market Assessment—2020".

* * *

SAFE AND REGULATED SPORTS BETTING ACT

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-218, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise in the House this morning to introduce the safe and regulated sports betting act.

I have gotten great support from across the House. I would like to thank the member for Windsor West in particular for his assistance with this legislation and for the seconding of the bill here this morning.

There are others in our caucus who have given great support, such as the members for Essex, Niagara Falls and Calgary Shepard, and I would like to thank them.

This is a historic moment. This is the third time this bill has come to the House. As members know, it passed in 2015 but got stopped in the Senate. Last time, in the 42nd Parliament, it did not make it out. This is third time lucky, as we will join forces with everyone in the House to see if we can move this bill forward.

Let me be clear that single-event sport wagering already exists in this country, and if members do not think so, they are behind the curtains. The Canadian single-event sport wagering industry is worth over $14 billion, but most of it, 95% of it, exists underground on the black market or through offshore websites. These are unregulated sport-wagering sites. None of that activity is subject to government regulations or taxes; none of it is creating jobs in this country or economic opportunities; and none of it is contributing to consumer protection, education, harm reduction initiatives or support services, which are badly needed in this country.

This legislation would amend the Criminal Code to repeal the federal ban on single-event sport betting and allow the provinces to implement a safe and regulated betting environment within the provincial wagering and lottery systems. By passing this bill, we can put a stop to the billions of dollars going to organized crime and put that money back into our communities.

To wrap up, it has all changed since 2018. The United States has allowed it. Sports leagues, like the NHL and NBA, are in favour of sports betting being regulated. It is time this country follows forward. I will have more to say on this bill, but it gives me great pleasure to stand in the House this morning and introduce it.

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

The Speaker: That was very well done and very informative, but I would remind hon. members to give a succinct explanation of their bill.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-219, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sexual exploitation).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to introduce my private member's bill today, an act to amend the Criminal Code, sexual exploitation.

I would like to thank the member for Portage—Lisgar for seconding this bill.

This bill was introduced in the previous Parliament as Bill C-424. It is designed to better protect young people and persons living with disabilities from sexual exploitation. This is a direct result of the advocacy, comments and concerns of the people of Perth—Wellington. They were shocked in January 2018 to learn that a person who was employed to work with young people and persons living with disabilities was convicted of a serious sexual crime against a person living with a disability. As a sentence, he received a monetary fine.

This bill would ensure appropriate sentencing for anyone who commits a serious sexual crime against a young person or a person living with disabilities. It provides for guidance in sentencing if the crime is committed against a young person or a person living with disabilities.

I look forward to continuing debate on this matter, and I am seeking the support of all hon. members in the House.

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

* * *

● (1010)

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-220, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (compassionate care leave).

He said: Mr. Speaker, almost seven years ago to the day I stood in the Alberta legislature to begin a journey to change compassionate care leave in this country. This legislation successfully passed, allowing thousands of Alberta caregivers to take time off work to care for their gravely ill loved ones.

Today, I am rising in this chamber to introduce my bill, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (compassionate care leave). This legislation, if passed, would allow caregivers using the compassionate care leave program to take additional time off work following the death of their loved one. Currently, this leave ends immediately following a loved one's death, not leaving enough time for the caregiver to make the practical necessities like funeral arrangements and estate planning and to have the time to grieve. My bill would extend compassionate care leave so that caregivers can take up to three extra weeks off work following their loved one's death.

This is job-protected leave, so caregivers would not have to worry about losing their employment during this time.

Caregiving is exhausting work. I hope members on all sides of the House will see the need for this amendment to the Canada Labour Code and support the continued progress of compassionate care leave in our country.

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

* * *

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION INCENTIVE ACT

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-221, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (oil and gas wells).

She said: Mr. Speaker, today I introduce the environmental restoration incentive act. I thank many members and colleagues for their support.

Canadian energy producers lead the world in remediation and reclamation, but struggling small and medium-sized oil and gas producers are collapsing in real time, leaving fiscal and environmental liabilities.

The 2019 Redwater decision means at-risk small companies now cannot raise money for that purpose. Municipalities lose major revenue and facilities are left in different conditions. It is not evasion or neglect by small gas producers, but a stark reality of their precarious economic positions. The number of orphan wells rose more than 300% since 2015. There are more than 130,000 inactive wells in Canada. Cleanup costs are estimated between $30 billion and $70 billion. The current orphan well system is overwhelmed and risks costing taxpayers 100% of those costs.

My bill would enable small producers to raise money from investors exclusively for decommissioning oil and gas wells. It would incentivize and ensure private sector proponents can fulfill environmental responsibilities at the lowest public cost.

My bill is not a perfect remedy for this complex challenge that requires co-operation and ongoing action from federal and provincial governments. I ask all members to partner and prioritize real solutions for all Canadians.

We can make a real difference right away with a tax credit that can only be used the year a well is decommissioned, will only exist for six years, and will only be for small and medium-sized producers that need it the most, with further measures later on.

My bill would help the environment, create immediate jobs for oil and gas workers, and protect taxpayers.

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

* * *

● (1015)

EXPROPRIATION ACT

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-222, an act to amend the Expropriation Act with respect to protection of private property.

She said: Mr. Speaker, there has been a disturbing trend in Canada toward what is referred to as regulatory or constructive taking of private property. This happens when government uses its statutory powers to regulate or restrict the property rights of an owner without acquiring title to the land being adversely affected.

The landowner feels the impact of the regulation as if the land had been expropriated. In Canada, government acquisition of land without owner's consent is not subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Landowners' rights are found in expropriation legislation. The government must follow the law as to what land may be expropriated and must observe the procedures set out in legislation. By setting out exceptions in the Expropriation Act, my bill seeks to remove some uncertainty from the existing legislation as to whether owners can be compensated.

With this legislation, my goal is to protect the private property rights of average Canadians.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-223, an act to amend the Citizenship Act with respect to adequate knowledge of French in Quebec.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce my first bill in the House of Commons, a bill seconded by the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

This bill amends the Citizenship Act to require that permanent residents who ordinarily reside in Quebec must have an adequate knowledge of French in order to obtain citizenship.

In Gilles Vigneault's masterfully chosen words, “The Francophonie is a vast, unbounded land, the realm of the French language. It exists within us. It is the invisible, spiritual, mental and emotional homeland within each one of you.”

I thank the House for its support.

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

* * *

● (1020)

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-224, an act to amend An Act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce in the House an act to amend an act to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, and to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces. I thank the member from Montarville for seconding my bill.

Tax season is approaching, and citizens and businesses in Quebec will have to file two income tax returns, with two different types of statements, two types of net income and two types of schedules. Everything needs to be done twice. Is it possible to simplify the lives of citizens and businesses by having them file a single income tax return? That is what we are proposing. It would be administered by Quebec, since Revenu Québec is present in every region and already manages the collection of GST and QST. Quebec finance minister Yves Séguin, a Liberal, was the one who first proposed this approach, which now has the support of every member of every party in the Quebec National Assembly.

This law would also enable Quebec to fight more effectively against the use of tax havens, since Ottawa is dragging its feet in that regard. We want to ensure we can protect and maintain all regional jobs.

We believe it is entirely possible to secure those jobs by reclassifying the public servants and putting them in other jobs that are currently understaffed.

The Research Institute on Self-Determination of Peoples and National Independence conducted a study. A single income tax return would save $425 million for individuals, businesses and the public administration. Can we stop making citizens, businesses and the public administration do everything twice? I am confident that we can.

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

* * *

AERONAUTICS ACT

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-225, an act to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Fishing and Recreational Harbours Act and other acts with regard to the application of provincial law.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to introduce my first bill in the House. I am particularly excited about this bill because it builds on what motivates my commitment to politics, namely, the self-government of my nation. I am therefore honoured to introduce my bill on land use and development and environmental protection. Under this legislation, a number of existing laws would be subject to Quebec's laws going forward.

Let us keep in mind that the protection of Quebec's territory essentially falls under the laws and regulations of Quebec and its municipalities. While Quebec cannot force the federal government to obey its laws, the federal Parliament can set strict parameters on the Government of Quebec in the enforcement of its own legislation. We have the ability to regulate matters pertaining to the environment and the development of our territory. It is inconceivable to me that Quebec should have to defer to the federal government on these matters, because what happens within our borders should be decided by us.

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

* * *

CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM ACT

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-226, an act to amend the Canadian Multiculturalism Act with regard to non-application in Quebec.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce a bill to amend the Canadian Multiculturalism Act to provide that it does not apply in Quebec. Canadian multiculturalism is a political ideology imposed on Quebec. All it has done is juxtapose a multitude of cultural solitudes and ghettoize difference.

The Quebec nation wants to design its own integration model. We are open to diversity and we want to create a harmonious coexistence based on shared values, especially when it comes to protection of the French language, separation of church and state and gender equality.

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

* * *

● (1025)

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-227, an act to amend the Employment Equity Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a private member's bill entitled "an act to amend the Employment Equity Act".

The Employment Equity Act was designed to ensure that we achieve equality in employment in the federal public service and for large employers in the private sector that come under federal jurisdiction. The fact is that the workforces in these areas still fail to represent the diversity of the Canadian population.

As it stands, the Employment Equity Act applies to only four groups: women, aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and visible minorities. Members of my community, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Canadians, are left out of the act. This private member's bill would make sure we are counted in.

Once again, I would like to thank the Public Service Alliance of Canada for its strong advocacy on this issue, and in particular Paul Jones of the Union of National Defence Employees in my riding.

We know that so many Canadians remain under-represented in all levels of employment, and that transgender Canadians suffer particularly high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Adding transgender Canadians to the Employment Equity Act would force employers to address this fact and come up with concrete plans to remove the barriers to equal employment for all.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, this petition calls upon the government to immediately commit to upholding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada by halting all existing and planned construction of the Coastal GasLink project on Wet'suwet'en territory, ordering the RCMP to dismantle its exclusion zone and stand down, scheduling nation-to-nation talks between the Wet'suwet'en nation and the federal and provincial governments and prioritizing the real implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition in support of Bill S-204 with regard to human organ trafficking.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am also presenting a petition today in support of Bill S-204 on combatting organ harvesting and trafficking.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting two petitions.

The first is from petitioners in my riding who are asking for the immediate repeal of Bill C-48 and Bill C-69. One is the anti-pipeline bill and the other is the tanker ban on the west coast. The petitioners from my riding remind the Government of Canada that over 100,000 jobs have been lost in the Alberta energy sector alone.

TAXATION

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition also comes from petitioners in my riding. They are demanding that the government stop raising their taxes and immediately commit to rejecting all tax increases to leave more money in the pockets of the people who earn it.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am putting forward a petition on behalf of concerned Canadians who want to see Bill S-204 supported. They have concerns about international trafficking in human organs and want to see the government take swift action to make sure that Canadians cannot travel abroad, utilizing perhaps criminal behaviour, to receive organs harvested without consent. The petitioners would like the government to put an end to this, at least from the Criminal Code side.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I bring members' attention to this petition signed by people from across the greater Toronto area. They want to bring attention to the harvesting of human organs. The petitioners want the government to take action by specifically supporting a number of bills: Bill S-204 and Bill C-350. The petitioners are urging Parliament to move quickly on this matter.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

● (1030)

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

CANCELLATION OF TECK FRONTIER MINE PROJECT

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am requesting an emergency debate on the economic impact on all of Canada caused by the cancellation of Teck Frontier.

It is an economic crisis for Canada, because energy is the biggest private sector investor in the economy and creates jobs in every province. However, nearly $200 billion in oil and gas projects have been cancelled or stalled, and 200,000 Canadian oil and gas workers have lost their jobs in the last five years. Every oil sands job creates five other indirect and induced jobs in other sectors in other provinces. Canada has the third-largest oil reserves in the world; 97.3% of which is in the oil sands.

Teck's cancellation is the 11th major multi-billion-dollar oil and gas project to be withdrawn, and Teck is the latest in a list of 18 companies that have cancelled or frozen their Canadian energy assets in the same time frame.

This flight of capital from Canada's energy sector represents a bigger loss of investment and jobs than at any comparable time frame in more than seven decades. It is the equivalent of losing both the automotive and aerospace sectors in Canada, which I am confident would rightly be considered a national economic catastrophe and a severe crisis by every member of every party in this House of Commons.

The cancellation of Teck Frontier will cost Alberta 10,000 badly needed jobs and $20 billion in investment. It will cost 14 indigenous communities, all locally impacted and all supportive, their agreements with financial, education and skills training opportunities. It will eliminate the potential of $70 billion in revenue to all levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal.

Its cancellation represents a crisis of investor confidence in the fairness, predictability, independence, and certainty of Canada's regulatory system, policy framework, and the economy overall. Teck invested $1 billion while meeting every requirement during eight years of a rigorous multi-jurisdictional review, and even recently took the unprecedented step of self-imposing a goal to be net zero by 2050, far beyond the already world-leading standards of Canada.

Seven months ago, Teck Frontier was recommended by the independent expert joint panel to be in the public interest of Canada, based on its science, evidence, technical, environmental and economic merits, but within a week of the final political decision, media reported that Teck board members concluded that public safety concerns and political risk in Canada made it impossible to continue to pursue the Frontier project.

Already this week, economists and commentators are wondering and warning whether any major energy projects can be proposed or built in Canada.

A painful truth is that it also represents an escalating national unity crisis from the perspective of western Canadians, who see political double standards for oil and gas compared to other sectors and other provinces.

All these factors combined present a national emergency that ought to seize the attention of every member of the House of Commons. An emergency debate is the bare minimum.

Previously, emergency debates were granted when Kinder Morgan announced its withdrawal from the Trans Mountain expansion and when General Motors announced the closure of their automobile assembly plant in Oshawa. Every member here agreed those were emergencies that deserved debate in Parliament, and it happens to be the case that Teck Frontier is larger, both in investment and in jobs.

For these reasons I request again, and thank you in advance for, your consideration for this important emergency debate.

* * *

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Lakeland for her intervention. I am prepared to grant an emergency debate concerning the Teck Frontier mine project.

This debate will be held later today at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PROPOSED TAX CHANGES

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP) moved:

> That the House call on the government to change its proposed tax cuts by targeting benefits to those who earn less than $90,000 per year, and use those savings to invest in priorities that give real help to Canadians, including dental coverage for uninsured families making less than $90,000 per year.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with someone who truly inspires me, the hon. member for Burnaby South. He will take the floor in the second part of my intervention.

[*English*]

What the NDP is offering today is an opportunity for all members of Parliament to get together to provide support for the one-third of Canadians who do not have access to basic dental care.

What we said in the motion, and what Parliament will be directing the government to do if it is adopted, is to cap the tax changes at $90,000 a year and to provide basic dental care to all those who are uninsured and earning less than $90,000 a year in this country.

I must say at the outset that Canadians already support this policy. A recent poll just last year indicates that 86% of Canadians support dental care for all those who are uninsured in this country. At the same time, other countries like the United Kingdom and the European Union have 100% dental coverage. Basic dental care is covered in those countries. Six million Canadians, when we put aside young people who have the opportunity to access provincial plans, are impacted by this lack of dental coverage.

● (1035)

[*Translation*]

That means that millions of Canadians will be affected by the motion being moved by the NDP today. Millions of Canadians will be able to access dental care once this motion has been adopted.

[*English*]

Let us hear some of the stories of Canadians who do not have access to basic dental care in this country. I would like to quote from a constituent, Jonathan, a man who works for minimum wage and who talked to me about the importance of having dental coverage in this country.

Jonathan works at minimum wage and cannot afford to get the basic cleaning that he needs as part of basic dental care. That means that because of bacteria in his mouth, he is often in pain. He tried to save up enough money to access the basic dental care that he needed, but then his car broke down. He needed it for work, so he had to make the tough choice between having transportation or getting his basic dental needs met. He simply could not do both.

He has tried borrowing money, but that has not worked either, because it puts him in a debt cycle that he simply cannot afford. He has looked into dental plans, as his family has, but they found that the cost was simply prohibitive.

In this country, half of Canadian families are $200 away from insolvency in any given month. Jonathan and his family are among them. A difference of $100 or $200 a month means the difference between managing to put food on the table, managing to keep a roof over their heads, and managing to pay the bills without going too much further in debt. They simply cannot afford the cost of a dental plan.

Canadian families are the most indebted of any families in the industrialized world, and we have the highest family debt loads in our country's history right now. The reality of Jonathan is a reality that many other people face across the length and breadth of this country.

One thing I should mention about Jonathan is that in addition to the pain, in addition to the struggles of trying to find resources to pay for basic dental care, he also says that he feels ashamed of himself, that because of his broken teeth and because he is in such pain, he simply is not able to smile. The adoption of the motion today would mean that Jonathan, like six million other Canadians, would get their smile back. That is extremely important.

I would like to talk about Elsie. Elsie is not her real name. She did not want me to use her real name because she works for a big corporation that makes a lot of profit and has been held just shy of the number of hours needed to access the company's dental plan. She works in the food and hospitality sector. Her teeth are literally rotting away, but because there is no basic dental care, she is unable to access the dental care that she desperately needs.

[*Translation*]

I will also talk about what I saw at the University of Montreal a few years ago. The dental clinic at the University of Montreal offers free dental care provided by students of the faculty of dental medicine who are studying to be dentists.

Fortunately, thanks to the University of Montreal, dental care is being provided, but there is a waiting list. People are lining up to get access and many of them are in pain because of the lack of basic dental care in this country.

That is the problem whether we are talking about Jonathan, Elsie or everyone else lining up to get care, not just at the University of Montreal, but all across the country. When there are free dental clinics, people are there because they are desperately trying to get badly needed dental care.

● (1040)

[*English*]

I recently had a meeting with working representatives from British Columbia, workers such as David Black, who is one of my bosses, a constituent of mine in New Westminster—Burnaby, as well as representatives from correctional workers, commercial workers and a teacher. They were all there in my office, and I mentioned that the NDP was bringing forward this motion. They said it was wonderful and that it could make a real difference in this country, and then they asked me what kind of dental plan members of Parliament had. I had to tell them that members of Parliament have granted themselves a good, effective dental plan that covers all of those basic needs.

Now those working people, who are here today, are saying through me to all members of Parliament that if dental coverage and dental plans are good enough for members of Parliament, they should be good enough for all Canadians across the length and breadth of this land.

[*Translation*]

In terms of cost, people may be wondering how much this dental plan will cost. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has already informed us that it will cost $800 million a year. The cost will be higher the first year, of course, because there are needs that will have to be met, but it should come to about $800 million, or rather $814 million, the first year.

If we take these amounts and compare them to the federal budget as a whole, we can see that they are not that high. Considering all the tax changes that the government wants to implement, this is something that would pay for itself.

[*English*]

Why is that? It is because we already know from emergency room physicians across this country that tens of millions of dollars every year go into last-minute care that is provided in emergency rooms by doctors who are not qualified. People who are desperately seeking dental care go into emergency rooms, and they are given pills or painkillers to get them through the following few days.

Emergency room doctors tell us that we need to have basic dental care in this country and that the absence of basis dental care is costing our health care system over $150 million a year. We are already paying the costs of this emergency care, as well as the costs for all of the people like Jonathan and Elsie who cannot even go to work because of the pain they are experiencing. The six million Canadians who do not have dental care are an incredible charge on our economy and our quality of life, without even considering the impacts on each of them.

Of course it makes sense to cap the tax changes and make sure we are taking care of basic dental care for all Canadians. This is a no-brainer. Members of Parliament need to get behind this idea. We need to make sure every Canadian has access to basic dental care in this country.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to get clarification on the figures to make sure I am reading them right. On our tax bill, people who earn up to $210,000 get some relief, and everyone who makes less than $90,000 gets relief, as would be his case. I am assuming that people who earn less than $90,000 would get the same relief as in the proposed Liberal tax cut, and then the part that would be eliminated would be those over $210,000, because no one over that amount gets anything.

If I am reading it right, how much money would be saved by taking the tax cut away from people who earn between $90,000 and $210,000?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, when we hear the question from the member for Yukon, we certainly hope that means he will be supporting the motion directing the government to bring in basic dental care.

The savings are about $1.6 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer, as I said, talks about a yearly expenditure on basic dental care for those who are uninsured of just over $800 million a year. In other words, there is no additional expenditure for government.

We can look at the amount of money the government has thrown at the Trans Mountain pipeline, $17 billion and counting. We can look at overseas tax havens, $25 billion according to the PBO. We can look at the $14 billion given to the banking sector 15 months ago. This is a drop in the bucket, but one that makes a significant difference in the quality of life of so many Canadians.

I hope the member for Yukon will support our motion and we can get this done for Canadians.

● (1045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby.

Historically, the fathers of Canadian Confederation decided that health should be the responsibility of the provinces and Quebec. The government has since revealed a very obvious thirst for centralization. Last year, the federal government intruded further and further into areas of provincial authority by exploiting its spending authority. What is being proposed here is a blatant intrusion into Quebec's jurisdiction. The Quebec government has always been against this idea, so much so that it called for the right to opt out with compensation. That element is missing from my colleague's motion.

My question is very simple. Given that this falls under Quebec's jurisdiction, that you are spending money that should be made available to Quebeckers through the federal health transfers, and that you are spending that money according to your own inclinations, how do you think Quebeckers are going to take this?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. member to direct questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the other member.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, that is why I mentioned the University of Montreal. I urge my colleague to go and see for himself the long line of Quebeckers waiting to be seen at the University of Montreal and at Quebec's free dental clinics.

We know that there are people in Quebec who do not have access to dental care. We know that the federal government should provide full funding. We know that the provinces and Quebec can decide how to manage these funds. Nevertheless, there is a dire need across Quebec and Canada. That is why it is so important to vote for this motion today, so the people who are desperately waiting today outside the University of Montreal and the free dental clinics can believe in the future and know that their quality of life will improve.

Business of Supply

[*English*]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, today we are talking about an opportunity to really transform the lives of Canadians.

My colleague told stories about some people, yet millions of Canadians cannot take care of their teeth. The Liberal government is proposing a tax giveaway, where the majority of the benefit would flow to those who earn over $100,000. If we target that measure and help those who need it most, those who earn less than $90,000, we can free up enough money to cover 4.3 million Canadians who need to take care of their teeth.

That is what we are proposing today. It would transform the lives of people in the ridings of all members of Parliament who cannot get the dental care they need.

I think about a woman who I met when I was walking down the streets of Vancouver. She ran up to me with her hand over her mouth. She told me that she had heard me talking about dental care. I told her that we wanted to ensure people were covered. She said that she never imagined she would ever be able to afford to get her teeth looked after. She told me that once she became older and was no longer covered under her parents' plan, she could not afford to go to the dentist, that her teeth were in a really rough shape now and that she was embarrassed. She was afraid to apply for a new job because she did not think people would hire her if they saw the condition of her teeth. She had tried her best, but there was something wrong with her teeth and she could not afford to get them looked fixed.

I think about her story and the many other Canadians who cannot afford to take care of their teeth. In a country as wealthy as ours, that should not be the way.

I think about what we could do if we made a better choice. We have choices. The Liberal government is making a choice. Right now, it is choosing to give away billions of dollars to people who do not need. It is making a choice to benefit those who do not really need the benefit. The Liberal government is making a choice and we are asking it to choose better. We could take the current proposal for the tax giveaway and put that money toward helping those who need it most. Let us focus on those people. If we do that, we would free up the money.

Let us talk about the choices.

The Liberal government's proposed tax giveaway would cost over $6 billion. If it targeted that measure and focused it on those families that need it the most, we could free up $1.6 billion. The Parliamentary Budge Office costed out how much it would take to cover those families that are uninsured. It found that year over year, it would cost just over $800 million. It would be more expensive in the first year because so many Canadians who did not have access to dental care would rush to get their teeth fixed. That would cost $1.8 billion in the first year, but would stabilize at around $800 million. This is huge.

Imagine the people across Canada right now who cannot get their teeth taken care of. If they go to an emergency room because their teeth are hurting, they are told there is nothing the hospital can do. They are given painkillers and sent home, yet the problem with their teeth remains. If we think about it, it makes no sense that we can go into a hospital and have complicated heart surgery or have our joints rebuilt, but if we have a problem with our teeth, we are sent home with painkillers. That is the only solution so many Canadians have. We need to change that.

A couple of months ago a woman came to my office. She did not want me to share her name because she was embarrassed about her situation. She had a problem with her teeth. However, her problem was even more heartbreaking. She could not afford medication to treat an illness she had and due to the complications of that illness she had lost some of her teeth. She was in pain. This woman had two problems. First, she could not afford medication. Second, she could not afford dental care. When I looked at her, I thought of how we were failing as a society. She thought it was her fault. She told me that she wanted to work hard, that she did not want any handouts and that she was at my office because she wanted to find a way forward.

● (1050)

I told her that it was not her fault, that she was not to blame. The horrible decisions we made resulted in her medication and dental care not being covered. We can change that.

[*Translation*]

Today we have an opportunity to make a change. The Liberal government is proposing a tax change, and we are proposing a solution. If this measure can target the people who need it most, we can implement a dental care program to help families who do not have access to the care they desperately need.

We have been observing the Liberal government's decisions and choices. Recently, the Liberals spent millions of dollars of public money to help corporations like Loblaws and Mastercard. They often choose to help the rich. The Liberals' proposed change would also help individuals who earn more than $100,000.

We are proposing that this change be scaled down and targeted to the people who need it most, meaning people who earn less than $90,000. If we adopt this measure, we can implement a dental plan that will benefit nearly 4.3 million Canadians.

We know that this is needed in Quebec. Some Quebeckers have dental problems but cannot afford dental care. We want to change that. A federal program would help these people access dental care, which would change many lives.

This is an option, a solution and a choice. We can do this. I urge all members of the House to think about the families in their ridings who need dental care but cannot afford it. I urge them to think about how we can help them. Today we have an opportunity to help them.

● (1055)

[*English*]

I think about the choices we have made and the opportunity we have before us. The motion before the House now is a concrete thing we could do right now.

I would like the members on the Liberal benches, all members, to think about the people in their ridings right now, to think about the families, the young people who do not have benefits and will never have them in their lifetime. I ask them to think about the gig economy and the fact that for many young people, the dream of having benefits is not there for them, the dream of having benefits that will cover their teeth is simply not a reality.

We owe it to those young people to do something to care of them. They deserve to have their teeth taken care of. They deserve to have a healthy life. Dental health is directly connected to their overall well-being and health. We can make this change right now.

I am going to put this to the government one more time.

The Liberal government is proposing a tax change, a tax giveaway to the wealthiest Canadians, those who earn over $100,000. Let us focus the tax change to benefit the families that need it most, those people who earn less than $90,000. With the money we free up, let us put in place a national dental care program that will lift up families, that will allow young people who cannot afford to have their teeth taken care of to get the dental care service they need. It will also allow workers who are struggling in jobs with no benefits to have confidence, knowing they can care for their teeth. This will change the lives of so many Canadians. This is a real choice that we can make right now to lift up people.

I call on the Liberal government to do the right thing, to target the tax measure to help families that are in need, to bring in place national dental care to lift up families, to ensure people can access the care they so desperately need.

That is the choice we have today. I call on all members in the House to support that choice.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the thoughtful members on health committee have already decided to study dental care, with the wisdom of members of all parties going into that discussion. In the minister's mandate letter, she was asked to look at this.

My understanding from the answer to my previous question is that every person with a taxable income of less than $90,000 will get the same tax relief under the NDP proposed plan if it were to go ahead. If this does not go ahead, will the member support the Liberal tax cut that would give the same amount to everyone with a taxable income of less than $90,000?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, what I am proposing today is an opportunity to help those who need it most. My concern with the Liberal government is that it is often helping those who are the wealthiest. The Liberals have given millions of dollars and billions of dollars to the wealthiest corporations. Here is an opportunity to help those in need.

My proposal is this. Yes, absolutely those who earn less than $90,000 will continue to get the same benefit as planned by the Liberal proposal. However, we are suggesting that instead of giving the maximum benefit to those who earn over $100,000, we not do that. Let us target those who need it the most instead.

If we do that, we can free up enough money to bring in place a national dental care program that will actually benefit those who need it most. That is what we are offering today and that is what we are proposing. It would mean a lot to so many families.

I ask the member to consider those people who live in Yukon and how they are struggling to access dental care. I know it is an issue that impacts everyone in this House. That is what we need to do. We need to make sure people have the access to dental care to take care of their teeth.

That is what I am proposing today.

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, much has been said about the NDP's Sherbrooke declaration, which calls for respect for Quebec's jurisdictions, an asymmetrical model and an automatic right to compensation. We do not oppose the essence of the proposal, but the first chance it gets, the NDP is proposing an intrusion into Quebec's jurisdiction. There is another way. What we are calling for, and what the provinces want, is for the federal government to restore health transfers. The provinces want 5.2%, and we want 6%. That would give the Government of Quebec and the provincial governments the flexibility to manage their health care programs. Otherwise, these kinds of proposals will disrupt health care management.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Madam Speaker, we are suggesting a change to the Liberal proposal, which really benefits the wealthy. Giving Quebec the right to opt out with full compensation is part of our values. The measure we are proposing would use that money to help families who need it the most.

Quebec could have access to the federal program if it wants. If it wants full compensation, that is also Quebec's prerogative. We are proposing something for the common good. We will always advocate for working together to build a more just society. We know we can achieve better results by working together. That is exactly what we are proposing, while still respecting Quebec's jurisdictions. Health is always a provincial responsibility. This is a matter of funding. We want to fund a program to help people who need dental care. That is exactly what we are talking about.

Business of Supply

Hon. Mona Fortier (Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to talk about our government's record, about how we have invested in Canadians, including middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join them, about the middle-class tax cuts we introduced in 2015, and about the tax cuts we proposed in 2019.

The economy is strong and growing. Our record proves that, by investing in Canadians, we can have an impact on Canadians' day-to-day lives while growing the economy. However, we are also very aware that too many Canadians are still having trouble making ends meet.

Ever since we took office in 2015, our plan has focused on investing in Canadians and their communities. We are investing in things people need to build a better future for themselves and their families. We are investing in the middle class and those working hard to join it. We know that a strong middle class leads to a strong economy, and a strong economy benefits everyone. Our plan is working.

[*English*]

One of the first actions of our previous mandate was to introduce a tax break for the middle class that is benefiting more than nine million hard-working Canadians. We also introduced the Canada child benefit, which is providing more money to those families who need it most. By doing so, we have helped to lift one million people out of poverty, including 334,000 children, giving them a better start in life.

I would like to talk about how this measure in particular has helped children in my riding. Ottawa—Vanier is one of Canada's most diverse ridings. In fact, I often say that it represents our nation's diversity in one riding. It has some of Canada's highest earners and some of Canada's lowest earners. That is why the Canada child benefit is so important to my constituents. Over 15,000 children in Ottawa—Vanier benefit from the Canada child benefit.

Our government has also increased the guaranteed income supplement to help low-income seniors make ends meet. By working in co-operation and collaboration with our provincial partners, we strengthened the Canada pension plan so that Canadian workers will have more money in retirement. I am sure that hon. members on all sides of the House will celebrate the fact that yesterday Statistics Canada released national poverty figures showing that 73,000 seniors have been lifted out of poverty since 2015.

Furthermore, our government understands that small businesses are the catalyst of our economy. That is why we cut taxes for small businesses to help entrepreneurs grow their businesses and create more good, well-paying jobs. This measure was well received, and small business owners responded. Canada has gained over one million jobs since 2015, most of which are full-time jobs.

I would also like to highlight our government's commitment to ensuring that everyone has a safe and secure place to call home. Our government established Canada's first national housing strategy. We have invested in the construction of more affordable housing in communities across the country and we have helped make it more affordable for people to buy their first home through enhancements to the first-time homebuyers incentive.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

We have made tremendous progress by working with Canadians. We have listened to their requests so that we can grow an economy that works for everyone.

Through our investments and Canadians' hard work, our country's economy is strong and growing. Over the past four years, Canadians have created over one million new jobs, and stronger wage growth has helped more people get ahead. However, we know that there is still a lot of work to be done.

[*English*]

Over the past few months, leading up to budget 2020, I have met with Canadians and stakeholders in Montreal, Windsor, Regina, Winnipeg, Kenora and elsewhere to understand the needs of Canadians in different parts of this country. One thing that came up is that too many people are still worried about making ends meet.

The rising cost of living is affecting Canadians from coast to coast to coast. They know what it is like to have their livelihoods put at risk by global economic challenges, and they worry about what the future holds for them and their families. We understand that.

I heard from Canadians that a good quality of life for them means not having to worry about living paycheque to paycheque. It means being in good health. It means living in a safe environment and in a society where diversity is celebrated. It means access to quality housing, child care and education, and an opportunity for all to succeed.

We have made a lot of progress over the last four years to grow the economy while ensuring that the middle class prospers, but we know that there is much more to do.

Economic growth and quality of life reinforce one another. We cannot sustain one for long without the other. We need to think about the future of our communities, about fighting climate change and protecting the environment, and about continuing our path to reconciliation with indigenous peoples. As long as these sorts of challenges are out there, our government will keep working to help Canadians overcome them. That is why making life more affordable for Canadians is a central focus for our government. It has been for the past four years and continues to be.

We are looking to grow an economy that works for everyone, not just the rich. By investing in and strengthening the middle class, we are growing the economy to benefit everyone.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Our plan to increase the basic personal amount will make the cost of living more affordable for more Canadians by helping them keep more of what they earn. That means they will have more money in their pockets. I would like to take a minute to explain how we will attain that objective and how that additional measure will benefit nearly 20 million Canadians.

As my hon. colleagues know, to help all Canadians meet their basic needs, no federal tax is collected on a certain amount of income earned. That amount is called the basic personal amount, or BPA. Under the existing rules regarding the BPA, Canadians can earn close to $12,300 in the 2020 tax year before they have to pay federal income tax.

[*English*]

As our first order of business our government proposed to lower taxes for the middle class and those working hard to join it by increasing the basic personal amount to $15,000 by 2023. We also propose to increase two related benefit amounts to $15,000 by 2023: the spouse or common-law partner amount and the eligible dependant credit.

This increase would be phased in over four years, starting in 2020. As I said earlier, it would cut taxes for close to 20 million Canadians. Importantly, it would mean that nearly 1.1 million more Canadians would no longer pay federal income tax at all by 2023.

To ensure that this tax relief goes to the people who need help the most, we will phase out the benefits of the increased basic personal amount. I will explain what this means in real terms for individuals and families.

It means that a single individual who makes $50,000 a year would pay less tax starting in 2020 with tax savings of close to $300 in 2023. It means that a two-earner couple where one partner works full time at $40,000 a year and the other part time at $20,000 a year would save close to $600 by 2023. It means that a one-earner couple with one child could save close to $600 in 2023. It also means that a single parent who can claim the eligible dependant credit in addition to the basic personal amount could save close to $600 in 2023.

All told, this would put $3 billion back in the pockets of Canadian households in 2020, with this amount rising to $6 billion by 2023. That is $6 billion to help make life more affordable for Canadians and keep our economy growing. That is $6 billion on top of the support that we have already delivered over the past four years.

[*Translation*]

When the middle-class tax cut, the Canada child benefit and the proposed increases to the basic personal amount are taken into account, a typical family of four could have over $2,300 more in their pockets in 2020 than they did in 2015. Once the changes to the basic personal amount are fully implemented, that family could have over $2,800 more in their pockets than they did in 2015.

That is what we mean when we talk about investing in Canadians. Thanks to the Canada child benefit, a working single mother or father of two earning $30,000 a year now gets $3,000 more in benefits every year than they did under the previous child benefit program. These changes will help more families pay for things that will have a real impact on their children's future, such as healthy food, registration fees for sports, summer camp or music lessons, or even warm clothes in the winter.

Our decision to improve the guaranteed income supplement has provided greater income security for close to 900,000 people, 70% of whom are women.

The guaranteed income supplement has helped lift 73,000 vulnerable seniors out of poverty. Thanks to the implementation of Canada's first-ever national housing strategy, a 10-year, $40-billion investment to provide more Canadians with affordable housing, the housing needs of 530,000 families will be met and chronic homelessness will decrease by 50%.

We will continue to invest in people and in the things that improve their quality of life. The past four years have shown what can happen when we put middle-class Canadians at the heart of our decisions and invest in those areas that make their lives easier.

We have seen that more money in families' pockets, more jobs, more welcoming communities and fewer people living in poverty contribute to our economic growth.

● (1115)

[*English*]

I do not like to repeat myself, but I think it is important to highlight, in both English and French, the results of our government's work to make life more affordable for Canadians. Due to the middle-class tax cut, the Canada child benefit and the proposed changes to the basic personal amount, a typical family of four could be better off by more than $2,300 this year compared to 2015. When the proposed changes to the basic personal amount are fully rolled out, the family could be better off by more than $2,800 compared to 2015.

These changes have been focused on those Canadians who need it most. The effect our plan has had on child poverty and seniors in need has been clear and is documented. We know that more work needs to be done to improve the quality of life for Canadians.

The way we have structured these changes to the basic personal amount clearly shows we are striving to target our efforts to be as effective as possible.

The reason we have focused on housing and the tax system is the flexibility those changes offer to Canadians. By providing tax cuts for those who need it and by providing the Canada child benefit directly to parents and caregivers, we are giving Canadians the tools to make the changes they feel they need.

We will also continue to work with indigenous peoples to help deliver a better quality of life for their families and communities. We will build on the progress achieved for all people in Canada, moving forward with investments that will make a real difference. We will do so in a way that is fiscally responsible and continues to reduce the federal debt relative to the size of our economy.

Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio is low and sustainable. That puts Canada in an enviable position, especially compared to our G7 peers. Our relatively low level of debt gives us a serious competitive advantage, one our government is fully committed to maintaining. Even though our economy is doing well, we need to be ready to respond to whatever challenges might arise. We need to continue to build confidence in Canada's economy, making sure the world continues to see Canada as a great place in which to live, work and invest.

Canada has a AAA credit rating from the three most recognized credit rating agencies. This strong rating reflects the confidence others have in Canada's economic strength. We took timely action during our previous mandate to improve business tax competitiveness in this country. To make it easier for small businesses to succeed and create more jobs, we have cut taxes for small businesses twice. As a result of federal and provincial actions, Canada has the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7.

● (1120)

[*Translation*]

Our government's objective is to maintain these competitive advantages while implementing measures to make life more affordable and to invest in Canadians. We are building an economy that works for everyone.

We know what can happen when we invest in Canadians: They benefit through their hard work. In just four years, this has resulted in a strong and growing economy that has generated more than a million jobs with a historic low unemployment rate.

These are real changes that help improve the quality of life and well-being of all Canadians. Making it easier for Canadians to get ahead is at the very heart of our plan for the prosperity of the middle class.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for letting me speak about this important matter today. I welcome questions from my colleagues.

[*English*]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was really taken aback by the fact that the member for Ottawa—Vanier did not mention dental care. In my riding, people are suffering from chronic dental issues. People are not able to address dental emergencies because they do not have a dental care plan.

With all the tax breaks the government has spoken about, why is it not investing in this basic health care need for Canadians?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for sharing that information with me. I would like to share that while many Canadians have coverage for dental care through employee health benefit plans, and through federal, provincial and territorial dental programs, we know there remain unmet needs for dental care in Canada.

For that reason, we welcome the decision of the Standing Committee on Health to study the issue of dental care in Canada. The Minister of Health's mandate letter includes a commitment to support Parliament in this work, which we are pleased to do so we can better understand what the government's role may be in helping to improve access to dental care in Canada. I look forward to seeing the work from the committee.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was a great speech from the member. You mentioned the middle class several times—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member to address the Chair and not the member.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the middle class several times in her speech; I marked down at least nine different times.

I wonder if the hon. member could define what the middle class actually is. Is it income? Is it families? What is the actual definition, in her opinion, of the middle class?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I understand the hon. member's question. I also want to entertain the fact that yes, we have been, as a government, really focusing on the middle class, and we will continue to do so. If we strengthen the middle class, we will grow the economy. As we know, many economists and many stakeholders have been talking about the middle class.

There is not one single measure that can explain what the middle class is. Why is this? If one looks at Windsor and how families are living, their income and where they live, compared to families in Churchill, for example, they will have a different set of income numbers and costs. The way I look at it is we want to focus on making sure Canadians have a good place to call home, a safe and dignified retirement, a good education for their kids and a good well-paying job. If we have all those factors, we make sure that the middle class is strong in Canada.

● (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, the minister spoke about the importance of the middle class and how we need to support it. One way to support the middle class is to provide quality public services. The federal government's role in the health care sector is to ensure that these services have proper funding. However, successive governments in recent decades have made cut after cut to health care funding.

Can the minister tell us whether her government plans to get health care spending back on track?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Our government has been investing in health care since 2015, for example, through provincial transfers, which were quite significant over the past five years. We also made a significant transfer for mental health care and for home care services. I believe that our government remains committed to investing in health.

With respect to pharmacare, our government has already done a lot in one generation to reduce drug costs. Now is the time to take another step. We need to sit down with the provinces and territories to implement a pharmacare plan based on the Hoskins report. We will work together to improve health care for Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I enjoy hearing from the minister, but I am a bit perturbed. I have been door knocking in Ottawa—Vanier, because there is a provincial by-election going on. People in Ottawa—Vanier, the minister's own riding, are talking about the importance of having access to basic dental care.

What the Liberals are offering this morning is unbelievable, in the same way that for 23 years they have been committing to pharmacare and studying pharmacare and have not been willing to move forward on it. Now there is a bill, Bill C-213, that all members of the House will be voting on in just a few months' time that will enshrine and put into place pharmacare, finally after 23 years, but the Liberals seem to be proposing more studies on dental care.

There are millions of Canadians who need basic dental care. The NDP's proposal does not increase costs. Why are the Liberals reluctant to endorse the motion we are debating today?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for mentioning my riding. I too have had the pleasure of going door knocking in the past few weeks and years.

When we knock on doors, the issues we are hearing about, especially lately, are the environment and climate change, the possibility of getting better pharmacare, and the fact that the Canada child benefit is helping people.

My hon. colleague asked a question about dental care. The Standing Committee on Health is actually planning to study this issue, so we will see what its recommendations are and how they can help the people of Ottawa—Vanier.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is the second time in the House that I have heard those on the other side say they introduced the Canada child benefit. In actual fact, child benefits are one of the country's oldest income security programs.

Why does the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity say this? Is the government trying to pull the wool over the eyes of new Canadians by rewriting history in its favour?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I remind the hon. member that when Liberals were elected in 2015, the first thing we did was give tax cuts to the middle class. We also introduced the Canada child benefit, which has helped lift more than 900,000 Canadians out of poverty and, as Statistics Canada said yesterday, over 334,000 children out of poverty.

We are doing the right thing, and I hope the hon. member will recognize that.

● (1130)

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 wondering if my colleague could expand on how important it is for us to support Canada's middle class. Giving the middle class an increase in disposable income helps our economy. Could she provide her thoughts on that?

Hon. Mona Fortier: Madam Speaker, I have been travelling across the country meeting with Canadians. Everywhere I went Canadians told me that the Canada child benefit has supported them. They also mentioned that the new tax cut we are proposing would make a difference, with more money in their pockets. Many measures we have proposed will help middle-class Canadians in their day-to-day lives.

We know we still have work to do, and that is why we are working to make sure we propose different measures. We must make sure we understand what Canadians need and which measures we should be proposing next.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am happy to be splitting my time with the member for St. Albert—Edmonton today.

I would like to thank my friends in the NDP for bringing this motion forward and giving us the opportunity to talk about the Liberal government's failed record when it comes to tax policy.

As some members know, I enjoy listening to music, from bands like The Guess Who, who happen to hail from my hometown of Winnipeg, and The Beatles, and from artists like Jim Croce and Frank Sinatra, to name a few. When artists have been around long enough, they will usually release a greatest hits album. Today, I would like to produce a greatest hits album for the Liberal government. I think an appropriate title would be “the Liberals' greatest hits of failed tax policy”.

Although this album was not supposed to be released yet, I will spend the next nine minutes or so giving my colleagues a sneak preview. The lead-off track on this album, which is one of my favourites, is called “the budget will balance itself”, written by the professor of peoplekind himself, the Prime Minister of Canada.

As a follow-up, he hiked up taxes on low-income families and then said they do not pay any taxes, seemingly unaware of the fact that they do. During a time of economic prosperity, the Liberals are running massive, endless deficits that will force even higher taxes on Canadians.

There are higher Canada pension plan premiums. They also eliminated the children's fitness tax credit and children's arts tax credit, making it harder for young families to afford these important programs. Despite the fact that their mantra has become “low carbon”, they axed the public transit tax credit, which means fewer people can afford transit passes. They are paying $600 million to the media, picking and choosing which media organizations are winners and which are losers, an Orwellian plan, to be sure, and one all Canadians should reject. It is no wonder half of Canadians say they are $200 away from insolvency each month. They are literally being taxed into bankruptcy.

Then there is the carbon tax, a massive tax grab that makes life more expensive for everyone and will not do anything to reduce emissions. In the last election, Canada's Conservatives put forward a real plan to protect the environment, including measures like the green home tax credit, which would have encouraged Canadians to make their homes more energy efficient. It would have incentivized green tech, making Canada a world leader. Since the Liberals came to power, 81% of middle-income Canadians are seeing higher taxes.

I am happy to note with respect to the environment that more Canadians voted for the Conservative Party of Canada's environmental plan than any other party. Our plan, unlike the Liberal plan, did not include an unfair carbon tax that penalizes Canadians for everyday activities. Especially given the winters we have in Manitoba, a carbon tax will do nothing other than penalize people who have to heat their homes when it is -30°C.

There is some potential relief on the horizon. Yesterday, the Alberta Court of Appeal found the carbon tax to be unconstitutional. I hope the federal government listens to the Court of Appeal and respects its decision and its jurisdiction. Part of the majority 4-1 decision read as follows: “The Act is a constitutional Trojan horse.” That is strong language from the court. It continues, “Almost every aspect of the provinces' development and management of their natural resources...would be subject to federal regulation”.

The next hit on the hit list is “welfare for billionaires”. What a concept: We tax the poor to pay the rich. The Liberals are like a reverse Robin Hood. Robin Hood stole from the rich to give to the poor, and for some reason the Liberals have it backward. They tax the poor into bankruptcy and give the money to billionaires.

They gave $12 million to Loblaws to buy refrigerators. My guess is that Loblaws can afford to buy its own energy-efficient fridges. I checked, and as of 4 p.m. yesterday, Loblaws had a market cap of $25.2 billion. There was also the $40 million given to BlackBerry. As of 4 p.m. yesterday, BlackBerry had a market cap of $4.2 billion.

Then there is my favourite. I call it the $50-million trifecta. There was the $50-million handout to Mastercard. As of 4 p.m. yesterday, Mastercard has a market cap of $322.8 billion. Also, $50 million went to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which repeatedly engages in funding anti-Semitic activities. There is also the $50 million that went to a late-night TV host, Trevor Noah, by tweet.

There is $50 million here, $50 million there, $50 million everywhere. I wonder who is next.

● (1135)

I know a few organizations that could use this money. Maybe if they ask the Prime Minister nicely, he will tweet yet another $50-million pledge. It is worth a try.

Then there is the CRA. The government's motto should be “Pay us more; we'll treat you worse.” In the recently released “Serving Canadians Better” report, the CRA reported that 83% of Canadians had an experience that did not meet their needs. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business gave the CRA a grade of D, and 41% of those who called the CRA received incomplete or incorrect information, a sad state to be sure.

Had it not been for the Conservative Party's pressuring the government from this side of the House, we would have had policies like reducing the accessibility to the disability tax credit for type 1 diabetics from 80% to 20%. Also, in October of 2017, the CRA tried to list employee discounts as taxable benefits, going after waiters and waitresses and restaurants for their employee discounts. In December of 2016, it came to light that the Liberals were considering taxing employer-provided health and dental plans.

Let us talk about the small business tax changes. It was in the middle of the summer of 2017, when Canadians were enjoying the hot weather and spending time with their families, that the government decided to quietly table tax changes when it did not think anyone was paying attention. These changes would drastically alter the lives of thousands of small business owners and families. Yes, small business people who were part of the middle class or working hard to join it had the rug pulled out from under them.

The government tried to hike taxes by 73% on small business investment, made changes to the taxes on splitting income and passive income and refused to make intergenerational family business sales easier, making it more expensive to sell a business to a stranger than to a family member. Remember that hot weather I mentioned? While Canadians were enjoying a nice cold beer in the sun, what did the government do? It raised taxes on beer too. This is sacrilege. I cannot think of anything more Canadian than an ice cold beer.

More recently, the government proposed an interest deductibility cap for businesses. This would be a disaster for all businesses and would have serious marketplace repercussions for banks, REITs, publicly traded securities and pension funds, to name a few.

I will start to wrap up now, but I want to let my colleagues on the other side of the House in on a secret. My goal today was to not only address the motion from my friends in the NDP, but eviscerate the government's failed tax policy initiatives and finish with a flourish.

At the end of the day, the Liberal proposal to increase the basic personal amount is a nice gesture. As Conservatives, we believe that people should pay less tax and get more value for their dollars. Canadians deserve to get ahead and not just get by.

It is not easy to find a humorous quote about taxes, but I think I might have. Here it is: “The hardest thing in the world to understand is the income tax.” Who said that? It was the greatest genius of the 20th century, Albert Einstein, who discovered the theory of relativity. This man is the father of modern physics and he could not understand the tax code. What we truly need is tax simplification and comprehensive tax reform, not delivering tax policy on a piecemeal basis, as this measure does.

What do we get for these exorbitant taxes? We get runaway deficits; a budget that, contrary to the Prime Minister's belief, does not balance itself; and Canadians who are less than $200 from insolvency at the end of the month. It seems that the more we pay, the less we get. The hill of beans and half cup of coffee per week the Liberals have proposed for 20 million taxpayers will do little to relieve the massive tax burden that the government has foisted and piled onto Canadians.

● (1140)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I work with my colleague on the finance committee. I am a little perplexed by his conclusion. He said that the number of tax changes is relatively small. He is absolutely right about that, but he would know from his riding, as we know from ridings across the country, that people are struggling to pay for basic dental care, while other countries, like those in the United Kingdom and the European Union, provide basic dental care. The cost to the Canadian taxpayer from people who go to emergency rooms for dental care is over $150 million a year.

I agree with the member that the government could take a much better approach, but in a minority Parliament, Conservative votes can be determinative on this issue. There is no doubt that people in his riding and right across the country need access to basic dental care. We are paying more by not having access to it than we would by putting it into place.

I gather from my colleague's comments that he might not be prepared to support this common-sense motion that the NDP has put together. If not, why not?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, the reality is that the vast majority of Canadians have affordable dental coverage through private plans. There is an issue, granted, with respect to some people who may not have coverage. In my home province of Manitoba, the University of Manitoba has a program in its dentistry school where people who cannot afford dental care or insurance come to have their teeth cleaned or whatever dental work they might need.

I am happy to hear the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity say that this issue is now being studied by Parliament. I will look forward to the thoughtful report that will come out of that study so that we can make the right decisions for Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to “greatest hits”. I want to reflect on some of the greatest hits: a tax increase on Canada's wealthiest 1%; a tax decrease for Canada's middle class; tax fairness, income sprinkling and passive income; a small business tax cut from 12% to 9%; close to a billion dollars in two budgets to go after tax evaders; enhancing the working income tax benefit by an additional $500 million per year, starting in 2019.

When we have had tax measures, such as reducing the middle class tax, the Conservatives voted against them. When we had the tax increase to Canada's wealthiest 1%, the Conservatives voted against it. Can the member explain why the Conservatives would have voted against those tax changes?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, at least the Conservative part of this side of the House, we take absolutely no lessons from the Liberal Party when it comes to tax policy. The Liberals have made life so much harder for Canadians and they do not even know it.

The tax changes on small business were absolutely devastating to small business people all over this country, all of whom were working hard to join the middle class. The Liberals have failed small business owners across this country.

The carbon tax has made it almost impossible for a number of industries just to get by. We have heard many comments in this House over the last number of weeks about simple things like the cost in agriculture to dry grain. The carbon tax is punishing businesses that have no option.

We take no lessons from that party when it comes to taxes. We were going to bring in a universal tax cut and scrap the carbon tax. What are the Liberals going to do, other than give people half a cup of coffee a day with this basic personal amount exemption?

● (1145)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the NDP motion regarding the Liberal plan to increase the basic personal amount from $12,298 to $15,000.

Before I address the substance of the motion, this is the first time that I have had an opportunity to rise in the House since the last election to give a speech, and I want to thank the constituents of St. Albert—Edmonton for their vote of confidence. It was an overwhelming vote of confidence of 61%, which was 16% higher than in 2015, and I am very humbled by that.

It would not have been possible without all of the individuals who worked so hard on my campaign, who believed in me. While I cannot name all of them, I will name two who worked harder than anyone other than perhaps myself and they are my parents, Tom and Rita Cooper. In fact, they may have worked harder than I worked.

I will say to all of the residents of St. Albert—Edmonton, just as I did in the last Parliament, that although I am not perfect, I will do everything that I can to take their issues and priorities here to the House and be their voice in Ottawa.

Turning to the motion before the House and the issue of increasing the basic personal amount to $15,000 from $12,298, let me say that this is nothing more than a Liberal middle-class tax gimmick. This is a government that talks a good game about the middle class. Indeed, the Prime Minister even appointed a minister responsible for middle-class prosperity to demonstrate the Prime Minister's apparent concern for middle-class Canadians, how caring he is and always from the heart out.

It is certainly interesting that, when the minister appeared before the finance committee, she was unable to explain her mandate. She was asked by my colleague, the member for Edmonton Centre and again today in the House to define what constitutes a middle-class Canadian. She could not answer the question. However, I digress, because the fact is, despite all of the talk, what matters is not words but action, and the actions of the government time and again are to make life less affordable for middle-class Canadians.

For a government that is so preoccupied with the middle class, it sure has a strange way of showing it. This, after all, is a government that scrapped tax credits that benefited middle-class Canadians. This is a government that scrapped the children's fitness tax credit, the children's arts tax credit, the student textbook tax credit, the public transit tax credit and I could go on.

However, not to be outdone, the government decided to jack up CPP, taking $2,200 out of the wallets of the average middle-class Canadian family. This is some way of showing its love for the middle class, nickel-and-diming them and taking money out of their wallets.

Of course, there is the massive tax on everything, the carbon tax, which as my friend, the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley noted just yesterday the Alberta Court of Appeal determined to be a "constitutional Trojan horse." Nonetheless, the government is adamant about imposing a massive tax on middle-class Canadians. The government would say, "Don't worry, be happy, we delivered a middle-class tax cut."

We heard the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity refer to the Liberal middle-class tax cut, which sounds like a good idea.

● (1150)

Who could be against a middle-class tax cut? Like anything, the devil is in the details. For example, if one earned between $62,000 and $78,000, how much would that Canadian save under the Liberal middle-class tax cut? That sounds like a middle-class Canadian to me. The answer is $117. Now, is that $117 a day, a week or a month? No. It is $117 a year. How much does that work out to a week? The answer is $2.25, not even enough to purchase one extra-large regular coffee at Tim Hortons. So much for the Liberal so-called middle-class tax cut. The Liberal so-called middle-class tax cut is a Liberal middle-class tax gimmick, not to be outdone by the latest Liberal middle-class tax gimmick of increasing the basic personal amount.

I say, with respect to the increase that the Liberals are proposing, it is too little, too late. It is too late because Canadians would not see the full benefit for four years. I say it is too little because by the time they do, a large part of that increase will be gobbled up by inflation. While the benefit to Canadians is not going to be all that much, having regard to inflation, the government says $550, $600 for the average Canadian family. That is less than the average $800 that middle-class Canadians have seen in terms of their taxes going up, not down, under the Liberals. For this nominal benefit to some middle-class Canadians, it is going to come at an enormous cost.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the cost of this Liberal middle-class tax gimmick will be $21 billion, at a time when the government is running a deficit of $26.6 billion, $7 billion more than projected with nearly $30 billion of deficits for the fiscal years ahead, with no end in sight. The Minister of Middle Class Prosperity talked about the government's fiscal anchor, debt-to-GDP ratio, which she says is going down, except it has actually gone up this year from 30.8% to 31%, and that is before taking into account the $55 billion of spending promises that the Liberals made in the last election.

What middle-class Canadians deserve is action. They do not deserve more talk. They do not deserve more empty promises. They do not deserve more gimmicks. Canadians deserve broad-based tax relief. It is something that Conservatives committed to. It is something we intend to deliver on should we be entrusted with the confidence of Canadians, which I expect will happen, and cannot happen soon enough.

In the meantime, we will hold the government to account for the fact that it has made life more unaffordable for everyday Canadians, all the while mortgaging the future generations in Canada with higher taxes, higher deficits and more debt.

● (1155)

Mrs. Tamara Jansen: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order. The Minister of Middle Class Prosperity misled the House by claiming that her government introduced the universal child care benefit, an initiative her party vigorously opposed when the Conservative—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is debate. The hon. member may try to raise it during her questions and comments or during her speech. It is not a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague speaks very eloquently and I enjoy working with him on the finance committee, but I remain perplexed by the Conservatives' approach on this issue.

They admit that the offering of those tax changes by the Liberal Party to Canadians would have very little impact on families that are struggling with record family debt. At least half of Canadian families are struggling to make ends meet in any given month. The Conservatives are not prepared to make the logical conclusion that the best way to make sure that this measure has impact on Canadians is to invest in basic dental care for Canadians in his riding and right across the country. I am perplexed by the contradiction.

Can Conservatives understand the importance of making sure basic dental care is available for all Canadians?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I certainly enjoy working with the member on the finance committee.

As my colleague the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley said in response to the same question from the hon. member, a vast majority of Canadians are already covered. The government has undertaken to study the issue at the health committee, and I look forward to the study and to reading the report.

I have a great deal of skepticism that a one-size-fits-all national dental care program is the answer to the few Canadians who are not covered.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to reiterate that I am delighted that the health committee, which includes Conservatives, is going to study this idea and that the government made the choice to put it in the mandate letter to the Minister of Health, and now the NDP is onside.

Business of Supply

Could the member talk about the bill? The last two Conservative members, who I assume are the experts on this topic because the party put them up for this opposition day motion, did not mention one word about the bill in their opening speeches. Maybe that member could comment on the bill.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I spoke about the substance of the issue before us, which is the Liberal increase to the basic personal amount. I reiterate it is nothing more than a Liberal middle-class tax gimmick, and we oppose it.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question. The member stated that he felt that providing dental care would not really help Canadians. I would suggest to him that if he talks to people, he will find that there are literally millions of Canadians who do not have basic dental care now. In reality, that is causing a crisis in emergency rooms because they cannot handle all of the people coming for dental emergencies.

Does the member understand that it does not make a lot of sense to spend $150 million getting inappropriate health care in emergency rooms when basic dental care will make sure those people are taken care of?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I simply reiterate that I am not convinced that a one-size-fits-all national plan is the answer in the same way I am not convinced that a one-size-fits-all national pharmacare program is the answer.

If there ever was an opportunity to move forward with a program like that, the Liberal government is making it all the more difficult with its out-of-control spending and massive deficits and massive debt, which I hope the NDP, like us, would encourage it to rein in.

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to share my time with my friend and colleague, the member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

The Bloc Québécois is a social democratic party. We feel strongly about redistributing wealth and ensuring equal opportunities for all. We fully support the principle of progressive taxation, and we believe it should be implemented to a greater degree. The idea is that the wealthiest contribute more to funding public services, which are universal and used by everyone.

On that note, it troubles us that the big Canadian banks are not taxed heavily enough. It is not like these companies could relocate to another country. They are in a protected market. Furthermore, I cannot overlook the fact that these multinational corporations and banks still have legal access to tax havens, which means they do not contribute as much to the public purse as they should. The rest of the population suffers, because they receive lower-quality services while paying more taxes and fees.

As everyone knows, we think quality health care is important. We believe that a person who falls ill has basic needs and is entitled to comprehensive care. Unfortunately, the current lack of funding means that many people do not have access to the care they need. That goes for prescription drugs and dental care too. In this day and age, it makes no sense that a person with dental problems would not be able to get the care they need and see a dentist. Dental problems can be very painful.

Today's motion is problematic. Dental care is an aspect of health care, and health care is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and Quebec. Ottawa's role with respect to public services and health is to provide as much funding as possible, but Ottawa has not been doing that for quite some time. This problem goes all the way back to 1996, which, as it happens, was after the Quebec referendum.

Ottawa decided to deal with its debt problem by slashing transfers for health, social services and education, even though expenses are rising faster in those areas than anywhere else, as we can see from budgets tabled by Quebec and the provinces. Health and education costs go up year after year, but Ottawa is providing less and less money to cover those costs.

Originally, Ottawa promised to cover half of our health care spending. Ottawa was supposed to match every dollar spent by Quebec. This equality was completely wiped out at the end of the 1990s and the federal government has been retreating year after year ever since no matter who is in power in the House. Even though the total amount increases every year, the percentage of the federal government's contribution keeps decreasing. Quebec is now asking that Ottawa fund at least a quarter of health care spending. We are well below that and the percentage keeps going down every year.

In the last Parliament, the Liberal government pompously announced a plan to reinvest in health care. At the end of the day, it just cancelled the Conservatives' cuts and added a few crumbs, all while interfering in this jurisdiction. At the time, Quebec's health minister, Dr. Gaétan Barrette, even accused the Liberal government in Ottawa of engaging in predatory federalism. Coming from a Quebec Liberal minister, that is saying something.

There is a consensus on this in Quebec City. Every year, the Government of Quebec asks Ottawa to make an annual reinvestment of 6% to make up for lost ground and get the federal government's share to a quarter of health care spending. There is also a consensus among provincial governments who are all calling for an annual increase of 5.2% in federal spending on health. Between Quebec and the provinces, everyone agrees that it is important for the federal government to make up for lost ground.

On that, we have to take into account the aging population, since seniors require more health care, which is more expensive. At the other end of the spectrum, young people get more money for education, which only makes sense.

● (1205)

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has made several updates to his “Fiscal Sustainability Report 2018”. He noted that Ottawa is the one with the fiscal flexibility, and that the provinces have no more wiggle room. This is true to such an extent that, even if the government chose to incur massive debt and run up the debt, it would have the means of maintaining the net debt at its current level. Based on future projections, the Parliamentary Budget Officer expects that Ottawa will have completely reimbursed its debt, while the provinces will still be drowning in massive debts because funding needs in health and education are increasing, but Ottawa is contributing less and less. That is a big problem.

The motion we are debating here infringes on provincial jurisdiction. We are not opposed to the idea of funding dental care, but we believe that that decision is up to Quebec, which does not have the money to fund all general health care services. When it comes to pharmacare, Quebec has a system that works, even though it is far from perfect. Obviously, a dental program is also necessary, but we should not be discussing it here. Our role here is to decide to increase health care funding so that the provinces can move forward with their plans.

I would like to read out a brief passage on this subject. I will then ask the members a question.

> This asymmetry vis-à-vis du Québec can be applied in real terms through opting out with compensation. The right to opt out applies where the federal government, on its own or with the agreement of the provinces, intervenes in areas of exclusive provincial jurisdiction (in particular health and social services, education, family policy, housing, municipal infrastructure, etc.). In such case, no conditions or standards should be applied to Québec without its consent, obtained after consultation and negotiation. The principle of opting out is very important, as it makes it possible to reconcile the exercise of federal spending power for provinces that want it with respect for Québec's constitutional jurisdiction.

As members may have guessed, I was reading a passage from the Sherbrooke declaration adopted in 2005 by the Quebec wing of the New Democratic Party of Canada. It is odd that after adopting those principles, the NDP is now moving a motion in Parliament that encroaches directly on provincial jurisdiction and does not mention that Quebec should automatically be allowed to opt out with full compensation if the federal government implements this measure.

Sadly, our party is no stranger to this treatment. If former Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe were here today, he could remind us how many times motions like these, ones that encroached on areas of provincial jurisdiction, have been moved.

In closing, the Bloc Québécois is a social democratic party. We believe in quality public services, but the role of the House is to provide health funding. It is up to Quebec to decide how to invest that money, whether in emergency care, dental care or pharmacare. It is not up to the House to encroach on areas of provincial jurisdiction. That is why we will be voting against today's motion.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I must, however, remind him that there are lineups across Quebec. Quebeckers are waiting for dental care.

If I understand correctly, the Bloc is saying that this issue is not fixed and that criticism of underfunded health care is warranted. However, the Bloc is choosing to penalize Quebeckers by refusing to support a motion that would provide dental care. The federal government would give this money directly to Quebec, which could decide what to do with it. As the member for Burnaby South pointed out earlier, this measure would include the right to opt out with full compensation, which goes without saying.

I do not understand why we are going in circles. There is a dental care crisis right now. The money is there at the federal level. If this motion is adopted and if the Government of Quebec agrees, Quebeckers will have access to that money and to dental care services. As I mentioned in my speech, people are lining up at the Université de Montréal to access free care because they have no other option.

Does the Bloc understand how important it is to give the Government of Quebec this option?

● (1210)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, what the Bloc understands is that this is yet another intrusion into provincial jurisdictions. If the member wanted to respect the Sherbrooke declaration, the motion should have stipulated that Quebec and the provinces would have the right to opt out with full compensation. Otherwise, what is the point of the declaration? Was it meant simply to grab votes in Quebec? Then, when it comes time to apply it, it is soon forgotten. Unfortunately, that seems to happen all too often.

Quebec's social and public services are more abundant and of higher quality than those found in the rest of Canada. We in the Bloc Québécois trust the National Assembly of Quebec to implement progressive policies that will ensure high-quality services for Quebeckers.

Any time Ottawa comes forward with a social service or progressive measure, Quebec has usually adopted it at least a generation earlier. That is the problem.

Health is underfunded, and the House of Commons is to blame. The House must first address health care funding.

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will defer to the member's request to not debate dental care here, and I will talk about something else that was brought up during the speech.

The last Conservative speaker said he was, shockingly, against the tax cut. Conservatives are normally for tax cuts, but he was against the tax cut. Does the member agree with that?

The motion in question would leave the tax cut in place for everyone with under $90,000 of disposable income, but it would eliminate it for people with $90,000 to $210,000. Does the member agree with eliminating that part of the tax cut?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. The member represents a magnificent area.

The Bloc Québécois does not support tax cuts for the wealthy. We are in favour of a progressive system.

In the last Parliament, the government cut taxes for the middle class. When we took a close look, it was clear that the people eligible for the maximum tax cut were those with annual incomes between $110,000 and $220,000. In my riding, there are not many people who earn that much. We would prefer to see measures that support those earning around $50,000 a year.

Here, we are discussing cutting taxes for those with incomes below $90,000. In my opinion, those earning more than $90,000 should contribute a proportionately higher amount of their income than a person who earns less than that.

However, the motion is not clear about how this will be implemented. Will those earning $90,000 be taxed incrementally more? Will the $90,000 represent a step increase? In that case it would be more profitable to earn $85,000 than $92,000 a year. Will the tax reduction kick in at $75,000?

We also need details about this.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did not want to interrupt my Bloc colleague's speech, but I want to raise this as quickly as possible.

Earlier the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity misled the House by claiming that her government introduced the universal child care benefit. That is something that was introduced by the Harper government.

I put forward a unanimous consent motion to table the Universal Child Care Benefit Act of 2006 to show that the minister is incorrect in her representation to the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I read the motion moved by my hon. colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby. I must confess to this honourable House that I was blown away by this motion.

For a moment, I felt like I was in Quebec's National Assembly or a Canadian provincial legislature. It was so surreal that I asked my assistant to pinch me. I asked him if Québec Solidaire had just tabled a motion in the House of Commons. He replied that no, it was the NDP.

Under the circumstances, before I even go into what I think of how the motion is worded, I would like to remind the House that this is 2020. The fact that we are once again debating a motion that falls under provincial jurisdiction in Ottawa is incredibly sad. It shows a lack of respect for the legislators that should legitimately make those decisions based on their values and their resources. Perhaps you have heard the expression “a leopard cannot change its spots”. This is a perfect example of that concept.

In 2005, after spending 45 good years fighting for the centralization of legislative powers in Ottawa, the NDP adopted the famed Sherbrooke declaration, in which it claimed to recognize asymmetrical federalism and it intended to give Quebec the systematic right to opt out.

Today, five or six elections later, with one MP back home, they have written off Quebec and its legitimate right to legislate its own affairs.

The NDP and the member for New Westminster—Burnaby know perfectly well that health is not a federal jurisdiction. Nevertheless, they are still trying to impose social programs that Quebec and the Canadian provinces have the authority to bring in if they want.

No one here is against apple pie. I love apple pie. No one here is against pandas. We all love pandas. However, imposing dental care coverage through, I assume, the Canada Health Act, is nothing short of overriding the Constitution that allows us to be here—a Constitution that Quebec has never signed, by the way.

A few seconds ago, I chose the verb “assume”. That was not a coincidence and that brings me to my second point. This motion is so vague it feels like we are heading into murky waters.

The motion talks about wanting to implement dental coverage for families whose income is less than $90,000. The motion also says that benefits would be made available to individuals who earn less than $90,000 a year. With all due respect, the motion's wording is so vague that it almost contradicts itself. It does not take much imagination. One example that I am very familiar with is my own experience from around 15 years ago.

I was 23 years old. I had just had my best year in the film industry. I had been working in the industry for four years. I earned more than $90,000 that year. I bought myself a triplex with my sister. Then, my wife, Mylène, gave birth to our son Émile Duceppe, our first child. My wife was in school that year. The following year, in 2004, I earned about $30,000 because I was freelancing. I was a contract worker.

Since my wife was still in school and I had a mortgage to pay and we had a young boy to raise, if I had had any kind of dental problem, my previous year's income would have been used and I would not have been entitled to the dental coverage proposed today.

I am sorry, I lost my train of thought. Someone I know is here and that stressed me a little.

An hon. member: Is it me?

Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: No, Madam Speaker, it is not my colleague.

We were not rich, but we were doing well. According to the NDP, I would not have been entitled to dental insurance. That is exactly why Quebec and the provinces are in the best position to develop social policy. The provinces manage those sorts of things. They are closer to the people and should be the ones to administer the program. They have a legislative scalpel and not a bazooka.

Once again, there is no respect for the true lawmakers in this area.

● (1220)

While the NDP wants to give orders to Quebec and the other provinces, the provinces are asking the government for just one thing, an annual increase of 5.2% in health transfers. The provinces are not asking to have another health care program rammed down their throats. They are simply asking for an annual increase of 5.2% in health transfers. This is not rocket science.

While health care systems across Canada are groaning under the burden of the aging population, the NDP is talking about dental care in the wrong legislature.

The Quebec National Assembly even unanimously adopted a motion calling on the federal government to do its fair share with regard to health care. This does not make any sense. While the Government of Quebec estimates that the health transfer deficit will be $13.7 billion by 2027, the NDP is insisting on talking about dental coverage without even knowing how it will be paid for.

The federal contribution to health was 23% in 2018. Today, it is 21% and, in 2027, it will be just barely over 20%. The federal government's real problem is not the details of the health care coverage. The problem is that the House is not contributing to the rising cost of health care. What is worse, the federal government has been gradually pulling back for decades, whatever its political stripe.

Right now, federal health transfers are going up by just 3% per year. Health care costs are going up more than that, so the provinces are essentially getting less money.

Health transfers should have no strings attached. Only Quebec can determine its own priorities. Health transfers must be sufficient to provide care for our people.

The worst thing about this motion is not just that Quebec does not want it, but that unions regard federal programs as interference. During the 2018 national consultation on implementing pharmacare, both the FTQ and the CSN emphasized the importance of taking Quebec's unique needs and independence into account.

I would like to quote from their brief, which summarizes the situation and is relevant here. I am sure this will be of interest to our NDP colleagues.

> The federal government has consistently interfered with provincial jurisdiction over health ever since the early days of the welfare state. The Canada Health Act is an instrument of that interference because one of its objectives is to establish the conditions the provinces must meet to receive federal funds.

The brief then goes on to say the following:

> ...our two organisations [the FTQ and the CSN] cannot ignore the declining federal contribution to health care funding. Rather than negotiate a new health transfer agreement, as promised during the election campaign, the Liberal government opted to maintain the Conservative reforms, which limit transfer increases tied to GDP growth to 3% annually. Previously, those increases were capped at 6% annually.

Lastly, it also states:

> To ensure the sustainability of Quebec's health system, the federal government must first increase its contribution to health care funding to an adequate level.

The issue of drug coverage is pretty much the same as dental care. The federal government cannot go shopping on behalf of the provinces when it is not paying its fair share for the current system. That is not how it works.

I will wrap up my comments, as I am sure my colleagues are eager to seriously debate this matter with me.

As the House devotes precious time to debating this proposal, can we at least agree to respect the sharing of legislative powers? That is why we were elected.

The Bloc wants to work collaboratively. We like that, and we proved it last week. However, when we are forced to work on somewhat vague and incongruous texts that are written almost deliberately to be rejected by certain parliamentary groups, it seems to me that our debates lose some of their relevance.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's presentation. He said that he likes apple pie and that this would be very nice, but that, as usual, the NDP did not say how we would pay for it. Well, we have said exactly how we would pay for it.

The government is proposing to spend over $6 billion on a tax cut for what it is calling the middle class, people with up to $150,000 a year. If we take the top part of that, over $90,000 in income, it gives us $1.5 billion, which would be better spent on people who desperately need it for the dental care they do not have now.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, first of all, the motion does not provide enough detail to indicate how we would get that money.

Second, this is about areas of jurisdiction. The expression “areas of jurisdiction” includes the word “jurisdiction”. I think that is fabulous. This is Quebec's jurisdiction. What is unfortunate is that it would have been so easy for the NDP to indicate in the motion that Quebec would have the right to opt out with full compensation. It would not have been complicated to write. We were told earlier that that was a given. History tells us that it is not really a given. It would have been so simple to include it in the motion, and perhaps that would have facilitated discussions between our parties. Unfortunately, I sometimes get the impression that too much electioneering goes on in this place. Unfortunately, at the end of the day, our constituents pay the price.

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two quick questions.

First, the Liberal tax cut, which we have talked about a lot today, proposes increasing the exemption ceiling and it would reduce taxes for 20 million Canadians. The Conservatives, of course, have said they are against it, and the New Democrats would reduce some of that. Is the member in favour of that tax cut for 20 million Canadians?

Second, the health committee has decided to study dental care, which I am definitely in favour of. I wonder what positive contribution the member thinks the Bloc will make to that discussion in the health committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, we are in favour of having the wealthy make a greater contribution. It only makes sense. The Bloc Québécois is a social democratic party and we are progressive.

In answer to the second part of the question, I would say once again that this is a provincial jurisdiction. If I may add something, as my hon. colleague suggested, I would say that Quebec needs to be given the right to opt out with full compensation every time. It is as simple as that. Unfortunately, the Liberals have proven in the past that this is not their cup of tea. The cuts to health transfers came from the Liberals. It was Paul Martin who made the biggest cuts to health, and now the provinces are suffering the consequences. It hurts Quebec and Quebeckers.

This has been going on for years. This is an opportunity to increase these transfers. We are calling on all hon. members to work together to increase health transfers. That is what we want. Sadly, we have no lessons to learn from the governments that sat in the benches across the way, regardless of political stripe, because the Bloc Québécois is doing its job.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Bloc asked earlier whether Quebec would have the right to opt out with full compensation. The NDP said yes. The Bloc asked how this would be paid for. We explained, and the motion is quite clear on that point.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer himself explained how we could pay for this dental care. I do not understand how a self-proclaimed social democratic party can act like this. People are lining up at the University of Montreal. I know people in Saint-Félicien and in Roberval who are experiencing this. I lived in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, and I know a lot of people in the Lac-Saint-Jean area who are truly in need of dental care.

The Government of Quebec makes the decision, of course. The federal government pays, and we have already found a way to get that money to Quebec if that is what the government wants.

Why is the Bloc so strongly opposed to a measure that could potentially help many Quebeckers?

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Madam Speaker, what a coincidence, I also know the people of Lac-Saint-Jean. That is my riding. The people of Lac-Saint-Jean like things to be clear. I am looking at the motion in front of me. I will not hold it up, because I am not allowed to. Nowhere in the motion does it say that Quebec would have the right to opt out with full compensation. It does not say that anywhere. They can say it all they want, but it is not written in the motion, and the motion is what we will be voting on. The people of Lac-Saint-Jean like things to be clear. I guarantee that they would agree with me.

● (1230)

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to have an opportunity to speak to the motion before the House. The motion calls upon the government to reallocate a portion of the resources that will be spent on a tax cut for what is called the middle class to people who really need it and do not have dental care.

It is my pleasure to do this because this is a historic occasion. It is not very often that members of the House of Commons have the opportunity to pass a resolution that would benefit millions of Canadians now and in future generations. This is the first step in ensuring greater equality in this country, an equality about something that is extremely important to individuals.

Dental care is pretty basic for people who can afford it. Their income allows them to pay for the services of a dentist to get their teeth cleaned, annual inspections, X-rays, if needed, and whatever else goes with that.

Madam Speaker, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. I am very happy to do that and I look forward to his speech as well.

He, along with me and other members of our caucus, are very much in favour of ensuring that everybody in Canada has access to quality dental care. It should already be a part of our health care system. In fact, in 1964, it was part of the design of medicare to include dental care, but during the negotiations and when it was passed, dental care was left out.

What we have is a gap. When someone breaks his or her wrist, the person can go to a hospital or a doctor and have a cast put on. The person can get the physiotherapy at the hospital that is needed. The person can be looked after. However, when people have a cavity or they break a tooth or they need work done to ensure their oral health, they have to pay for it. Why is that? There was a failure to follow through on the promise and hope of a general health care system that would include dental care. Of course, pharmacare was also part of the original design.

I go back to generations ago to the great leader, the first leader of the national NDP when it was formed, Tommy Douglas. He campaigned for many decades to ensure there was greater equality in obtaining health care for people in this country. That is exactly what this motion is aimed at as well.

We joined the campaign. We put this forward as an idea that we would want to put in place. We campaigned on it. We let it be known. People were very interested for reasons that were fairly obvious to me, knowing as I do, and I am sure hon. members know that when we talk about the middle class in this country, that is a pretty vague notion. I do not think the minister is able to tell us who is included in that.

We do know that the people who do not have and cannot afford dental care know who they are and they do not think they are in the middle class. They know they are not in a position to have what others have and are entitled to. This motion would give all those people the right to dental care just the same as everybody else.

This motion comes about because of the Liberal government's plan, and it promised this, of having a middle-class tax cut. What do the Liberals mean by that? We do not know, but we do know the plan the Liberals put forward is going to cost in excess of $6 billion per year once it is fully in place. That $6 billion is a lot of money. It is essentially taxpayers' money that is now being collected which the government proposes to spend out of general revenues to give a tax cut to certain people.

That tax cut would go to people who earn up to $130,000 per year. The maximum benefit is $347 per year, I believe. That would go to the people who are in the upper income bracket. The lower we go down on the scale, the less the benefit is. When one gets down below $40,000, I think the benefit is about zero.

● (1235)

Who is this benefiting? Is this benefiting people who do not have an income to pay the kind of tax that would benefit from this? Is it going to people who do not need it?

The Liberals can say they are going to have a middle-class tax cut, and they will fulfill their promise, but this is a Parliament that is supposed to work together. We could make a significant improvement to this plan by saying that the Liberals could do their tax cut but we should ask why they are giving it to people who are already making $90,000 or more a year. That $300, or $340 maximum, is not going to change their lives. They might like to have $300; who would not? However, I question whether they need it in the same sense as people who are in a situation where they cannot afford dental care, and do not have access to it. It could change their lives.

I say that because dental care is extremely important to one's health and well-being. Not only is it important to one's health and well-being, but if we think of children growing up who do not have access to dental care, it affects their well-being, their health, their digestion, and their social standing.

Everybody in this House knows there is a big divide in this country. There is a divide between people who have good teeth and people who do not have access to the care that is required to make sure they have proper oral health. That is not fair. It is a great inequality. It is one of the most unequal aspects of health care in Canada, because most dental care is not covered by public health insurance. Some emergency care is. Someone may have an abscess in a tooth, because the person has not had the opportunity to go to a dentist to have proper dental care, or to have cavities filled and the person is forced to wait and endure the pain that comes with that. The person will go to a hospital emergency room and have an emergency extraction which costs the health care system several hundred dollars, but the person no longer has a tooth. Then the person is affected by that for the rest of his or her life.

That is the reality. That is unfair and it is unnecessary. It is an inequality that can be fixed. We, in this House of Commons, have an opportunity today to pass a resolution that would allow that to change. We do not need to give a $300 tax break to someone making $125,000 a year. However, we do need to ensure that everybody has fair access to health care.

During the campaign, we announced our platform and we announced that program in particular. People were coming up to me in the streets. They had heard about this and wanted to know more. They thought it was great. I do not want to try to paint too weird a picture, but people asked me to look at their teeth and asked whether I thought they could get a job with the way their teeth looked. That is the reality. People know they are excluded from employment and certain social activities. It affects their lives in many ways.

I remember an older gentleman in his seventies was almost crying, telling me how he had had cancer and as a result had serious problems with his teeth. He had to get a couple of teeth replaced or refilled. He had some done that he thought were paid for by the province, but they were not. He had to pay for that himself. He said that he had to wait two years to save up enough money to fix his other teeth. That was terrible. He was not interested in voting or in participating. I told him that the way to change things was by voting for something he wants and needs. I hope he did. I did not check with him afterwards.

We are here now, and we have this opportunity to do this. I am calling on all members. This is a real historic opportunity for members on all sides of the House to say that this is something we could do collaboratively that would change the lives of millions of people in this country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the things the Standing Committee on Health looked into last go-around was the issue of a national pharmacare program. It did an exceptional job. We have made significant progress as a result of that.

I look at what is happening today. Whether it is in a ministerial mandate letter to take this issue into consideration, in terms of what it is we might be able to do, my understanding is that the Standing Committee on Health is also going to be looking into that.

Does my colleague believe that the standing committee would be able to do some fine work? Maybe we could get it on course, the same way we managed to do with the pharmacare program. We should at least get MPs around the table at the standing committee to see what they might be able to come up with.

● (1240)

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, I have been on many committees and I do make recommendations. Recommendations have been made for many years about many things in the House.

This is an opportunity to do something. It is a first step toward a full national dental care program, but that requires a lot of work. It requires negotiations and fitting it into a full program, including pharmacare.

This is a first step, but let us do it. Let us take the money that would otherwise be given to people who do not need it and ensure it is available to people right now as a result of a very simple, straightforward measure for which the money is already allocated and which the government has already decided spend.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, one thing I have heard from all sides, quite honestly, is the erroneous use of the term "tax cut". A tax cut is where we take a tax rate and drop it to a lower rate. What the government is doing is proposing a raising of the threshold that is not taxed, so on the exemption from tax.

Out of concern for accuracy and calling something what it is, what does the member have to say about the proper use of the term "tax cut" or raising the exemption threshold?

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, the member can call it anything he likes, but the result is paying less taxes. When the hon. member's party was in power, and I was here, the Conservatives called a lot of things "tax cuts". They were not specifically taking a tax and chopping it; they were actually lowering taxes or doing something else.

The government has called this a middle-class tax cut, and the Liberals campaigned on it. I do not care what the member calls it or how it is implemented; it is spending taxpayer money that is now being collected and saying that we are going to give it back.

Tax cuts are actually expenditures of money. We are saying to spend the money on something that people actually need, in fact, desperately need and would change their lives. This $340 will not change the lives of anybody making more than $90,000 a year.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is the first time a member of Parliament from the Green Party has taken the floor today on this opposition motion, so I am happy to inform the New Democratic Party that we welcome the motion and plan to vote in favour. I hope others will as well to get this motion passed in a minority Parliament. It would be about time.

I will share my own experience. As a single mother, I did not have much income, being the executive director of Sierra Club Canada through my daughter's whole childhood. The peak of my pay was $50,000 a year. I chose to ensure my daughter had dental care. As a result, I needed to have a whole bunch of teeth pulled. I had to spend a fortune, $4,000, to get ready for the 2011 leaders' debate.

In 2008, I had these flipper things that were the cheap fix for the holes in my mouth, and I could not speak to save my soul. I could not say *vérificatrice générale*. There were certain words I just could not say with a cheap flipper thing in my mouth. I had to spend the money, because I needed to be okay in the leaders' debate.

The reality is that a lot of people out there are making choices and ending up being in this situation. The member for St. John's East mentioned some people and said that very few of them were actually in a position to hope to become prime minister, while dealing with a mouth that had not seen a dentist for a proper amount of time or with the proper amount of money.

It is about time we deal with this. I certainly know what it is like and I know a lot of Canadians who are in a very difficult position because of a lack of dental care.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her support and for her personal story.

I could tell my own stories. I still have gaps in my jaw from the lack of full dental care when I was a child in a family of eight children. I do know of what the member speaks, as I am sure other members do. If they do not know it from their personal experience, they know it from their neighbours, friends and families, which is a good reason to see this as a good and positive measure.

● (1245)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour again to stand in the House and speak on behalf of my wonderful constituents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

I am going into my fifth year as a member of the House and during my time here, I have known nothing but a Liberal government. I did work for a previous member of Parliament during the time the Conservatives were in power.

Over the last numbers of years, I have watched the Liberal government make a number of choices. I will start with what it calls a middle-class tax cut, which in fact sent the lion's share of the benefits to people making six-figure incomes. I remember at the time telling Liberal MPs in this place that they gave themselves the maximum tax cut and that people who earned the median income, which is just over $40,000 per year, would receive nothing. That is just a correction for the record.

We also have the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, and the Liberals have only implemented a handful of those 94 calls to action. This is a government that chose to spend billions of dollars of taxpayer money to buy the TMX pipeline. It has inadequate climate targets. It is waffling on pharmacare. Today we are getting lukewarm support for what the NDP is proposing for dental care.

Governing is about choices. I think back to the words of the late Jack Layton, when he said that we could not just be a party of opposition, that we had to be a party of proposition. That is exactly what today's motion would do. It is the NDP bringing forward a motion to the House, which would have real and tangible benefits for many Canadians suffering from a lack of care.

If we go back to the throne speech, there was a cursory mention of dental care, as follows:

> The Government is open to new ideas from all Parliamentarians, stakeholders, public servants, and Canadians—ideas like universal dental care are worth exploring, and I encourage Parliament to look into this.

We are looking into this. We took the words of the Governor General, and we are doing precisely that. In fact, regarding the proposal for dental care, a poll was done last year by IPSOS. It showed that around 86% of Canadians would support providing publicly funded dental care to those without insurance coverage. Eighty-six per cent is a pretty comfortable majority of Canadians. I know that no matter what side of the political spectrum one represents, constituents in every riding of the country need dental care. They are suffering because of poor oral health.

Our proposal is very simple. One of the first things the Liberal government proclaimed it would do was with regard to taxes. The Liberals want to essentially take the basic personal amount and raise it in stages, so the amount of income a person would not pay taxes on would rise to the first $15,000 by the year 2023. This would then slowly slope off to the cut-off income of $150,000 a year.

People who are earning six figures are going to receive most of the benefit. The NDP proposes that we take that proposal but instead limit it to people who earn $90,000 a year or less, in other words, to people who actually need it.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has estimated that if the proposed Liberal tax change comes into effect with the income going up to $150,000, it will cost the Canadian treasury $6.2 billion by the year 2024-25 after the full impact has kicked in. I remind all hon. members that tax changes actually cost money. If we are just giving a rather small benefit to the people who do not need it, then what measurable benefit are we giving Canadian society?

Meanwhile, a huge number of Canadians do not have any dental coverage. They do not have that oral health. We have a real opportunity here to take something, shift it slightly so there still is a tax change, but use the resultant savings to invest in a national dental care plan and get people the help they require.

● (1250)

For my constituents back home, I want to read into the record our motion of today. It says:

> That the House call on the government to change its proposed tax cuts by targeting benefits to those who earn less than $90,000 per year, and use those savings to invest in priorities that give real help to Canadians, including dental coverage for uninsured families making less than $90,000 per year.

We need to look at some of the statistics to understand why this proposal is so important. We know that emergency room visits due to dental emergencies cost taxpayers at least $155 million annually. According to Statistics Canada, in 2018, 35.4% of Canadians reported they had no dental insurance, and 22.4% of Canadians, which is roughly 6.8 million people, avoided visiting dental professionals due to the cost.

We know the health literature studies have linked poor oral health to serious health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, dementia, respiratory infections, diabetic complications, renal disease complications, premature birth and low birth weight.

We can look at where we can make those targeted investments in society that will have real impact. Yes, the upfront costs will be quite expensive, because we are going to have to bring a large portion of the population up to a standard of care. However, those costs will start to go down over time. We will see the results in savings in our medical system when we do not have to spend the money to deal with much more complicated health problems down the line.

This is a real opportunity for us to come together and make a difference in this place. I ask members to look at the situation in their own ridings, at what so many of their constituents are facing and to make a real difference by passing this motion. We have a choice before us. Are we going to spend our limited time in this place to give money to people who do not need it or are we going to make that investment to ensure Canadians are getting the help they need?

I have been listening to the debate today and members who spoke previously brought together a lot of personal stories, of meeting constituents, residents in their communities who had to cover their mouth because they were embarrassed by the state of their teeth or had further complications going down the line, which had led to multiple hospital visits.

In many ways, oral health is still very much a class issue. People who have means, who have income, have good teeth. People who do not have that source of income usually have poor oral health. This is an opportunity to give people another rung on social mobility, to give them the ability to go forward, to have confidence in seeking a new job, to be more open, to really participate in society.

Our dental care plan as members of Parliament is very generous. In fact, we have so much privilege in this place. We command an amazing salary. We have incredible health and dental benefits. Why do we feel comfortable as parliamentarians to give ourselves that coverage, yet we balk at the cost of giving it to our constituents?

Can we honestly make that argument to the public when in our constituencies, that we as members of Parliament deserve dental care that they do not have? I do not think many of us can. If members are going to make that argument, I would think twice about sitting in this place, because constituents might have better ideas.

I know my time is coming to a close, but I will end by imploring all of my colleagues, no matter which political party, to seriously look at this proposal, look at the good it will do for the people of Canada and take this moment to come together in this minority Parliament, pass the motion and get our country onto a path where we can cover people for dental care, which will have a very real and measurable impact in their lives.

● (1255)

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciated hearing the speech from my hon. colleague. Given that pharmacare and dental care are already matters that will be engaged directly in some manner in this Parliament, I am wondering how taking away this basic deduction from higher-income people will actually help lower-income people.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I think it is quite clear that the way it is going to help lower-income people is by taking the resultant savings of roughly $1.6 billion, which is not just chump change but a considerable sum of money, redirecting it and investing it in people to make sure that they have dental coverage.

The hon. member has to know what the costs of dental care are, especially for someone who has been suffering from poor oral health. Many people cannot afford that. That is how we would be putting money back into people's pockets. We would make sure that they do not have to pay those upfront costs and that they could go to the dentist like he can, like I can, and not face exorbitant costs. That is how we would invest in people who do not have the wealth and privilege that so many people in this place and other members of Canadian society enjoy.

People who are earning six figures do not need a tax break. We need to be investing in people who need it. I know who I speak for, and I implore that member to think about the constituents who live in his riding.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech and the NDP for putting this motion forward.

This is clearly a good idea. There are a lot of low-income people in my own riding who face problems not just with dental care, but with meeting the basic cost of living. A tax cut for people with lower incomes is a good idea.

My understanding from what I have heard is that the tax cut would not apply to people who earn more than $90,000. It is not completely clear in the motion. I would just like some clarity on that, but I support the idea of ensuring that the funds go toward helping the lowest-income people in our communities.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I also say this for the benefit of my Conservative colleagues.

For clarification, what we are going to do is make sure that the increase in the basic personal amount of $15,000, which is exempt from income tax, is meant only for people who are earning $90,000 a year or less. It is not $150,000, but $90,000.

For clarity, that is in fact what we are proposing: putting the resulting savings into a national dental care plan to help people of low means.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I have to admit that our concerns are similar to those of the NDP. The Bloc is a progressive party. The main issue we have with the motion is about respect for jurisdiction. The Bloc Québécois might have been a little more open to supporting the NDP motion as presented had it included a provision demonstrating respect for Quebec's jurisdiction.

Going forward, what I am asking my colleague to do is to take into consideration the need to respect Quebec's jurisdiction.

Would he agree that their motion, in its current form, is poorly worded?

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I am very well aware that the delivery of health care services falls under provincial jurisdiction, but where I see the strength of our federal government in matters such as health care is to ensure that Canada does not operate like a patchwork quilt. Much in the same way that the Canada Health Act operates in providing financial transfers to provinces that meet five conditions, I see this acting in a similar way.

My ultimate goal would be to have it that, no matter what province one lives in, whether it is Quebec, British Columbia or New Brunswick, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and that we all get a standard level of care. I think where one lives should not determine the type of health care one receives.

● (1300)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to stand in the House and represent the residents of Winnipeg North. I rise to provide some comments that are fairly widely accepted, at least among Liberal members of the House of Commons. I would suggest that through working on all sides of the House we have been able to bridge some common support for good initiatives.

I would break what we are discussing today down into two issues. The first is dental coverage. Depending on which member is speaking, the New Democrats and the Bloc members spend some time talking about dental coverage. The Conservatives, on the other hand, have more of a fixation on taxes. I have good news for both the official opposition and my New Democrat friends. I hope to address both of those issues.

I will start by talking about the election of 2015. Back in 2015, we had a real change in course through the change in government with our current Prime Minister. It was a change for the first time after many years under Stephen Harper. I know I should be somewhat careful when I say that, because it tends to scare a few people. When Stephen Harper was the prime minister, it was very rare for us to see anything of a progressive nature taking place, whether it was regarding health care, our environment or any other type of initiative.

Since 2015, we have had, for the first time in many years, an opportunity to see a number of areas progress. One of which I am very proud is the issue of pharmacare. For many years I sat in opposition here in the House of Commons. For even more years I sat in opposition in the Manitoba legislature. Health care was a very important issue. Dental care was an important issue, even back then. In 2015 the government, from the Prime Minister's Office right through, indicated that we wanted the standing committee of health to look at a national pharmacare program, or something of that nature, that would be able to provide more affordable medications for Canadians in all regions of our country.

As members of the House will know, the standing committee came up with an excellent report. I have had the opportunity to review some of the comments that came out of that particular report, and over the last few years we have seen a great deal of lobbying. A good percentage of that lobbying, in a very effective way, took place since that report. I have heard this from unions, and more importantly from constituents. Day after day in the last session, I brought forward petitions with hundreds of signatures from residents of Winnipeg North saying they wanted to see some form of a national pharmacare program.

We need to recognize that it is not as simple as some would try to imply. Back then, the New Democrats would tell us to just wave our wand, and we would have a national pharmacare program. They know better. We cannot just click our heels and make things happen like that. We have to work with the different levels of government. We have to try to present the case, and ultimately it is going to take a great deal of work to bring in a system.

We have invested literally tens of millions of dollars trying to further this, so that we will have some form of a national pharmacare program. Prior to this administration, I do not ever recall hearing the debate on national pharmacare, and the idea behind it, to the degree to which we have been hearing it in the last four years. I am glad to see the progress we have made. We have had ministers of health who have had a profoundly positive impact on the reduction of the costs of medications, in particular for hospitals and institutions, through the way in which we purchase prescribed medicines.

● (1305)

We now have a motion on the floor that in part deals with a dental plan. Again, the NDP is in a dream world. My friends often say New Democrats are like Liberals in a hurry. This is the type of thing that cannot just be wished into being. We have to do the background work. The Prime Minister sent the Minister of Health a mandate letter in which he asked her to look into how we might be able to expand the debate of how we could do what we started with pharmacare, taking dental care into consideration.

The Standing Committee on Health is going to study this issue. When I posed a question to my NDP friend, he said standing committees do all sorts of reports and so forth. Over the last four years our government has demonstrated that, when it comes to the pharmacare issue, we take it very seriously. Not only was the pharmacare issue mentioned in the mandate letter to the Minister of Health, but a standing committee is going to deal with it. If it is doable, we are interested.

We recognize that not all Canadians have dental coverage. We also recognize that while there is some direct benefit to dental coverage, we have to look at the best way to realize dental coverage for those individuals who will be in need of that service in the future.

Whether it is the mandate letter, the standing committee or the dialogue, pharmacare has been mentioned many times. I have had the opportunity to talk about pharmacare on many different occasions here in the House. I have even had the opportunity to reference dental care. I have talked about it with my constituents.

Our Prime Minister wants our caucus members to get a sense of what our constituents want. He wants us to bring their asks and what they are feeling in our constituencies back to Ottawa, whether on the floor of the House, in standing committees or in our caucus discussions. He wants to ensure that our constituents' concerns are brought to Ottawa so that we have an understanding of them. Not everything takes place in the Ottawa bubble.

That is why we have seen this government take a number of progressive actions dealing with not only health care and the environment but also taking progressive steps toward developing our country through infrastructure. We could talk about the CPP.

When we talk about pharmacare or a dental plan, we have to talk and work with the provinces, because there is a jurisdictional area there. The Bloc has already highlighted that on several occasions. There is a sense that we need to work with the stakeholders, and the provinces in particular.

We have a good example of just how successful we were on another progressive issue: the Canada pension plan. For years, Stephen Harper ignored it. He did absolutely nothing. Many years before he was prime minister, one would question whether he even supported the CPP and the idea behind it.

Within a couple of years, through the Minister of Finance and other members of cabinet working with the provinces, we were able to get an agreement that enhanced the CPP. The workers of today will have more money when it comes time for them to retire. That is an example that really demonstrates how this government treats those issues that are of critical importance to Canadians. We are looking at those issues.

I want to give some attention to Conservative members, who at times underestimate what we have been able to do while making progressive changes with regard to taxation and the redistribution of what I would classify as wealth in Canada.

● (1310)

Remember that within a couple of months of the 2015 election, one of the very first pieces of legislation we introduced, and I know the House is familiar with it, was the tax break to Canada's middle class. That was a tax cut. At the time, the Conservatives voted against those middle-class tax breaks. What is interesting is the Conservatives stand up and say they want more tax breaks, but when they actually had a chance to vote for tax breaks, what did they do? Every one of them stood up and voted no.

Then we heard that the 1% wealthiest should pay a little more in taxes, so we brought forward a votable item to increase taxes on Canada's wealthiest 1%. Not only did the Conservatives vote against that, which surprised me, but so did the NDP.

That is why I find today's motion interesting. The New Democrats are saying we should not give a tax break in one area so we can funnel that money into another area. I have heard that before. They believe we should have a tax for corporations here, put a tax there, click our heels and make things happen.

In the 2015 election, the New Democrats talked about a multi-million-dollar housing strategy proposal. We came up with a multi-billion-dollar first-time-ever housing strategy that goes for 10 years. It is the single greatest investment in housing. How did they respond to it? They said it was not enough, yet it was 10 times the amount they were talking about in the election. That was the election where they were advocating for balancing the budget. I think it is because they have this sense that whatever the government does they have to try and one-up it. If we say we are going to build 1,000 homes, they will say they will build 5,000 homes. If we say we are working toward a national pharmacare program, they will not only say it was their idea, but now they want a national dental care program. When it comes to my NDP friends, it is never-ending. That is something I witnessed when they were in opposition.

When I was in the Manitoba legislature, it was quite the opposite. It may be hard to believe, but I believe the Manitoba government gave six tax reductions on corporate taxes in 15 years. That is more than the Conservatives did. I would suggest that the NDP in government and the NDP in opposition are two different animals.

When we look at the bigger picture of what we have been able to accomplish by working with Canadians over the last number of years, the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity said it well. We had the middle-class tax break. We had the tax increase to Canada's wealthiest 1%. We had the Canada child benefit program enhancement. As I have often said inside this chamber, that particular program saw over $9 million a month going to the riding of Winnipeg North to support our children. We had the increase to the guaranteed income supplement, lifting hundreds of seniors out of poverty in the riding of Winnipeg North alone. We just had a report from Stats Canada that indicated that the number of people who have been lifted out of poverty in three years is over one million. Never in the history of Canada have we ever seen, in a three-year period, one million people lifted out of poverty.

That tells me that the government is doing it right, that by working with Canadians we are making a positive difference.

When we look at why it is so important that we get it right, and we look at where those tax dollars and those tax breaks and the enhancement of the child benefit and our seniors program are going, the reality is that they are putting dollars into the pockets of the Canadians who need them the most. When we do that, we are increasing their disposable income. By increasing Canadians' disposable income, we are allowing Canadians to spend more in their communities.

That in itself assists in building the economy. That is why the Prime Minister and other Liberals will say that by supporting our middle class and giving our middle class strength, we are strengthening our economy. Again, the proof is in the pudding. By working with Canadians, we have created well over one million jobs since 2015, and most of those are full-time jobs. I would compare our record with the Stephen Harper record, any day on anything.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Done.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: The member might not want to say, "done" too quickly because they will be embarrassed if they accept that challenge.

Madam Speaker, we look at the policies that have been put in place, both on the progressive side in terms of programs like the CPP and budgetary measures such as tax cuts. If we look at the investments in Canadians, specifically the record amounts of money in infrastructure, we see that unlike the former government we actually believe in infrastructure. A healthier infrastructure is good for the economy. We know that.

On this side, we get it. By addressing all three areas, we have witnessed a relatively healthy economy over the last number of years that has generated record numbers of jobs and has reduced unemployment rates to historical levels in certain areas of the country. These are the types of things that are having a positive impact on Canadians.

In the most recent budget, we are talking about increasing the basic allotment amount from just over $12,000 to $15,000 over the next few years. My Conservative friends will say that is not a tax cut. I always say a tax cut is a tax cut is a tax cut. It is, in fact, a tax cut. Those individuals will be paying less tax, as a direct result, once again, of another Liberal initiative. That is incorporated and coming up. We are going to see some wonderful things in the not-too-distant future. Those are the types of things that will keep us on the road that we are currently on.

We, collectively on the government benches, understand the importance of working with Canadians, consulting with our constituents and coming up with the ideas that are ultimately going to take form in different ways through legislation, through budgetary motions and just through government policy in general. We are in contact with ministers and we provide direct input, whether inside this chamber, in our caucus or in the standing committee.

I will leave it at that, but I would suggest that we are going to get a lot more when we get the chance to look at the next budget.

● (1315)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to put it on the record, just to be clear, I do not think I have ever agreed with that member. However, there are a few points in his speech that I agree with today. I certainly agreed that the NDP ridiculed the Liberal national housing strategy in 2015. The member said that we said it was not enough, and I certainly agree with that. It was not enough because there was nothing there.

The problem with the Liberals is they think that if they keep saying something it will become true. When we kept trying to find out where the national housing strategy was, we had the national housing strategy person, the member for Spadina—Fort York, who got up very defensively, said that they had helped over a million Canadians. We wanted to know where the million Canadians were. Then when the member was questioned on it, it turned out he had just made that up. He said it was for rhetorical advantage, to misrepresent numbers about a basic housing strategy.

If we listen to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, someone the Liberals seem dead set against and have tried to undermine, his latest comments on the Liberal national housing strategy are that they maintain "current funding levels for current activities and slightly reduced targeted funding" for current activities. If we get through the bureaucratese and economics of that, it means the Liberals have basically been putting jack squat into a national housing strategy and they plan to maintain a jack squat national housing strategy.

That leads me to my final point. I agree with the member that the Liberals are always willing to put money in the pockets of people they think need it the most, like Galen Weston, $12 million to fix his fridges. The Liberals think he needs that the most. We are here talking about people who cannot get dental care.

I do not know if the member understands what it is like to be without dental care, but I meet people without dental care all time and they are not people in the Liberal universe. We are here to say we could have a reasonable strategy to help with dental care or we could have more and more of this kind of Liberal rhetoric for advantage that helps no one.

● (1320)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when the member makes reference to rhetoric, for almost 20 years I sat opposition in the Manitoba legislature, and for roughly 15 of those years the NDP was in government.

Many, and particularly members from the Bloc, will say that the provinces do have a role to play in dental care. Some of the saddest stories we could hear are from northern rural Manitoba, and a lot of the inner city areas in Winnipeg North. The need is there, and it is very real. I have said that. The Prime Minister has acknowledged that. The Minister of Health has acknowledged that. All Liberals recognize the issue. For years and years, the NDP in Manitoba never got it done. It refused to address that particular issue.

Now the NDP in opposition here in Ottawa is saying that we have to deal with it. The standing committee is going to be dealing with it. There is going to be a study in regard to it. We are very hopeful and optimistic that if we can work with provinces and support provinces, we might be able to do something.

We are starting the ball going forward, which is more than I could have said during the 15 years I was in opposition, when the NDP was in government and when it virtually ignored the issue completely.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to enter the debate with my colleague opposite. The member raised the dynamic where the NDP sees the government doing something and says it is never enough.

From a Conservative viewpoint, we have a very similar observation when members on that side get pressed for the way they conduct their business. Immediately, the point their finger and start blaming Mr. Harper for areas that were directly under their control. It is interesting that this member still does not see that.

While I am on the subject of things that the member may not see, I do appreciate the member's commitment to the House and his engagement on so many files, but he is not doing his rookie members any favours by constantly getting up and robbing them of the chance to defend their government and to actually cut their teeth in this place.

In all seriousness, the member did raise the subject of tax cuts versus raising the threshold, saying a tax cut is a tax cut is a tax cut and it is all the same. If we agree with that, it is effect and not the actual substance that matters, the government continues to say things like “A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian” and yet it keeps talking about working for the middle class.

I am getting very tired and frustrated with this. I want everyone in Canada to do well. Utilizing the term “middle class” kind of stratifies people into little boxes. I would ask the member, who served as an MLA and as an MP, whether he would ever go into his constituency office and say, “You're middle class, so I'm going to help you. You're not middle class, so I'm not going to help you. You're making too much money, so I'm not going to help you” or would the member say it is his duty to stand up and try to make sure that everyone could get ahead, that everyone's children and grandchildren could be better off.

● (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, actions speak louder than words, and all one has to do is take a look at the Canada child benefit program and look at the way in which Stephen Harper worked it under the old system. Millionaires were being subsidized, and it did not matter if one made $10,000 a year or $150,000 a year: There was no difference in terms of amounts.

One of the first actions we took and have enhanced since then was to recognize that some individuals need more than others. That is reflected in the policies. It is the same thing we are doing with the tax changes this year by increasing the basic exemption.

There are many examples I could give. I can tell my friend across the way that we always try to arrange it so that whoever walks into my office in Winnipeg North walks away happier than when they came in. We do not necessarily resolve every problem we get, but we try. I would like to think I advocate for 100% of my constituents.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, there is someone whom my colleague opposite did not mention in his fine speech, and that is unfortunate. I am referring to Paul Martin, who practically invented the fiscal imbalance.

I do not know whether my colleagues remember this, but from 1996 to 1997, immediately after the referendum, which was a very important date for us, Paul Martin significantly restructured the transfer payments. Again and again, he made cuts to transfer payments to Quebec that amounted to almost $2 billion, which led to what is known as a fiscal imbalance. Even today, intense pressure is placed on provincial governments when the federal government can more or less balance its budget by reducing transfer payments.

If my colleague is so open-minded and concerned about the middle class, why does he not agree to increase health transfers to 5.2% annually, as requested by various provinces?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I actually have a history on that particular issue.

There was a time in the early nineties when there was an agreement we would have a tax change. Provinces were given a tax shift, given more money through taxes, and in return the money was taken away from health care transfers. Jean Chrétien said no, and said that we would establish a floor to ensure the federal government would always have an interest in providing support for heath care for the provinces throughout the country.

If we take a look at the many years we have been in government since then, particularly the last four years, we see that today we give more money to health care than we have ever given before. Not only do we do that, but we also highlight issues we believe are important to all Canadians, including mental health. This is an area that we talk a great deal about. We talk about the issue of palliative care, on which we have had much debate inside this chamber, and issues such as dental plans or pharmacare plans.

These are important issues for all Canadians. It does not matter where they live. If there is an interest, this government is listening. Where we can act, we act. We have demonstrated that. Every day we work as hard as we can to deliver good-quality services for Canadians, and we have a heck of a good civil service to make sure that happens.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

I would like to thank my NDP colleagues for using the first opposition day to urge the government to work collaboratively for working-class Canadians.

In this minority Parliament, the Liberals have a choice. They can provide a tax break to people who are making more than $90,000 a year or they can offer dental coverage to families making less than $90,0000 annually. In fact, if I were the Liberals, I would be jumping at the chance to support an opportunity to work so well for Canadians. What we have been able to provide here is an opportunity for the Liberals to see what they could accomplish instead of giving a few more dollars to people who do not actually need the money.

We know right now that we are leaving millions of Canadians behind. They cannot afford to go to the dentist. We know that this is causing incredible stress on our emergency rooms. We are spending $155 million annually on dental-related emergencies. These are preventive things. This is money we would not have to be spending if we had dental care for people who need it.

By providing access to oral health, we would also ensure that we are preventing other serious health conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, dementia, respiratory infections, diabetic complications, renal disease complications and premature birth and low birth weight.

We need to start protecting all Canadians, particularly those who are most vulnerable. I have spent a great deal of time in my riding of Edmonton Strathcona, which is a very diverse riding. There are large number of students in my riding, and there is a large diversity in socio-economic status. I have spent a lot of time on doorsteps talking to people, and I am unbelievably surprised by the incredible support for a dental program in this country.

What is interesting to me is that it is not just those people who would benefit from a dental program who are so supportive of it. It is, in fact, Canadians of all economic backgrounds, whether they can afford their own dental care or not, who recognize that we have an obligation to make sure all people within our community are taken of.

I spoke to a constituent of mine, a young father who lived in a lovely home and clearly had a level of income that is quite comfortable. He had two daughters. He spoke to me at length about his support for medicare, pharmacare, mental health care and dental care. I said to him that he obviously had the money to take his kids to the dentist and asked him why he was worried about dental care. His response to me, which is something every person in this House needs to acknowledge, was that his children's well-being and his well-being depend on his community and country doing well. He was worried about the kids at his daughters' school and their ability to access dental care.

If Canadians like this young father can be generous and understand the obligation we have to represent Canadians and do what is best for Canada, I really find it problematic that there are people in this House who do not recognize it. We know that across Canada there is incredible support for a dental program, and the majority of Canadians who have elected us to represent them in this House have asked for and supported dental care. What right do we have to not support that? What right do we have to not support dental care when the people who put us in this building to represent them have said that they want dental care?

It is also really important, and people have brought this up before, that we talk a bit about how the Liberals say that there is no money for things that they do not want to put money into while there is always, always money for the things they think are important. This is not the first time that members will hear this, but Loblaws does not need Canadian taxpayer dollars. Mastercard does not Canadian taxpayer dollars. The ones who do need it are young families who cannot afford their dental care and university students and families who are struggling to make ends meet in my province, where 19,000 people were laid off in January. Those people need support. They need support to be able to access dental care.

● (1330)

A budget is coming out in our province today, and it is not going to get better there. There are people hurting in Alberta, and this is a concrete thing that I and all members can fight for on behalf of our constituents.

I would also like to take a moment to offer to my Conservative colleagues the thought that millions of Canadians do not have dental care, but the biggest benefits from the Liberal tax cuts go to the wealthy. Conservatives talk a lot about standing up for working Canadians, so I can only assume that they will be supporting our plan to cap the cut for the wealthiest and invest those savings in a dental care plan that will benefit millions of hard-working Canadians.

I am so proud to be a New Democrat, to represent Edmonton Strathcona and to have a proposal that would immediately help 4.3 million people and save our health care system tens of millions of dollars each year. It is time we started delivering on the needs of everyday Canadians and it is time we started investing in Canadians and their needs. Dental care is health care. Canadians should not have to choose between taking care of their teeth and taking care of their health.

● (1335)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a distributional analysis from the PBO. I looked at 2024, as an example. If we capped it at $97,000, meaning $97,000 and up, there would be savings of about $934 million, which is not insignificant.

My question is about dental coverage, because there is a question about spending that $934 million on dental care when it has not been fully studied in this place and it is really within provincial jurisdiction. I am not discounting it as a priority, but why would we not look to something like the Canada workers benefit, which would have a direct impact on poverty and be much better targeted? It is within the purpose of the motion and it would clearly be within federal jurisdiction.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, the motion is about dental care and the need we have seen across the country for dental care. While there are a number of different things that the NDP has been fighting very hard for, in this motion we are looking at dental care and how we can support people who need some support for their dental care.

We are not saying this should apply across the board; this is for families that actually need dental care support.

I thank the member for bringing up options for other ways we can support Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bloc Québécois MPs are progressive and in favour of social democracy. I like the idea of helping the least fortunate. I am sure everyone here likes that idea.

However, it would have been so simple to include the right for Quebec to opt out with full compensation. If that had been in the motion, the Bloc Québécois would probably have voted in favour of it.

I would encourage the NDP to amend its motion. That way, we might manage to accomplish something together.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I am glad that the Bloc is a progressive party. It is nice to have them on our side of the room.

We would like to see a plan that would be national in scope. We are looking for dental care that would be available to any Canadian who needs it. Whether or not there is an opportunity to discuss that further, I would have to talk to my colleagues.

Business of Supply

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to Liberals speak today and the message seems to be hurry up and wait. The fact is right now we have a lot of Canadians who are suffering from poor oral health who need this care right now and yet, the Liberals do not want to go all the way because they believe half measures are appropriate. It is a party that has taken 23 years to get to pharmacare and now wants to delay dental care when it is evident that so many Canadians need it.

I am hoping my colleague can illustrate how great this need is and what the result in savings will be to some of the lowest-income Canadians.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague that, unfortunately, we are used to hearing the right words from across the floor but do not necessarily see the actions to follow through with them.

I could tell members anecdote after anecdote from the people I have talked to who would benefit so much right now from having access to dental care. I have talked to people who are so ashamed that they cannot afford dental care that they cover their mouth when they speak. They are so ashamed that they cannot pay for this basic ability to take care of their own dental hygiene that they will not apply for jobs and are hesitant to go out in public.

These things are happening in Canada in my riding and it is really quite devastating. We have proposed such an easy fix. We can do this.

● (1340)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I think that if you seek it, you will find consent for the following motion:

> That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the Opposition motion in the name of the Member for New Westminster—Burnaby, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, February 26, 2020, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Business of Supply

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am always honoured to rise in the House to represent the people of Timmins—James Bay.

For the folks back home, what we are discussing today is something on which the Liberal government has promised to work collegially, in this minority Parliament, to try to bring solutions, without our throwing brickbats at each other. However, as we are seeing throughout this debate, the Liberals are absolutely dead set against a reasonable solution. The solution is for a serious problem: the lack of dental care for more and more Canadians across this country.

I talked to a young woman the other day who said something that I thought was very powerful. She said that in Canada today the economic dividing line is between those who have dental care and those who do not. Those who do not have dental care are put at such a basic sense of risk, and there is also a risk of damage to self-worth. From knocking on the doors in my region and in my community, I have seen the impacts of not having access to dental care. In the great regions in the Far North, in the communities of the Cree, the dental crisis is a serious medical crisis.

What are we proposing? Whenever we come forward with a reasonable suggestion, the Liberals say, "There is the crazy NDP, pie in the sky. It is never good enough." They tell us to stick with the Liberals, who make all the great promises but do not ever actually deliver. The pharmacare promise came so long ago that I think I was a child at the time. At least emotionally I was a child. The Liberals are still promising pharmacare, but we just have to wait a bit longer.

A great analogy for this relates to a loaf of bread. Why fight for a big loaf of bread? We can cut half a loaf of bread and give it to Galen Weston and tell everyone else they are loved and cared for. We are so cared for that the Liberals now have a Minister of Middle Class Prosperity. If this were a drinking game, and every time the Prime Minister said "middle class" we had to take a drink and then a shot for the follow-up line "those trying to join it", people would be bombed at the end of a four-minute speech by a member of the government.

I say that in all seriousness, because the Prime Minister grew up in a very different middle class than my father and mother did. I do not know the middle class he grew up with in the town of Mount Royal, but my mother and father were the children of hard rock miners. My mom quit school at 15 and got a job. My dad quit school at 16 and got a job. He became a member of the middle class at 40, when he could go to university. My mom would type his notes when he would come home after 12 hours on an all-night bus to Timmins. By getting a university degree, he became a professor of economics. That was the middle class.

Middle class meant that my dad could buy a little house. It was not a big house, and it took him 25 years to pay it off. We had one car, and when that car died it just stayed in the driveway. My dad never got another one. Middle class meant that his kids could go to school and come out without debt, because he had a summer job. That was the middle class.

When we ask the middle class prosperity minister what the middle class is, she says it is hard to define, that it is for people who have stuff. That is it? She says it is for people who have kids in hockey. What about the families who do not have kids in hockey? What about the families who are working three jobs full time and are not able to pay their rent?

It is called the gig economy. The finance minister, who is pretty much the minister of the 1%, tells us to get used to it; it is the new normal. It is not the new normal. It is the direct result of deliberate economic policies by the Liberals and the Conservatives, going back and forth, policies that have deteriorated the once strong middle class that was the basis of the economic engine in this country.

When we talk about dental care now, with people who have to make a choice among paying their rent, looking after their children, getting their car fixed so that they can get to work and getting their teeth fixed, we are in a very different economic reality. What is the solution? It is quite simple. The Liberals, whenever they do not know what to do, give money to wealthy people and tell us that we will all benefit. The first thing the finance minister did was give a tax cut to the middle class and those wanting to join it. In other words, those making $150,000 a year are going to love the Liberals, and for those making $40,000 a year, they have nothing but a lot of nice affirmations.

● (1345)

The minister of the 1% has given us $14 billion in tax cuts over the last five years. These are cuts to revenue that could be used to invest in things the Liberals say they support, like pharmacare, and address the horrific shortage in national housing. They keep saying housing will receive the greatest and most incredible investment ever, but they are just not spending money on it. They do not even know where the money is because they gave it away in tax cuts.

What about their latest tax cut? Those who make $150,000 a year will do very well, but those who make less will get very little to diddly-squat. The reasonable alternative is to say that those making $90,000 or more do not need the extra money and to take that money and put it into a national dentistry fund to help 1.4 million Canadians.

The Liberals seem to think these finances are shocking. The finances were not shocking when they wrote a cheque of $4.5 billion to Trans Mountain to get it to go away. Then we bought ourselves a pipeline, and now they are adding $1 billion every few months, no problem there. They did not have to factor that out. They did not have to cost it out. Now they are asking how to cost out a national dental care program. What we know is that in the first year it will be used by a lot of people, but then it will settle in at about $800 million a year.

It is pretty clear that if we decide not to give more benefits to the rich, the people who so-called have all the stuff, and put in a dental plan, it will make life much better for many Canadians. It is doable, but it is about political will.

The other issue is about federal and provincial jurisdiction.

[*Translation*]

Quebec clearly has a lot of credibility when it comes to providing services to its people. The NDP upholds the principle of asymmetrical federalism. If the Government of Quebec decided to offer a program, it would be able to develop a plan and receive federal funding. That is reasonable.

[*English*]

To the other provinces, like Jason Kenney's Alberta, which would love a national dental care plan and then would give it to some oil executives, we would say no, that the money has to go to dental care. We have to protect the rights of citizens in this. If we are going to change how we tax money to help people, we have to make sure it will go there.

In my 16 years in the House, I have seen a continual deterioration of the middle class through deliberate policies, like the policies that downloaded the cost of university tuition onto students year after year so that students are now coming out with $50,000 or $60,000 to $100,000 in debt that they cannot get out of. I have seen the rise of the so-called precarious gig economy, precarious because it favours corporations, as it does not require standards to be in place for employment. It is crippling the young generation that is carrying those costs. I have seen the rise of housing prices in urban areas and in rural areas like mine, where right now 2,000 homeless people are in the area of the city of Timmins, a city of 44,000 people. Despite all the volunteers we have, they cannot address that crisis without a national investment. What do we get from the government? It says we have the greatest national housing investment ever, but we are not seeing any buildings.

This is about choice. It is about the choice to invest in housing. It is about the choice to invest in our students. It is about the choice to invest in infrastructure. Here we have a clear choice to not give to the rich and make a plan to establish a national dental care plan.

I appeal to my Liberal colleagues to do the right thing, work with us and send the message that this minority Parliament can work together.

● (1350)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the element of the motion that suggests the basic personal amount should be targeted more specifically to people in need and middle-class Canadians. I would like to think I had a middle-class upbringing, having been raised by two teachers, and I think that should be the focus of our efforts.

Some of my concern comes from looking at the distributional analysis of the PBO. In 2024, those with incomes above $97,000 will only receive less than 14% of the benefit. It is a bit disingenuous to suggest this will only flow to upper-income Canadians or principally to them.

My other challenge is with the math from the NDP in this instance. Over five years, the distributional analysis suggests that for incomes over $97,000, the basic personal amount will be about $3.5 billion, yet the dental care promise in the NDP platform is $5 billion. These numbers do not add up and that is my fundamental challenge with this motion.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I am glad that my hon. colleague was raised by teachers as I am sure he can do math. I had one teacher in my family, my father, who was very good at math, but he would say his son was not so much. That is why I rely on the Parliamentary Budget Officer as well. When I look at the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, it says the benefits do go to those making above $90,000, just as the previous tax cut went to those making above $90,000.

There is always a reason for the Liberals not to do the right thing, but when we see the costs of this figured out, it would probably cost $1.8 billion in the first year and then probably about $800 million. That may be low, but the impacts on society are going to be much better.

I would ask my hon. colleague how much of a benefit we are getting from the $12 billion or $15 billion that was signed off on with respect to the pipeline. Has he done a cost-benefit analysis of how that is helping the middle class? That is probably a question he gets asked all the time in his riding.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech of my hon. colleague from Timmins—James Bay and appreciate some of his comments. He mentioned the middle class quite often in his speech and commented on the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity. He said there is not really a definition from our Liberal colleagues on what the middle class is.

Can the hon. member give me a definition of what the middle class is according to the NDP? What would the average income per household be? I would like to know if the New Democrats have a definition for what the middle class is within their platform.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question. Rather than talking about the middle class, which I think has become so damaged, we have to start talking about the new working class, which is no longer only blue-collar but also white-collar workers.

There are professors who are basically getting minimum wage and working on endless contracts. At one point, being a professor was considered the ultimate white-collar job. We are seeing more and more white-collar workers on these perpetual short-term work cycles.

Therefore, this myth that there is a middle class that we are all part of has become problematic. We have seen a deterioration of that class, and the new working class is no longer just a blue-collar situation. It is also people who are on these endless contract cycles and burdened with student debt. Once we start talking about the real relationship of class, I think we can start to talk about targeted solutions for them.

● (1355)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I listened to our hon. colleague, I could see how devoted he is to his people, and I really appreciate that.

People have been talking about collaboration for a while now. We proved it last week by accomplishing something major for the people of Quebec and the other provinces.

What the Bloc Québécois is saying is not complicated. If the New Democrats amend their motion to say that they support Quebec having the right to opt out with full compensation, the Bloc Québécois could potentially get on board.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, the NDP believes that the principle of asymmetrical federalism is fundamental to Canada. Quebec has many progressive programs to defend the values, interests and quality of life of Quebec residents. That is obvious to the NDP.

With regard to the question about the motion, the member will have to speak to his critic. However, the NDP feels it is necessary to implement a program that will give people in Quebec and other regions of Canada access to dental care.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

I am very pleased to rise to speak to the motion moved by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby. I am glad to see that he took note of the new tax cut that the government gave middle-class Canadians. This tax cut will put more money in the pockets of nearly 20 million Canadians. It is a commitment we made during the last election campaign, when we promised to make life more affordable for Canadians. We made that promise and kept it, because we know that this tax cut will help middle-class families and those working hard to join it.

First of all, I believe it is worth pointing out that Canada's economy is strong and growing. I would like to cite some statistics. More than 1.1 million jobs have been created since the fall of 2015. The unemployment rate is at its lowest in more than 40 years. Wages are rising faster than inflation. The poverty rate in Canada is at an all-time low. The results of the 2018 Canadian income survey show that between 2015 and 2018, more than one million Canadians were lifted out of poverty, including 334,000 children and 73,000 seniors. This is the largest three-year reduction in Canadian history. Canadian businesses are turning a profit. In fact, their profits are making them more competitive. This means that employers can continue to create more well-paying jobs. In the end, middle-class Canadians are the winners.

Nevertheless, there is more work to be done. The cost of living is increasing, and too many families still have a hard time making ends meet. That is why we want to help Canadians keep more of what they earn.

It is also why, in 2015, we gave Canadians the tax relief they deserved. We put hundreds of dollars in the pockets of middle-class Canadians. We also asked the richest 1% to pay a little more. In 2020, our government is more committed than ever to providing more support for the middle class and for the most vulnerable Canadians, achieving tax fairness and investing in people. That is the best way to grow the economy.

That is why we have taken steps to help families buy their first home. It is why we have enhanced support for Canadian families. As I mentioned yesterday, 9,000 families in Hochelaga have received monthly tax-free payments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. The hon. member will have six minutes and 52 seconds to complete her speech when we resume debate after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[*English*]

TRANSLATION BUREAU

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, GP): Madam Speaker, in light of the recent tensions in this House, I wish to call attention to a bright patch in the Canadian record, something we can all be proud of. Today, I want to honour and congratulate the Translation Bureau.

[*Translation*]

The Translation Bureau's staff support the Government of Canada in its efforts to serve Canadians by communicating in both official languages, but their efforts go far above and beyond that mandate. I was touched to learn how incredibly inclusive, respectful and committed their work is.

[*English*]

A fine example of their efforts is the new gender and sexual diversity glossary, a free glossary that lists the English and French equivalents of 193 concepts on gender and sexual diversity.

The bureau also offers translation for international languages, sign language and five indigenous languages and counting, including recent work to include Wolastoqey latuwewakon, a language with only a few hundred speakers in my home riding.

[*Member spoke in Wolastoqey and provided the following text:*]

Wolasuweltomuwakon, Nuhkomossok naka nmuhsumsok, Woliwon ciw latuwewakon, Kisi monuwehkiyeq ‘ciw nilun, nilun oc tokec nuleyutomonen, ciw weckuwapasihtit. Nit leyic.

[*Member provided the following translation:*]

Maliseet language honour code, grandmothers and grandfathers, thank you for our language that you have saved for us. It is now our turn to save it for the ones who are not born yet, may that be the truth.

* * *

WINTER IN LONG RANGE MOUNTAINS

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.): Madam Speaker, *Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow* has certainly been the theme song in my province of Newfoundland and Labrador this winter.

[*Translation*]

Indeed, all this snow has given us a magnificent white blanket for the winter carnivals.

I would like to think all the volunteers and groups in my riding, Long Range Mountains, who organized winter festivities in their communities.

[*English*]

This is also a huge boost to many not-for-profits as well as small businesses, especially those in the tourism industry.

Let us embrace winter and lace up our skates, go ice fishing, try downhill or cross-country skiing, or jump on a snowmobile and experience the hundreds of miles of groomed trails. The more adventurous can try zip lining, take a thermos of hot chocolate and go sliding with the family or, my favourite, snowshoeing with dogs.

[*Translation*]

There is nothing like a nice, hot cup of broth in the forest to make any winter outing a success.

[*English*]

Whatever their fancy, people can get out and enjoy, and we can continue to let it snow.

* * *

MASTER BREEDER SHIELD

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the accomplishments of three dairy farmers in my riding. Oxford is a unique riding that has a strong presence in both the manufacturing and automotive industries, but Oxford is also known as the dairy capital of Canada.

Today I would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of Larenwood Farms, Darcroft Farms and Wilmarlea Farm, which were recently awarded Master Breeder shields. This prestigious award is presented to dairy farmers who have achieved excellent health, productivity and longevity for their herd of cattle. A Master Breeder shield is a lifelong dream of many dairy farmers and serves as a testament to years of hard work and dedication.

Again, I would like to congratulate these three Oxford farms, as only 19 farms across Canada received this award in 2019. Oxford is truly the dairy capital of Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY RADIO STATION

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate one of the wonderful institutions in my riding of Outremont, Radio Centre-Ville.

Radio Centre-Ville celebrates its 45th anniversary this year. Radio Centre-Ville is a multicultural radio station that encourages an exchange of ideas and gives a voice to those who are often forgotten by other media outlets. That is the case for programs like Radio Centre-Ville's *Fraîchement jeudi*, which recently celebrated its first year on the air. *Fraîchement jeudi* is an inclusive program that lets Montreal's LGBTQ community exchange ideas and enhance their media representation.

Our local media outlets play a key role in the everyday lives of our communities, and I am always delighted to recognize how they enrich our lives.

* * *

GAÉTAN BOIVIN

Mrs. Louise Charbonneau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to a forward-thinking man from my riding, Gaétan Boivin, president and CEO of the Port of Trois-Rivières.

He won the male personality of the year award at the Radisson gala presented by the Mauricie chamber of commerce last Friday.

Mr. Boivin has successfully modernized the Port of Trois-Rivières by working with his team to implement the On Course for 2030 plan. Thanks to his efforts, the port now has integrated modern, productive infrastructure. With its deepwater capacity, the Port of Trois-Rivières is one of the largest ports in Quebec and eastern Canada. It employs thousands of people and contributes $270 million to the economy of Trois-Rivières.

I want to congratulate Mr. Boivin, a visionary pioneer who has made the Port of Trois-Rivières a remarkable place.

* * *

● (1405)

[*English*]

LORAN SCHOLAR

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today to congratulate Govind Deol from L.A. Matheson Secondary School on receiving the prestigious Loran scholarship award. Govind was selected from more than 5,000 students from across Canada as one of 36 Loran scholars awarded a $100,000 scholarship that will go toward post-secondary education.

Govind started a basketball program for elementary students, volunteered at Camp Next, did patrols for the Surrey Crime Prevention Society, helped the Kinsmen Lodge and raised funds to build schools for an NGO called the Sikhi Awareness Foundation. He is a Matheson Mustang and an exemplary Canadian.

To Govind I say congratulations.

* * *

ADDICTIONS ADVOCATE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, approximately eight million Canadians suffer from addiction. Most suffer alone and in silence, but my friend Natalie Harris is trying to change this.

Throughout my time in Ottawa, I have had the honour of meeting countless mental health champions. Few have touched my life the way that Natalie Harris has.

Natalie's struggle with PTSD and addiction has been well documented, but what people do not know is how truly amazing she is. Natalie is a kind and compassionate individual whose journey from the abyss to her work today is a testament to her driving will to survive and help others.

Natalie's new project, writing get-well cards for those suffering from addiction, is a direct effort to help those in need and at the same time raise awareness of this important issue.

Tomorrow, after caucus from 12 noon to 1:30 p.m., please join colleagues from across all party lines as we host Natalie in the Speaker's lounge in West Block, room 233-S.

We are working together to bring awareness to the terrible disease that is addiction. It is my hope that the words of encouragement we offer may help to build confidence, break the cycle of addiction and maybe, just maybe, save a life.

* * *

COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian deserves a safe, affordable and accessible place to call home. To raise awareness about poverty and homelessness in Brampton South, I took part in the Coldest Night of the Year walkathon hosted by Regeneration Outreach Community.

I want to thank Ted Brown and all of the organizations and volunteers that made this event a success and that make a difference in our community every day.

On Saturday, 425 walkers raised more than $100,000 for those in need.

I want to recognize Pastor Jamie Holtom, the Boys and Girls Club, Rotary Club, Peel police and first responders, and teams from Grace United Church, St. Paul's United Church, Christ Church and many others.

I am also proud that our government is doing its part by investing in real change that has lifted over one million Canadians out of poverty since 2015. There is more to be done to ensure that every Canadian has a fair chance to succeed.

RURAL HEALTH CARE

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I attended the funeral of my niece Cheryl two weeks ago and, six months before that, the funeral of her father.

Cancer impacts all families. It does not care about age, income, job, dreams for the future or where one lives.

In rural Canada, it is often difficult to access health care in a timely manner. Add in the additional challenges of Canada's more remote places, where air travel to see a doctor is often a requirement and complicates access even more. Our health centres and staff can do amazing work, but they have their limitations.

I really want to make sure we proceed with our platform promise to “make sure that every Canadian has access to a family doctor or primary health care team” and to improve “the quality of care for the nearly five million Canadians who today lack access”, because our lives depend on it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister told environmentalists he would plant two billion trees by 2050, that was a simplistic solution. He tried to fool Canadians in order to get elected. He has never been able to tell the truth, and the truth is that his Liberal government will not meet its Paris targets. It is weak to talk nonsense, but that is how it goes with this Liberal Prime Minister.

I would like to remind him that he has already planted thousands of trees, and that is not enough to protect our environment. If there are trees left over that need planting in Canada, we could use some around Lake Saint-Augustin in Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. The town of Saint-Augustin wants to protect the environment and has a tree planting project to protect its lake.

Where can tree planting projects be found? We in Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier really want to take meaningful action to improve our environmental footprint.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a happy occasion.

This is the first day of the Special Olympics in Thunder Bay, which are going to run for the next four days.

I want to thank the very many volunteers who have made this happen. I want to thank the coaches and the parents of all the athletes for their considerable contributions. Most of all, I want to congratulate the athletes.

I would tell the athletes to try hard and do their best, but most of all to enjoy it.

I ask the whole House to join me in giving a big round of applause to all the Special Olympic athletes this week.

* * *

TOMLINSON LAKE HIKE TO FREEDOM

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the immense contribution of black Canadians as part of our month-long celebration of Black History Month.

The great riding of Tobique—Mactaquac is home to the northernmost route of the underground railway. Brave men and women fleeing slavery found their way to Fort Fairfield, Maine, where they were given refuge in places such as Friends Church.

Once they were able to make their final journey to freedom, they would set out through the woods until they reached Tomlinson Lake in Carlingford, New Brunswick. Once there, they knew they were safe and began their new lives in Canada as free people. They overcame many challenges and contributed immensely to a better Canada.

Passionate and tireless volunteers have worked to preserve these stories and valuable parts of our history. They hold an annual hike in the fall where families can walk the trails and learn the stories. I would encourage all members to learn more about this part of Canadian history at tomlinsonlakehiketofreedom.ca.

Although freedom was reached at Tomlinson Lake, the journey to true equality and recognition continues.

* * *

CATTLE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Saturday night, I was delighted to attend Beef Bash 2020. This was an opportunity for ranchers and those related to the cattle industry to come together before calving season. We enjoyed prime rib, filet mignon and beef ribs, followed by a night of cowboy dancing.

Our hard-working ranching industry participants create a high-quality and delicious product. What many people are not aware of is their role as environmental stewards. Ranching has a significant positive impact on grasslands and carbon sequestration. I invite members to watch the video *Guardians of the Grasslands*.

This week, the cattlemen are here in Ottawa. It is important to do a special shout-out to my constituent David Haywood-Farmer, who is finishing his two-year term as president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and has done so much important work promoting the industry here and abroad.

I thank David for his leadership, and Bonnie and family for allowing him to dedicate himself to this important role.

* * *

PENSIONS

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today almost 400 delegates from the Canadian Labour Congress are on Parliament Hill talking about issues facing workers.

Workers need this government to finally make good on its promise of a universal pharmacare program. They need a $15-an-hour minimum wage and they need laws to protect their pensions and benefits.

On this government's watch, when Sears failed, the lives of thousands of workers and retirees across the country were devastated. What did this government do in response? It did nothing. Workers and retirees are still at risk.

Workers still get ripped off when companies go bankrupt. Just last month, Barrymore Furniture in Toronto claimed bankruptcy and abruptly closed its doors. Because the Liberals failed to fix the laws, close to 50 workers not only lost their jobs, but they lost out on the severance and benefit payments they were owed. For some of them, that was close to $50,000.

When will the Liberals take action and keep their promises to workers?

* * *

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

JENNY SALGADO

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of rapper, composer and performer Jenny Salgado.

A moment of your time? We deserve to be heard.
A moment to reflect. We are listening.
Our words may not reflect your views,
You may not see yourself in our words like you see your
reflection in the mirror.
That's because the "us" here, that hangs suspended
from our lips,
Will be but muffled noise to the world.
Millions of words, people and tomorrows that can't get along.
The struggle to be understood.
Why the suffering when we claim togetherness?
As a country, as a people!
Just a moment to unite us,
To talk about the "us" that is dying to tell you
About the division that pulls us from our history.
Nothing good can come of it.
Thank you for listening.
The mike is now yours.
But never forget,
We always have a voice.

* * *

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Alberta Court of Appeal ruled in a four-to-one decision that the legislation that brought in the federal carbon tax erodes the authority of the provinces, calling it "a constitutional Trojan horse."

Our country is based on the rule of law and the division of powers. The Liberal government knew from the start that its carbon tax encroaches on the rights of the provinces, yet it passed it anyway. Not only is the carbon tax a cash grab scam that does nothing for the environment, charges a tax on a tax and cuts into the bottom line of Canadian businesses and households, but it is a power grab by the federal government.

The truth is Canadians are struggling to make ends meet under a government that opposes resource development, allows radical activists to ignore the law and charges a carbon tax on everything.

If the Liberals really cared about the Constitution and Canadians, they would scrap the carbon tax right now.

* * *

MANYOK AKOL FUNDRAISER

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday I had the pleasure of joining a remarkable group of young people in my riding who represent the best in our community.

When tragedy strikes a community, as it did on January 8, when 18-year-old Manyok Akol, or Manny to his friends, a popular football player and rapper, was killed, it can either divide a community or bring people together.

On Sunday, over 200 youth came together at the Boys and Girls Club for a basketball game to raise funds for Manny's family. In the face of unspeakable loss, these young people brought together sponsors from 10 different community organizations, including Ottawa Community Housing and the Britannia Woods Community House, to raise thousands of dollars and help heal a community that has been through so much pain.

These youth already know something we should all remember: that we are stronger together. We thank all the volunteers who showed us how a community can persevere and find comfort and strength in the face of tragedy.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was a teacher before he got elected, and he has taught protesters a valuable lesson. They can hold illegal blockades—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

This session is not really starting off well. I wanted to point that out and ask everybody to take a deep breath. We will go back to the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, we know he is a teacher, because we have all seen his picture in the yearbook.

We know that he has taught protesters a valuable lesson. They can bring our economy to its knees and they can hold illegal blockades, holding up our rail traffic leading to layoffs, and he will do absolutely nothing.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his weakness has caused the situation to spiral out of control?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly not weakness to demonstrate a strong commitment to dialogue and reconciliation.

Last Friday, the Prime Minister could not have been clearer. He acknowledged and recognized the impact that these blockades are having and he said unequivocally that the barricades must come down and the law must be obeyed.

As members know, we do not instruct our police officers in their operations, but we trust the police to do the job that they are currently doing for us. We urge all Canadians to obey the law, to allow the trains to start moving again and to come back to the table to resume that important dialogue.

* * *

● (1420)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's weakness has emboldened these protesters. It took him days before he would even call them illegal. In the first two weeks, he was telling police not to do their job and not to move in and remove them.

It is not just his weakness that is affecting the blockades, it is also affecting important investments in our energy sector. The Teck mine had its application approved by an independent regulator. It was sitting on the cabinet table for months, since July.

Why did the Prime Minister wait so long before making a decision on Teck Frontier?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, this was a decision made by Teck. We respect that decision and I am sure it was a difficult one. The decision made by Teck Resources—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. minister can continue now.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, the decision made by the company and the letter sent to me by the company's CEO demonstrate clearly the need for all levels of government to be working together to deliver on climate action and on clean growth. We need to take action on climate change to reduce pollution, and in doing so we will provide business certainty.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): The minister does not seem to realize that he is part of the government that created the regime that forced Teck to pull out. It was the government's decision to wait months before making a final decision on Teck. It is not just his energy approvals process that is causing problems; it is also his signature policy, the carbon tax.

Yesterday, the Alberta Court of Appeal ruled, "We recognize there may well be those who favour ending further oil and gas development and even shutting down the entire oil and gas industry. Chief amongst them would be Alberta's foreign oil and gas competitors."

Why is the Prime Minister doing the dirty work of Canada's foreign competition?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to set the record straight. The Teck Frontier review was actually done under CEA 2012, the process put into place by Stephen Harper's government of which Jason Kenney was a minister of the Crown.

The decision that was made by Teck Frontier was independent of the review, but I will say that one of the problems with CEA 2012 was that it forced all of the various difficult issues to the back end. We have fixed that through the Impact Assessment Act, by ensuring that the big issues are dealt with early on in the process.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government keeps talking about reconciliation with first nations. The best way to achieve reconciliation is to work hand in hand with first nations.

Unfortunately, because of this government's inertia, 14 Alberta first nations have now been left high and dry because the Teck Frontier project no longer exists. For nine months, the Liberal government did everything it could to stymie the project, and now those 14 first nations have nothing.

Why did the government drag its feet for nine months?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the decision was made by Teck. We respect the decision, and I am sure it was not easy to make.

The decision made by Teck Resources demonstrates clearly the need for all levels of government to work together to deliver on climate action and clean growth. We need to take action on climate change to reduce pollution and thereby provide business certainty.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the minister on his French. However, just because he says something in French does not mean I agree with him, especially when he talks about working together. Fourteen first nations were prepared to work together in partnership with Teck Resources to ensure the $10-billion Frontier project would be carried out, to promote this project that would have created up to 10,000 jobs. For nine months, this government came up with reasons why this would not work. As a result, this is not working.

Why did the government work against the 14 first nations that were invested in this project that would be good for Canada?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, this decision was made by Teck, and we respect their decision.

As Teck Resources indicated in its letter, global capital markets are changing rapidly, and investors and customers are increasingly looking for jurisdictions that have a framework in place to reconcile resource development and climate change, in order to produce the cleanest possible products.

We agree with that assessment. Productivity is good for certainty and good for Canada's competitiveness and Canadian workers.

● (1425)

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday you mentioned a wonderful expression from back home that means "cruising for a bruising". The other side of the House seems well versed in that.

Is it not time to admit that the management of the rail crisis has been a failure? I cannot call it the indigenous crisis, because it is not just their fault. I cannot call it the government's crisis, because it has all kinds of crises on its hands. Yesterday the Minister of Indigenous Services said that he worried the situation could escalate.

Will the government admit failure? The Prime Minister has been invited to meet the Wet'suwet'en people in British Columbia, so will he go?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. We have always been focused on finding a peaceful, lasting resolution and on establishing trust and respect among everyone involved.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Kahnawake, Lennoxville, Restigouche, Kanesatake and, a few days ago, Saint-Lambert, among other places in Canada, will the government try something else that does not end in failure? Can the government call for a temporary suspension of police intervention? Will the Prime Minister get his ministerial tushie on a plane, take his ministers to British Columbia and negotiate a resolution, please?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have engaged and will continue to engage in dialogue on this issue. It is also very important to acknowledge and recognize the impact that these rail disruptions are having on Canadians right across the country: access to chemicals to keep their water clean, getting products to factories so people can continue to work.

We urge the people at those barricades to lift the barricades to allow the rail services to resume and to obey the law, and in those circumstances where it is not, we trust law enforcement across this country, who are properly instructed and properly led, to uphold and enforce the law.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I met a senior in Quebec City who told me that she needed dental care but could not afford it. Meanwhile, there are long lineups of people waiting for free dental care at the University of Montreal. Clearly, people need dental care but cannot afford to pay for it.

Does the Prime Minister recognize that people need dental care but cannot afford it?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the health committee is preparing to undertake a thorough study on dental care, and I look forward to receiving its recommendations. I thank the member for his advocacy.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those are some pretty words, but the Prime Minister has an opportunity to do something about it right now. There are millions of Canadians who cannot take care of their teeth because they simply cannot afford it. The Liberals are planning a massive tax giveaway, where the most benefit flows to the wealthiest Canadians. Our plan is to target that measure to benefit those who need it most, allowing us to fund national dental care.

Instead of helping the wealthiest Canadians, will the Prime Minister work with us to make sure 4.3 million Canadians can take care of their teeth?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, my mandate letter specifically tasks me to look at the possibility of dental care for Canadians and the health committee is one of the best places to do that. It is obviously made up of partisans from across the aisle and it is going to be a very thoughtful and reflective study. I look forward to hearing the recommendations.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it turns out the Liberal carbon tax is not only useless and is driving away jobs, but an Alberta court said yesterday it is also unconstitutional. The court ruled federal and provincial governments are coequal. The federal government is not the parent and the provincial governments are not its children. In other words, the Liberals have no right imposing a carbon tax on Alberta or on any other province.

When will the Liberals respect this ruling, respect the Constitution, respect the provinces and cut the useless carbon tax?

● (1430)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already heard from the courts of appeal in Ontario and Saskatchewan, both of which determined that the federal plan is well within federal jurisdiction. The Alberta Court of Appeal's decision is one step in this process. We look forward to the Supreme Court of Canada's deliberations in March and are confident that the price on pollution is fully within federal jurisdiction.

Tackling climate change should not be a partisan issue. It is a scientific issue. It is not an aspirational issue. We need to focus on addressing climate change and this is an important measure in doing that.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax does absolutely nothing to combat global emissions. It hurts commuters. It hurts farmers. It hurts small businesses and it is putting a huge strain on national unity in this country. The court in essence said that if it were upheld, hypothetically the government could dictate to individuals the temperature of their home or whether they drive a car or not. Clearly, no one trusts the Prime Minister with that kind of power.

Again, when will the Liberals scrap this useless, unity-killing, job-killing carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House as an MP from Ontario, but also as a grateful daughter of Alberta. Let me say, I understand the despair in Alberta and I believe passionately—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order.

We are good to go. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I believe passionately that a strong Alberta is essential to a strong Canada. Let me say what we need for that, and I am going to quote the Calgary Chamber of Commerce: "We need real, decisive action on climate change.... The success of our businesses, the well-being of our families...depend on it."

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[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 20 days, there have been blockades across Canada, and things are only getting worse. Freight trains are blocked and paralyzed. Tensions are rising.

Pierre Dolbec, the president of Corporation des parcs industriels du Québec, said in an interview that this situation is totally ridiculous and that if it goes on, more vulnerable companies may not make it through the crisis.

The prime minister's lack of leadership is seriously harming companies in every region of Quebec, and there is no end in sight.

When will he take action?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we fully understand the impact on the economy and on those who have been laid off. We are very aware of the situation.

The Prime Minister has been taking action from the start. We are working very hard to end the blockades. They are, of course, a provincial responsibility in the three provinces affected. We are working to have the blockades removed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Minister of Transport said, the Prime Minister is not doing anything to resolve the crisis.

Meanwhile, Resolute Forest Products is planning to halt production at some 20 sawmills in Quebec and Ontario. Two Resolute sawmills are located in Haute-Mauricie. Up to 5,000 workers could be affected.

The Prime Minister wants to lecture other countries, but when there is a crisis here at home, he does nothing.

Is there anyone across the way who can step up and do his job?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are here to resolve the problem. As my colleague said, we are aware of the impact this is having on many industries, including the forestry industry, the lumber industry and the agricultural industry. We are very aware of the situation.

That is why we have started to make progress. For example, part of the track was reopened yesterday, and the first CN train was able to travel between Toronto and Montreal. We hope that all of the trains will soon be running again all over the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's weakness has emboldened those who continue to illegally blockade our ports, roads and railways. The Prime Minister is also blocking investments in this country by cancelling approved projects and creating insurmountable political uncertainty for others. Hundreds of billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs right across the country have been lost as a direct result of his weak leadership.

When will the Prime Minister finally stand up to the anti-energy activists in his own caucus, stand up to those blockading our economy and stand up for Canadian jobs?

● (1435)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been steadfast in its support for the hard-working men and women in our oil and gas sector. It is why we approved the Line 3 replacement project and why we always supported Keystone XL, where construction will soon begin in the U.S.

Let us remember that there were thousands of good, well-paying jobs that we created in Alberta and B.C. because we did the hard work to get TMX right. We believe in the workers, the sector, the families, and we have their backs.

Oral Questions

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's weak leadership is also failing indigenous communities. When he killed the northern gateway pipeline, he stole a 33% equity stake and $2 billion in economic benefits from northern indigenous communities. When the Teck Frontier mine was cancelled because of the political uncertainty he created, the Prime Minister tore economic hope out of the hands of the 14 indigenous communities that had signed agreements in place.

How does it advance the cause of reconciliation when the Prime Minister does everything he can to keep northern indigenous communities in poverty forever?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this was a decision taken by the company. We respect that decision. I am sure it was a difficult one. I will say that during the environmental assessment process that was conducted under CEAA 2012, the company did incredibly good work in engaging indigenous communities in Alberta near the project. That is certainly something that can be a model for companies going forward.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since this government abdicated its leadership responsibilities on the rail crisis, the situation has deteriorated. More blockades are going up in Quebec and elsewhere. When the Prime Minister decided to hide from this dispute last Friday, he said that he wanted to engage in dialogue, but that it takes two to have a dialogue.

My question is simple. What are the two indigenous affairs ministers doing here right now? Why are they not on site having a dialogue to resolve this crisis?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the urgency of this situation and the significant impact it is having on Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We remain hopeful for a peaceful resolution to the blockades. That is why I was in regular contact with the hereditary chiefs all last week. I indicated that we were available to meet in person any time.

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ECONOMY

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, workers are paying the price for the Prime Minister's incompetence on the rail crisis. In my riding, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, Resolute Forest Products was forced to lay off 200 people in Senneterre and Lebel-sur-Quévillon on Monday, with no date set for a return to work.

What does the government plan to do? That is 200 families that have to go without an income while they wait not only for the blockades to be lifted, but for the network to get back to normal.

Why is this government not doing everything it can to resolve this crisis?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the situation very well. That is why we have been working day and night to resolve this problem from the start. It is important to have a dialogue. It is also important for the blockades to come down so that our rail services may resume. That is what we have been doing from the start. We are working on a resolution for both the short term and the long term.

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[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, oil and gas projects are being built all over world, except in Canada.

With Teck being forced to cancel, 14 indigenous groups lost out, and 10,000 new jobs are gone. I would call this a failure, but we know the Liberals view this as a win.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that Teck Resources' Frontier oil sands project was killed as a result of his government's anti-oil and gas policies?

● (1440)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a few times, the decision was taken by the company itself, not by the government. I know it was a difficult decision.

Teck Resources' decision, in the letter that was provided by their CEO, shows the need to have serious climate plans that incentivize innovation, cut pollution and ensure our economy stays competitive for the long term.

We are doing just that with a price on pollution. We are moving to exceed our Paris targets and working to be net zero by 2050. We have a serious climate plan, and we will be working with Alberta and working with the oil and gas sector to ensure that we can meet it in a way that will incent the development of a clean-energy sector.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's weak leadership, anti-energy policies and delay tactics continue to drive investment away from Alberta.

In fact, expenditures in the energy sector are now $42 billion lower than they were under the previous Conservative government. With the cancellation of the Teck mine, the Prime Minister has overseen almost $200 billion in cancelled energy projects.

When will the Prime Minister stand with Albertans and our first nations communities, defend the interests of Canada and stop killing Alberta energy projects?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, Line 3 is complete and in service in Canada. We did the hard work necessary on TMX, and construction is under way, creating thousands of jobs. There has been over $8 billion in new petrochemical projects. Thousands of jobs are linked to those projects.

These are real investments in our energy sector, and real results for Canadians and Alberta workers.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 10 years, Teck cancelled its Frontier project, five days before the government had a deadline to render a decision. Why?

Was it because the government had been telegraphing that it would cancel it and reject it? The member for Kingston and the Islands across the way was promoting a petition against it last week.

Frontier was balancing the environment and the economy, something the Prime Minister often inanely repeats.

Why is the Prime Minister turning his back on the 14 first nations that are supportive of Teck Frontier in favour of dirty oil from other countries?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this decision was a decision taken by the company. We certainly respect that decision. I am sure it was a difficult one.

As Teck's CEO said in his letter, we need to move past jurisdictional and partisan fighting. We agree, and we are working with all orders of government across Canada and with the resource sector to ensure that we create good jobs and ensure clean and sustainable prosperity for all.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's weakness, dithering and delays are what forced Teck out, and it harms the whole country.

Yesterday the Liberals could have said a resounding, passionate yes to me about Alberta, but only Conservatives fight for all of Canada.

The value of oil and gas to Ontario's economy is more than half the auto sector. Oil sands companies buy the most supplies from B.C., Ontario and Quebec. Atlantic Canadians and Albertans are inextricably linked. Every oil sands job creates five jobs in other provinces and other sectors.

Why are the Liberals puppets for anti-energy activists who want to phase out the oil sands and shut down Canada?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much hope, and I rely on the hope, that one thing we can agree on on both sides of this House is that we all believe in the importance of national unity. We all understand that the economies of Ontario and Alberta and of Quebec and Alberta are intimately connected.

That is a firm conviction of our government. That is why I would urge the members opposite not to make national unity a partisan football.

The Speaker: I just want to remind hon. members that when somebody asks a question, we want to hear what it is, but we also want to hear what the answer is.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Prime Minister could have saved a lot of time and asked the Conservative leader to hold his press conference for him. Their plan to send the police in is not working. Chase is not on the case.

For weeks, we have been calling on the Prime Minister to name a mediator, sit down with hereditary chiefs and de-escalate the situation. CP Rail is recommending that. Industry is recommending that. Indigenous leaders are recommending that. What is the holdup? When will the Prime Minister admit his Conservative plan is not working?

● (1445)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to acknowledge that there is some very important work going on in British Columbia with the British Columbia government; a former member of this House, Nathan Cullen; and our ministers in discussion. The RCMP, the hereditary chiefs and the leadership of the Wet'suwet'en community are at the table.

There are important discussions going on, but at the same time, we have to recognize and acknowledge the impact these barricades are having on Canadians across the country. It was important to ask the people at those barricades to recognize the impact their actions are having on ordinary Canadians and to take down those barricades. It is the responsibility of the police of jurisdiction where the law is not being obeyed to uphold that law. We have confidence in their ability to do so.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Hamilton's light rail project is a rare opportunity that has the shared support of city council, big business and organized labour in the community. It is a much-needed investment in public infrastructure and mass transit. It will create jobs, help the environment and uplift the economy. However, the Gong Show Doug Ford government recklessly pulled provincial funding and derailed this critical project.

Time is running out. Will the government partner with the City of Hamilton and help get our LRT funded and back on track?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that is making historic investments in public infrastructure. We support local governments in their work to improve local infrastructures. In fact, my hometown of The Hammer, Hamilton, has secured over $500 million in federal investment in infrastructure money and other projects.

We are a committed funding partner; however, on this specific project, we have not yet received a formal request from Ontario. We remain eager to work with the province and the city to get public transit built.

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, without question, our government has made bold and unprecedented investments to grow the middle class and help those working hard to join it, but we know that far too many Canadian families are still struggling. In a country like Canada, one family living in poverty is one too many.

Will the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development update the House on the work being done to combat poverty in Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we got into office, we have prioritized the fight against poverty and growing the middle class, and our plan is working. Through key investments in Canadians and according to the Canadian income survey, we have achieved our goal of helping over one million Canadians to escape poverty.

That is the largest reduction of poverty in Canadian history. We will continue to work toward a future where each and every Canadian has—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

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[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government's lack of leadership shows in its approach to everything from the rail blockades to the coronavirus. According to Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer, the signs are worrisome. The World Health Organization is talking about a possible pandemic, but what is the government doing? Nobody knows. Radio silence. This situation is very worrisome. This is a serious, high-risk issue, but the Liberals are twiddling their thumbs.

What is the government's plan for helping Canadians protect themselves from the coronavirus?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that Dr. Tam is working very closely with our international partners, but more importantly with our provincial and territorial partners.

As the situation evolves and as the World Health Organization raises its alarm around a country's ability to contain the virus, we shift our focus to domestic preparedness and making sure that provinces and territories have what they need to respond to any potential outbreak.

Let me be clear: This is a situation of great concern for the world, and we are on it.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with at least 33 countries reporting cases, 11 cases confirmed in Canada and over 80,000 global cases, we are now being told to prepare for a possible COVID-19 pandemic.

Other countries stopped flights in and out of China; Canada did not. Other countries immediately introduced strict screening measures; Canada did not. We are now being told the window of opportunity for containment for stopping the global spread of this virus is closing.

Can the health minister confirm that she is satisfied with the actions taken to date?

● (1450)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the measures the member opposite is talking about are ones that are found during the containment phase. In fact, we did have screening for passengers who were coming from the most heavily affected regions. However, now that we find the coronavirus in at least 35 countries, many that may not be tracking the virus, those measures are less effective. It is time to turn our attention and our resources to making sure we are prepared on the domestic stage.

I will remind the member opposite that Italy had some of the most restrictive travel quarantine. In fact, it has two significant outbreaks and two communities under quarantine.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Alberta Court of Appeal struck down the federal carbon tax as unconstitutional. The majority opinion called the carbon tax a “constitutional Trojan horse”, as it would set no limits on federal government power.

For the Liberal government to impose an expensive public policy unilaterally, when it is of clear national importance with national unity implications, was reckless and tone deaf.

When will the Prime Minister work to actually reach environmental targets and scrap this unconstitutional carbon tax?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already heard from Ontario and Saskatchewan courts that this approach is fully within federal jurisdiction. The Alberta Court of Appeal's decision is one step in the process. This will be adjudicated in March before the Supreme Court of Canada and we are very confident that federal jurisdiction will be upheld.

I do find it odd, however, that the party opposite, which professes to be a party that believes in the market, rejects a market mechanism, which is the most efficient way to reduce emissions, in favour of a more expensive regulatory approach or perhaps just an aspirational one.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is bankrupting Canadian farmers across the country and the numbers are only going to get worse unless something is done.

Ontario grain farmers paid $12 million in carbon tax last year just to dry their grain. The carbon tax will cost hog farmers $22 million by 2022.

A grain operator in my riding contacted me last night. He is going to be paying close to a million dollars in carbon tax over the next two years. Enough is enough. The Alberta courts have found the carbon tax to be unconstitutional.

When will the agriculture minister cancel her farm-killing carbon tax?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know how concerned our farmers are about all the stress factors they have been dealing with, including bad weather in 2019, international trade, and issues stemming from the rail blockades.

I understand the situation, and that is why we created a suite of risk management programs. I am working hard with my provincial counterparts to improve those programs.

We also implemented measures for certain sectors, such as exempting fuel used on farms from the price on pollution.

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HEALTH

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the WHO is worried about COVID-19 becoming a pandemic, health care professionals in Canada are worried about the federal government's lack of preparedness. Infectious disease specialist Karl Weiss is criticizing Ottawa for not implementing any effective coordination efforts.

If the government manages this public health crisis as badly as it is managing the rail crisis, we have every reason to be worried. Can it reassure the public and explain its emergency plan as a leader in the fight against COVID-19?

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working very closely through the pandemic plan that Canada developed after the time of SARS, which has many permanent structures in place and other urgent structures that can be raised up in situations like COVID-19.

I am very confident that under the leadership of Dr. Tam and the Canadian Public Health Agency, we are working closely with our federal and provincial territories to understand and know what they will need to respond to the outbreaks as they may happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am actually going to quote Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer. She said that "we have to prepare across governments, across communities and as families and individuals, in the event of more widespread transmission in our community."

The federal government has a crucial role to play when it comes to public health, transportation and border security. What is it doing to prepare?

● (1455)

[*English*]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear the member opposite quote Dr. Tam, who is of course the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada. She and I, and many other officials, have been working very closely to do exactly what he is proposing, to have a substantial plan that deals not just with outbreaks of coronavirus as they may occur across the country, but to prepare Canadians for what that means in terms of disruption to their lives and to ensure our systems across government are prepared as well.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the illegal blockades have held our country hostage for over 20 days and every day the situation gets worse.

The Prime Minister's weak leadership has emboldened these radical activists. They know that they can shut down bridges, highways and other critical infrastructure without consequence. Now they have shut down the Lakeshore West GO Train, preventing thousands of commuters from getting to work. The situation is spiralling out of control.

When will the Prime Minister end these blockades?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I think most people would understand, there are injunctions in place and there are laws that need to be obeyed. The Prime Minister has been very clear, urging people to obey the law and to take down those barricades.

We also have confidence in the law enforcement officers of jurisdiction, who are well trained and understand their responsibilities. They are endeavouring to resolve these barricades and these blockages in the most peaceful way possible.

We will continue to maintain our confidence and to support law enforcement and the provinces in their jurisdictions as they endeavour to clear these blockages and resume service for all Canadians.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last evening, at the peak of rush hour in the GTHA, another blockade was set up on the tracks near York Boulevard in Hamilton.

These illegal protesters are disrupting the GO train service to Hamilton and Niagara, and it continues today. This adds to the already unbearable gridlock that my constituents face daily.

Meanwhile, the elected representatives of the Wet'suwet'en people support the projects these protesters are actually opposing.

When will the Prime Minister act and end these illegal blockades?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member opposite to understand that the responsibility for actually enforcing the law with respect to those blockades is the responsibility of the police office of jurisdiction operating within the provincial jurisdiction of authority.

It has been made very clear, and the police is doing that job, but it is doing it in a very responsible way. Its responsibilities require that it be done peacefully and effectively.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday illegal protesters blocked the West Coast Express commuter train in the Fraser Valley again. The B.C. public safety minister declared, “Police do not need an injunction to clear and arrest the blockaders.” When the B.C. New Democrats call out illegal activity and advocate for police action, the Liberal government has to know that it is asleep at the switch.

I never thought I would say this, but when will the public safety minister take a page out of the B.C. NDP playbook and get our rail lines cleared?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recall a time when the Conservatives actually believed and entrusted law enforcement to do its job. As a matter of fact, as I have quoted in the House, they have previously stated that they have full confidence in the judgment of the RCMP and they respect its operational independence.

Our government continues to respect the law and those who have been tasked with upholding it.

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[*Translation*]

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in an age of rapidly evolving technologies, the government has new tools it can rely on, such as artificial intelligence, to improve services to Canadians.

Could the Minister of Digital Government tell the House how the government is using artificial intelligence to improve services to Canadians?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Orléans for her question.

Canada is a world leader in artificial intelligence. The government is using its expertise to improve services to Canadians. From tools for improving safety in marine transportation to technology for revitalizing indigenous languages, we are using artificial intelligence to better serve Canadians.

We have mechanisms in place to ensure that its use always lives up to Canadians' expectations in terms of values and ethics.

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● (1500)

[*English*]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, seniors, rural residents and those without Internet have been unable to access the information and the tools they need to file their taxes. The Liberal member for Winnipeg South Centre's office said it best: “This is a very poor reflection on an organization that is already viewed by many as being very insensitive to the clientele it is trying to serve.”

The minister has failed Canadians for five long years. When will she stand up to her agency and fight for everyday Canadians who are just trying to file their taxes?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CRA certainly is not overlooking the 1.7 million Canadians who choose to file paper tax returns.

Since 2018, the CRA has mailed out tax packages directly to those who filed paper returns the previous year. Anyone who has not received a tax package can call the dedicated telephone line and order one, and the package can also be downloaded or ordered on the CRA's website.

There is no need to make a mountain out of a molehill.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for once, could the minister side with Canadians who just want to fill out their tax returns?

Revenue Canada goes all out to make its own work easier and make things harder for seniors and rural residents who do not have access to the Internet. People across the country are angry, even people in the riding of the member for Winnipeg South Centre, whose office says that Revenue Canada is already considered to be very insensitive towards the clients it is trying to serve.

When will the minister ensure that Revenue Canada cleans up its act?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleagues opposite that they were the ones who cut the information packages that Canada Post was supposed to deliver to all clients across the country. Since 2018, we have sent 1.7 million tax packages to rural residents, seniors and individuals who file their tax return on paper.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister has said several times that all parties involved were consulted extensively in discussions on CUSMA and its implementation.

Yesterday, in an appearance at the Standing Committee on International Trade, Dairy Farmers of Canada clearly said that they had not been consulted at all. The current government continues to neglect this agricultural sector. The government has given up sovereignty and oversight of the dairy sector.

Why did the Deputy Prime Minister not consult Canada's dairy farmers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was a Liberal government that created supply management, and it was a Liberal government that protected it.

I should point out that at the beginning of negotiations, the U.S. government wanted to completely dismantle this system. We defended our supply management system, and we will continue to do so.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year, the government announced Canada's first-ever food policy, which aims to give everyone in Canada access to sufficient amounts of healthy food.

Every day, community organizations across Canada try to make a difference by improving access to healthy food. Through this policy, $50 million has been allocated to creating the local food infrastructure fund.

Could the minister update us on this program?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform you that 240 projects were approved under the first stream of the local food infrastructure fund.

These projects will help more Canadians access good food, which is the goal of our food policy. Other projects will be approved soon, and a second call for proposals will be launched in the spring.

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[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indigenous people are standing up across the country demanding respect and justice. Their message: Enough is enough.

The reality on first nations is getting worse. This week, a seven-year-old boy died in a house fire in Garden Hill, a community with third world housing, no running water, no all-weather road in a region of 13,000 people without a hospital.

When is the government going to recognize that systemic racism and underfunding is killing people? When is the minister going to act to ensure justice for the Knott family and for indigenous communities across the country?

● (1505)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my deepest condolences go out to the family and the entire community of Garden Hill First Nation for their loss.

My department has been in contact with the first nation's leadership to identify and deliver support to ensure the well-being of the community. We understand the stressful nature of the situation. I will continue to work with first nation partners on timely and appropriate supports.

As a matter of policy, as government, we are striving to close that socio-economic gap that has existed for far too long. With historic investments in infrastructure and housing, we strive to get there, and we will get there.

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TRANSPORT

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the waters around the southern Gulf Islands are being used as a free anchorage for freighters waiting to enter the port of Vancouver. The environmental damage, pollution, bright lights and noise from these freighters are impacting Gulf Islands communities and wildlife. Some of these vessels are waiting to load U.S. thermal coal for export, because Pacific U.S. states refuse to export thermal coal from their ports.

Will the government mandate improvements and efficiencies at the port of Vancouver and ban the export of U.S. thermal coal through Canadian ports?

Privilege

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member is probably aware, the new interim protocol for anchorage was developed in partnership with the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority, Pacific Pilotage Authority Canada, industry stakeholders and communities to respond to the immediate concerns of certain coastal communities.

The government's long-term strategy will be aimed at improving the management of anchorages outside of public ports with a view to ensuring the long-term efficiency and reliability of the supply chain and mitigating environmental and social impacts.

I want to thank the member for his advocacy on the file.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I have two points that I would like to bring to the attention of members.

One hundred years ago, in the winter of 1920, the very first parliamentary security corps was formed. Until then, the Dominion Police, which merged with the Royal North West Mounted Police in 1919 to become the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, had patrolled the grounds of Parliament Hill. When the parliamentarians of the day decided they no longer wanted an official police presence in their buildings, a contingent of six individuals from the RCMP remained to create what would become the Senate Protective Services and the House of Commons Protective Services.

[*Translation*]

Today, just as it did a century ago, the Parliamentary Protection Service supports parliamentarians and protects our democracy. It focuses on striking a careful and effective balance between access, openness and security. It is a constant challenge, and I am grateful to the men and women of the service for their dedication to their work and for ensuring that the Parliament of Canada is able to work for the good of Canadians.

[*English*]

I would like to draw to the attention of members the presence in the gallery of several past and present members of the Parliamentary Protective Service.

Over the years, they have faithfully watched over Parliament Hill and its occupants. They have worked to keep us safe while making visitors feel welcome and comfortable, and they have helped ensure that the heart of Canada's democracy remains open. We are grateful for their service to our country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of our distinguished former colleague and leader of the opposition, the Honourable Gilles Duceppe.

● (1510)

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe I heard the parliamentary secretary to the House leader question my integrity in question period like he did yesterday on a point of order. I just want to be clear about one thing. Yesterday, he alleged I threatened Canadian unity in the House. Let me say this to be clear. I am fighting for Alberta and for oil and gas, which means I am fighting for a strong Canada—

The Speaker: I believe we are getting into debate right now.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF CONTENTS OF BILL C-7

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege today concerning the premature disclosure of the contents of Bill C-7, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding medical assistance in dying, introduced yesterday.

As you know, it is a well-established practice in the House that, when a bill is on notice for introduction, the House has the first right to the contents of that legislation.

In a report circulated prior to question period, and hours before Bill C-7 was read a first time in the House, the Canadian Press published an article that detailed specific information contained in Bill C-7.

In the article it states:

> The bill [would] scrap a provision in the law that allows only those already near death to receive medical assistance in dying—as ordered by a Quebec court last fall....
>
> Sources say it will drop the requirement that a person must wait 10 days after being approved for an assisted death before receiving the procedure. And it will drop the requirement that a person must be able to give consent a second time immediately prior to receiving the procedure.

The reporter gives credence to the fact that contempt has occurred by revealing later in the article:

> The sources spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to reveal details of the bill prior to its tabling in the House of Commons this afternoon.

After the sources indicated to the reporter that they were aware of their guilty actions, they boldly and defiantly continued their affront to Parliament by providing even more detail of the bill.

I quote again from the article, which states:

> Sources say today's bill will not deal with broader issues that were excluded in the new law and that must be considered as part of a parliamentary review of the law that is to begin this summer.
>
> Those issues include whether mature minors and those suffering only from mental [illness] should be eligible and whether people who fear losing mental capacity due to conditions like dementia should be able to make advance requests for medical assistance in dying.
>
> It will, however, propose a measure intended to deal with a situation in which a person is given consent and who has been approved for an assisted death loses the mental capacity to give consent a second time immediately prior to receiving the procedure.

After carefully reviewing the contents of Bill C-7 following its introduction in the House, when I and other members of Parliament got to see the bill for the very first time, the details reported by the Canadian Press hours earlier were indeed contained in Bill C-7.

Ironically, my first precedent to present to you is from the last Parliament, brought to the Speaker's attention on April 14, 2016. It was with respect to Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other acts regarding medical assistance in dying.

It would appear that the Liberal justice team just has not learned any lessons as it was pointed out on April 14, 2016, as I am pointing out today on Bill C-7, that specific and detailed information contained in Bill C-14 was reported in a newspaper article and elsewhere in the media before the bill had been introduced in the House.

On April 19, 2016, the Speaker found that there was in fact a prima facie case of privilege regarding Bill C-14. He stated:

> As honourable members know, one of my most important responsibilities as Speaker is to safeguard the rights and privileges of members, individually and collectively. Central to the matter before us today is the fact that, due to its pre-eminent role in the legislative process, the House cannot allow precise legislative information to be distributed to others before it has been made accessible to all members. Previous Speakers have regularly upheld not only this fundamental right, but also expectation, of the House.

The Speaker's concluding remark on April 19, 2016, was as follows:

> In this instance, the chair must conclude that the House's right of first access to legislative information was not respected. The chair appreciates the chief government whip's assertion that no one in the government was authorized to publicly release the specific details of the bill before its introduction. Still, it did happen, and these kinds of incidents cause grave concern among hon. members. I believe it is a good reason why extra care should be taken to ensure that matters that ought properly to be brought to the House first do not in any way get out in the public domain prematurely.

On October 4, 2010, on page 4711 of the House of Commons Debates, Speaker Milliken noted:

> It is indisputable that it is a well-established practice and accepted convention that this House has the right of first access to the text of bills that it will consider.

● (1515)

Getting back to my point about the Liberal justice team not learning any lessons, there was a similar case from March 19, 2001, regarding the Department of Justice briefing the media on a bill before members of Parliament. In that reading, Speaker Milliken said, at page 1840 of the House of Commons Debates:

> In preparing legislation, the government may wish to hold extensive consultations and such consultations may be held entirely at the government's discretion. However, with respect to material to be placed before parliament, the House must take precedence. Once a bill has been placed on notice, whether it has been presented in a different form to a different session of parliament has no bearing and the bill is considered a new matter. The convention of the confidentiality of bills on notice is necessary, not only so that members themselves [will] be well informed, but also because of the pre-eminent [role] which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of the nation.

The Speaker found another case of contempt on October 15, 2001, after the Department of Justice again briefed the media on the contents of a bill prior to the legislation being introduced in the House.

Maybe, in this minority House, members can finally take these characters in the Minister of Justice's office to task for their continuous disrespect of this Parliament. Given the facts presented and the clear precedents on this matter, I believe, Mr. Speaker, you should have no trouble in finding a prima facie case of privilege. In that event, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member. I will take this under advisement and return to the House, should I see fit.

RESPONSE BY JUSTICE MINISTER TO ORDER PAPER QUESTION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to address the question of privilege raised by the member for Timmins—James Bay in respect to the government's response to Order Paper Question No. 163.

I would point out that the member for Timmins—James Bay has presented different estimates as to the government's litigation costs related to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision respecting the first nations child and family services program.

The member presents three sets of information: the government's response to Question No. 163, which I would point out has been calculated using a consistent formula that the government uses for litigation costs in responding to Order Paper questions; a compilation of a number of responses to ATIP questions over the years, which has been compiled by Dr. Blackstock; and an estimate prepared by the Assembly of First Nations.

The government does not have a clear line of sight into how either Dr. Blackstock or the AFN calculated these costs or what was included in their estimates. This in no way suggests that the calculations were done in bad faith or that the minister deliberately misled the House with the government's response to Question No. 163.

This amounts to a debate as to the facts, and therefore should not be considered a legitimate question of privilege.

This brings us to the broader issue. While we may have different political views on issues before the House, we are all here for the same reason, to work in the interests of Canadians.

When a member feels that the information the government has provided appears to be inconsistent with other sources of information or may feel that the information is incomplete, the simple and civil thing to do is talk to the minister or parliamentary secretary responsible for the file.

If that approach does not yield the results that a member expects, it is perfectly legitimate for members to raise these matters as points of order. What I have witnessed of late is that members are unfortunately using questions of privilege instead of more appropriately using points of order.

I would hate to suggest that members are using these important questions of privilege simply to score political points. I would also like to point out that raising these matters as questions of privilege is tantamount to a direct personal attack on a member's character.

There are but few examples that can be found of a member deliberately misleading the House. More often than not, a misleading statement arises when there is a mistake, an omission or a simple misunderstanding on an issue. To assume that members and ministers deliberately seek to mislead the House is a false assumption.

Let us remind ourselves of the important role we play in our parliamentary democracy and treat each other with the respect that we all so thoroughly deserve.

● (1520)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not normally rise immediately following the interventions of the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, but it is the job of the Speaker to determine what is or is not a valid question of privilege. For this member to suggest that members are uncivil or somehow derelict in their duties for bringing up important questions of privilege for you, as the Speaker, to decide sends a chill from the government that once again it does not want to hear from members of Parliament and it does not want to be challenged.

When we on this side of the House, and in this case it was a member of the NDP, believe that we have been misled by a government answer to an Order Paper question, we have every right to raise that.

You, Mr. Speaker, not a representative of the government, will determine whether that was the right course of action or whether a breach has actually occurred. That is an important thing. We have to stand up for the rights of members of Parliament, and I am disappointed that this member would undermine that with his statement here today.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for his input. I will take it under advisement.

The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you can also refer to me as the NDP whip. Hopefully, that will help with this process.

I rise on a point of order. I too just want to thank the Conservative whip for his intervention. This does send a very chilling tone to this House. When we are in a minority Parliament, it is important that we work collaboratively together and not see this kind of standing up in the House and, in my estimation, accusing another member of behaviour unbecoming. Therefore, I hope that the member will take the point to reflect, and allow you, Mr. Speaker, to do the job that you were elected in this place to do and not put those kinds of ramifications.

The reality is that for the NDP there is a strong desire to see some reconciliation done in meaningful ways, specifically around the issue of indigenous children. I certainly hope that the tone of this place would reflect what, hopefully, is the intention of all of us, which is to support indigenous children.

Hopefully, we will hear back from you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. members for their input. We will continue.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PROPOSED TAX CHANGES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will pick up where I left off before question period.

That is also why, as the first act in its new mandate, our government tabled a proposal to once again lower taxes for the middle class. All Canadians must be able to reap the benefits of our economic growth.

This new tax cut targets the basic personal amount, as the government indicated this past December when it tabled a notice of ways and means motion. The basic personal amount is a technical term that is not always easy to understand but essentially describes something very simple: It is the amount of money that a person can earn before paying federal income tax.

At this time of year, many Canadians are preparing to fill out their income tax return for 2019. When they do it, they will see that the basic personal amount for 2019 was $12,069. The plan we are proposing will raise that amount to $15,000 in 2023.

Let me be clear. Canadians will see a difference beginning this year, in 2020, since this increase is spread over four years. Once these tax cuts are fully implemented in 2023, single people could save nearly $300 in taxes every year, and families could save double that, or nearly $600.

That is not all. Nearly 1.1 million more Canadians will no longer pay federal income tax in 2023, including seniors living on a fixed income and low-income workers, for example.

Our proposal increases two other related amounts at the same time: the spouse or common law credit and the credit for an eligible dependant. Conversely, Canadians in the highest tax bracket will not get this tax cut. Nonetheless, this cut will put more money in the pockets of nearly 20 million Canadians.

The Canada child benefit reduces the financial pressure on families and has lifted approximately 300,000 children out of poverty. As I said yesterday in my statement in the House, more than 9,000 payments were made in Hochelaga and more than 15,000 children benefited from these payments, which averaged $640. In total, $5,769,000 in tax-free payments were made in Hochelaga, and they have certainly helped families, including single-parent families. When I was a young mother, I would have loved to have access to that kind of funding.

As the Minister of Social Development said, Canada's poverty rate has fallen to a historic low. According to Statistics Canada, it was one of the sharpest declines on record: Canada's official poverty rate dropped from 12.1% in 2015 to 8.7% in 2018. The Minister of Social Development said that it was the largest three-year reduction in poverty in Canadian history and that poverty is at its lowest point on record in Canada.

It is thanks to programs such as the Canada child benefit, as well as increases to the guaranteed income supplement, that Canadians have more money in their pockets.

I would like to use my remaining time to tell members about what the government has done to help Canadians, including the most vulnerable Canadians.

As I said, we created the Canada child benefit, which has lifted 300,000 children out of poverty.

The enhanced guaranteed income supplement means that some 900,000 seniors now enjoy greater income security. That lifted 57,000 seniors out of poverty.

Canada's national housing strategy, an investment of $40 million over 10 years, will enable more Canadians to find safe, affordable housing. The strategy will meet the needs of over half a million households over the next decade.

The Canada workers benefit puts more money in the pockets of low-income workers.

Thanks to the middle-class tax cut and the higher basic personal amount, a typical family of four will have over $2,300 more this year than in 2015. Once the changes have been fully implemented, that typical family could have $2,800 more than in 2015.

The government invested in Canadians, and that is what matters to them. As a result, our economy is more vigorous and our people get better support.

● (1525)

What we need to do now is make sure that even more people benefit. That is exactly what the new middle-class tax cut announced in December will do.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I often meet people in my riding who cannot get a job because they have problems with their teeth, when the image of them with teeth missing is making it difficult for them to get jobs, especially on the front lines of employment. I meet employers whose employees cannot go to work because they are sick from a tooth infection or even worse. It then becomes a health issue.

We know that this costs the GDP and hurts the Canadian economy. We are deeply concerned. We are learning about the Liberals' middle-class tax cuts and all we are asking them to do is cap that at $90,000. That would save $1.6 billion to the Canadian taxpayer, which in turn could be used for a dental care plan that would help one in five Canadians who cannot access dental care.

The Liberals have a choice to provide a tax break to those who are making more than $90,000 a year or to offer dental care coverage to families making less than $90,000 a year. It is a simple choice, but this would make a huge difference in the lives of people from coast to coast to coast. It is good for the Canadian economy.

Will my colleague support our proposal today and do the right thing? This would help our economy and help people in her riding as well.

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I thank my opposition colleague for his question.

I am proud to be part of a government that in 2015 presented a clear proposal to help a segment of voters who had just experienced 10 years of vulnerability as a result of the Conservative cuts.

I have a brother who is severely handicapped. For 10 years he did not receive any help from the government with home care or health care. For 10 years he suffered from the Conservative government's health care cuts.

In 2015, we gave Canadians the choice to invest more in health care and home care, support seniors and vulnerable people and introduce a benefit to lift Canadian children out of poverty. We are an ambitious, progressive government that believes in the possibility of getting money from people who have more of it and giving it to those less fortunate.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague provide her thoughts in terms of the Standing Committee on Health? It did an outstanding job in regard to the whole issue of pharmacare and has laid the tracks for the government to look at ways in which we could move toward a universal pharmacare program. From what we understand, the health committee is now going to be looking at the dental plan. Does she see it as a good thing, at least as a starting point, from the House of Commons' perspective?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. In fact, it should be noted that in her mandate letter, the Minister of Health was asked to study the issue of dental care. I think that the Standing Committee on Health will also study the issue. Our government has certainly—

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sorry to have interrupted the answer that was coming, but I think it is important that we always make sure that no member misleads the House. It is customary to give members a chance to withdraw and clarify.

The parliamentary secretary, in answer to a question, claimed it was the Liberals who created the universal child care benefit. I have a document in my hand, and if necessary, I would ask unanimous consent to table this document, which clearly shows that the Universal Child Care Benefit Act was enacted in 2006 by the former Conservative government and not the Liberal government.

The Deputy Speaker: As the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge did pose a question at the end of his comments in respect to unanimous consent to table a document, does the member have the consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I expected that.

Concerning the point of order the member raised, this could be construed as debate. There will be opportunities for hon. members to bring those points into debate at a later time this afternoon, as the question is before the House.

The time for questions and comments is now completed.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

● (1535)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that was a great intervention that we heard from the Conservatives. I am really happy to pick up on it. Let us chat a little on that topic.

It dovetails really nicely into an article that the Canadian Press put out today. It talks about Canada, according to Statistics Canada, having the lowest rate of poverty in Canadian history.

I have news for the member across the way: That has very little to do with the former Conservative universal child care benefit and a lot more to do with the Canada child benefit that was introduced by this government. As a matter of fact, members do not even have to take my word for it; we can listen to what all of the professionals are saying. Let us look at what Statistics Canada is talking about as it relates to how far we have come.

With regard to this specific motion, I actually do not have a big problem with the various components that are in the motion. What I have an issue with is the way in which it was presented.

Do I look toward a day when we can have a meaningful discussion about dental care? I absolutely do. I always think that it was one of the natural next steps in health care, back when it was introduced back in the 1960s. It was in a minority Parliament situation, I will say, when we had the opportunity to discuss and bring forward that very important piece of legislation. Now we are talking about pharmacare, which was, in my opinion, the next natural step, although unfortunately, it took as long as it did.

I do want to have a discussion and I am very happy to see that it is within the mandate of the minister to start having that discussion. Indeed, I am sure parliamentarians will, at the appropriate committee, want to talk about dental care and where that falls into this.

However, let us get back to the topic at hand and where this motion is really going. This motion is attempting to zero in on doing as much as we possibly can, in particular for those who are struggling to make it. I would argue that through a number of the pieces of legislation that the government has introduced over the last four and a half years, we have seen significant strides in terms of lifting people out of poverty and in terms of seeing the lowest recorded levels of unemployment in Canadian history. We are talking about the economy growing at a pace that leads among the G7 countries.

I heard a very interesting discussion between a Conservative member and an NDP member prior to question period, in which the Conservatives seemed to be asking why we are only talking about the middle class and why it is just the middle class.

An hon. member: You do not even know what the middle class is.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, look at this. Through their heckling, they are asking the same question again.

I am surprised that Conservatives do not understand the economic principle of supporting those who drive the economy forward. They are basically asking what is in it for the 1% and saying there is nothing in it for the 1%. Despite the fact that they tout themselves as the economic saviours of Canada, they do not realize that when a nation has a strong middle class, when we help people who are struggling to get out of those circumstances, we will see our economy grow, and who is going to benefit the most from a fast-growing economy? It is the 1%.

An hon. member: Do we have one?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, do we have one? I am happy to answer questions now if the member would like. Do we have one? We have one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. Do we have a fast-growing economy? This economy is among the best that we have seen. Notwithstanding the heckling that is coming from the other side of the House, I would beg to differ with my colleague who made that comment.

I will say that this is why something like amending the basic allowance for personal income before taxes is so key. It is because this takes it another step forward.

● (1540)

This is to help those who are struggling to make it. It lets us give them a break.

The numbers that we are talking about here would put $3 billion back into the pockets of Canadians in 2020 and up to $6 billion by 2023, which will affect 1.1 million more Canadians who would pay zero in federal income tax. What we are doing is putting money back into the pockets of Canadians. Some people who need it the most would be getting an additional $300 per year. Families would be saving, through the reduction in taxes, an additional $600 a year.

What are those people who are getting an extra $300 a year going to do? This is a rhetorical question to my colleague from British Columbia, but they are not going to put it in a tax-free savings account. They are not going to be putting it into an investment that does not help the economy work. They are going to be putting it right back into the economy by spending that money.

Who does better when people are spending money in the economy? The government does better. Guess what the government can do when they do better? They can start bringing in more policy like this to give more breaks, and that is what we are seeing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I really feel as though I am making progress here, because a Conservative member across the way is starting to get it. I really feel that this has been an effective discourse despite the fact that it has involved some heckling, some of it what we might consider to be unparliamentary. I am really happy to see this.

However, going back to the motion, what we know is that when we put the necessary tools in place to help grow our economy, to help people who are struggling, to help the middle class in particular, we are going to see meaningful changes to our economy that are going to be for the betterment of all Canadians.

When we talk about dental care and where the NDP is trying to go with this opposition motion, I am fully supportive of the idea of looking into dental care and figuring out, as we have been with pharmacare, what the advantages would be in going toward a system like this. I applaud the NDP for always being the champions of issues like this.

I am willing to be quite frank here. It was the NDP, the former CCF, and Tommy Douglas who led the charge on health care. We would not have the amazing health care system we have in this country right now had it not been for that member, and I stand by that.

This is not a partisan thing; it is the reality of the situation. I applaud the NDP for always pushing forward on this agenda. What I have an issue with in this particular motion is the way that the motion is construed to try to tie these two together. In all honesty, I think it does a disservice to the work that needs to be done to properly examine where we need to go with dental care and the impacts that some of these policies genuinely have on Canadians.

I will leave it at that. I look forward to answering any questions. I am happy to engage on a personal level with some of the Conservative members if they would like to learn a little more from me. I am always willing to share my wisdom.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult, because the Liberals are talking about how great the economy is for many people in our country, while of course the Conservatives are arguing about how much better they are at managing the economy. What we do know is that we are here for the one in five Canadians who cannot get a dental plan. The system is not working for them, either when the Conservatives are in government or when the Liberals are in government.

We keep hearing the Liberals promising their middle-class tax break. In the last Parliament, they brought forward a middle-class tax break whereby if someone earned $45,000 a year or less, the person got nothing, but if someone earned over $100,000, that person got up to $700. This time, if someone earns $143,000, that person will get the maximum.

All we are asking for is capping the middle-class tax break at $90,000 and thereby ensuring that Canadians who do not have a dental care plan do get a plan.

I got a note today from Veronica Morgan in Port Alberni. She is from Huu-Ay-Aht. She wrote, “My wonder is if there is anything gearing towards supporting those who can't afford dental support, for those who aren't on income assistance but don't have a dental care plan.”

Bruce Smith wrote, “Yes, dental and optical should be part of our health care for sure.”

I am urging the member to support this motion like Tommy Douglas did on health care. Let us move forward and make sure that every Canadian has dental care.

● (1545)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's passion. When I was a municipal politician, we used to take property tax dollars and put them into funds to help people get their teeth fixed who could not afford to do it because they did not have coverage. I understand the pressures. Quite frankly, it is not a thing that property taxes should be paying for.

This is something that should be done at the provincial and federal level, by putting the necessary tools in place with the necessary legislation and support for all Canadians. I am more than willing to have this discussion. My only reservation is the manner in which this is presented. It seems to bring two separate issues and somehow link them together.

Unfortunately, I do not support this, but I do very much support pushing forward and doing that in partnership with the NDP to make sure that we have good, meaningful discussion and dialogue around dental care.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the member's speech, he picked up at the end of the intervention I made regarding the previous Conservative government as the government that brought in the universal child care benefit. I even looked up a headline from the CBC at the time that said, Liberal apologizes for saying that people will take their child care money and spend it on beer and popcorn. We know that the government does not trust Canadians with their own money and they want to have programs for Canadians, rather than what members freely use themselves.

I want to point out that the member took credit for the lowest level of poverty in Canadian history. In the last government the definition of poverty was changed. The goalposts, so to speak, of the statistics were moved. Is the member aware of that and does he want to comment on how the government may have affected the definition of poverty?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to talk about the universal child care benefit, let us talk about it. It was a benefit that was designed to give every single Canadian the same amount of money. It did not matter if one made $15,000 a year or half a million dollars a year; one got the same amount of money.

I understand that is Conservative policy and those are Conservative ideas. I get it. It is just a difference of opinion as to how to implement policy like this.

Our version of that is maybe the millionaires do not need that $1,500 a year and maybe we should be giving more to people on the lower end of the economic spectrum. Here is the kicker to it. What Conservatives do not understand about it is that they might get a short-term gain, because they can give $1,500 a year to some members of their base, but they are not doing anything in the long term for the economy.

When we invest in people, the middle class and those who are struggling to make it, we will see that money kick in as we are seeing now. It will grow the economy and it will support everybody in Canada.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and to share my time with the member for Windsor West.

Politics is about choices. Regardless of what side of the House members sit on, they come here in part because they feel they have good ideas about what choices the government ought to make that would be in the best interest of their communities. Of course, there can be real disagreements sometimes on the nature of those choices and which path to take in light of the choices we put to the House.

Today the NDP is trying to put a choice to the House that is about looking out for people in Canada who cannot access dental services. Having good oral health is important to one's health overall. We also know, because we heard stories during the campaign last fall, how important it is for people seeking employment and the kind of social stigma attached to not being able to take care of one's oral health.

A woman who lives in St. Michael's Villa in Transcona shared the impact that poor dental health had on her family, as some seniors feel like they cannot go out or socialize because they are embarrassed at the state of their teeth. We heard in caucus stories from across the country of people who would like to get a job but in some cases are ashamed to go to an interview. In other cases, they feel that they were not selected because of the stigma I referred to earlier.

There is often objection to embarking on this kind of project to do something concrete for people. The objection is not to having the government do things for people they cannot otherwise do themselves, but to having government be a vehicle for collective action to help people who on their own do not have a big voice. This is unlike some of the big corporations we see here that get to be the hot topic of question period because they have a lot of money and they have the ability to invest. Most regular Canadians do not get that kind of time and attention. The purpose of this motion today is to get that time and attention and to provide that kind of advocacy for regular Canadians who are struggling just to look after their teeth.

That is the choice that NDP members are bringing forward to the House today. Often the objection is that, although it is a nice thing to do and NDP members are nice people, we do not understand what it costs. We do not understand how it will get done and the government cannot afford to do that for everybody.

For the benefit of those who might be listening at home, I would like to read the motion into the record, which will not be the first time today I am sure. The way the motion reads is exactly to show that we can afford this, because it would be using money the government has already made a choice to do something with, which is to give a tax break that is going to disproportionately benefit the wealthiest Canadians.

The motion reads:

> That the House call on the government to change its proposed tax cuts by targeting benefits to those who earn less than $90,000 per year, and use those savings to invest in priorities that give real help to Canadians, including dental coverage for uninsured families making less than $90,000 per year.

It is a down payment on getting to universal coverage with money that is already there and that the government has already told us that it does not need because it is prepared to put it back in people's pockets. Whose pockets will it go into? Overwhelmingly, the money for this cut tax would go back into the pockets of people who earn over $100,000 a year.

The largest benefit that an individual Canadian can get under this cut would be in the neighbourhood of $300 a year, which is not that much. The people for whom $300 a year is a lot are not going to be getting $300. Instead of giving $300 per year to people who are already making at least $113,000 a year, we can ensure that families with the least income in Canada are getting access to a service they do not have access to right now.

Earlier in the House, our leader made reference to the long lineups at free university dental clinics. I think Montreal was the example he used, but it is not unique to Montreal and it is happening across the country. People cannot get access to those services.

● (1550)

It is just not true that we cannot afford to do this. The people who say we cannot afford to invest in our people, we cannot afford to make sure that people have the services they need, together those two parties have been ruling this country for a long time, in fact for the entire history of our country, but particularly in the last 30 years. We have seen massive government deregulation. We have seen massive cuts to social spending by the federal government, starting in the nineties. We have taken that path of deregulation and cutting services and refusing to invest in people. That is the trajectory we have been on for 30 years now and it has not been working. Canadians more and more feel pressure to make ends meet at the end of the month. They feel like they are not getting the same level of service that they used to.

We heard questions in question period today about people calling the Canada Revenue Agency and not being able to reach anyone on the phone. We cannot go into an office to get help to apply for EI or to figure out how to file our taxes. The services that the federal government has been providing have been in steady decline, all in the name of increased prosperity that just has not come.

There is a lot of evidence that shows that when we invest in people and help them get the things they need in order to get back on their feet, like looking after their teeth so that they have the confidence they need to go to a job interview and get that job, or so that in retirement they do not isolate themselves in their apartments because they feel awkward about going out, worrying that people might be laughing at them, or that they will not be understood because their teeth are not what they used to be. It really is no laughing matter. People worry about that and it ends up seriously affecting their lives.

We have had the approach of cutting. We have had the approach of helping out big corporations, giving them massive corporate tax breaks in the hope they will invest back in the economy, which they did not do, and that the wealth would trickle down. That whole way of thinking has been debunked.

Instead of giving another tax break to people who are making over six figures, we should take that money and invest it in something that is going to do something for people who could use the help. They need a government that is willing to coordinate those many voices. They are far more numerous than the people earning the most, but those voices are not loud because they do not have the money to amplify them. They need a government that is willing to coordinate that activity so that for all of those people, who are the majority, they can start getting the things that they need.

That is what the NDP is committed to advocate for in this place. We make no apologies about it. We are going to continue to make proposals. We are not just here to criticize. There is certainly a lot to criticize and we will not hesitate to do that either. A part of real criticism, that is not just part of the cheap political point-scoring that too often goes on in this place, is to come up with real proposals and real alternatives about how we would do it differently. This is how we would do it differently, but it does not have to be just our idea. We would prefer that it not be just our idea, but that parties in this place get on board. The money is there. We can make it work and it is about time that we did.

That is what we are here today to do. That is what we are here today to say. I do not think we need to send it off to committee to study and study. Here is the deal. The Liberals promised pharmacare in 1997. We know what "to study it" means. It is kicking the can down the road so the job does not get done at the end of the day. Liberals said they liked the idea of a parliamentary committee study at one point, then they created their own commission for pharmacare. The fact is we are not missing the information, we are missing the political will. No amount of studying will stand in for political will.

The motion today does not make a change in the budget. It calls on the House to affirm that change. Surely with the resources of government, if we have the political will, we can get this done and get it done quickly. That is what we are calling on the House to do.

● (1555)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is a westerner in a social gospel kind of movement. He and his father are among those rare NDPers that sometimes Conservatives can agree with. I obviously like the first part of the motion and the member knows this.

The second part of the motion I have a problem with. We are running a $26.6-billion deficit. I am going to refer to some words from Roy Romanow and Tommy Douglas, who said that when governments are in debt, they are actually not making policy decisions anymore on behalf of their people. They are making policy decisions on behalf of the people they owe the money to.

What I see by running up large successive deficits and accumulating more debt, which the first part of the motion could easily deal with, is a policy of letting bankers decide for us what we should be doing.

Is that a wise way of doing it? I am guessing Roy Romanow would not agree with it. We should be paying down the debt and reducing the deficits, so that those on tougher means with lower incomes do not have to continue paying taxes to finance our out-of-control spending.

● (1600)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, what is left out of that analysis is the importance of revenue in balancing a budget. The corporate tax rate went from 28% in the year 2000 to just 15% today. Every point of the corporate tax rate is worth over $2 billion, and he talks about the magnitude of deficit.

The fact is that the Conservatives and Liberals both got there together. That decrease in taxes started under Chrétien and Paul Martin and it was finalized by Stephen Harper. The story was that private industry would take those tens of billions of dollars and invest them in the Canadian economy. That did not happen.

The promise of what those tax cuts were meant to do was never realized. The fact is that money could be better spent. There is no way that we will ever balance a budget if we do not raise enough revenue.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member overstated it when he said that these benefits would flow to families or individuals earning over $100,000. According to the PBO and its distributional analysis, looking at 2024 when there is a total expenditure of $6.8 billion, 86% of that will go to individuals earning under $97,000.

I do not want to completely understate the amount of money at issue here, though. It will be over $900 million that will flow to individuals with incomes over $97,000, so there money potentially to be saved.

I have a question, though, with respect to the expense on dental care. If we look at the math over the five years and if we were to cap it at $97,000, we would see $3.5 billion in savings. However, if we look at the NDP's promise and the costing from the PBO, it would be $4.9 billion in expenditure. Therefore, the math does not add up. What are the member's comments on that?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the cap we are proposing is at $90,000, not at $97,000, so there is a little extra revenue to be made up there. It is weighted to the first year, in part because there is a big backlog. However, the member will notice that the ongoing operating cost of that program goes down significantly in year two and thereafter.

Again, this is not a question of money; this is a question of political will. The math is there to make this work. If it is the question of a small additional investment at the outset in order to get it up and going, that is quite reasonable. If the House wants it and if the government wants it, surely we can get it done. We have money for Mastercard and Loblaws. That is the kind of money we are talking about to make up for the small difference that the member mentioned.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciated my colleague's intervention.

I do not think that anyone in the House is against the idea of providing dental care to Quebeckers and Canadians. There is just one massive problem: Health is a provincial jurisdiction.

My colleague was talking about political will. This is not a decision to be made in the House, here in Ottawa. This is a decision that has to be made in Quebec City. The National Assembly of Quebec has unanimously called for an increase in health transfers. It has been calling for that for years.

If my colleague agrees this is a question of political will, would he also agree to reopen the Constitution on this issue? Personally, I have no problem with that. In fact, we would have a lot of requests if that were to happen.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that we support the idea of increasing health transfers to the provinces. We cannot have an accord with the provinces without having a negotiation. There is no negotiation without a willingness from the House. Let's establish a willingness here and then negotiate with the provinces.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to speak to our motion with respect to dental care. It is amazing what I have seen over the years. There is always an excuse not to help children with health care and people who need some type of assistance.

At the end of the day, this is a matter of political will. We can listen to all the different excuses such as not enough money being there, but there is money for the submarines that do not work right. There is money for planes that have not been delivered, and with overrun costs.

I will give a classic example of something that just came to its anniversary. The money we borrowed for a new tax on Canadians. The HST was brought in and we gave money to the Provinces of British Columbia and Ontario to enter into the program. We had the economic analysis on the cost of borrowing over 10 years. Ontario received $4.6 billion and British Columbia received $1.6 billion to British Columbia. It is now over $7.1 billion in cost.

When we are talking about the dental care for Canadians, we are also talking about the savings we would have for so many people who do not have the necessary coverage. We are also talking about the improvement in our economy by having a healthier workforce. Those are not immeasurable in the economics being applied here today, but they are tangible at the end of the day for the Canadian economy.

There is no doubt that when looking at dental care, it is one of the most underestimated investments when it comes to health care. There are several factors that help people with their dental care. It is not even just about cleaning and an avoidance of pain. We also deal with other health problems, such as respiratory conditions, cardiovascular disease, dementia, infections, diabetic complications, renal disease complications, premature birth and low birth weight. These are all related to poor dental care.

We can always find an excuse not to start something and the motion speaks to that. It is specifically about making a budgetary choice in this Parliament. It is very much isolated to the moment with respect to economics and its accountability for the public.

We are asking the House to call on the government to change its proposed tax cuts by targeting benefits to those who earn less than $90,000 per year and use those savings to invest in priorities that give real help to Canadians, including dental coverage for uninsured families making less than $90,000 per year.

Millions of Canadians will now be able to afford some type of basic dental coverage. When we did the work in the partnership and outreach for this motion, statistics indicated that 35.4% of Canadians reported that they had no dental insurance.

There are people in our neighbourhoods who are unable to get coverage. A significant portion of the population do not have any insurance whatsoever. What money they use on oral hygiene and health care is at the expense of rent, food or investment in education.

It is important to note that those people are also most likely to be under-employed, unemployed or work part-time. It is so hard for this chamber to wrap itself around the fact that we want a simple choice to start a significant program that would at least touch the worst of the worst in Canada. It is amazing we can always find a reason not to do it, but we can find a reason to buy a pipeline and buy submarines that do not work right. We can find all kinds of reasons for pet projects and corporations, including Mastercard and Loblaws. We always hear the explanation of why it is possible and why it has to be done.

● (1605)

However, when it comes to protecting kids, when it comes to providing a basic coverage for them and their families that are the worst off, there is always a reason not to do it.

This is what is disappointing. With all the problems we face right now in the country, one of the most civilized countries on the planet, we cannot help some of the people in our constituencies when it comes to oral hygiene and dental problems. Is it too big of a problem for us to fix? Is it that we cannot do it and we will have to leave it up to another Parliament? Maybe it will find the wisdom. Can we not find the small amount of money in the budget to reallocate toward this proposal?

I talked about the HST and the continued legacy of debt and deficit. We continue to finance that deficit to bring a tax on ourselves. What I have not said is that we are still not in a surplus. We are still paying interest on that debt. There was no problem finding the money for that.

However, to pay for this, there is a problem. I do not understand it. I think most Canadians are on board with this. I think most Canadians understand the vulnerabilities. When we look at the numbers, it also affects women. For a government that says it is dealing with some of the systemic problems in relation to women and society, again, this is another missed opportunity. The statistics show that 24.1% of women are more likely than men, 20%, to report costs as a barrier. People are saying they are not taking care of themselves because of that. It is an issue of finance. Canadians aged 18 to 34, 28%, were the age group most likely to report costs as a barrier for dental care.

We are at a time when we have burdened our youth with expenses from post-secondary education that are historic. We are passing on a legacy of debt to them, as well as a legacy of other issues for them to deal with. They also have some of the highest rates of unemployment and under-employment. There is also the fact that many of the jobs they enter into do not have benefit packages.

We are saying that we give up, that we cannot do it, that it is too complicated for us and that we cannot figure it out. There is no consensus here. Nobody else can offer an amendment? There could have been an amendment to this to make it work. That is fine. We are open to that. An amendment could have happened here. However, the government is saying no, that it cannot do that, that it is too complicated and too hard. The government just cannot be bothered and that is sad.

Those young people are our future. One would think we would have the common sense to actually be preventative. One of the reasons we talk about this in a prevention model is that there is also another $155 million approximately for people to go to hospital emergency rooms to have their teeth taken care of. However, we do not know the true costs because people do not even do it.

I do not know a Canadian out there right now who would not like to have an emergency room that is not cluttered with mental health issues and other types of unnecessary appointments. People have to go to emergency rooms because they are desperate and have nowhere else to go. I do not know anyone out there who would not agree that these cases do not need to be there when there are other emergencies.

That would be one of the better things that could streamline our system. How much money are we losing and tying up because people cannot get the proper basic coverage for their dental care?

For many mental health issues, we do not provide actual supports out there. People end up going to the hospital because they have no other options or they go to a clinic, if they are really desperate. We pay for that. That does not make any sense.

Again, I would argue the economic value of this for employers who are looking to invest in Canada. This is significant because it takes this off their books and puts it toward a workforce that is healthy, stronger, more competitive and productive. That is good for all Canadians, because those people then pay taxes.

● (1610)

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, dental care is extremely important to people on low incomes. We know that with proper dental care, a filling that costs $80 could save thousands and thousands of dollars in other health issues, like heart disease. A filling that is not done properly can cause blood poisoning and that person may end up needing much greater interventions by the health care system.

We support this motion. Has the member done the research and looked at how much money will be saved in the health care system by providing basic dental care to people on low incomes? How much money are we going to save by doing this and helping people?

● (1615)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, about $155 million will be saved annually just from emergency room visits alone. That does not take into account the fact that the people going to emergency rooms at all hours of the day are clogging up the system for other people affected by other issues. That is a drain on our economy and our productivity as a society.

If people are going to emergency rooms out of desperation at 10 o'clock at night because they have to be at work the next day, then there is less flow in our economy because productivity goes down for a lot of different reasons related to that. With prevention, an appointment is scheduled and people never end up in that situation and do not become a burden on the emergency health care system.

That is one perfect example of how this would work and how the investment would pay off. It should be measured as part of the formula to do this. We should at least provide some political will.

Everybody knows that hospital wait times are very difficult, very stressful and very painful. Canadians should be asking their MPs why we are sending those with dental problems to the hospital, as opposed to what we should be doing, which is helping them to prevent those problems to begin with.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to discuss child care or health care, but I would like to read to my colleague a recent unanimous resolution of the Quebec National Assembly. It dates back to June 2019 and states the following:

> That it [the Quebec National Assembly] reaffirm the Government of Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction over health care;

I really think that my NDP colleague knows that health is a provincial jurisdiction, but, through his motion, he is trying to impose a certain way of doing things on Quebec, to make Quebec spend money on this particular area. It is up to Quebec and the provinces to decide what they will do with their money.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Bloc has twisted itself around in this case, out of an ideology, to be against young people, families and children.

It is important to read the motion. The motion asks the government to redirect some of the highest income in its budget to a program. The motion does not even say how that could be done.

The Bloc's position on this is interesting, but I am a bit disappointed in Bloc members. I know they are strong advocates with respect to many other issues. In reality, the motion does not say how this could be done. The resources could be directed to Quebec so it can go about providing its dental program and to Ontario and other places. It does not specifically say that in the motion.

It is an unfortunate missed opportunity for the Bloc to support progressive policy, because it would open up an income stream for Quebec to better prepare its citizens for this type of problem.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to put a question to my hon. colleague, who indicated that the provinces would be interested in participating in this type of program. I know that my province of Quebec staunchly defends itself from any federal interference in the health system.

Does my colleague know if other provinces are prepared to sign on to this type of bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, first of all, this is a motion; it is not legislation. It is important to distinguish between the two. The motion provides the vehicle and flexibility to do that. It would not trample on provincial rights. It provides a direct policy for the government to change where the funding comes from with regard to high-income earners and allows for a system to be put in place. From there, it is up to the government to craft the way it wants to do it, which is similar to how we deliver health care to all the provinces. The motion does not specifically assign this.

To use the jurisdictional barrier issue to vote the motion down is really unfortunate and sad. It really shows us that there is always an excuse to go against the poor, children and young people when there is no political will. There would be no jurisdictional trampling at all through this process.

● (1620)

Mr. Darren Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here while you are presiding over this meeting. I want to thank you for the opportunity to stand and speak today about the government's plans in this area.

With respect to the suggestion on how savings from changes to the tax system could be used, I am pleased to talk about the government's commitment to strengthen health care for Canadians.

The mandate letter of the Minister of Health includes a commitment to support Parliament in studying the issue of dental care so that we can better understand what the government's role may be in helping to improve access to dental care in Canada. This debate provides an opportunity for members of Parliament to share their views on this issue.

Across the country, many Canadians have coverage for dental care through private employee health benefit plans, while many are supported by government programs. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, $15.5 billion was spent on dental services in Canada in 2017. Of this, 54% was covered through private insurance plans, 40% was paid out of pocket and 6% was publicly funded by a variety of federal, provincial and territorial government programs.

We know that oral health is an integral element of overall health. By the time they are adults, 96% of Canadians have been impacted by dental decay. It is largely preventable and disproportionately and more severely impacts our most vulnerable populations, such as those living with a disability, those from low-income households, those in marginalized communities and seniors.

Twenty per cent of Canadians have moderate to severe gum disease. This number is amplified in older adults and those with lower incomes. Not only can this cause tooth loss and related problems with eating, speaking and social interactions, it has been shown to complicate a number of medical conditions. Further, the Canadian Cancer Society advises that in overall cancer incidents in Canada, oral cancer ranks ninth in men and 13th in women, and the trend line is increasing. About 5,300 Canadians will be diagnosed with oral cancer annually, and nearly 1,500 will die of it.

That is why the government welcomed the Standing Committee on Health's recent decision to study the issue of dental care in Canada and stands ready to support the committee in its work.

At a national level in Canada, good data on unmet dental care needs does not exist. We know that three-quarters of Canadians visit a dentist at least once a year, higher than the OECD average, and that wait times for dental care are among the shortest in the world. Approximately two-thirds of Canadians report no dental needs. At the same time, we know that approximately one-third of Canadians are uninsured and that approximately six million Canadians have reported avoiding a visit to the dentist because of cost.

To address data gaps, the Canadian government has partnered with Statistics Canada to design an oral health surveillance component for an upcoming cycle of a Canadian health measure survey, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and in collaboration with leading researchers from all 10 of Canada's university faculties of dentistry and experts from the United States and the United Kingdom. This work will provide key information for those developing oral health programs and policies for Canadians.

In addition to improving data on dental care, the federal government provides dental care services for certain groups of people through the non-insured health benefits program delivered by Indigenous Services Canada. The government provides dental coverage for recognized first nations and Inuit. In addition, the children's oral health initiative provides dental coverage for many first nations children and their parents.

Through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the interim federal health program provides coverage for emergency dental care services for some refugee claimants and protected persons. In addition, the federal government provides members of the Canadian Armed Forces, some veterans and inmates of federal penitentiaries with dental coverage.

● (1625)

Alongside these federal programs, all provinces and territories fund and manage their own dental care services, which cover medically necessary in-hospital dental services for all residents. Many provincial and territorial programs also cover some dental services for certain groups of people, such as children in low-income households, people receiving social assistance benefits, people with certain disabilities and senior citizens. However, specific eligibility requirements, types of services included and the financial coverage levels depend on the province or the territory.

Provincial and territorial health care programs, including those with dental coverage, are supported by federal funding through the Canada health transfer, or the CHT. The CHT is providing $40.4 billion to the provinces and territories in 2019-20. This will continue to increase each year in line with the growth rate of the economy, with a minimum increase of at least 3% per year. Over the next five years, CHT funding to provinces and territories is expected to exceed $200 billion.

In addition to direct federal spending on dental services and fiscal transfers to the provinces and territories, assistance for dental care is already provided through the federal tax system. About two-thirds of Canadians receive dental coverage from their employee health insurance benefits. The federal government supports these Canadians by not including the value of these insurance plans in the taxable income of employees.

Forty per cent of dental care costs are paid through out-of-pocket payments by Canadians. The federal government provides assistance with these costs through an income tax credit called the medical expenses tax credit. This is a non-refundable tax credit for eligible medical expenses that can be claimed by taxpayers if the expenses exceed 3% of an individual's net income or $2,352, whichever is less, in the 2019 tax year. An additional refundable medical expense supplement is available for working individuals with low incomes and high medical expenses.

In addition to support for dental care, the federal government improves the oral health of Canadians at the national level through health promotion, disease prevention and professional and technical guidance. In the area of health promotion, and in consultation with the national oral health professional community, last year the government incorporated oral health considerations into the Canada food guide and into its ongoing information campaigns.

In terms of prevention, the government has worked with the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Alberta to produce user-friendly online information on proper teeth cleaning for infants, children, adults, seniors and pregnant women, as well as for caregivers supporting older adults living with dementia at home. The government has also partnered with the University of Manitoba and collaborated with many key national health professional organizations to produce the Canadian caries risk assessment tool, which will now enable Canadian health practitioners to confidently assess their preschool patients and take the steps necessary to prevent early childhood caries and guide those patients into the appropriate care approaches.

The government has also worked with the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health to produce comprehensive knowledge products for community decision-makers on water fluoridation. Community water fluoridation remains a safe, cost-effective and equitable public health practice to prevent tooth decay.

In the areas of professional and technical guidance, the government collaborated with leading Canadian researchers in the areas of the oral health effects of cannabis and vaping to develop knowledge products for Canadian oral health practitioners to consider as they care for their patients who may be using these substances. The government has also partnered with McGill University to create and launch the Canadian Dental Connection website for rural and remote communities seeking oral health practitioners, and provide online training modules for these practitioners on cultural competency and trauma-informed care.

To support the improvement of the oral health of Canadians and fulfill our international responsibilities, the government works with partners and stakeholders nationally and globally, including organizations in the professional, regulatory and educational domains, such as the Canadian Dental Association and the Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation. We have also collaborated with international health and dental organizations, such as the World Health Organization, and oral health authorities around the world.

● (1630)

These initiatives demonstrate that our government is playing a constructive role in supporting access to dental care for Canadians. We look forward to participating in the study of dental care to be conducted by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, of which I am proud to say I am member.

However, we know that dental care is only one aspect of the health care system for Canadians. The government has a strong interest in improving the health care system so that it can meet the needs of Canadians now and into the future. With an aging population, increasing rates of chronic disease and cost pressures tied to new drugs and technologies, our system must adapt if it is to deliver better care and better outcomes at a cost that is affordable.

Our government is committed to strengthening health care, including improving access to primary care, mental health services, home and palliative care, and implementing national universal pharmacare for Canadians. These commitments build on our actions over the last several years to improve access to mental health services, home and palliative care, and prescription drugs.

Our joint work with provinces and territories has been particularly successful and provides a good model for future joint work on health care. Federal, provincial and territorial governments reached an agreement on a common statement of principles for shared health priorities in 2017, which outlines key priorities for federal investments in mental health and addictions, as well as home and community care.

The common statement reaffirms our shared commitment to report on results to Canadians through common indicators; to improve the affordability, accessibility and appropriate use of prescription drugs; to support health innovation; and to engage with regional and national indigenous leaders on their priorities for improving the health outcomes of indigenous peoples. Under this agreement, federal investments of $11 billion over 10 years are being used by provinces and territories to address specific needs in our health care system, such as increasing the availability of home and palliative care and helping youth access needed mental health services.

We will continue to build on this progress as we work to implement the commitments outlined in the mandate letter of the Minister of Health, including improving access to primary care, setting national standards for access to mental health services, and continuing to make home and palliative care more available across the country. In this respect, the government looks forward to learning more about the challenges faced by Canadians in accessing dental care and will actively participate in the study of this important issue by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health.

Mrs. Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite mentioned his commitment to palliative care. I wonder if he could speak to the fact that provincial health minister Adrian Dix has just pulled funding for 10 hospice beds in Delta because the hospice is unwilling to provide MAID.

As we know, MAID and palliative care are completely opposite treatments. I wonder if the member could fill me in on his thoughts on the commitment to palliative care.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of Minister Dix. However, another topic that we have talked about studying on the health committee, and I believe the member is also on the committee, is palliative care. These are things we are going to talk about in the future.

This is something that is extremely important to Canadians, and it is something that we as members of the health committee will be continuously looking at to see how we can improve palliative care for all Canadians.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his very thoughtful comments today and also for his tremendous work as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

My colleague comes from Atlantic Canada. When knocking on doors last summer, one of the number one items I heard at the door, and I am assuming he did as well, was access to health care services in Atlantic Canada and how we can improve health care services within our region and all across the country.

I wonder if my colleague could elaborate on the importance of the investment of $11 billion that we have made when it comes to home care and mental health services, and how that has really benefited Canadians across the country.

● (1635)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member as well for her incredible contribution as former minister of health and the work that she did on behalf of all Canadians.

The member is absolutely correct. The number one thing we heard at the doors in Atlantic Canada was for better health care. In addition to the Canada child benefit, which has done incredible things for our country, one of the things I am most proud of is the $11 billion, in addition to the health care accord, that we have put in separate streams to go toward mental health care and home care. This investment allows the federal government to have a say in how that money is spent, and it comes with expectations on behalf of the provinces and territories to ensure those funds are spent in the proper way.

It is the first time that I am aware of that we have had federal health care transfer money go toward dedicated streams within health care funding. It is something that I found was met with lots of resistance when it was first negotiated with the provinces and territories. However, the provinces and territories did fall in line and did accept those funds. I think they probably look at those funds now and say that this was money well spent and that they will work with the federal government to show how they have invested those funds in their communities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know my Liberal colleague's thoughts on the Sherbrooke declaration.

In 2005, the late Jack Layton, former parliamentarian and leader of the NDP at the time, said that in a Canada that works, Quebec would have the right to opt out unconditionally with full compensation.

In our opinion, the NPD's proposal proves that the party is distancing itself from its late leader, Jack Layton. This comes to us as a surprise and a disappointment.

I would like to know my colleague opposite's thoughts on the following question: Should a proposal like the one currently on the table not include a right for Quebec to fully opt out with full compensation and no strings attached?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

The motion we are discussing today is on dental care for Canadians. What we have said from the start, and what we have seen in the mandate letter of the minister, is that we are willing to look at these things. We are willing to do whatever is necessary and whatever is possible to consider for the better health of all Canadians.

We have said from the start that we would take suggestions from other parties and from all parliamentarians in this House on how we can move forward for the better health of all Canadians. This is something that we take very seriously.

Again, going back to the health committee, all the members discussed the possible studies they would be able to do, and one of the ones that was mentioned first was dental care. The Minister of Health had this in her mandate letter as something that we have to look at within the terms of her mandate. It is something we are very proud to work on, and we will collaborate with all members in this House to ensure that we are working toward better health for all Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary for his thoughts on how important it is, when we are talking about interprovincial jurisdiction and the potential for pharmacare or even for dental plans in the future, that the federal government work collaboratively with the provinces and respect the important role the provinces and other stakeholders have to play.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, we cannot get where we need to go for Canadians if we do not collaborate and partner with all provinces and territories. We will not get national universal pharmacare if we are not able to work with the provinces and territories.

We cannot trample on jurisdiction. The provinces and territories need us as partners and we need them as partners. We need them to see how important this project could be and how important national pharmacare could be. Whether it includes dental or it does not, a national universal pharmacare program requires partnership and collaboration with every province and every territory in this great country.

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is fascinating to listen to my colleague talk about federal-provincial collaboration on health matters. I do not know why we are debating this topic today, since health is a provincial jurisdiction. This motion is rather odd.

That said, my colleague talks a lot about federal health spending. We do want to work together, even though this is a provincial jurisdiction, but federal legislation stipulates that the government pays 50% of provincial health care costs. Right now, Quebec is getting just 22% and we are asking for a 6% increase. We are far from that 50%.

Is my colleague prepared to look at increasing health transfers to Quebec so that we can perhaps participate in a Canada-wide pharmacare program?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, in 2019 over $40 billion went toward health transfers. Almost $200 billion will go toward it over the next several years, and it is going to go up by 3% every year. We are making those commitments to the provinces.

Health care is provincial, but the federal government does have a role. I went over several of the things that we do and several of the things that past federal governments have done toward health care. There is a big role for the federal government.

The fact that I have mentioned a collaborative partnership has been commented on several times. We absolutely need to be a partner at the table and we need to collaborate with provinces and territories, recognizing that health care is indeed the jurisdiction of the provinces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite is talking about the need to collaborate, especially on health care, which is a provincial jurisdiction, as we have been repeating since the beginning of this discussion. Quebec has a very effective health care system that covers dental care, in large part, for children 10 and under. It certainly does not need to be reviewed, at least not in its current form.

My colleague is talking about collaboration, participation and partnership with the provinces. However, a partnership involves mutual respect. Does my colleague agree with including the right to opt out with full compensation, as Quebec is demanding and as is set out in the 2005 Sherbrooke declaration?

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on the great work that Quebec does for health care. I look forward to perhaps using this as a model on dental care that we can study at the health committee. Maybe we can learn from Quebec.

Quebec has done many things to lead the country in the past. I look forward to the upcoming dental study and looking at the models that work in Canada and finding ways to make them work in other provinces and territories as well.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be here to speak to this important issue, but would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Today we are here to talk about something incredibly important, and that is dental care. We know that, across Canada, many Canadians are not able to afford basic dental care. I want to read into the record so that the constituents of North Island—Powell River know what we are talking about. The motion that the NDP has presented today simply says:

> That the House call on the government to change its proposed tax cuts by targeting benefits to those who earn less than $90,000 per year, and use those savings to invest in priorities that give real help to Canadians, including dental coverage for uninsured families making less than $90,000 per year.

In my riding this is a significant challenge. During the election I was very surprised by how many doors I knocked on where people told me very clearly that affordable dental care was one of the best parts of the NDP platform to help people.

In my riding there are challenges on this issue. I want to give a specific shout-out to Compass Dental in Campbell River. One day a year, usually on a Saturday or a weekend day, dentists from that office, from Shoreline Orthodontics and Pier Street Dental come together and provide free dental care to members of the community.

There may be other dentists added to this list. When I went there a couple of years ago, the reception staff were absolutely amazing. They told me when they arrived early in the morning there was a huge lineup of people outside the door hoping to get an opportunity. Those dentists work hard every moment of that day to provide the dental care that people so desperately need.

I am so grateful for that dedication and that commitment in the riding, but I also face the reality that many people are desperately in need of dental care and have no way of being able to afford it. I cannot imagine how hard it is for dentists to have to turn people away, but that is what is happening.

I remember talking with a mother who talked about the reality that, at the end of the year, she pays for her children to get their dental care, but she simply cannot afford her own dental care. All parents would sacrifice for their children, but it is not right that the costs are such a barrier.

I also think of one constituent who is 56 years old and has had six teeth pulled in the last 10 years. She is down now to one chewing tooth. I cannot imagine that. Looking into the future, she knows that she needs implants or dentures, but she does not know how she is going to afford them. Her plan is to blend her food.

How is it that, in a country as rich as this, we are seeing the government give significant amounts of money to Mastercard and Loblaws, profitable businesses that are doing quite well for themselves, rather than to people who want to have their teeth taken care of? It is a simple, basic need. As rich as we are in Canada, we should do better.

That is why we are here today. In December, our finance and health spokesperson for the NDP wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance saying this is a real opportunity to collaborate and work together. We asked the Liberals to cap the middle-class tax cut they are proposing for people earning over $90,000 and use that money as a down payment to cover uninsured people making less than $90,000 a year, which is about four million people.

As I am having this discussion about the need of individuals in our country for the most basic dental care it brings to mind the truth of this place, which is that financial choices are political choices.

Who are we going to support in this country? Are we going to support people who are making a significant profit at the end of the year?

● (1645)

I remember when the government gave significant dollars to Loblaws in the last Parliament to help it with more energy-efficient refrigerators. I will never forget one of the local business owners in my riding emailing my office and asking where his money was for his refrigerator. A small amount of money would make such a significant difference in the life and prosperity of his business, and he wanted to know where he could get that kind of support.

I represent a rural and remote community, so there are other challenges on top of the challenges faced by people who have lower incomes or very expensive dental care. People could be making decent wages and keeping everything pretty sustainable, but if they need to have a very expensive dental procedure done sometimes they simply cannot do that. When we look at the challenges of just moving around my riding already, this just adds another layer.

When we look at these issues, we have to say to the government that when it makes choices about how to spend money, it is also making a political decision about who it values in this country. I hope all government members will support this motion, because what it really speaks to is valuing the most vulnerable people in our country and providing them with support.

There are so many stories, and I heard them when I was knocking on thousands of doors. I heard stories of people who were embarrassed to apply for work because their teeth were not in good shape. I heard stories of people who needed basic dental care, and it was getting to the point where it was painful so they were going to the hospital to get a tooth removed rather than getting care when they needed it, which could provide huge health concerns for them later in life.

I am really aware of the fact that in the year 2000 in this country we honoured corporate contributions. We understood that corporations in Canada, big multinational, multi-million-dollar corporations, were making a significant amount of money and doing it on the resources of this country and on the labour of the people who live in this country. The corporate tax at that point was 28%. Today that tax is down to 15%.

These huge corporations are making significant amounts of money. I want to be really clear: I am not talking about the corporations in my riding that are doing well and looking after their people. I am talking about big multinational corporations such as Mastercard and Loblaws that have significant revenues every year. There was a time when they paid that 28% tax. Basically, to me that was understanding that the resources belonged to Canadians in this country, that the labour came from people who lived in this country and that the corporate tax meant we would not have people suffering to such a high degree when other people were prospering.

Here we are today having this debate. We are asking the Liberal government to take this seriously. Like pharmacare in the last Parliament, and it is continuing in this Parliament as well, the government keeps pushing things down the road. It wants to do another study and not talk about the core issues here. When people are struggling to afford their medication they should be the priority, not big corporations. When people cannot afford the most basic dental care they should be the priority, not the rich and well-connected.

This is a choice, and I am really sad to see a lot of people who are speaking from the government side not seeing a pathway to get to this motion. I just want to be really clear to the constituents I represent that this is a motion in the House. There was another motion that was passed unanimously in the House a little over a year ago to make sure that if any money to be given to our veterans was left over at the end of a year, it would go into the next year to support them, because we know there are so many challenges and barriers. The government did not follow through on that motion. It made a choice to vote but not support it.

Here we are again with an important motion that says we value people who have less. We value them more than people who have a lot, and today we are going to make sure they get the dental care they so desperately need.

● (1650)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her questions. I always appreciate her comments.

I do not agree with one of the statements that she has made, indicating that our government has punted pharmacare down the road. If I look back over the past four years, our government has done extensive work to move this file forward. We have taken steps, including making changes to the pan-Canadian pharmaceutical review board. We have also joined provinces and territories to make sure that we can bulk-purchase medications together. Furthermore, in budget 2019, we invested $35 million for the creation of the Canadian drug agency. Work is under way.

I have a specific question for my colleague. Does she agree that putting together a national pharmacare program, and also a dental care program, is going to require the collaboration of the provinces and territories? If we want to move forward with this, we absolutely have to work with all levels of government. I would like to hear the member's comments about that.

● (1655)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member. I deeply appreciate the time that we have together on PROC, and have a deep respect for the work that she provides in that space. I have a great respect for her.

However, I just have to say that our perceptions will not align on this issue. I think the Hoskins report was very clear. The step forward around pharmacare was a single-payer universal system. Right now, we know that the next steps have not been implemented.

It goes back to the core issue of continuing to hear a lot of words that sound really good, but we need action. I say that as a person who represents people who have come to me. Seniors have come to me and have said they cannot afford their medication and are making choices every day between eating enough or taking their medication.

One woman in particular, who had a severe disability and was on a disability pension, not making a lot, worked hard and saved a little money to buy a van. She bought a van to live in, because she could not afford her medication.

These are real choices. We are here for Canadians. We are not here for rhetoric.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a specific question around rural and remote communities that might face additional challenges with people who cannot plan for appropriate dental care and who then run into emergencies. How difficult it is for them to deal with that when they may not have a clinic or an emergency room available to them?

I spoke earlier in this chamber about the waste of $155 million for people having to go to emergency rooms for emergency dental care, and how it was completely wasteful. However, when we look at rural and remote communities, there are probably additional challenges for people to even get to those locations.

I would like to hear the member's comments about that. If we had a planned, scheduled activity of dental care, even a basic one, people would more appropriately be able to stay in their community, leading to stable employment and to their being stronger contributors to the economy, as opposed to dealing with emergency situations.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, this is a really important question.

I have to say, as a member of Parliament who represents more rural and remote communities, one of the biggest challenges is making sure that, when we look at our legislation and look at our actions, we are actually thinking of the realities on the ground.

In my riding, which is basically half of Vancouver Island and a large part of the mainland as well, there are communities like Kingcome right now that are under evacuation because the water is not clean. It is an indigenous community. They have had to be emergency evacuated. The reality for them is to buy a couple of boats or take a helicopter to get out of that community. If someone there needs emergency dental care, the barriers are profound.

I think about some of the communities that are accessible only by boat. It can take a long ferry ride to get to the services people need. These are the challenges.

When I look at motions like this, it is about making sure that people in our country who have the least have the most access, and that it is easy and affordable for them. There are other challenges that they face in our country. Across the whole country there are a lot of rural and remote communities. We need to make it more accessible for them.

We need to look at every decision we make in this place from that lens, because it is often those communities that have built our economy.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in this chamber and speak about something that has been a core gap, an omission in our national health care system for almost half a century.

Canadians are justly proud of our public health care system. It is an accomplishment that defines us as a nation. It is an affirmation that we will take care of each other and our most vulnerable. It is a reflection of our commitment to equality and justice. However, it is not perfect and it is not complete. Many important health services remain uncovered in Canada. For these, patients remain at the mercy of their ability to pay.

Canada's New Democrats are proud to introduce the motion before us today because it would help address one of the most glaring gaps in our public system: dental care.

Our proposal calls on the Liberal government to target its tax plan currently before the House to those earning less than $90,000 per year and use those savings to make a down payment on universal dental care by immediately extending coverage to millions of currently uninsured Canadians.

To be clear, Canadians earning over $90,000 a year do not need a tax cut, but those earning less do need help, and the NDP plan is based on this position.

The omission of dental coverage from our universal health care system is both a pressing public health concern and a social justice issue.

Many would be surprised to learn that the most common non-communicable diseases are oral diseases. Studies have also linked poor dental health to serious health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, dementia, respiratory infections, diabetic complications, renal disease complications, premature birth and low birth rate. Numbers cannot begin to quantify the pain, social impacts, and economic losses suffered by those with untreated dental problems, yet as we speak, 35.4% of Canadians today have no dental insurance, and nearly seven million Canadians avoid the dentist every year because of the cost.

Unsurprisingly, this hurts poor and marginalized Canadians the most. Canada's most vulnerable citizens have the highest rates of dental decay and disease but the worst access to this much-needed service.

According to the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, 50% of low-income Canadians have no dental coverage whatsoever, along with the majority of seniors over the age of 60. Indigenous populations have nearly twice as much dental disease as non-indigenous Canadians, and income-related inequalities in oral health are greater in women than in men.

Moreover, at a time when wages have flatlined and their job prospects have grown increasingly insecure, young people have also seen benefits like dental insurance rapidly scaled back or completely eliminated by employers. Today only 50% of millennials have access to dental insurance. This deficiency harms career prospects and is a matter of fundamental intergenerational inequity. According to Statistics Canada, young Canadians aged 18 to 34 are the most likely group to report cost as a barrier to dental care.

If we can agree that everyone in Canada should have equal access to health care regardless of their age, income, job status or where they live, then we simply cannot justify the continued exclusion of oral health care from our public health care system.

However, at present, Canada ranks second-last in public financing for dental care among OECD countries. The motion before us today would begin to change that. By making a small modification to the government's tax plan, we can extend dental coverage to 4.3 million uninsured Canadians right away.

I will now provide a brief overview of how we can get this done.

In December 2019, the Liberal government announced its intention to increase the basic personal amount tax credit in 2020. It has marketed this proposal as a “middle-class tax cut”. However, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, individuals with net incomes between $103,000 to $160,000 will receive the largest average reduction in their income taxes at $347 annually, while individuals with net incomes below $15,000, the poorest Canadians, will receive the smallest average reduction, at $1.00.

● (1700)

Overall, this tax plan will cost $6.9 billion per year once it is fully implemented. New Democrats believe that this funding should be focused on Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet. We are proposing that the government target this tax plan to those making $90,000 per year or less, with a phase-out beginning at $80,000, and use the $1.6 billion in annual savings to invest in dental care for uninsured Canadians with household incomes below $90,000.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, providing dental coverage for uninsured families making less than $90,000, which is the median income in Canada, meaning 50% of Canadians in this country, would cost $1.8 billion in the first year and approximately $830 million for every year after that.

This program would give immediate help to 4.3 million people and save our health care system tens of millions of dollars every year. After all, emergency room visits due to dental emergencies already cost taxpayers at least $155 million annually.

Under the NDP's plan, there would be no cost for individuals with a household income under $70,000, while copayments would be required on a sliding scale for those with a household income between $70,000 and $90,000.

We are proposing comprehensive care for these Canadians. The minimum basket of services covered would include diagnostic services, preventive services, restorative services, endodontic services, periodontal services, prosthodontic services, oral surgery, orthodontic services and adjunctive services as well.

This program would be the next big expansion in our health care system after pharmacare, which the NDP is also driving forward in this Parliament. This program could be administered by the federal government or by provinces and territories upon agreement. Existing provincial and territorial programs that provide the same services could continue.

I wish to conclude my remarks today by outlining the path forward toward full universal dental care in Canada.

During the last election, New Democrats heard from many Canadians who were struggling to afford necessary dental care. We heard heart-rending stories from Canadians in every province and territory of the physical, emotional, social and economic pain of dental illness. That is why at their first meeting following the campaign, the leader of the NDP pressed the Prime Minister to work across party lines in this minority Parliament to address this urgent health concern.

It is ludicrous that we cover the entire body and then carve out the piece of our mouth and cover it from the tonsils back, but leave Canadians uninsured for the tonsils forward. It is absurd.

I was pleased to see the government acknowledge this NDP priority in its Speech from the Throne and I was heartened that the Minister of Health's mandate letter contained a direction to "Work with Parliament to study and analyze the possibility of national dental care." The NDP is turning a possibility into reality with the motion here today.

I moved the motion at the Standing Committee on Health at the very first committee meeting dealing with business. I was proud that my colleagues accepted my motion to undertake that study on the development of a national dental care program and I call on my colleagues on the health committee to give this study the upmost priority, but as we prepare to embark on the tremendously important task of developing a national dental care program for Canadians, there is no reason we cannot get started right away, because the need is clear and before us we have a realistic plan to achieve it.

I want to pause for a moment and remind my fellow Parliamentarians why we do not have dental care today. The 1964 Royal Commission on Health Services, which formed the original framework of our public health care system, called for the inclusion of dental services. That was always intended to be part of our public health care system. However, it was not brought in at that time simply because there was a shortage of dentists, a shortage so acute that they believed it was impossible to implement a universal system.

Nevertheless, the commission stated explicitly that it believed that it was imperative for the government to immediately establish a public system for children, expectant mothers and public assistance recipients that could be scaled up, as resources expanded, to a universal system. In fact, it said the program was one of the highest priorities among their proposals. Unfortunately, it was never established by any Liberal or Conservative government to this day.

● (1705)

However, today we have turned Canada's dentist shortage into a surplus, and thereby resolved the original impediment to implementing universal dental care.

It is time to roll up our sleeves and begin the work necessary to make this overdue health care service a reality for Canadians. I therefore call on all members to take that first step today. Let us demonstrate our commitment to universal dental care by making a down payment that immediately extends coverage to 4.3 million people, and then we will do the work to make sure every Canadian gets access to necessary dental care on a universal basis, as was originally intended over 50 years ago.

Canadians have waited long enough. It is time to finally ensure that access—

The Deputy Speaker: We are a bit over the time there. I thought the hon. member was wrapping up, and I think we were pretty close, but in any case, we will go to questions and comments.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

● (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate many of the words that the member has stated in support of a national dental program. I appreciate the fact that he made reference to the minister's mandate letter, a reference to it being in the throne speech and now the standing committee is conducting a study on it. I would have been more supportive if it had been a motion that asked us as parliamentarians to work with the different stakeholders, in particular the provinces. My colleague knows that when it comes to health care services, the provinces play a critical role in whatever it is. To have that optimum service, the provinces have to be involved.

I am wondering if my colleague could share his thoughts on whether he believes that we have to have the provinces onside, or would he suggest, if we could not get the provinces onside, that we should go it alone as a national government.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, in this country we really have a couple of different options. It is always open to the federal government to show leadership and to take the lead and extend essential health care coverage to Canadians, or it can work with the provinces and territories on a shared basis. As I pointed out in my speech, both those options are available.

The issue here before us today is that the NDP is taking a federal government initiative, a $6.9-billion tax cut, and instead targeting that tax cut and using the savings to immediately provide dental care to the 50% of Canadians in this country who do not have it now. That does not require anybody else's involvement. That is purely a federal government initiative, and the NDP is pushing the Liberal government to do this.

Ultimately, the way our health care system works is that health care is delivered at the provincial level, and the federal government provides transfer payments. It is all dependent on the federal government showing leadership and providing that funding. There is no reason that this approach could not be proceeded with as well.

I want to leave my hon. colleague with one thing to think about: Dental care is an emergency, and many Canadians are suffering now. They need leadership from the government now. They cannot wait years or decades. They have already waited five decades. The NDP says it is time to act now.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, dental care, as indicated, is very much needed in my riding of Vancouver East. During the lunar new year period, I visited many of the seniors in my community, and without a doubt, the vast majority of them said that this is their number one priority. They desperately need the government to act so that they can have the dental services and support that they need to live healthily. For some of them it is really as desperate as enjoying life, because without proper dental care they cannot eat effectively either.

The Liberals say they cannot support this motion because this matter is being studied at the health committee. I wonder how bringing this motion into place and supporting it would impede the work of the health committee. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for Vancouver East for all of her work on health care and for pushing for dental care for her constituents and all Canadians.

However, I would take that objection from my Liberal colleagues more seriously if I had not seen this already once before. They said the same thing when the NDP moved a motion in the House several years ago to move ahead with public pharmacare. They said they could not until the Standing Committee on Health issued its report. Then the committee issued its report and it called for public pharmacare, but they still did not act. Then they said that we had to wait for the Hoskins report. Those working on the Hoskins report did their work, and the Hoskins report issued a call for public pharmacare, and we are still waiting. To this day, the Prime Minister has never uttered a commitment to public pharmacare, nor has a single health minister of the three health ministers since 2015 of this Liberal government. All they keep doing is delaying, and that is after the Liberals promised public pharmacare in 1997. Forgive me if I am not going to take seriously another Liberal standing up saying, "Here's another reason Canadians have to wait before they get access to dental care."

It is time to bring in public pharmacare and public dental care now for Canadians instead of giving billions of dollars to oil companies or buying pipelines. They always seem to have money for that. It is time to put that money into the health care of Canadians.

● (1715)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Calgary Shepard. I look forward to his comments.

I have listened intently to the speeches throughout the day in this esteemed chamber. I think everyone is very passionate about the motion brought forward by our hon. NDP colleagues.

The motion states:

> That the House call on the government to change its proposed tax cuts by targeting benefits to those who earn less than $90,000 per year, and use those savings to invest in priorities that give real help to Canadians, including dental coverage for uninsured families making less than $90,000....

We can break this motion down into two parts. I agree, and I think most people in this House will agree, that we need to do more to serve the most vulnerable in our communities. I think all members have heard heartbreaking stories from their constituents. I have had constituents in my office talking about the difficulties they are facing related to dental care, health care or employment. There are a lot of important issues that we as members of the House of Commons should bring forward on behalf of our constituents. Therefore, I do not think we will hear very many people disagree with the need to have more means to help the most vulnerable in our ridings.

I am from Saskatchewan. I was an MLA in Saskatchewan for two terms and eight years. I have heard all the stories about Tommy Douglas. I know our NDP colleagues like to quote Tommy Douglas and talk about him bringing medicare forward. I believe it is one of the great advancements in Canadian history and he should be applauded for that, but he was also a very fiscally conservative individual. There are other quotes here that Mr. Douglas has often said that our hon. colleagues from the NDP do not attribute to him, but I would like to bring one forward. At one point in time, Mr. Douglas stated that if governments do not get out of debt, the decisions are made by the ones who lend the money. In other words, he was saying that, as a government, we need to have balanced budgets. That is something Mr. Douglas took very seriously, because if not, we are giving up some of our sovereignty and some of our ability to make decisions. Bringing forward public health care was very important, but he was also fiscally responsible. An NDP premier is not one of the first people I thought I would be quoting in this House. I hope my colleagues will forgive me. It is important to be fiscally responsible, because then we are able to make better decisions.

Another thing Mr. Douglas knew is we need to have a strong economy. If there is no money there to spend, we cannot spend it on our most vulnerable. That is very much something that should be brought into this motion.

We have had some very disturbing decisions made over the last few days regarding our energy sector. I understand the commitment was $5.6 billion if fully implemented. However, over the last few years we have forgone $120 billion worth of investment into our oil and gas sector, which would have paid for programs for the most vulnerable, for public schools and for public health care. I find it very alarming, to say the least, that we have a motion brought forward by opposition members talking about the need to spend money, and on the other side we have the same people trying to ensure that projects do not go forward that would pay for these programs. At some point in time, that bill has to be paid.

Two days ago, Teck Frontier withdrew its project worth $20 billion. We saw Enbridge withdraw the northern gateway project worth $7.9 billion. We saw the TransCanada Corporation withdraw the energy east project worth $16 billion. We saw Petronas withdraw the Pacific Northwest LNG project worth $36 billion. We saw Aurora LNG withdraw its project worth $28 billion. We saw Prince Rupert LNG withdraw its project worth $16 billion. We saw ExxonMobil withdraw its WCC LNG project worth $25 billion. It is unbelievable.

● (1720)

What all these have in common is that they are all private companies that wanted to invest their shareholder dollars, not public dollars. It is private dollars that they wanted to invest. When those projects go forward, they help pay for some of the programs that we want to have for our most vulnerable people.

Moving forward as a country, we need to understand that the pie is getting smaller. That means there is less for everyone. There are fewer ideas for people to bring forward programs for everyone. There is less opportunity. I have constituents who have very rare diseases that they want covered by the drug formulary. They cost a lot of money.

Where do we get the funds to pay for that? It is through private investment, through oil and gas companies, and through people investing in Canada because they have confidence that our economy is going to be strong. Right now, in the letter that was sent by Teck Frontier's CEO, that confidence to invest in our country is not there. That should be a worry for everyone in this chamber who wants to bring forward motions to spend more money on our most vulnerable, which I agree with. We need to ensure that we have the resources to do that.

I listened intently to my hon. colleague across the way. He was talking about the generic drug program. When I was an MLA, I am quite sure, coming out of the COF conference, the premiers conference, that Premier Ghiz and Premier Wall were commissioned to do a health report that brought forward the generic drug plan to make drugs more affordable for people across the country. I do not believe Premier Ghiz and Premier Wall were NDP premiers.

They were two premiers who got together and had some different philosophical ideas. They brought forward a report to ensure that cheaper generic drugs could be bought in bulk to benefit all Canadians. That is something we benefit from now.

Having people come together from different political stripes is a good thing and brings forward solutions. I am pretty happy that I was able to be a part of that. I learned a lot from Premier Wall. Working with partners is one thing that we learned as the government in Saskatchewan. I was part of the Saskatchewan Party government. That was a combination of Liberals and Conservatives in Saskatchewan coming together and forming a party to make sure that we would have good government.

I appreciate working together with people from across the aisle to bring forward good ideas, good policies and good programs, and to make sure we could be a better government for all Canadians. I believe that is why people sent us to this House.

When I think about this motion, I think about breaking it into two parts. I believe everyone in this chamber thinks that for the most vulnerable in our society, programs need to be in place to ensure that they have a better quality of life. I think everyone in this chamber would agree with that.

The other part is the financial aspect. How do we get there? Conservatives think we need to grow the pie, not just slice it up differently. We need to make the economic pie bigger. We need to ensure that we have more money and that our economy is growing so that we can bring forward these programs for all Canadians, making sure that there is a better quality of life for Canadians.

I believe that is something we need to have a very serious discussion about in this chamber going forward. I think that will happen after we are done these proceedings and are into the emergency debate. Is this a country that allows projects to be built? If it is not, then we need to have a discussion on how we are going to bring forward programs. It is going to be a more difficult discussion. There would be a much smaller pie for us to divide into programs that we want to see for our constituents.

I believe we were sent here to grow this country, to grow our economy and to make sure our children and the next generations have more benefits, more ability to have great jobs and a better quality of life than we had. Going forward, we need to have that conversation to ensure that our economy is growing. We need to make sure we have good discussions about this to ensure that we have good programs for the most vulnerable in our society and so that Canadians have a better quality of life going forward.

● (1725)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a two-part question.

The first part is around the foundation of the motion today. We are taking a proposed Liberal tax cut that, when fully implemented, would cost $6.9 billion. We are determining whether we should reduce that by targeting that tax cut at more needy Canadians and use the savings to fund dental care.

Does my hon. colleague agree with the tax cut itself? Does he believe that oral health should be covered by our public health care system, or does he think that part of the body should not be covered?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately when we start talking about Liberal tax cuts, I do not believe any of the numbers the Liberals put forward. I have not had a conversation on what numbers are true and what numbers are not. It is very difficult for me on this side of the House. They brought forward a lot of small business tax changes two summers ago. They were going to try to ensure that small businesses were hampered and were unable to do better business. When we see these proposed tax cuts, I do not believe the numbers. The Liberals always leave some room for imagination.

On the second question, the programs we can put in place to ensure people have a higher quality of life is of course important. We need to ensure we are able to fund these programs on a go-forward basis and have the ability to ensure that people who need the coverage have it. I believe all members in this chamber would find this very important and we should have a conversation about it.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Regina—Lewvan for bringing up Tommy Douglas. Maybe some day he will be on the $5 bill. We never know.

I am of the age when our school systems provided dentists and optometrists who would come to the schools. Then all of a sudden, the budgets coast to coast were squeezed and they were no longer in the school. The NDP is right in some of this, that the most vulnerable do not have the choice. They do not have the funds for dentists, optometrists and so on.

I agree with the member for Regina—Lewvan. We need to create wealth in the country to give our social programs the love they need right now, and we have not seen it under the Liberal government.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, although my colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood and I are not of the same vintage, when I was in elementary school, for the first couple of years dentists would come in and check our teeth. However, because the provincial government was so far in debt, those programs were taken away. I remember getting the fluoride treatments and being checked.

This is an example of when the economy shrinks and the government does not have the money to run these programs, we lose them. I think that ties in very nicely with the point of my presentation, that we need a strong economy and we need to grow the economy so these services, once they are there, are not taken away.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the previous question, not about the blinders the Conservatives have with respect to what is actually happening in the economy but on the schools.

When we talk about these national programs, in particular in the area of health care, it is very important for us to recognize the provinces play a dominant role in that whole area.

There is a need for the national government to work with provinces and territories. When we look at school divisions, they are in essence creatures of provincial legislation. Through the school divisions, very good quality dental services could be provided. It is a great gateway that could ultimately complement a national dental program in the future.

Would the member not agree that we should be allowing the standing committee to do the fine work it can do and see where that ultimately takes us? If this is something we can make happen, why would we not do it? However, we first need to do the homework.

● (1730)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I am so excited my colleague said that we had blinders on with respect to our economy. He and his colleagues across the way have been bringing up numbers that just do not add up.

Canada's unemployment is higher than the G7 average and higher than the U.K., Germany and Japan. Growth is flat. The United States outgrew Canada in the last three or four years by 50%. Incomes are stalled. Since the Liberals came to office, middle-class incomes have been flat, rising $35 a year compared to $450 under the years of the Stephen Harper government. People are coming up short. Poor incomes and rising costs have driven insolvency rates to 10-year highs. There are more people going bankrupt in Canada than ever before. We do—

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to be joining the debate on the NDP motion. I again thank my constituents for sending me here to represent them in this cathedral of our democracy and to speak to the motion.

When I was looking over both the text of the motion and listening to the debate so far, I like the first part, but I have a problem with the second part. The first part reads:

> That the House call on the government to change its proposed tax cuts by targeting benefits to those who earn less than $90,000 per year, and use those savings to invest in priorities that give real help to Canadians...

The first part is a rich mouthful. There is a lot there for Conservatives to agree with. We want to see more tax savings for Canadians with more reasonable means, people who are working class or trying to get into the middle class, a term that the government cannot define although it has a minister responsible for it.

It is the second part I have a problem with. It says, "including dental coverage for uninsured families making less than $90,000 per year."

That gives me a heavy groan. That is a Yiddish proverb, "A rich mouthful, a heavy groan". The motion is exactly that.

I could get completely behind the first part. It is rich in a lot of things I would like to see done for Canadians earning less than $90,000.

However, it gives me a heavy groan when I see after the comma what is basically an intervention into a provincial jurisdiction. I am sure every Bloc member will appreciate this, because it is a provincial jurisdiction. It is up to our provinces to provide this. The Alberta government provides 21 different public service plans in health care, including drug plans and mental health plans that are created for our residents.

Let us talk numbers. My colleague who spoke before me talked about numbers. We have a $26.6-billion deficit. We are accumulating debt for future generations to pay off.

If we go back to budget 2015, it expected $263.2 billion worth of spending. Budget 2019 said that by the 2022-23 fiscal year, we would be spending $358.4 billion. That is an incredible increase in financial resources that the Government of Canada is expending. We do not have a surplus in any of those years. It is all debt and deficit spending.

This is where I start having problems. When I look at these numbers, in budgets 2015, 2019 and 2020, we would be spending about $302.6 billion. Budget 2019 actually showed that we were spending $329.4 billion. We have a structural deficit in the country. The government is spending more money on programs than it is bringing in.

I want tax cuts, especially for lower-income Canadians. It is targeted at the right place. The NDP has it right at the beginning of the motion and then completely loses the story on the back end when we look at the numbers and what is going on with public finances.

I have looked at the main estimates and old age security payments for 2019-20 are $42.7 billion. It is one of the biggest programs in government right now. Guaranteed income supplement payments are $12.8 billion. Looking at these numbers, what strikes me the most is that in the past two years old age security has gone up by $4.5 billion in spending. That curve does not go down; it just keeps getting bigger and bigger.

This is usually targeted toward low-income seniors who are receiving these payments. Obviously, we want to do right by our seniors who helped build this great country and set us on the right path to build an even greater country. Whatever we can do to make Canada better is something for which we should be striving. The problem is that we need to bring in enough revenue to pay for all these things.

The government in the last little while has announced $41.3 billion of new spending over five years, unbudgeted in any way. It is absolutely ridiculous. How can we make right by people?

The previous member from Saskatchewan mentioned Roy Romanow. He was on a West of Centre podcast. He talked about fiscal responsibility, ensuring savings and thrift in government. These are all things with which I agree. Those Prairie NDPers are cut from a different cloth. It is a cloth that I sometimes agree with, not always but sometimes, especially at the provincial level. On the podcast, he said that when he took over the Saskatchewan government, it had $14 billion in debt. He talked about the reality.

● (1735)

He said that if we do not get out of debt when we have a deficit and are accumulating more debt, decisions will be made by those who lend out money: bankers. They will make the decisions for us. Bondholders will be making public-policy decisions for us, because as credit ratings begin to downgrade, as the Moody's of the world, financial investors and speculators start making judgment calls on whether we are running our finances correctly, they will constrain our ability to make the right decisions for the residents in our provinces.

I will give the House an example from my province of Alberta.

In 1990, when Premier Ralph Klein took over government, there was a terrible situation: a massive deficit, a large volume of debt. At that time, he tasked Stockwell Day and Jim Dinning, successive treasurers, to get him back on track. It required the closure of entire government departments. They were not doing this because they had some great love for putting civil servants out of work. They did so because those who were lending them money told them they would not lend out one more penny. They hit the debt wall.

What happens when we hit the debt wall? We are incapable of borrowing and of paying debt interest. When debt interest becomes the second-largest line item in our budget, we have a spending problem and we have to stop. Those who suffer the most when those decisions have to be made are those who earn less than $90,000. They are lucky if they have an income. Usually they are losing their jobs at that moment.

There came an oil and gas boom on the royalty side, specifically for natural gas, that helped Alberta get itself out of debt. By 2002-03, Alberta had paid its debt in full. There was a great sign that Ralph Klein used to hold. He was proud of it. That is an important image to remember. It has happened to provinces before, and there is no reason why it cannot happen to the federal government.

One of my constituents sent me an email about the unconstitutional carbon tax. The Court of the Queen's Bench in Alberta has decided to call it a constitutional Trojan horse. We all knew this from the start. It was just an attempt to get more revenue into government coffers.

I remember this discussion at finance committee and asking a question about it, the same question that Leon in my riding asked: When are Albertans going to get a complete refund of every single dollar they have spent on this unconstitutional carbon tax in their province? I am not talking about the rebate. I am talking about 100% of the cost that was imposed, basically illegally, on Albertans, in my home province. That is what I want to know from the government. I want to hear the Liberals answer this question.

Difficult decisions were made by Roy Romanow, who was mentioned by the previous member. Premier Romanow had to close 52 rural hospitals. He said this on the podcast and I had to look it up afterward. I am guessing that did not make him a very popular premier, which he readily admitted afterwards, but service delivery had obviously changed in health care and those were difficult decisions to make. Those are not decisions I want to see a future government constrained by because bondholders, bankers and speculators are betting on whether Canada can pay off its debt and betting on whether Canada will ever get into a position where the deficit has been reduced to zero and we are on track to returning some of the money.

There is no great recession going on right now worldwide. There is no reason we cannot return to a surplus budget. There is only one political reason for it: The Liberal government is incapable of stopping its spending.

To return to my Yiddish proverb, "a rich mouthful", the motion gets this right. People earning under $90,000 a year deserve greater attention from the government to lighten their tax burden. Working-class families, single-income families and single-parent families do not need to pay more in taxes. They should be paying less. The problem is that establishing a new government program now, after $41.3 billion of more spending, is the wrong way to go.

I hope other members in the House will reflect upon these numbers. We are in a bad fiscal situation. Eventually, the big companies that do the ratings will take away our AAA credit rating. I do not want to be here when a government has to announce large budgetary cutbacks.

Just to repeat, this is provincial jurisdiction. It is up to a province to decide how it wishes to spend its money. It is not for the federal government to intervene in what should otherwise be completely up to the provinces to determine.

● (1740)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was in the House when the Harper Conservative government ran deficits every single year from 2008 to 2015. It ran seven straight successive deficits. As a matter of fact, most of the debt that is piled up in this country was acquired under Conservative governments and Liberal governments. The Department of Finance did a study a few years back and found that per year of government in this country at the provincial and federal levels, the party that balanced the budget the highest percentage of the time was the New Democrats. That is a fact of this country.

I want to challenge the member on the idea that health care is purely provincial. The federal government, through the Canada Health Act, sets out principles and then negotiates with the provinces. If the provinces deliver health care and meet the requirements of the act, they are entitled to transfer payments.

Does my friend agree that we can do the same thing with dental care simply by expanding our system to cover this neglected part of our body that has been excluded for no reason other than a historical anomaly? Does he not understand or agree that dental care was always intended to be part of our medicare system, going right back to the 1964 Hall report? Can he explain why he does not support having dental care covered like every other part of our body is?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, thankfully the great citizens of this country have never found it necessary to put a federal NDP government in charge of our public treasury, and I hope it stays that way. That way, the New Democrats can never pretend they had a chance to balance anything.

This is an area of provincial jurisdiction. The provinces never want to see the federal government intervene directly into it.

Mr. Don Davies: So is health care.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: I hear the member heckling me because he does not like my answer, but that is simply the matter.

We have a $26.6-billion deficit. In my home province of Alberta, diagnostic services are a private area. They are paid for publicly but are privately administered. The Province of Quebec does it differently. It does this the way it wants to. It is the same thing in every single province. Each provincial government runs a health service, and provinces can determine how they wish to operate it and how they wish to provide the services. That is the way this great Confederation of ours is supposed to work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and to the Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to give my hon. colleague from Alberta, a man who is very well known in Quebec because he spent a good part of his childhood living there, the opportunity to talk about how Quebec sees dental care.

Is this an area of shared jurisdiction or does it fall under Quebec's jurisdiction?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question.

With regard to his question about Quebec, I do not know whether the province offers this service to its residents or not. That is a choice that Quebeckers need to make with their provincial government.

What I do know is that, in my province of Alberta, we have a provincial government that can decide when and how to provide a given service, such as dental care. The situation is different in my province.

When I was very young and lived in Quebec, dental care was offered to those aged 18 and under, and the government paid for it through the health care system.

Of course, things are done differently in my province. However, this is a decision that every province has to make.

If we look at the federal government's fiscal situation, it is clear that we simply do not have the money for another federal program imposed on our provinces.

● (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway pointed out, very correctly, that the Conservatives actually have the worst record of balancing budgets and paying down debt. The reason for this is very simple: They love handouts. They will throw billions of dollars at the private sector, in the same way that the Liberals do.

However, when it comes to regular people and working families, the Conservatives and the Liberals have no money left. Here we have a proposal that basically changes a tax cut that helps people who earn six-figure incomes. Instead of putting money in their pockets, this would ensure that the four and a half million people who do not have access to dental care have basic dental care.

Why are the Conservatives so opposed to helping support working families?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, first, the easy answer is that the math does not agree. I know that is difficult for the member to accept.

Second, as I remember, it was his leader at the time, Jack Layton, who demanded more spending and even larger deficits and more debt. It was a deal the New Democrats had signed with the other opposition parties to topple the government. They could just look back to the same document at the—

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

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I am proud to support the motion, as it would help the majority of people in my riding. What will not help that majority is the current Liberal tax cut.

The PBO found that the Liberal tax proposal will cost $6.9 billion annually when it is fully implemented. The largest benefits would go to individuals making at least $113,000, who would get $325 per year. This would not help the majority of people who live in my riding.

In London—Fanshawe, the average income for an individual in 2015 was a little over $30,000. The average household income was just under $60,000. This cut would not benefit those people. Also 47% of people throughout Canada would not benefit from this tax cut.

This is typical Liberal policy that the government has put forward. I can look to the previous choices the Liberal government has made. There was $14 billion in corporate tax cuts announced in the 2018 fall economic statement. In June 2019, the PBO stated that Canadian corporations may be avoiding up to $25 billion a year in federal income taxes. The Liberal government could go after this. The Conservatives have been talking about increasing the government's coffers. The Liberals could do this, but they refuse.

From CRA's own records, we see that the wealthy and corporations hold at least 9% of Canada's total financial wealth offshore, resulting in an annual loss of at least $8 billion in government revenues. What is evident is the Liberals' determination to give the wealthiest Canadians even more of a share of that wealth.

It is clear that this Liberal plan would not help my constituents. However, what would help them is dental care coverage. Statistically, we know that every dollar spent by a government on a social program is worth five times that much to the economy. The dental program that we are proposing would save households $1,200 per year.

Canadians spend approximately $12 billion a year on dental services overall. Some of this is recovered through insurance, but a great deal comes out of people's pockets. In fact, six million Canadians avoid going to the dentist or receiving care because the cost is so prohibitive. Besides tooth decay, gum disease and tooth loss, a person's oral health is linked to other illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease. Inflammation seems to be associated with these diseases because bacteria flourish in plaque.

Publicly funded dental care programs need to be universal and provide essential care to those most in need, including children in low-income families, seniors living in institutional care, people with disabilities, the homeless, refugees and immigrants, indigenous people and those on social assistance.

All provinces and territories pay for an in-hospital dental surgery and some have prevention programs for children. Also, a number of ad hoc and charitable programs provide dental care to the poor. Many of them run out of Canada's 10 schools of dentistry, but these programs are a drop in the bucket compared to what is needed.

Canada has one of the lowest rates of publicly funded dental care in the world. According to a report by the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, it is only 6% of total spending. Even the U.S. has a higher public share, at 7.9%. Many European countries include dental care in their universal health programs. In Finland, for example, 79% of dental care is publicly funded.

The cost to the health care system overall is significant as well. Imagine a patient with an untreated tooth infection. At the low end, a trip to the hospital ER for dental pain costs the health care system $124. If the person needs to be hospitalized, that cost jumps to over $7,000 per visit. This is hard to justify considering this could have been treated earlier at a fraction of the cost if the infected tooth had been removed. It is only logical.

Many people without dental health coverage live with pain and discomfort to the point that they end up in the emergency room to have a tooth pulled or, worse, end up dealing with other illnesses linked to their poor oral health. What are the costs to our health care system to admit people to the hospital for something more severe when they could have been proactively visiting their dentist? Canadians take sick leave, which costs the Canadian economy about $16.6 billion annually. We could create a healthier Canadian economy with healthier Canadians.

● (1750)

These are just the health aspects, but what about the social aspects? Oral pain, missing teeth or oral infection can influence the way a person speaks, eats and socializes. These problems can reduce a person's quality of life by affecting their physical, mental and social well-being. People with bad teeth can be stigmatized, both in social settings and in finding employment.

In many conversations about the need for a universal dental care program, our leader, the member for Burnaby South, has spoken specifically about a woman he met on the campaign trail who was missing several teeth. She was embarrassed to speak to him. She told him that she found it difficult to find a job that paid more than minimum wage and that she would love to advance in her field, but felt her oral health and appearance were a hindrance.

I can tell members that when I am in my constituency and when I was on those doorsteps, I ran into this situation all the time. So often I engaged with folks in London who faced that exact same problem. Too often we treat the idea of dental care as a choice, and if a parent or an individual cannot afford care for themselves or their family, they are judged, but the problem lies in our system of care, or, to be more realistic, the lack of that system.

Dental care cannot continue to be treated as an unnecessary cosmetic procedure, privately funded and only for the lucky few, and excluded from medicare. Health care must take a full body approach. We cannot have a society in which only the rich are allowed to have good teeth and good health. That is not the Canada I want.

We know that the Liberals have no trouble working for the richest. They recently spent public money on big, profitable, well-connected companies like Loblaws and Mastercard and on subsidies to the oil and gas sector, but now it is time to show up for the working class, for families who need that change.

New Democrats have a solution. Instead of spending $6 billion of federal revenue on something that excludes 47% of Canadians, a huge majority of people in my riding, and only gives marginal amounts to those who earn under $90,000, an investment of $1.6 billion of that program can help everyone. This program would give immediate help to 4.3 million people and save our health care system tens of millions of dollars every year. That is why I am proud to support this motion.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was very interested in the great speech by the hon. member. However, I wonder if the hon. member would be willing to grant me that when we reduce taxes on businesses, businesses can actually create jobs. Some of those business owners may earn in excess of $90,000, but it is when we invest back into our economy that we allow business owners to create jobs. Is it not also beneficial to reduce taxes on businesses as well?

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, this particular Liberal tax cut is not a corporate tax cut. This is an individual tax cut. However, the problem is the same, in that it is something that puts more wealth into the hands of those who are already wealthy.

As I had stipulated, we know that providing social problems on a universal basis actually helps everybody. When we talk about increasing help to individuals who earn $90,000 or less, we are talking about increasing benefits to them by $1,200 a year. I am pretty sure that there are people in his riding who would really appreciate that program.

● (1755)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my NDP colleague whether she believes, as I do, that health falls under provincial and not federal jurisdiction.

What is more, why is the NDP of 2020 distancing itself from the Sherbrooke declaration, which was made by former NDP leader Jack Layton in 2005? Under that declaration, Quebec would have the right to opt out with full compensation, no strings attached, when a law is passed in an area that falls under Quebec's jurisdiction.

[*English*]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, I always love to talk about the late Hon. Jack Layton. He is a hero of mine, and I know that Jack was one of the fiercest advocates for a full body approach to health care, whether talking about health care, pharmacare or something like dental care. It is what New Democrats have been talking about for a very long time and have been pushing governments to do.

I believe that health care is about both a federal commitment and a provincial commitment, and it does not have to be limited. I certainly believe in the Canada Health Act in terms of what it can achieve across the board universally in that scope.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I think this is the first time that I have had occasion to direct a question to the hon. member for London—Fanshawe. Knowing both her mother and her father, I would welcome her to the House and say that if I were your mom, I would be busting my buttons.

Sorry: not your mother, Madam Speaker, but the hon. member's mother.

I certainly intend to vote for this motion, as does the Green Party. However, I find some imprecision in the way the motion is worded, and I just would love clarity around it. It says “on such things as dental care”. What are the other things? What would be the actual amount of money that could be set aside by this change in the tax regime?

I would ask the hon. member to enlighten us. Can we really do more than dental care? Why is it “such things as” dental care, just to understand the motion more fully?

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's comments. Certainly, she is a proud mother and he is a proud father, and I do them honour, hopefully, by taking my spot in this House and talking about something that they both, as New Democrats, have fought for for a very long time.

In terms of the wording and the specifics, I know that it has been estimated that $1.6 billion could be saved. I believe that with the implementation of this program, around $800 million would be costed, so that anything additional could go to other services and an expansion of that program.

Again, this is about taking care of people head to toe. This is about the full body approach that we need to take to health care to be proactive and to save a lot of money down the road.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague for her inspiring speech, and I look forward to hearing my colleagues' questions very shortly.

I would like to begin by proposing that we remember what our role is as representatives of our constituents. I think our primary focus must always be on trying to create a better, fairer, more progressive world where people can live in dignity, reach their full potential, hold meaningful jobs with good working conditions and have a good quality of life that makes life worth living. We always need to keep in mind that we are here to improve the quality of life of our constituents, to create a world with more justice and dignity for all.

We in Canada are fortunate enough to have had a universal public health care system that is accessible to all for many years. It is an invaluable system that many people fought for, including the NDP, but also members of other political parties. Those people fought to have a system where everyone is treated equally when they become ill. When illness strikes, medical treatment is not provided just because an individual has a credit card or a bank account, but because they are a citizen of a country where a collective decision was made to treat people without discriminating on the basis of money, fortune or wealth.

Unfortunately, our universal public health care system was not accompanied by a universal public pharmacare system. We are the only country in the world where this incongruous situation exists. I believe we will have other discussions about pharmacare, which will greatly improve the lives of Canadians and significantly cut costs.

Our universal public health care system is not perfect. The motion presented today by my party would address one of the problems. At some point, the human body began to be viewed as a puzzle, with some parts being insured and others not. If someone has a heart attack, they get in an ambulance and go to the hospital. If they need bypass surgery, it is covered. If they need open heart surgery, they will get it because the heart is covered by health insurance. If they break a leg climbing a tree and need a cast, the leg is covered. However, if there is a problem in a person's mouth, if they have trouble with their teeth, if they have a cavity or need a root canal, well, good luck. That is not covered. They have to get out their chequebook or credit card.

Our system is flawed. The human body has been separated into various parts that are valued differently for insurance purposes. It is pretty odd. Dental care is extremely important to people. Millions of people in Canada cannot or will not have their dental problems looked after because they cannot afford to. About one in five people in Canada avoids going to the dentist because of cost. Does that make sense to anyone? Can we justify that to the people we represent, to our constituents? I do not think so.

During the last election campaign, I talked about this with people at their homes, in parks and in restaurants. They realized right away that it makes no sense that the quality of care we get for some parts of our bodies, like our mouths and teeth, depends on our wealth and good fortune. We value equality, and that is not equal. As a progressive, that is something I will fight.

As parliamentarians, whether we are in the government or in an opposition party, we have to make choices. From the beginning of the 43rd Parliament, the Liberal Party has made a very clear choice by proposing another tax cut that once again favours the wealthy. This is not the first time, either. The Liberals did the same thing in the last Parliament when they proposed a middle-class tax cut that did not give one cent back to people who earn less than $45,000. For the Liberals, people who earn $35,000 or $40,000 a year are not rich enough to be part of the middle class, so they got nothing. This year, the Liberals are proposing another tax cut which, let's face it, is an expenditure. It is money that is no longer going into the government's coffers. We are missing out on a certain amount of revenue, with no guaranteed results to show for it. We are not guaranteed better services for the public or a better quality of life.

● (1800)

This completely irresponsible tax cut is going to cost us nearly $7 billion. The tax cut that the Liberal government is proposing is worth $6.9 billion, and once again, it will benefit the wealthiest Canadians.

The biggest benefits, which will save people $300 a year or more, are limited to those who earn at least $113,000 a year.

The Liberals are saying that this will save the average family $600 a year. Only individuals who earn at least $143,000 will be eligible for that $600 a year, which is the maximum savings provided by this tax cut. The people in our society who are going to save $600 are the ones who earn nearly $150,000.

Personally, I do not see this as a progressive measure. I do not think it will help those who are struggling and those who are the most disadvantaged.

The NDP put forward a proposal that appears in the motion moved today, specifically, that anyone who earns more than $90,000 a year will not get a tax cut. Like everyone else, the first tax brackets will benefit, but above $90,000, there will be no tax cut. This measure will save Canada $1.6 billion.

It is not very complicated after that. The money that was going to the rich would be transferred to a new public dental care program that will cost between $800 million and $850 million a year, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. We save twice as much as we need to give additional coverage to 4 million Canadians, to people in the 338 ridings represented here, to people who are suffering and who cannot afford the care they need.

A society has to choose whether to take care of people or to give handouts to the rich. It is important to look at what we are facing today and think about what choice we have to make to help our constituents as much as possible.

We want public dental care to be accessible to people who earn less than $90,000 a year. Let us keep it simple. People who earn $90,000 or more do not get a tax cut, and people who earn less than $90,000 a year have a new social program that will make a real difference in their lives. The program will improve their health and will probably save our health care system money because it will prevent illnesses that can get worse when someone does not have access to care. We need to keep this in mind to ensure we are making the right decision.

Many years ago, we made the good decision to develop a public, universal health care system. It was such a good decision that candidates like Bernie Sanders are desperately trying to institute this system in the United States, knowing that it would be the right thing to do and a positive social change.

Our proposal would cost less than $1 billion a year and would be funded from an irresponsible tax cut that helps only the wealthiest Canadians.

Some people will say this encroaches on provincial jurisdiction. We have heard that one before. Since I am going to be asked the question anyway, I will remind hon. members that we have the principles of the Canada Health Act, that there are health transfers to the provinces and that there will necessarily be negotiations with the provinces to see whether or not they decide to get on board. Then, it might be worthwhile for Quebec to get $250 million to $350 million to allow Quebeckers most in need to receive dental care.

I think a responsible Quebec government is going to sit at the table, like every other province, and look at what can be done.

The Sherbrooke declaration is indeed still part of the NDP platform, and Quebec's right to full compensation would inevitably be included in legislation. However, what we have before us today is not a bill or a federal-provincial negotiation. It is a motion. It is a direction that parliamentarians are giving to the government to tell it that this is important and that it should move in that direction.

I want to reassure everyone. If this works out, it will not be a federal public servant playing around in people's mouths, it will be a dentist, and that dentist will probably be paid and hired by a clinic or hospital in Quebec, if you are a Quebecker.

● (1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is critically important to recognize that to optimize any sort of a national dental program, we need provinces and territories onside. I believe that is indisputable. We have to do that in order to optimize the program.

I am not convinced the New Democrats have done their work. Can they provide any feedback to the House in terms of what provinces they have consulted? Do they already have a sense of which provinces would endorse this? Would the member agree we need to work with provinces and territories to have the optimal program? If that is not possible, is the NDP suggesting the national government would go on its own in providing a national program?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his interesting question.

I come from the union and labour relations community, where collective agreements and contracts are renegotiated. One thing is certain: in 100% of the cases, we do not know how the negotiations will end before they begin.

Some provinces would dearly like to see an increase in federal health transfers so that they can provide better services to their residents. Statistics Canada showed that over 35% of Canadians and Quebeckers do not have dental insurance, which means that one in three people in Canada do not have easy access to dental care when they need it.

Some provinces may be more reluctant, which is normal. However, I would like to be able to say that this is the direction that we intend to take and the way we want to take care of people in our provinces and here in Canada.

● (1810)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, indeed one in five Canadians avoids going to see a dentist. That is 6.8 million people across the country who do not really have access to dental services because of costs.

In context, in a riding like Vancouver East, which tends to be a very low-income riding, I have met many constituents who are worried about applying for a job because their teeth are in terrible shape. They have not had dental services their whole lives. Imagine what a program like this would do for people like them. Not only would it help people's health, but it would build their self-esteem and also help them to get into the job market.

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To that end, I really do not understand why the Liberals and the Conservatives are resisting this program. It would be paid for if the government adjusted its tax structure so that people who make $90,000 or less receive the tax changes but anybody above that amount would not.

I wonder if the member can further elaborate on the importance of this program.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very relevant question.

It is true that having bad teeth is usually the most obvious outward sign that makes it possible to differentiate between social classes. Poor dental health has an impact on every aspect of a person's life. Everyone can understand how that could make it harder for someone to get a job and cause problems in their social and love lives. Let us be frank. In real life, having bad teeth causes problems. People will see the difference and this will create barriers in every aspect of the person's social and socio-economic life.

Yes, this is a good proposal. We need a tax system that is based on true progressivism to ensure that the wealthiest members of our society are able to help and to pay for the services of those who really need them.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am happy to hear from my NDP colleague.

The Bloc Québécois recognizes that health, including dental health, is a major concern for all Quebeckers. This issue has been one of the Bloc Québécois's key demands going way back. Currently, the federal health transfer goes up by 3% per year, but we want it to go up by 6% per year to make up lost ground and bring the federal contribution up to at least 25% of health care costs. Originally, the federal government contributed 50%. We fully agree with that idea.

Still, the problem is that the federal government has to respect provincial jurisdiction to ensure the money will be used efficiently. We must avoid contradictions. My colleague just said that his party might have forgotten to include Quebec's right to opt out with full compensation and no strings attached in its motion. I am pleased to hear that. I would have liked to see that stated explicitly in the NDP motion, but I can understand that it was just an oversight.

That said, the Bloc Québécois cannot vote for a motion like this, for the reasons I just explained. The money needs to be transferred to Quebec with no compensation and no strings attached so that Quebec can decide how to use it.

Dental health is a major concern for us. We share that concern.

● (1815)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, I am glad to hear that the Bloc Québécois supports the general idea. I would have liked their support here in the House, but I understand that we have our differences.

The Conservatives slashed health transfers and the Liberals maintained those cuts, but our parties agree that health transfers need to go up by at least 6%.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and the recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, February 26, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to call it 6:30 p.m. at this time, so we could begin the emergency debate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

EMERGENCY DEBATE

[*English*]

CANCELLATION OF TECK FRONTIER MINE PROJECT

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The House will now proceed to the consideration of the motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the Teck Frontier mine project.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC) moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

She said: Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I rise tonight to address a national economic emergency, the cancellation of the $20-billion Teck Frontier oil sands opportunity, even though the expert joint panel recommended it in the national public interest seven months ago. The cancellation of Teck Frontier will cost Alberta alone 10,000 badly needed jobs and will cost all 14 local and supportive indigenous communities their long-sought-after agreements with financial, education and skills training opportunities. It will eliminate the potential for $70 billion in revenue to all three levels of government for services and programs for all Canadians.

People may think oil and gas is isolated to Alberta and Saskatchewan, but the energy sector as a whole is the largest single private sector investor in the entire Canadian economy. B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Atlantic Canada and all of the territories have onshore and offshore oil and gas resources, some stranded and some not, with related industries at various degrees.

Canada should be proud to be home to the third-largest oil reserves in the world. Canadians should also know the reality that 97.3% of it is in the oil sands, so Canada's oil future is dependent on the future of the oil sands. Every one oil sands job creates five jobs in other sectors in other provinces.

Ontario, Quebec and B.C. companies are the biggest suppliers to the oil sands. In 2017, oil sands companies, even after all the losses, spent $1.9 billion on goods and services from over 1,100 Ontario companies. Here is the alarming part. That was a 45% drop from what was spent in Ontario in 2014, before the Liberals were elected and launched their plan to "phase out the oil sands", in the Prime Minister's words. In 2014, nine of every 10 full-time jobs created in Canada were made in Alberta, offering opportunities to everyone across the country and the world, driven by a thriving energy sector. I think most Ontarians would be surprised to learn that the contribution from oil and gas businesses to Ontario's economy is more than half of the contribution of the automotive industry. Over the next 10 years, oil and gas could generate $12 billion in tax revenues for programs and services Ontarians value.

The livelihoods of many Quebeckers also depend on the oil sands, where approximately 400 companies are direct suppliers to the industry in Alberta. The federal tax revenue generated from the incomes of those multi-generational Albertans and Albertans by choice working in the province's energy sector is shared right across the whole country. As my Atlantic Canadian family members and friends remind me, a rising tide lifts all boats.

In 2018, Canada's oil and gas sector still contributed seven times that of the auto manufacturing sector and 15 times that of the aerospace sector to Canada's GDP, even after the colossal drop in investment and activity. No Albertan and no Conservative wants to stand in the way of any other Canadian province, territory or industry. We want all to thrive. However, the attacks by the Liberals on oil and gas, their anti-resource, anti-business bill, Bill C-69, their oil shipping ban bill, Bill C-48, the drilling ban, the development prohibitions, the Liberal fuel standard, layers of new taxes, red tape, and ongoing and escalating uncertainty, are actually all attacks on all of Canada's economy.

Nearly $200 billion in oil and gas projects have been cancelled or stalled, and 200,000 Canadian oil and gas workers have lost their jobs since 2015, a flight of capital that is the biggest loss of energy investment and jobs in any comparable time frame in more than seven decades. Teck's cancellation is the 11th major multi-billion-dollar mega oil and gas project to be withdrawn, and the latest in the list of 18 companies that have cancelled or frozen their Canadian energy assets in the same time frame. To put it in context, these numbers are equivalent to Canada having lost both the entire automotive and aerospace sectors combined in Canada. That would rightfully be considered a national economic catastrophe and a severe crisis by every member of every party in this House of Commons, and it has been going on in Alberta for years.

Canadian-founded juggernauts like Encana and TransCanada are removing "Canada" from their name and moving out of Canada. Drilling companies like Akita, Trinidad, Ensign, Savanna, Citadel and Precision Drilling have all moved their drilling rigs, their expertise and their world-class skills to the United States.

Let me make clear the disproportionate impact of the attacks on the oil sands by the Liberal government on Alberta.

As of 2018, capital investment in the sector fell by half, more than in the last seven decades, and the oil sands development in particular has experienced an even sharper drop in investment of almost 70%.

Whereas most provinces showed a decrease in people on EI as of January 2019, Alberta saw a major increase.

● (1820)

Business bankruptcies in Alberta were up 28% between August 2017 and August 2018. Business insolvencies in Alberta have skyrocketed by more than 70% from their 2015 lows, compared to a 13.5% decrease on average for the country as a whole over the same time period. Real estate vacancies and food bank use are both at record highs.

Albertans wonder why oil and gas job losses and all the related social consequences, such as suicides, family breakdowns and crime, do not seem to be occupying the permanent attention of national media and commentators. The cancellation of Teck just adds to an already existing pattern of crisis and it has been escalating since 2015.

As recently as February 2019, Devon Energy announced it hired advisers to help sell off its oil sands assets and later sold its Canadian operations to CNRL. The CEO said the sale was part of the company's "transformation to a U.S. oil growth business". Month after month it was the same in 2019.

Imperial Oil says it is slowing down the development of the $2.6-billion Aspen oil sands project due to market uncertainty and competitiveness barriers.

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Trident Exploration said it would cease operations. It left 94 people without work and a large number of oil and gas assets with no owner, including over 3,000 wells, 240 facilities and 500 pipelines.

Later, Husky Energy cut 370 jobs after announcing it would cut capital spending by 10%.

Perpetual Energy then announced it had cut 25% of its workforce.

Here is the deal: Albertans cannot see a light at the end of the tunnel. The cancellation of Teck Frontier represents a growing crisis of investor confidence overall in the fairness, predictability, independence and certainty of Canada's regulatory system, policy framework and the economy overall.

Teck invested $1 billion over nine years while meeting every requirement during a multi-jurisdictional rigorous review and was approved. In the months since Liberals moved the goalposts, the environment minister said the political approval depended on Teck's capacity to be net zero by 2050. Teck took that unprecedented step of self-imposing that exact goal far beyond the already world-leading standards of Canada and the industry average, not a regulatory requirement and found nowhere in federal law. Teck also committed to recycling 90% of the water used in processing and generating half the emissions of the oil sands industry average.

The Alberta government even agreed to adopt a 100-megatonne oil sands emissions cap to remove all the Liberals' excuses 48 hours before Teck's decision to cancel Frontier over public safety concerns, political risk and policy uncertainty in Canada became public. Teck's other assets are in unstable South American countries.

We all know the truth here. In the last couple of weeks, Liberal cabinet ministers hinted publicly that they might delay past the February 27 deadline and that they were considering any and all information, presumably new or different from the evidence, science, technical, environmental and economic merits that actual experts already evaluated. Liberal MPs spoke out and promoted petitions and admitted most of the caucus was against it.

Is it really any wonder why the whole world is looking at Canada and wondering whether any major resource project can be proposed or actually built here ever again?

Make no mistake, Canada's oil and gas is produced with the highest environmental and social standards in the world, literally second to none with an environmental performance index of 25, compared to places like Nigeria with an EPI of 100 or Saudi Arabia with an EPI of 86. This is what is so crazy about what the Liberals are doing.

Canadian oil sands producers lead the way. They have reduced emissions per barrel by 32% since 1990 compared to resources of similar kind around the world. They are the biggest private sector Canadian investors in clean tech in Canada and world leaders in R&D and innovation. Canadian energy and the oil sands can be the future, not the sunset, and it should be for Canada and for the world.

A painful truth is that this loss also represents an escalating national unity crisis. Western Canadians see political double standards for oil and gas, exemptions and blind eyes turned to projects, industries, exports in other provinces and foreign oil imports.

A strong Alberta means a strong Canada. It should be unthinkable for a sitting Prime Minister to attack the lifeblood and the primary industries of any Canadian province. Can we imagine a Prime Minister saying he was going to stand up to big auto in Ontario or big manufacturing in Quebec? Canadians would be rightfully outraged and so would Conservatives. It seems like in this House of Commons, it is only Conservatives who would be outraged at divisive political attacks on the lifeblood and industries of particular provinces and regions in our country.

The Liberal Prime Minister decided his political gains were more important than the unity of our nation. Their electoral result was as expected and all the Prime Minister did was give his empty words and here we are in a national and economic crisis today.

● (1825)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's remarks, but I am worried that this debate is going to fan the flames of rhetoric on both sides.

As a member of Parliament on this Teck Frontier issue, I supported this and approved the proposal. In terms of supporting it, I also realize that there are already 20 oil sands projects in the mill with approval. This one probably will not come into being unless things really change within the next 10 years. The problem we see on that side, and on this to a certain extent, is the way it is viewed out there in Alberta.

I have a lot of Alberta friends. I spend a lot of time there. A lot of people from the Maritimes worked in the oil industry and still do. In fact, 25 flights a week used to go out of Moncton to Alberta, and they are not now.

Trying to blame everything on the Prime Minister is not the answer. Does the member really think that the price of oil in the market had nothing to do with this decision? It requires $92 a barrel of oil for it to be successful. Oil is nowhere near there and looks like it is not going to get there.

Let us have some real facts on the table here. The Teck company made the decision themselves, and the price of oil is—

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

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, let me say this to my dear friend. As a first-generation, born-and-raised Albertan with a deceased mother from Newfoundland and a father from Nova Scotia, let me tell him that I know very well both what the energy sector in Alberta has contributed to the country and also how hard it is on families and on communities when they have to go other places to find work.

Atlantic Canadians, Albertans and people all around the country and all around the world have built our province and built our industry together. Conservatives will not let the divisive Prime Minister take it down.

Now I take this personally because I started part of my public policy career in the oil sands business unit in the department of energy. I was part of the effort to get the world to recognize the oil sands as a recoverable resource, as recently as 2006, with existing technologies. At that time it was high risk, capital intensive and the entire world said that it could not be done. Do colleagues know who did say it could be done? It was Albertans and Albertans by choice. We are proud of that contribution, but does this member—

● (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Do you have more questions?

Hon. Wayne Easter: No. Give her more time.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, what is ridiculous is that that member would stand in this House and try to pretend that multi-billion-dollar companies making multi-billion-dollar, high-risk, capital-intensive, long-term investments actually base their decision on the spot price of oil on a daily basis. I mean, how ridiculous. Are these guys actually serious? In this country this is the most—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, in her speech, my colleague began by saying that oil was the future of Canada. To me, that future seems bleak. At times I got the impression that she was talking about oil the way we might talk about water, air or agriculture. There is something essential in life and that is the ecosystem we live in. The energy transition happening today makes fossil fuels no longer—

[*English*]

An hon. member: Did you walk here?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Can you be quiet, please?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I ask members to allow the hon. member to ask his question.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I get the impression that Alberta's big problem is that it put all its eggs in one basket, namely oil.

Albertans have never given a thought to economic diversification. Today they are still asking that we—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mario Simard: My colleague needs to calm down, take it easy.

[*English*]

An hon. member: It is the Speaker's job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Yes, and it is not an MP's job.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask hon. members on both sides of the House to be respectful. We must allow the hon. member to ask his question, but I would also ask him to be respectful.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, may I finish?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, would my colleague agree that the problem is that there is no economic diversification in Alberta?

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, that is one of the great myths spun by the left both inside and outside Alberta. If one would actually look at the facts on diversity across the workforce, one would see that Alberta has long been the province with the third most diversified economy in the country. That is what happens when you have pro-business policies in a legal framework.

Here is my concern. First of all, I am glad the member has realized that oil and gas is a natural resource. I agree with him. Here is the fact. The energy sector is the sector that is regulated the most by all three levels of government in this country.

When these lefty Liberal politicians try to say that the issue is market conditions and business decisions, it shows they have no understanding at all about it. They do not understand that legal policy and political, fiscal and regulatory frameworks are what set the potential market conditions to attract or, in our case, drive businesses out of Canada. This is all for the United States to leave us in the dust, and for the dirtiest energy producers in the world to keep skyrocketing to meet global demand? It is ridiculous.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, the House has only been sitting again for two weeks and this is the second emergency debate that we have had. I do not think I have seen that in my 11 years of being here. We have had two emergency debates on two perhaps similar issues, but they are also different. What is happening to our country when we are at such a crisis point that we have had to have this kind of debate week after week?

So far the government has managed, in terms of the oil industry alone, to drive $150 billion out of the country. I want to talk about this project specifically, and then I am going to get into a bit of the context for the decision that was made.

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Frontier mine was a proposed oil sands mine located between Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan in northeast Alberta. The process for this application started nine years ago in 2011, so it has been nine long years and $1 billion spent. It was projected to create 7,000 jobs during construction and another 2,500 during operations. Building the project would have required a $20.6-billion investment, and it would have contributed $70 billion in federal, provincial and municipal taxes over 41 years of production.

We hear about pharmacare programs and dental programs. If the government keeps driving businesses out of this country, we are not going to be able to afford anything.

This project had first nations support. The company had signed agreements with the 14 indigenous groups who live near it, and the latest agreement was made just last weekend before the decision was to be made.

Let me talk about the emissions. In its report on Teck Frontier, the review panel wrote the following:

> The project is expected to have emissions that are equivalent to or lower than oil produced in some other jurisdictions. Not permitting oil production from the Frontier project may result in exporting emissions to other jurisdictions with higher emission intensity than the project and increase overall global greenhouse gas emissions on a per barrel basis.

The joint panel review acknowledged that there would be some environmental impacts. I have been to the oil sands and I have seen the amazing remediation work that has been done in that area. The panel recommended that the project move forward.

This is the panel's statement:

> There are credible forecasts that indicate increasing hydrocarbon use globally over the next several decades. Evidence was not provided which demonstrated that oil produced—or not produced—in Canada would reduce domestic or global consumption or the associated carbon emissions.

These are two really important features. What the panel was essentially saying is we are going to continue to need oil and this would be produced in an environmentally reasonable way. The company committed to improving their process.

In November 2011, we had an application. In July 2019 we had a review panel that recommended the approval and then, to be quite frank, the cabinet sat on this for many months with the decision actually being due this week.

On Sunday night many MPs from the west, and I was one of them, got off the plane and heard the news. The immediate thing one does is look at what has happened in those four or five hours of being in the air. It was a stunning outcome to see that Teck had withdrawn its application.

I want to give the House some context for the decision. The government loves to say it was the company that made the decision but let us put this decision in context.

In 2017 the Prime Minister said we need to phase out the oil sands. Whoever thought that he meant to phase them out within a year or 24 months? No one thought that, but obviously that is what he is intending to do.

I would like to contrast this with the Alberta premier, who acknowledged the need for transition, but he said that he hoped that last barrel in the transition period would come from a stable, reliable democracy with some of the highest environmental human rights and labour standards on the earth. He wanted that to be Alberta.

Obviously, the Liberals do not want it to be Alberta. They want it to be Saudi Arabia. While we still need oil, we all recognize the need for transition. However, the government wants to remove that from Canada but not from anywhere else.

What we have next is a caucus revolt. I am going to give the House some quotes.

The MP for Scarborough—Guildwood was quoted as saying Liberal caucus members were “darn close” to unanimous in their opposition to the Teck mine. He guessed that the Prime Minister would not go against the views of caucus.

● (1835)

The MP for Beaches—East York said:

> If we are truly committed to net zero by 2050, and to the science, and to the world, and to our future and tackling climate change, there is no explanation sitting here today as to how this project fits within that commitment. So should it proceed as it stands? I think it's a pretty easy no.

He said that the government was listening to caucus MPs voicing opposition. He also said, “They are incredibly serious about consultation with caucus and taking our concerns to heart.”

The MP for Pontiac weighed in and said that we have to meet those standards. He went on to say, “My constituents demand that we meet those, and our grandchildren demand that we meet those.”

The MP for Toronto—Danforth told the Toronto Star that she is concerned about the damaging impacts of the project on wildlife and old-growth forests and that she questions whether the project would compromise the government's net-zero pledge. She also said that from everything she has read about the Teck Frontier project she does not think it should go ahead.

The MP for Kingston and the Islands actually paid money to boost a petition against the oil sands.

What we see is the majority of Liberal caucus members, as they themselves report, being against this particular project. Then we hear that the Liberals are preparing an aid package for Alberta in case this project does not go ahead.

As members are aware, there has been an incredibly weak and poor handling of the Coastal GasLink project, which has created issues across the country. The government is not managing to deal with it, so I think it feared having to make another decision that might have gone against the activists. Again, I have to say that the government continues to fail to recognize that if we do not produce the oil it is going to be produced elsewhere.

With the current government, the Prime Minister saw the writing on the wall. It is very clear he did not want to make a decision. What I have learned in this business is that things do not happen by magic. It was absolutely no coincidence when all of a sudden there was a decision not to go ahead with that project and that it was going to be withdrawn. We all would love to have been a fly on the wall for the conversation between the Prime Minister and the CEO of the company before that decision was made. There is no coincidence in this kind of business.

The Prime Minister says that he does not direct the RCMP. However, is it not interesting how the RCMP took no action on the current blockades until he said that those blockades had to come down. Is it not interesting that he does not want to make a decision about this particular project and all of a sudden a decision is made for him.

From the SNC-Lavalin affair, we all remember the statements about the Prime Minister being in "that kind of mood". In this case, he has a crisis on his hands. It is happening throughout the country and he has dealt with it poorly. He also has an important project that he does not want to make a decision on. He has a caucus revolt and then, by coincidence, the company decides to withdraw its application.

This is a shame. It has certainly worried us incredibly on our side of the House. It is certainly not fair that Alberta is hurt and penalized and that we continue to look at Saudi Arabia and other places to import our resources from. It is wrong and the government should be ashamed.

● (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is a lot of interest in the subject, so please restrict your questions to very precise ones so we can have as many questions as possible.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the passion she showed. This is obviously a very important issue for her, her constituents, all Albertans and all Canadians.

I am hoping that tonight in this emergency debate we can have constructive dialogue and talk about how we can specifically respond to the letter put forward by Don Lindsay, the CEO of Teck, and his call for greater balance between protecting the environment and having a greater framework with regard to climate change that would allow for projects like this to move forward.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague could perhaps share with this House what she is proposing and what the Conservative Party of Canada is proposing. Perhaps she can share some discussions she has had with the Conservatives in Alberta with regard to taking action on climate change to ensure we can develop these resources in a way that allows us to meet our Paris climate targets and allows us to create jobs, as the hon. member mentioned.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, perhaps that was a puzzling aspect of the letter that was written, because it is the framework that the government has put in place. It is the goalpost that the company agreed to meet. It was the Premier of Alberta who made significant commitments in terms of where he was willing to go, what he was willing to do to make sure the project happened. What really has to worry us, by suggesting that Canada has an unstable framework, is looking at where else oil is produced in the world. I would suggest that our framework and our emissions are some of the best in the world.

For those who suggest that we can do better, we absolutely can. However, this project had gone the mile and the premier had gone the mile. Clearly it did not matter what mile they ran, the caucus over there wanted to say no.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend the member on her speech.

However, I have to wonder about the fact that Canada imports oil from Saudi Arabia. Canada produces so much oil that, in addition to meeting Canadian demand for oil, it is our biggest export. We are the fourth-largest producer in the world.

The message sent by Teck Resources, a private company, is that the market has dried up and it is time to begin diversifying our economy. Alberta needs to diversify its economy.

Why not do it now? This is the perfect opportunity.

● (1845)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, no company goes through nine years of process and tens of billions of dollars and then, four days before a decision is due, decides to pull the plug on the business plan. Obviously people are in it for the long haul.

Yes, we do need to change in terms of our environmental process. We do need a transition, but why are members of the Bloc, the NDP and the Liberals not willing to say "Canada, we stand proudly behind you and we will be the last barrel of oil that gets extracted"?

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, Teck is a huge employer in my riding. The Trail smelter is one of the biggest smelters in the world and I meet with Teck on a regular basis, every year or more than that. For the last five years, I have been hearing from Teck about the Trail operation, about its coal operations in southeast B.C. and about the oil sands projects it has on the go. It has always prefaced the discussion about the oil sands project by saying that the price of oil is paramount and it just does not see a way forward at this time.

Don Lindsay's letter mentions that it is difficult to get investments from various institutions because they want to see how this project fits in with the climate action. Those are the things that are driving this, and it is not the spot price of oil. The price of oil was predicted not to go above $60 or $70 for the next 20 years.

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Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Madam Speaker, the company did not pull out four days before a decision was to be made because of the price of oil. The company had looked at the price and was in there. It wrote a letter to say why it pulled out. I did not see anywhere within that letter the price of oil. However, we do know all the circumstances and the context that surrounded its decision, which I outlined in my speech.

The decision around the price of oil and whether a company is to move forward is a business decision for it. What we are responsible for is to make decisions in a timely way based on the science of the project. The government sat on its hands and was unwilling to do this. As I said, I would have loved to be a fly on the wall for that telephone call between the CEO and the Prime Minister.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's economy, among the 10 most prosperous in the world, was built in part by the wealth provided by our natural resources. Our resource sector provides tens of thousands of well-paying middle-class jobs to hard-working Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

At the same time, we know that the global fight against climate change to protect our natural environment and biodiversity are among the most pressing issues we face as human beings. Climate change is the existential threat of our age. It calls for effective, lasting action and clear-eyed, pragmatic policies that will measurably reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions over the years to come.

[*Translation*]

Canadians are increasingly recognizing the magnitude of the climate crisis.

[*English*]

Going forward, thoughtful Canadians understand that economic progress will need to take place within the frame of environmental sustainability. Certainly, in the case of the oil and gas sector, the investment community is telling all of us that future growth and prosperity will require reductions in our carbon emissions and overall environmental footprint.

The latest scientific report from the IPCC indicates that human activities have already caused 1° of global warming above pre-industrial levels. If global emissions continue to rise at their current rate, the world could see a 3° rise in warming by 2100.

The implications of this are very real. On average, Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. A warmer climate will intensify weather extremes, result in sea level rises and reduce the amount of snow, ice and fresh water. Heatwaves will increase and contribute to droughts and wildfires.

It is no wonder that youth around the world are fed up with our generation not acting on the science we have before us and question whether they see a future in which they can contemplate having children of their own.

In the 2019 election, Canadians overwhelmingly voted for parties that offered ambitious climate plans.

The international community has also been coalescing around the issue, with 77 countries now committed to achieving net-zero by 2050. Our election platform reflected those concerns. During the campaign, we committed to two key climate policies: exceeding our target of 30% below 2005 levels by 2030, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

● (1850)

[*Translation*]

We have made a lot of progress since 2015. For the first time since then, our greenhouse gas emissions are dropping.

[*English*]

Early in our first mandate we developed the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, the first real climate plan this country has ever had. It contains over 50 different measures, from phasing out coal, to major investments in public transit and electric vehicle infrastructure, to energy efficiency for buildings and industries.

We invested over $3 billion to scale up clean technology and put in place a national price on pollution, because there can be no credible plan to fight pollution if polluting is free.

In jurisdictions where the federal pricing system is in place, revenues are returned directly to the people, making 80% of families better off.

Perhaps the most important impact is the opportunity that a price on pollution creates for innovation. It prompts businesses to deploy their engineers and entrepreneurs to find solutions to reduce pollution.

Despite identifying over 200 megatonnes in emissions reductions through the framework, we need to identify an additional 77 megatonnes of emissions reductions just to hit our current 2030 target.

Meeting our 2030 target in itself will be a challenge, but it is a challenge Canada is ready to take on.

Developing a plan aligned with science to achieve net-zero by 2050 will be even harder given our vast geography, northern climate and reliance on a resource economy. What is exciting though is the conversation it allows us to have with provinces, companies and others about pathways for achieving our goal.

[*Translation*]

Achieving our climate goals requires cross-partisan leadership from every region of the country. We need a national consensus, a real team effort.

[*English*]

The enemy is climate change. It should not be each other.

That national consensus must include Canada's oil and gas sector. It must include provinces and territories. It must include our energy companies, exporters and explorers, and their employees. It must include the millions of Canadians who heat their homes and drive their cars with carbon-based fuels. It must include all of us.

Let me be clear: The Government of Canada remains committed to furthering Canada's natural resource sector to create good middle-class jobs. We recognize that, in the modern world, a strong economy and a clean environment must go hand in hand.

Some say these goals are irreconcilable. I disagree. In my conversations with resource sector leaders and western political leaders, I hear more and more about the importance of Canada to build its brand as the cleanest supplier of resources to remain competitive as the world transitions to a net-zero future. I agree with them.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Calgary Chamber of Commerce stated clearly that:

> In order for our [provinces] and our country to thrive, we can and we must be able to lead in natural resource development and solve climate change through innovation. Canadian businesses know this, and the global marketplace is demanding it, yet the rhetoric by political leaders is severely hindering any future progress.

Hard-working families are paying the price.

In its letter to me, Teck also calls on us to develop a framework that reconciles economic development and environmental protection as the only path forward. The letter recognizes that Canada is “uniquely positioned”, with its abundant resources, to be that provider of “climate-smart resources” to global markets.

Canadians have the innovative spirit and know-how to provide the world with the most environmentally and socially responsible resources, and that is what we must strive for.

Canadian energy companies are among the most innovative in the world, and they can lead the way. A number of oil and gas companies, including Shell, Cenovus, CNRL and MEG Energy, have already committed to net-zero, as have companies in other sectors, such as Microsoft.

Achieving net-zero will require an economic and an environmental transformation and the mobilization of significant amounts of private capital. The Government of Canada is committed to working with Alberta, Saskatchewan and the resource sector, to ensure that the best projects get built so that we can create jobs and ensure clean, sustainable growth.

The best projects are those that have the lowest pollution per unit of production, develop a path to net-zero emissions and minimize impacts on biodiversity and the natural environment. In 2020, these conditions are increasingly non-negotiable. Leading money managers and investors like BlackRock are making sustainability and climate risk tenets of their investment strategy. They are pulling their money out of environmentally risky ventures and diverting to sustainable projects.

We are very concerned that times are tough in the resource sector and in Alberta due to market conditions. Let there be no mistake, our government stands with workers in Alberta, and with resource sector workers across the country. That is why we are moving forward with the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. This project is delivering nearly 3,000 jobs for Albertans today and will peak at 5,500 in the near term, which is important for Alberta and thus for all Canadians.

We also understand, and I believe most Albertans understand, that it is time Canadians had a much deeper and more thorough conversation about how we keep our energy sector competitive in a world moving to net-zero emissions by 2050. This is how we will protect well-paying resource jobs and create opportunities for the future.

The status quo no longer works. Consumers and the investment community are demanding change, and so are industry leaders, and that change must accelerate.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

No one has a step-by-step guide to net zero. We must engage Canadians and experts to create credible pathways.

[*English*]

Certainly, a key component will be a focus on clean technology.

Hoping for technology to save us from the hard policy choices required to reduce emissions is not a climate plan. However, a thoughtful approach to clean tech must be a key part of an effective strategy to get to net-zero, and in particular to help us decarbonize key sectors of our economy. In the oil and gas sector, for example, exciting work is going on, not just on carbon capture, but on developing ways to extract energy value from natural resources without carbon pollution.

Canada needs to be the cleanest source of resources as we transition to a low-carbon future, and current projects need to also focus on continuous improvement. Partnering with industry on the development and commercialization of clean-tech solutions will create enormous opportunities to expand exports and jobs.

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[*Translation*]

With sound investments, Canada can be a leader in clean technology. In fact, we already are.

[*English*]

Already, global markets for clean-tech and low-carbon goods and services generate trillions in revenue, and clean tech employs over 180,000 people here in Canada. Beyond taking action domestically, we believe that Canada must also work with like-minded countries to lead internationally.

The enormity of the work ahead requires that people from all backgrounds and all political affiliations pull in the same direction to ensure we can leave a healthy and sustainable world for our children.

Climate change should not be a partisan issue; it is a science issue. We all have a role to play in de-partisanizing climate. A generation ago Canadians were deeply divided about free trade, yet today we have a national consensus on the desirability of free trade in North America and with our international partners. That national consensus offers us a model and an example to follow.

I invite my colleagues from across the House to work with us to tackle the greatest challenges of our time.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very well-read speech. It was certainly one of the best-read speeches from the PMO I have heard in a long time.

I have a very simple question. I understand his comments on climate change, but I wonder how the government justifies every day oil being brought into the country from some of the worst human rights abusers in the world, such as Saudi Arabia, Nigeria or Algeria.

In fact, in a Library report, Statistics Canada, reported that in 2018 the government oversaw a quarter of a million barrels of oil brought in from Syria. I know that sounds unbelievable, but this is straight from Statistics Canada. I have asked repeatedly and the people there have confirmed that these numbers are right.

How does the government prioritize money for butchers like al-Assad over regular, everyday workers in Alberta?

● (1900)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I fully understand why some of the comments need to be so personal in the House. I actually wrote that speech; it was not the Prime Minister's office.

I believe this debate was about the decision by Teck Resources to withdraw their project. As I have said a number of times in the House, that was the decision of the company. The CEO of Teck Resources pointed out very clearly a number of the issues with which we needed to deal. As he outlined in his letter, “global provider[s] of sustainable, climate-smart resources to support the world’s transition to a low carbon future” are critically important.

We need to move forward in a manner that will encourage the development of our energy industry in a way that is sustainable from a climate perspective. We need to engage that conversation. Simply sitting down and saying that we do not want to work on climate change is not going to solve the problem.

We are working to ensure that we are creating opportunities for the energy sector going forward in a manner that is consistent with our obligations to address the existential threat of climate change.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I agree with practically all his comments about climate warming and the climate emergency. It was a good presentation that unequivocally shows that we are facing a crisis.

I would like to ask my colleague the following question: If the Liberals are aware of this climate crisis, why did they buy a pipeline?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Climate change is definitely the greatest challenge of our time. We have implemented many measures and developed the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, which includes 50 initiatives to fight climate change in all sectors of the economy. During the election campaign, we also promised to exceed the 2030 target and achieve net zero by 2050. We want to work very hard to reassure Canadians that we can achieve these targets, and we want to co-operate with all members in the House on this issue.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad the minister mentioned the Calgary chamber's comments, because Alberta is hurting. There have been huge job losses there. Naturally, this project promised thousands of jobs. It promised $20 billion in investment.

The trouble is that the Teck CEO plainly said that it needed a partner, as it does not have $20 billion. Its market capitalization is around $8 billion, I believe. It also needed a price. According to the joint review panel, Teck was banking on a price of $95 U.S. a barrel. No economic analysis right now in the world will say that oil will ever be at $95 a barrel.

What we need is a real plan to create good jobs in Alberta, and not just in Alberta. Many of the people in my riding go to Fort McMurray for jobs. They want jobs in the Okanagan Valley. They want jobs in the Kootenays. We need a plan that will fight climate change and bring those jobs all across the country, but especially in Alberta, real good jobs that will fight climate change and put these people back to work.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, we agree that there are significant challenges facing the Alberta economy, certainly much more significant than are facing many other parts of the Canadian economy. The Canadian economy itself created a million jobs over the last four years.

In Alberta, there has been a significant issue with respect to market conditions affecting the oil and gas sector, and it is incumbent on all governments to partner to respond to that. There are a number of ways in which we can respond, but first and foremost, we need to actually have a collaboration with the energy sector and with the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta on pathways to ensure the continued progress and success of the energy sector within the context of Canada's commitments with respect to climate that are based on science, not based on politics.

● (1905)

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could the hon. minister reiterate some of the numbers associated with clean tech and the good work Canada is doing? I am very impressed to see how progressive our government is.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, we know what the downsides are of not addressing climate change. The fundamental upside is that countries that actually take the lead in addressing climate change and developing solutions to address the climate challenge creates enormous economic opportunities going forward.

Already trillions of dollars of work is going on in the clean-tech space. There are 180,000 jobs in Canada that actually rely on clean tech. Estimates are that by 2030, it will be a $26 trillion market opportunity, but it is an opportunity that is available to companies and to countries that actually innovate and are leading, that get into the game soon.

Therefore, for Canada to ensure that it is successful as we move forward into a low-carbon future, we need to be part of that innovation, and that is something we are very focused on doing. We have spent over $3 billion in scaling up clean tech. We are focused very much on ensuring we are targeting the sectors where we need to make emissions reductions, but also ensuring we have products and services that we can export to the world.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, talking about leadership, Alberta was the first province to have an environment minister. It was the first jurisdiction in all of North America to regulate and report emissions, the first jurisdiction in all of North America to set targets for reductions across sectors and enforce them and the first jurisdiction in North America to have a major industrial levy to reduce emissions and incent innovation and technology. That was all more than a decade ago.

Speaking of clean tech, in Canada the number one investor of the private sector in clean tech are oil sands companies. The last known statistics were of the $2 billion in clean tech, $1.8 billion was invested by oil sands.

Alberta is home to the oldest wind farm in all of Canada. Major investments of the private sector in alternative and renewable energy technologies are from oil sands and pipeline companies. They are Canadian and are world leaders in innovation, R and D and technology.

How come these facts never come out of the mouths of that minister or any of those Liberal members?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, I would actually agree with a number of the things my hon. colleague said. Certainly Alberta was one of the first to price industrial emissions, under the Notley government, and that was—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could we let the minister finish his point?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, Alberta has done a number of things.

We are very much wanting to partner with the Government of Alberta. We are working on methane equivalency. We accepted the output-based system that Premier Kenney asked us to accept a couple of months ago. We are interested in moving forward in work on clean tech with the Alberta government, in which it has indicated strong interest.

Something that we have talked a lot about is the fact that many Canadian companies in the oil and gas sector have already committed to net zero by 2050. That includes Synovus, CNRL, MEG Energy and Shell Canada. A whole range of companies have actually done that.

Therefore, yes, we need to build on those kinds of actions to ensure we are driving climate action. We need to ensure we turn that into an opportunity with respect to economic development, because we are producing the most sustainable, most environmentally friendly resources in the world.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe the hon. minister made a mistake by unintentionally saying that the Notley government brought forward the carbon levies targeted toward major industrial emitters in the 1990s. Obviously it was a government long before she was in power. If he could correct the record on that, I would appreciate it very much.

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, that is correct. It was actually elaborated on by the Notley government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the charming member for Repentigny.

I will try to keep a cordial tone, as I have noticed in the last few minutes that there is enormous tension in the House. I hope my Conservative friends will keep the same cordial tone that I will use during this short speech.

On the way here, I thought about what we would be doing tonight. To be frank, I am wondering why we are having an emergency debate tonight. The reality is that the cancellation of the Teck Frontier mine project is the result of a private company's decision to abandon its project because it sees that it is not economically viable in the current context. It has made a decision to stop investments, which I agree are huge enough, so as not to fall into a money pit.

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I think the Conservative Party has always been the party of some form of capitalism. It is a party that clearly understands the implications of the free market system. I do not understand why the party that constantly invokes market forces, the free market and small government is asking today that the House intervene when a private company makes a decision. I find that rather curious.

In 2011, this private company based its analyses on the price of a barrel of oil, which was around $100. For the project to be viable, the price of a barrel of oil would have to currently be between $80 and $90. As we know, the price of oil is around $50 to $55. Therefore, I am wondering if my friends in the Conservative Party would like the Canadian government to end up supporting the Teck Frontier mine project, given that the market is unable to currently support this type of fossil fuel project. There is a really big question mark in my mind. I am certain that my friends in the Conservative Party would be happy to respond.

There is another rather crucial element. I do not know if members are aware of this, but the majority of large investment funds are taking their money out of fossil fuels. They realize that the climate crisis is real and that, in the next few years, fossil fuels will no longer be driving economic development. They are investing in the energy transition instead. It seems to me that people should be aware of this.

Perhaps the economy of the future lies not in petroleum resources, but in cleaner energy and the energy transition. That is something that is important to be aware of, and I think the financial community has come to that realization. In my opinion, if the main oil-producing provinces do not wake up to that reality, then they will be doomed to relive the same type of crisis as they are experiencing now.

The climate crisis is not a myth. Some people are even talking about this being the anthropocene era. Humans are having such a devastating effect on the planet that they may eventually render it uninhabitable. Personally, I do not want to live with such a liability. I am thinking about the planet that I want to leave to my son. The Conservatives often calculate the public debt and say that we are going to leave a public debt to our children. In my opinion, there is a much bigger debt that we may be leaving to our children, and that is the environmental debt. If we are living in an environment where the climate is constantly changing and the air around us is unbreathable, we are not leaving our children much of a legacy. I think our Conservative friends should think about that.

I think I know what this evening's debate is about. Perhaps my Conservative friends and I will say the same thing. I get the impression that the western provinces feel alienated from the rest of the country. I get the impression that they feel like the federal government has let them down. We can agree on that, because Quebec has been through it before. To come back to the western provinces' feeling of alienation, I could tell them about Quebec's special circumstances and especially about the impact that fossil fuels have had on our economy.

● (1910)

It should be noted, and this is quite important, that from the early 1970s until 2015, the Canadian government apparently invested $70 billion — that is the figure we have, but we will never know the real amount — in the technology needed to develop the oil sands. Of that $70 billion, $14 billion came from Quebec, but that investment did absolutely nothing for us and contributed nothing to our economy.

Another NDP politician I quite like is Thomas Mulcair. Before the 2015 election campaign and before he was flirting with the idea of becoming prime minister when he saw some rising support in the polls, Mr. Mulcair talked about Dutch disease. What is that? Dutch disease is the phenomenon whereby the value of our dollar increases to the point where it puts pressure on our exports, thereby leading to a downturn in manufacturing, which is based primarily in Quebec. Therefore, any time natural resources, such are oil, are heavily developed, the Quebec economy suffers. That is what happens.

This means we spent $14 billion to undermine Quebec's manufacturing sector. That is a fact. I could mention Dutch disease to any number of people, and they will be aware of that logic.

Briefly, it seems to me that if the problem we are having today has to do with a feeling of alienation among people in western Canada and the impression of being mistreated by the Canadian federation, I could tell them all about Quebec's specific case.

First, I should mention that twice during constitutional talks, when the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords were signed, we sought but never received recognition. Not only did Quebec not receive the recognition it was seeking on those two occasions, but it also hit a wall.

Second, I would point out to my western colleagues that, in 1982, the Constitution was repatriated without our consent. Quebec never signed the Canadian Constitution.

Third, I would remind my colleagues that, in 1969, the Government of Canada launched broad consultations on bilingualism and biculturalism. In the end, the government realized that making Canada a bicultural country would result in recognizing Quebec's special status. The government therefore decided to scrap the idea and make Canada a multicultural country so as to avoid giving Quebec the recognition it wanted.

As members can see, on four or five occasions, the Canadian federation clearly said no to Quebec. If my Conservative Party friends want to talk about feeling alienated this evening, I get it because it has happened to us repeatedly.

In this case, this sense of alienation is fuelled by economic interests. Every day in the House I keep hearing that Canada is not doing enough to support the oil sands sector. My friends from the Conservative Party keep coming back to that and are constantly asking that we build a pipeline.

I find it funny we are never in a position where we have to ask for hydro towers to be built. Hydro-Québec has never received a penny from the federal government to help install its infrastructure, which contributes to delivering green energy throughout Quebec, energy that could also be used for the other provinces and even exported to the United States. Surprisingly, we are not hearing those speeches here.

When I look at everything that has been done by the Canadian government, I have one question. Think about the Trans Mountain pipeline that was purchased for $4.7 billion. Initially we were told it would take another $7 billion to get the pipeline up and running, but that amount is now $12 billion. That pipeline is going to end up costing at least $16 billion. Personally, I think it is ironic to hear the west complaining today about alienation and saying that the federal government is not doing enough.

* * *

● (1915)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to inform the House that Friday, February 28, shall be an allotted day.

* * *

● (1920)

[*Translation*]

EMERGENCY DEBATE

CANCELLATION OF TECK FRONTIER MINE PROJECT

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, our colleague from Jonquière had some interesting things to say. He spoke about building towers, which is exactly what the Conservatives proposed during the election campaign with the national energy corridor. We wanted to electrify Canada using Quebec's electric power, and if we are going to use oil and fossil fuels, they might as well come from Alberta.

I cannot wait to hear the Bloc Québécois's stance on the LNG project, which we have been hearing a lot about and is located in my colleague's riding. The Conservatives and the Government of Quebec support the project, while the federal government has some reservations. What we do not know is where the Bloc Québécois stands.

Do I need to remind the member that Quebec consumes 10.6 billion litres of oil, 62% of which comes from the United States?

Are the Bloc members, like the Liberals, happy to make Donald Trump's America richer?

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, what a great question about the energy corridor.

During the election campaign I often used the following analogy. To me, the energy corridor project sounds like allowing someone to run their sewer pipe across my land in exchange for running my clothesline across their land. A sewer pipe and a clothesline are not remotely comparable.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what I am hoping to see this evening is a positive contribution to a very important issue, not only for western Canada but for all of Canada. This is something we need be really up front with.

People in the Bloc might be happy to hear divisive language that would be disruptive to our nation. It saddens me. I know it saddens many members of this chamber.

I would like to see an approach that talks about the benefits and the things we can do to make a difference. In—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: You consider the LNG project to be a sewer pipe?

At least now we know.

Mr. Alain Therrien: He was talking about your energy corridor.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Where do you think your LNG pipeline is going to go?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Let me remind all members that this is a debate and members must address the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my question is related to the country as a whole, recognizing that western Canada, and in particular the province of Alberta, plays a critical role in the overall development of our nation.

Does my colleague across the way agree that we do not have to live in a province to have compassion and want to assist in driving that community and making that community a better place to live?

Personally, being from the prairies, I see great potential in the prairies going forward, such as in the TMX, which is a pipeline that will take bitumen to the coastline for the first time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I completely understand. I feel for my friends in the west and the troubles they are facing. My colleagues are welcome to listen to the answer.

I feel for—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Can we please respect the people talking?

The hon. member for Jonquière may answer the question.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I feel for people going through hard economic times right now.

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In politics, there will always be a power dynamic, but it comes down to one basic thing for me. Whenever a member says his or her province has been left out in the cold or has fallen through the cracks in the Canadian federation, I, as an elected representative from Quebec, feel it is my responsibility to repeatedly point out, as I am doing today, that Quebec has been left out in the cold. If I failed to do that, I could not face my constituents.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am sorry I am not able to address the member in French. I am taking French lessons and working on that.

I wanted to point out that as a progressive in Alberta who represents Edmonton Strathcona, I also represent the people who did not vote for the Conservatives in Alberta, which is about 40% of Albertans. As a large portion of the francophone community is in my riding, I would like to clarify something.

Do I understand correctly that the member was not saying that Alberta had not contributed to our country? I do think the member did not mean to say that Alberta has not contributed to our country, though that was what I heard. I just wanted to clarify that Alberta's oil and gas sector has had an important role in Canada, building Alberta and Canada. I just wanted to get some clarification on that.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I acknowledge Alberta's contribution to the Canadian economy and the development of this country, but at this point, we need to start thinking about getting out of fossil fuels.

That is what I meant by what I said.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, will it be the Teck Frontier project or the climate emergency? The government no longer has to make that choice.

I will once again talk about the oil sands because they are causing a number of issues. Yesterday, Teck Resources announced that it is cancelling the Frontier project. The Frontier project would have resulted in the permanent destruction of old growth forests, fish habitat and highly biodiverse wetlands that currently cover almost half of the projected site. The neighbouring Dene and Cree indigenous communities would also have suffered the consequences of the project, faced with the risk of losing their traditional knowledge forever.

However, despite the clear conclusions about far-reaching irreversible consequences, and even acknowledging that the greenhouse gas emissions generated by Frontier made it impossible to meet the Paris targets, the joint panel recommended the project.

With this project, some things have been said about the extent of irreversible damage to the environment and natural habitats. An additional 4.1 to 6 megatonnes of CO2 equivalents would be produced over 40 years. That did not matter. A comprehensive study of Wood Buffalo National Park, Canada's largest national park, found that every aspect of the park is deteriorating and that this project would really not have helped. This key conclusion was ignored. Of the 17 indicators of the park's environmental health studied by UNESCO, 15 are in decline. This was downplayed.

A 161-page report on this park noted that, without proper intervention, its heritage value would be lost forever. Members can rest assured that I am not going to list everything that is compromised by a project like this: wetlands, disruptions in the migratory paths of birds, others at risk of extinction, massive sections of boreal forest being cut down, subterranean pollution, exposure to toxic substances. I will stop there.

Let me be clear: Nothing I just listed is in the national interest. Despite all of the downsides, that is what the committee retained. It needed to be in the national interest. Defining national interest is another kettle of fish.

The developer withdrew his project. The fact is, the developer knew full well that his project was not viable. It was not viable according to a very important metric for a company: its financial and economic viability.

Teck talked about an oil price of $95 per barrel. Teck used a base price to establish its financial parameters that was not recognized by an international organization that Canada is a member of and which has exceptional credibility. I am referring to the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. The institute examined the Teck application. The findings were crystal clear. They described it as reckless or irresponsible and imprudent. That is the Teck project.

According to the legal definition, recklessness is a state of mind where a person or a minority group pursues an action deliberately and without justification by choosing to ignore the risks of such an application. That is recklessness, and that is Teck.

In addition, forecasts by key industry leaders clearly show that the price of oil should be between $60 and $70 per barrel for decades to come and be relatively stable. We should also remember that oil from the oil sands is one of the most expensive to produce.

Even Teck acknowledged in December, to its investors in the Fort Hills project, that the barrel price was going to remain at $60. That was not taken into account in the analysis.

It was the responsibility of the review panel to ask the proponent about the financial information submitted. The panel should and could have asked the proponent to review its forecasts and resubmit them for review. It was the responsibility of the panel to adjust the financial information, which it did not.

● (1930)

I think we are going to have to carefully scrutinize the committee's future conduct. Why would the committee have approved the project, considering the environmental and indigenous concerns, not to mention financial concerns?

I will now get to my second point, namely, the many disputes with indigenous peoples. I highly doubt the government or the House has heard the last of the contentious issues being raised by indigenous peoples.

We keep hearing that indigenous communities support projects like the Frontier project and other current projects. Without going into the details of aboriginal treaty rights and the federal legislation that establishes guardianship of indigenous peoples, it is important to reiterate that indigenous decision-making processes are not monolithic.

Indigenous communities have a governance structure that we should try to understand better in order to enter into respectful dialogue with them. Band councils were created by the federal government, and we cannot regard them as the only legitimate representatives in any kind of discussion. It is important to note that the Supreme Court has recognized hereditary chiefs as being responsible for decision-making regarding their traditional lands, that those chiefs have been speaking out since 2010 when the project was first being developed, that protesters began setting up encampments in 2019, that the company had to get injunctions, that the RCMP moved in in early 2019 — I am not talking about now — and that they arrested 14 protesters.

I think we have a better idea today of what the hereditary chiefs wanted and what they did not want. This project infringes on aboriginal treaty rights.

Some leaders signed agreements, but their arms were being twisted. I can even sum up what some leaders said. They said that they oppose the project but signed anyway so that they could at least get something out of it, since their opposition is never taken into account.

The leaders of Smith's Landing First Nation asked the Government of Alberta for a meeting four times. They had the support of the Northwest Territory Métis. Grand Chief Stewart Phillip from the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs spoke up and rallied other regions, as we have seen.

François Paulette, whom I am always pleased to see at United Nations environmental conferences, is an elder from Smith's Landing First Nation. He has made it clear that the 33 Dene nations oppose the Frontier project and any plan to expand the oil sands. When Mr. Paulette attended UN climate change conferences, such as COP22, COP23 and COP24, he tried to educate all the attendees on the rights of indigenous peoples in Canada.

Alice Rigney, a Dene elder in Fort Chipewyan, said that the Frontier project would completely destroy the land and everything that goes with it, including the people, the birds, the animals, the fish and the water. Others have made similar statements, but I do not have time to read them all because I only have a minute and a half left.

Just because someone signs an agreement does not mean that they are happy about the project. In this case, the testimony shows that it is the lesser evil, but it is evil nonetheless. It is a little like saying that agreeing to take medication means someone is happy about being sick.

The Alberta government created a $1.25-billion program for members of indigenous communities who want to invest in big oil and gas projects. To me, that is buying people. Will the Premier of Albert keep that money and continue to use it to help indigenous people? That should be suggested to him. It would be an act of good faith that would help promote reconciliation.

The Bloc Québécois is pleased that this project has been withdrawn, but I am choosing my words carefully. We still take exception to the lack of professionalism and rigour on the part of the joint review panel, whose work should be closely monitored to ensure that it is making decisions based on facts.

● (1935)

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will make a comment and follow it with a question.

Alberta oil, much of which flows through my constituency of Battle River—Crowfoot, goes through a small town called Hardisty. The western Canada select price is approximately $36 a barrel. Most of that oil goes to the United States, where in west Texas it is mixed off, with the various processes involved, and sold for approximately $50 a barrel.

Is the member aware that the 60% of oil Quebec imports from the United States is actually in part Alberta crude that comes from the oil sands?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. The oil we purchase in Quebec comes from Enbridge's Line 9B reversal. It therefore comes from the oil sands.

Since the gas we buy for our cars is from Alberta, we are contributing to Alberta's finances.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important to acknowledge the importance of the price of oil in many of the decisions that are being made with regard to the marketplace.

The last question was interesting, and my question is based on it. The member mentioned that oil goes through the United States, where it is then sent back up north at an increased value. This is one of the reasons the government approved a pipeline to take oil to the coast.

Does my colleague from the New Democratic Party agree that when we talk about resource development, the economy, the environment or indigenous issues, we have to look at the broader picture? The economy and the environment do, in fact, go hand in hand, and it is important for us to consult.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member for Winnipeg North that I am not a member of the NDP. I am a member of the Bloc Québécois.

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I think there are three things that are globally recognized: respect for human rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples; a healthy environment; and a climate that feels safe, in other words, without constant flooding or drought. These three things are recognized around the world.

Indigenous peoples around the world are standing up for their rights.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really respect the member for her respect of the environment.

I want to get back to the economics of this project. The company has said, when we read between the lines, that it could not find a partner to carry this project forward. It needed $20 billion.

One of the Conservative members pointed out that companies do not look at spot prices. Well, of course they do not. They look 20, 30 or 40 years down the road. Increasingly, the economic analysis has shown that this is not going to be a good investment for 30 years. That is why big companies, like BlackRock and other big investments firms, are pulling back from the fossil fuel industry.

I wonder if the member could comment on that, because that is at the crux of all of this.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. It gives me a chance to add some information.

First, Teck Resources is likely one of the last in a long list of companies that have abandoned planned investments in the oil sands. I can name several, including giants like Shell, Statoil, Total, ConocoPhillips, Marathon Oil and Samson Corporation. All these companies have pulled out of the oil sands.

There is another important piece of information that may have played into the Teck Resources decision last Friday, two days before it announced its withdrawal. In reporting its results for 2019, the company announced a writedown on the value of its minority stake in Fort Hills, a Suncor Energy oil sands mine. The company itself recognized that this was no longer working, that there was a problem. This was above all an economic decision.

From an environmental perspective, we see this as an excellent decision.

● (1940)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do not want to eat into the time for questions and comments, but before I resume debate, I want to give a reminder to members. Most of the members who were heckling back and forth have been in the House for quite a few years and know what the rules of the House are. That includes a few leaders in the House. I would not want that to rub off on some of the newer members.

I hope that members will respect each other. If they wish to debate, they can get up to be recognized and then participate in the debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Victoria.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member of Parliament for Edmonton Strathcona.

Teck Frontier was never the solution the Prime Minister and the Liberals said it was, and it is not the solution the Conservatives are now claiming it is. Teck is another example of the Prime Minister's failure of leadership on fighting climate change and creating jobs for the future.

I am surprised that we are here for this so-called emergency debate. How does this debate constitute an emergency?

Teck pulled out of a project that was a bad decision economically, given that its business case relied on extremely high oil prices, for decades to come, of over $95 a barrel, much higher than what Teck told its own investors and almost double what our oil prices are currently. It was an even worse environmental decision, given the astronomical CO2 emissions from the project and the impact on land, air and water. The Teck Frontier project would have emitted four to six megatonnes of CO2 every year in its operation. To put that into context for my Conservative colleagues, four megatonnes of CO2 is equivalent to the emissions that all the light-duty vehicles in British Columbia produce every year. That is every single car, every single small truck and every single personal vehicle. The Teck Frontier mine would have emitted that amount every single year.

The greenhouse gas emissions from the Frontier mine are fundamentally inconsistent with Canada's climate targets and the Paris Agreement commitments. When we are already so far away from achieving our climate commitments, anyone serious about meeting our climate obligations, our obligations to our international commitments and to future generations, could see that this project could not be approved. Nevertheless, the Liberals looked as if they were seriously considering moving forward with the project. The Liberals committed to carbon neutrality by 2050, but this project would have emitted four to six megatonnes of CO2 every year until 2067. It just shows that the Liberals' words were just more empty words.

The Liberals keep saying they want to balance the economy and the environment, but they are failing at both. They decided to buy a pipeline for $4.4 billion and now want to borrow an additional $12.6 billion to construct the Trans Mountain pipeline, which will increase tanker traffic on the coast, where my constituents and I live, sevenfold and increase our greenhouse gas emissions in the middle of a climate crisis.

The Teck Frontier mine, the proposal that the Liberal government was seriously considering, would have put endangered species in northern Alberta at high risk, would have devastated irreplaceable wilderness, would have had detrimental impacts on treaty rights and would have knocked us even further off track from our climate goals.

● (1945)

Instead of empty promises, pipelines and bad projects, let us invest in long-term sustainable jobs in Alberta and across Canada. Investing in transit, retrofit, green infrastructure and clean energy will not only help us meet our climate targets but can also provide good family-sustaining jobs in a low-carbon economy.

New Democrats proposed a plan that would have created at least 300,000 good jobs in the clean-energy future for the next four years, but we have not seen that kind of leadership from the Liberal government. We need to build zero-emission vehicles here at home and we need to make it easier to buy and charge zero-emission vehicles no matter where we go. We need to be not only producing electric vehicles in Canada but also providing incentives targeted to made-in-Canada vehicles only, giving manufacturers a powerful incentive to build. This safeguards good jobs and strengthens our auto sector.

We need to electrify our fleets, making public transit cleaner, more convenient and more affordable. We need to provide training for workers to transition into the low-carbon economy. We need to provide support for workers, for families and for communities so that the changing economy actually works for them. We need to boost clean-tech research and manufacturing with “buy Canadian” procurement. We need to create good family-sustaining jobs by building infrastructure in every region of our country.

We could save families $900 or more a year in home energy costs with energy-efficient upgrades. Making bold investments in energy efficiency not only pays off in terms of reducing emissions but also brings savings on energy bills. It also means good jobs in communities from coast to coast to coast.

We need a government that is committed to supporting workers today, not with imaginary jobs and projects with no business case, but supporting workers while equipping them with the skills and opportunities of the future. It means making sure that Canadian workers have access to meaningful training funds to use when they need them.

I also want to take a moment to mention an incredible organization, Iron & Earth, which is a worker-led initiative. These are oil and gas workers who want to work building renewable energy projects, who organized to support each other and who advocate on their own behalf. They are not only supporting their fellow workers, demonstrating how their skills are transferable and connecting these workers with training, resources and a network they require to position themselves in the new renewable energy industry, but they are also calling on the government to implement a national upskilling initiative, investing in training that would empower oil and gas, coal and indigenous workers to get into the renewable energy economy. These oil and gas workers see the opportunities that could be possible if the government truly took its commitment to workers and the climate seriously, but successive Liberal and Conservative governments have left workers to navigate these shifts on their own.

Workers in Alberta are feeling the impact of job losses, and 19,000 workers lost their jobs just in the last month. The answer to this problem is not projects that are economic and environmental nightmares. The answer is not empty promises of jobs from projects that have no business case. The answer is investing in good family-sustaining jobs all across the country.

We need to fulfill Canada's G20 commitment to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and we need to redirect these funds to low-carbon initiatives. We also need to reform Export Development Canada's mandate to focus on providing support for Canadian sustainable energy projects rather than the petroleum industry.

We need to truly support workers, industry, research and innovation. These are the kinds of investments that would drive real results, creating hundreds of thousands of good jobs and helping to boost the economy across the country. It would also put Canada on the path to meeting ambitious science-based greenhouse gas reduction targets that we need if we are going to prevent catastrophic climate change from dangerous global warming beyond 1.5° Celsius.

The answer is a plan that creates good jobs to support hard-working families and upholds indigenous rights. The answer is a made-in-Canada green new deal.

● (1950)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, it sounds like we just took a journey to a different planet, listening to the speech from our NDP colleague.

The argument is not viable. It does not make sense. The company tried for seven years or more to get approval for this project. It spent over $1 billion to get to this stage, but the government dragged this process out for so long, for months and months, that it made the project die on the spot. The company lost the money and Alberta lost the jobs.

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Providing jobs for Albertans is not by word of mouth. It is a responsibility. Everyone has to be logical and reasonable in talking about it, and not just provide a bunch of rhetoric coming from here and there about how to move to green energy while we depend solely in Alberta on an industry that has been feeding Alberta and Canada forever. How can we provide immediate jobs to Alberta right now if we do not approve projects such as this one?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, immediate jobs are what they want, yet Teck Frontier mine promised 7,000 construction jobs that may or may not have really appeared because the company said to the joint review panel that its business case was built on $95 a barrel. The CEO then admitted to the company's own investors that anyone with any credibility looking at the price of oil knows that it will never get to $95 a barrel. We are at $51, and projections say it will not go much higher than $60 to maybe, tops, $70.

This project was not going to be built. If you want good jobs now, invest in the low-carbon economy.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with the lack of initiative from the Conservatives, we might actually have to move to a new planet when it comes to climate change.

Through NRCan, we announced the electric vehicle and alternative fuels infrastructure deployment initiative, which was $8 million for 160 EV fast chargers that actually amounted to two stations in my riding. Does the member acknowledge that we are working diligently for a cleaner future?

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, I will always applaud the small steps that we are taking toward climate action, but when we have a government that spends $4.4 billion on buying a pipeline and then is going to borrow over $12 billion to construct it, it is challenging to see the current government as anything but a climate failure.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I used to live in Victoria. I actually lived three different times in the Victoria riding and I am the former president of the Conservative EDA in that riding, so I know Victoria very well.

I am always amazed at people from all sides of this House who are constantly lecturing about climate change, yet at the same time they are flying or driving here. We looked at the Bloc Québécois from the last Parliament, when there were only 10 of them. They racked up almost half a million kilometres driving to Ottawa every week.

The member comes from Victoria. She probably comes through Vancouver and flies here. She talks about making small steps toward the environment. I wonder if she would consider perhaps walking here as one of her small steps, or perhaps supporting Alberta oil, which has a much lower GHG footprint than the Alaska oil or the California oil that is brought up to Washington state and refined as jet fuel and sent to Vancouver so she can fly to Ottawa.

● (1955)

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, this is one of the things that Conservatives will often fall back on: Why are we using fossil fuels while advocating for climate action? It is one of the problematic aspects when we have a system that is so embedded in fossil fuels infrastructure. We need our government to take leadership. We need our government to invest in innovation, in new technology. We need our government to show the kind of leadership that will address the climate crisis now.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Once again, during the answer there were a lot of points of view being aired when it was not time for people to speak. I ask members to hold their questions and comments until the next time.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is very unfair of you to constantly be pointing out the member for Winnipeg North for that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not going to point out anybody at this point because I know most of the people who were doing it are quite seasoned in the House and already know what the rules of the House are.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, at the heart of this debate is one fundamental truth: We need a solution to the economic crisis gripping my province, we need an economy that supports Albertans and we need the UCP and the Liberal government to stop playing politics with the people of my province and get to work.

I am so tired of listening to this blame game in which not one member of Jason Kenney's government or the Prime Minister's Liberal government is actually working with Albertans.

Teck was never the solution to the crisis impacting my province. The Prime Minister knew that, and so does Mr. Kenney. Our energy sector plays an important role in our economy. The Alberta oil and gas sector has, for some time, been the economic engine that drives this country and has driven our province.

I am a fourth-generation Albertan. I am deeply proud of Alberta and our heritage, and I will proudly declare that I come from a long line of hard-working Albertans who have contributed to the oil and gas industry and have built our province and our country. It is for those Albertans that I am speaking this evening.

Our leadership has failed us. Not only have they failed to work with Albertans to diversify our economy and make sure Albertans were well placed for the 21st century, but they have told stories about it. We have been told that oil and gas is coming back like the past. We have been told that there is another boom just around the corner. We have been told that this project or that project will save us.

I am the daughter of an oil and gas worker. I have lived through the boom-and-bust industry in this province, and it is not going to be coming back the way we had it before, full story. When the Conservative members of this House fail to acknowledge that, they are not doing justice to people in Alberta.

What we have not been told is there was another path forward. Norway has $905 billion saved up as a result of their energy royalties. We have saved $17 billion in our heritage fund. That is $905 billion to $17 billion. To top it off, Norway started saving in 1990. When did we start saving? It was 1976. I was four.

The Conservatives have given away our wealth. The Liberals have given away our wealth. The government has known for decades about greenhouse gas impacts and it has not done the saving and planning that we needed to do.

What is worse than that is the failure of our leadership to fight the most important crisis of our time, the climate crisis. We need deep investment in Alberta. We need to invest in Albertans. We need to give Albertans the jobs that they earned and deserve. We need to stop lying to them that there will be some sort of a renewal of oil and gas, that it is coming back to $95 a barrel, because it is not.

There are young people who live in my riding who go to the University of Alberta and King's University. These young people are looking to the future and are scared for their future because we are not addressing the climate change crisis and we are also not providing an economic opportunity for my province.

While the Liberals say we are doing enough and the Conservatives say we need to double down, nobody is fighting for Albertans. Nobody is trying to make sure there are jobs in my province for my people.

● (2000)

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I keep hearing everyone talk about how oil and gas prices are not going down. Could someone please explain to me why consumption keeps going up? That is my biggest concern.

The next thing that I have to be concerned about is that all these oil and gas projects are being cancelled in Alberta, yet we do not stop having imports of oil and gas from other countries. Then we could deal with climate change for a change. Let us actually all agree to ban all oil and gas imports coming into Canada, so people can stop saying “climate change”.

Will you support me on that? Can—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member that he is to address the questions and comments to the Chair.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I do not actually know if there was a question there, but I would like to follow up. Unfortunately, I do not think the member heard some of the things that I said.

I am deeply embedded in making sure that people in Alberta have an energy sector. I am not saying we need to turn off the pipes. I am saying that we do not have a reasonable plan that addresses the climate and ensures that we are heading into the 21st century with a diversified economy that looks at alternatives, like retrofitting our homes and massive infrastructure construction projects. We could be working on capping our orphaned wells.

There are a million things we could be doing right now, and doubling down and putting all our eggs in one basket is just hurting Alberta.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member raised points about Norway having a social democratic government that actually had less production over a shorter period of time, yet has saved up a trillion dollars to make that transition to clean energy. The Conservatives in Alberta have left the cupboards bare, basically gutted. After decades of production, Albertans have very little to show for it. That is tragic.

She also raised the point about climate change and its cost to our economy. In terms of insurance costs and economic costs, that is $10 billion a year. The Liberals do not seem to take it seriously, neither do the Kenney Conservatives in Alberta.

Why do neither of these governments understand that they need to be looking at Alberta workers and looking at Alberta jobs in a new context?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I wish had an answer for this question, and I do not. I really do wonder what would be wrong with diversifying our economy. Why would that not be a good thing for Alberta? How would investing in a whole range of different industries and technologies not help Albertans?

I can only suggest that maybe this is a question someone from either other side of the House could answer for me.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate both NDP members on their clear and courageous speeches.

Indeed, fossil fuels are a massive global problem today. Following his speech, I heard one of my colleagues ask an NDP member what planet he lives on. The real problem is that we all live on the same planet. Pollution created in Alberta has the same repercussions on Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The major challenges we face today are the same whether we live in Alberta or Quebec.

I hope my colleague will agree that there seems to be a bit of denial going on, and that is a serious problem. That is what I understood from her speech. Some people are not ready to acknowledge that the price of a barrel of oil will never go back to where it was and that the oil industry is causing substantial damage to the Alberta economy.

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● (2005)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I also think that what we are seeing here is a lack of recognition that there is a need for action, and the action cannot come on the backs of Alberta workers. We cannot hang my people out to dry. We have to find a way to diversify our economy and find those jobs for Albertans that they so deserve.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask the member to clarify something. She made a reference to there being Albertans in this House who were not fighting for the best interest of Albertans. While I am—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is debate and not a point of order.

Resume debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today on this important debate. Before I start, I would like to advise I will be sharing my time with the member for Niagara Centre.

[*Translation*]

I know that our government welcomes this opportunity to hear from all parties in the House.

In many ways, Teck Resources' decision to abandon the Frontier project based on its own economic and operational interests has highlighted two of the biggest challenges of our time. The first is to ensure that our natural resources, including our oil reserves, continue to provide Canadians with jobs and opportunities. The second is to honour our commitments, both at home and abroad, to combat climate change.

Our government has been dealing with these two challenges since taking office. Canada is the fourth-largest oil producer in the world. Our oil industry continues to be a source of jobs and prosperity for the entire country. We also know that in this century of clean growth, economic prosperity and environmental protection must go hand in hand.

We have therefore taken a balanced approach. This approach uses revenue from our oil resources to invest in clean energy and the technologies of tomorrow. We know that, in the medium term, the world will not give up oil as an energy source. In fact, we expect demand for oil to increase in the coming decades.

[*English*]

Our goal is to make sure Canada produces the cleanest petroleum in the world, and we have already taken huge strides. Our petroleum producers have cut the intensity of their emissions by 28% since 2000. Many companies have committed to achieving net-zero emissions, including Canadian Natural Resources Limited, MEG Energy and Shell.

This indicates that major energy companies know the importance of establishing Canada's brand as the cleanest supplier of resources anywhere. We see the same thing happening with natural gas, where LNG plants are making greater use of electricity. One project, LNG Canada, will have "best in class" emissions. Other smaller projects will be even cleaner, with emissions as much as 90% below the global average.

Canadian innovators are also leading the way on removing carbon from the atmosphere and storing it safely. In fact, four of the largest-scale demonstration projects in carbon capture, use and storage are in Canada.

We have also put a price on pollution, we are phasing out coal by 2030, we are focused on helping remote communities move off diesel and we are making generational investments in clean energy, clean technologies and green infrastructure. That infrastructure includes a nationwide network of charging stations for electric vehicles and incentives for people to buy these vehicles.

Canada already generates more than 80% of its electricity with no emissions, and our goal is to get to 90% by the end of this decade. Those efforts are complemented by significant new investments in smart grids right across the country.

Two other areas where we see great potential are hydrogen and small modular reactors. We are in the process of developing a hydrogen strategy to grow production for use in transportation, mining and industry. Small modular reactors, as the name implies, are smaller in size and output than traditional nuclear facilities. Some can be transported on the back of a truck, making them ideal for remote areas. Because they are modular, they can easily be added to one another to meet changing demand. Best of all, they produce absolutely no pollution, making them a key tool in the transition to a net-zero economy.

All of these efforts, and more, are aimed at achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, making Canada one of some 77 countries to set that ambitious goal.

We are also active on the global stage through the G7 and G20 as well as through Clean Energy Ministerial and Mission Innovation, which Canada was proud to host last year. As part of Mission Innovation, Canada has pledged to double its investments in clean-energy research and development from $387 million to $775 million this year alone.

We are also involved in the International Energy Agency, COP and the International Energy Forum. We are also engaging with international partners to position Canada as a player in establishing secure and sustainable global supply chains for the minerals that are powering many clean-energy technologies, minerals that are in growing demand around the world. Recently, for example, we finalized a joint action plan to collaborate with the United States on critical minerals.

● (2010)

All of these actions are aimed at ensuring that we balance resource development with our environmental commitments. In its announcement withdrawing its application for Frontier, Teck Resources made it clear that it understands the need for that balance. As the president and chief executive officer of Teck Resources, Don Lindsay, said:

> There is an urgent need to reduce global carbon emissions and support action on climate change....We support strong actions to enable the transition to a low carbon future. We are also strong supporters of Canada's action on carbon pricing and other climate policies such as legislated caps for oil sands emissions.

[*Translation*]

We agree with Mr. Lindsay and other leading industrial groups that all levels of government must come together now to take climate action that will enable us to achieve net zero by 2050. It is time to make this objective a reality. In the days and weeks to come, our government will continue to work with our provincial and territorial partners, indigenous communities and all those who wish to join this discussion with open minds and open hearts.

In doing so, we will be guided by the principles that Canadians expect of us. We will be responsible for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to meet and exceed our Paris targets as we move towards net-zero emissions by 2050. We will enhance our competitiveness and the health of the economy to create jobs. We will collaborate by strengthening partnerships with the provinces and territories, indigenous peoples, municipalities and youth. We will be inclusive, by ensuring fairness and by preparing the workforce of tomorrow. We will ensure that our decisions yield affordable results for industry, families and the middle class.

Those are the values that have guided our government since 2015. They are the values and principles that will guide our efforts to develop a real climate action plan. Canadians ask no more than this. They deserve no less.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are aware that just a couple of years ago the Prime Minister said that he wanted to phase out the oil sands. It has certainly been said by the Liberals that the vast majority of the caucus was against this particular proposal. We know that there were hugs and celebrating when the company decided to withdraw its application.

I have trouble aligning the parliamentary secretary's comments, in terms of being supportive and caring about the issue, with the actual actions and stated goals of his other caucus members.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, I can tell my hon. colleague that our government has been seized since 2015 with the issues going on in the oil patch and in the oil sands sector.

That is why we supported Line 3, which is actually completed on the Canadian side, as well as Keystone XL. I met with some governors and senators in the U.S. last year, and we talked about Keystone XL and the importance of getting that project moving forward. Let us not forget TMX. Last year I stood up in this House many times to answer questions from Conservatives who did not believe we were ever going to get it built and that we did not want to get it built. Now, there is pipe in the ground in Edmonton, and going all the way through. There are thousands of jobs being created.

We understand the anxiety in Alberta with respect to jobs. That is why we are working hard, with Alberta and all the industry partners, to move forward in a constructive, sustainable way for the industry. That is what we are going to continue to do.

● (2015)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, if the Teck Frontier project had gone through, it would have actually permanently stripped away 14,000 hectares of wetlands, 3,000 hectares of peat lands and 3,000 hectares of old-growth forest. Then, of course, as we know, it would also generate over four million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually. That would have blown the government's ability to meet the climate targets, no question.

Aside from this project, the government is also proceeding with the Trans Mountain expansion. The government bought the pipeline for $4.6 billion, and the expansion has ballooned up to $12.7 billion in costs. That will not help the government address the climate emergency that we are faced with today.

What we heard and what we are hearing from people in this House and from the community is that we need a just transition plan. Will the government actually get to work and create that just transition plan?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, since 2015 we have been working on the transition to a low-carbon economy. We have invested over $60 billion over the last five years and we are committed, down the road, to ensure that those investments are made, because we understand. At the same time, when we transition, we need to make sure that the jobs are there, which is what the anxiety is all about out west and across Canada when people do not have jobs or are afraid to lose their jobs.

Basically, we are making sure that we are making the proper investments in clean tech when it comes to transition. At the end of the day, we know that the oil and gas sectors will still be required around the world for decades to come, so we need to balance out the environment and the economy.

NDP members are saying not to do anything on the economy, and to let it drop. What we hear from the Conservatives is that it is all about the economy, and to forget about the environment. However, we know that we need to do both, which is what Don Lindsay from Teck Resources told us. We need to do both, and Canada has the ability to do both.

We need to make this a non-partisan issue. We are not there yet, but we need to work together to get there.

S. O. 52

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the first investment made by the Liberal government was $2.65 billion to the UN's Green Climate Fund. Can the member opposite explain what projects were funded by Canada's initial investment and whether it actually reduced emissions?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, the debate today is with respect to the Teck decision. However, I will take this opportunity to highlight the words of Teck president, Don Lindsay, when he said:

> Resource development has been at the heart of the Canadian economy for generations. Resource sectors including the Alberta oil sands create jobs; build roads, schools and hospitals; and contribute to a better standard of living for all Canadians. At the same time, there is an urgent need to reduce global carbon emissions and support action on climate change. As a proudly Canadian company for over 100 years, we know these two priorities do not have to be in conflict.

That is what we are aiming for. We believe what the industry is saying, the signal that it sent, and we are working towards that goal.

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to contribute to the debate this evening. Let me remind the House that over the last four years, our government's plan has been focused squarely on investing in the middle class and helping people who are working hard to join it.

We believe all Canadians should benefit from our country's economic success. Cutting taxes for all but the wealthiest, and giving more money to middle-class families and those who need help the most, are only the first steps in our new mandate.

We will also make it easier for people to get an education, buy their first home and find care for their kids. We will help workers enter the workforce, grow their skills and transition between jobs. We need to continue to build confidence in Canada's economy, making sure the world continues to see our great nation as a great place to invest. We are building this confidence with targeted support for businesses, which will encourage more job-creating investments.

To make it easier for small businesses to succeed and create more jobs, we have cut taxes for small businesses not once, but twice. This is part of our government's responsible plan to build a strong, growing economy. We will build on the progress of the last four years and continue to make a real difference in the lives of Canadians today but equally, if not more importantly, well into the future.

Part of that means acknowledging the regional challenges that exist, particularly in the oil and gas sector. For that reason, we are moving forward with the Trans Mountain expansion project.

At a time when most of our energy exports go to the United States and the economies of Alberta and Saskatchewan are struggling, Canadians know that we need to open up new international markets. The Trans Mountain expansion project will create thousands of good middle-class jobs, accelerate Canada's clean-energy transition and open up new avenues for indigenous economic prosperity.

Today, construction is well under way and thousands of Canadians are hard at work. Contractors have started work at the Burnaby terminal, the Westridge Marine Terminal, the Edmonton terminal and pumping stations in Alberta.

In October, construction began on segment one in the Edmonton area after the Canada Energy Regulator released land for construction. The work on segment two started immediately.

This has allowed the company to start putting pipe in the ground. The goal is to have the expansion project in service by the latter half of 2022. In the short term, this is creating good, well-paying jobs. So far, over 3,000 people have started working on this project. At peak construction, there are expected to be over 5,500 people employed on sites across Alberta and British Columbia.

Once completed, the project will open up new international markets, get us a fair price for our energy resources and provide much-needed relief to the economies of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The project, as it stands today, is very different from the project that was originally planned by Kinder Morgan. It will now support more union jobs in B.C., as well as in Alberta, and the project has been designed to a higher standard for environmental protection.

As the company has been working on the engineering plans for this project, environmental protection is always at the forefront. Trans Mountain has a robust safety regime, with important risk controls for all traffic and oil tankers in particular.

Over the last 65 years, Trans Mountain has developed comprehensive safety, spill prevention and emergency response plans to make sure the company is protecting the public, the environment and its employees.

The project will also help move less oil by rail and more by pipeline, which is the most economic, environmentally sound and safe mode of transportation. Our government remains confident that the project is commercially viable. We are comfortable that Canada will see a positive return on its investment when it comes time to sell.

Once completed, the pipeline's capacity to move Canadian oil will almost triple, unlocking potential to meet the world's demand. This is a monumental project, one in the best interests of the entire country. The project will also create economic benefits for many indigenous communities. To date, Trans Mountain has signed agreements worth more than $500 million with 58 indigenous communities.

● (2020)

It will generate new revenues for all levels of government for the betterment of Canada and Canadians. Over the course of this project's construction and the first 20 years of operation, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that this project will add over $160 billion to the Canadian economy and add $46 billion to government revenues.

Almost half of these revenues, $19.4 billion, will go straight to Alberta, supporting provincial and municipal programs that Albertans depend on each and every day. Every dollar the federal government earns from this project will help fund new technologies and green energy solutions that will ensure Alberta remains an energy leader as we work together to fight climate change.

Let us make no mistake: In a world where Canada makes a rapid and decisive transition to a low-carbon economy, the oil and gas sector has an important role to play. In 2018, we announced an investment of more than $1.6 billion for Canada's oil and gas sector. It included measures designed to support workers as well as their families, foster competitiveness and improve the long-term environmental performance of the oil and gas sector. Investments have already been made to support oil and gas companies, reduce their carbon footprint and develop alternative uses for their products.

To conclude, by building the Trans Mountain expansion project, we can make sure we are able to safely get more Canadian resources to world markets where we can get good prices for them. That increase of revenues will benefit everyone. It will mean more money for businesses to create good, well-paying jobs for Canadians. That is more money for hard-working families, money that can be spent to help local communities and grow our economy.

● (2025)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member talked about Trans Mountain a lot instead of Teck Frontier, so I will ask him about that.

He said that it was basically a good economic investment as well, yet we have just heard that the price of expanding that has gone up to about $13 billion. When Kinder Morgan first proposed it, the price was somewhere on the order of $5 billion. That is quite a jump. It will affect the profits of the producers who will be using it because the tolls will go up, but it is also increasing the cost to Canadians. About $8 billion of that we will never get back, even if we sell the pipeline. However, there probably will not be any opportunity for that.

Poll results on public approval of the pipeline are showing a real increase in people who do not want the pipeline. How much are Canadians going to pay for this pipeline?

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, I want to reiterate. Over 3,000 people have started working on this project. Over 5,500 people are expected to work on this project. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that this project will add over $160 billion to the Canadian economy and add $46 billion in government revenues. Almost half of these revenues, $19.4 billion, will go straight to Alberta, supporting the province, supporting communities and supporting Canadian families.

Therefore, the investment that we are making today is an investment that will be sustainable for the future and sustainable for three provinces in particular: B.C., Alberta and Saskatchewan. It will ensure that people get back to work, that revenues get back to these provinces and communities and that revenues come back to the federal government for further investments, once again, to all Canadians.

S. O. 52

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Niagara Centre is totally mistaken. The Trans Mountain pipeline was not a government investment; it was a government buyout for a private sector investment that wanted to employ people in my riding, which the Trans Mountain pipeline runs through. Because of the Liberal government, British Columbians, Albertans and western Canadians are furious because nobody has certainty in the western Canadian economy anymore.

When we talk to global investors, they do not want to come to British Columbia and it is because of the Liberal government taking advantage of British Columbia by buying the Trans Mountain pipeline when we had private sector investments with private sector jobs to fulfill that project.

● (2030)

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, I was waiting for a question from the member, but I will try to anticipate what he meant by his statement.

I will make it very clear for the member from B.C. that this is a different project than was originally planned by Kinder Morgan. In fact, it will now support more union jobs in British Columbia. It will support more economic prosperity for Alberta.

The project has been designed to be of a higher standard, with more environmental protection. It is different and it will add more sustainability not only in terms of the economy, but also in terms of the social benefits as well as the environmental benefits for B.C. and all of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, the member spoke a great deal about Trans Mountain. What I would like to say is that the government is reaping what it sowed. It talks incessantly about reconciliation and respect for first nations, while making empty promises about the oil industry.

What we often hear from first nations people is that they are among those who pollute the least and are affected the most by the current climate crisis.

I believe that the government is reaping what it sowed.

[*English*]

Mr. Vance Badawey: Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that this government is showing a great deal of respect for indigenous communities by working with them.

I appreciate the comments made by the member for Edmonton Strathcona, particularly because she is from Alberta. She rightly points out the effects of this decision primarily with respect to the realities that the Premier of Alberta and others are giving to this situation.

The global price of oil is well below the point that would make this project not profitable, with no increase in sight. Investors are fleeing the industry not only in Canada but globally. The global consensus is that climate change must be addressed. This process is doing just that. We are moving forward in an economically, environmentally and socially responsible way for all of Canada.

S. O. 52

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon member for New Brunswick Southwest.

There is a war on the working men and women of this country. If people do not believe me, just ask the 7,000 would-be workers at the now cancelled Teck Frontier mine in northern Alberta.

If people do not believe me, ask the thousands of workers who would be on site now, finishing the construction of the northern gateway pipeline.

If people do not believe me, can ask the 200,000 out-of-work Canadian energy employees who sit staring at their phones, waiting for it to ring with a job offer across northern Alberta.

If people do not believe me, ask the more than 20% of young males in the province of Alberta, who are unemployed and desperate for opportunity.

If people do not believe me, speak to the 14 first nations communities around the perimeter of the Teck Frontier mine, whose leaders had signed agreements for that mine to provide opportunities for their young people to escape the clutches of poverty.

If people do not believe me, then talk to the steelworkers who would have provided steel for the energy east pipeline, which is now cancelled, ensuring that the insanity of selling our oil on the cheap in the west, while buying it at a premium in the east, will go on for an indefinite period of time.

If people do not believe me, look at the footage of the fitness instructor in Victoria, B.C., who arrived at a blockade and begged protesters, saying to them over and over again, “I've got to get to work. There are 40 people expecting me to teach a class. Can you please get out of the way and let me do my job? I don't even know what your political cause is about, but surely it can't be about blocking a middle-class fitness instructor from going to work.”

If people do not believe me, ask any of those thousands of people if there is a war on the working men and women in our country.

Let us be clear about what this dispute is not about. First, it is not about the environment. The blockaders who are stopping the Coastal GasLink pipeline, many of whom think it is an oil pipeline, are standing in the way of the construction of the pipeline and the LNG Canada plant, which would ship Canadian natural gas to China and other Asian markets to replace coal-fired electricity and reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, by some estimates as much as 30 million tonnes per year. That is because natural gas emits half the greenhouse gases for each unit of electricity that it generates versus coal.

Canada is perfectly positioned to reduce global emissions by shipping our natural gas. Why? We have 1,220 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. We have a cold climate, which makes it easier to cool and therefore liquify and transport natural gas. We supply our LNG facilities with clean, green, emissions-free British Columbia hydroelectricity. We are closer to the Asian markets, significantly closer, than the Gulf of Mexico, which would be our principal competitor.

In other words, we are perfectly positioned to ship clean, green Canadian natural gas and reduce global emissions, but these blockaders do not want us to. They would rather see coal combustion in Asia pump millions of tonnes of greenhouse gases into our atmosphere, coal being the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions anywhere on planet earth. However, these protesters would like to continue to see dirty foreign coal, as long as it demobilizes our population and prevents our people from getting to work.

No, it is nothing to do with the environment. Nor was it anything to do with the environment when they, along with the help of the government, shut down the Teck Frontier mine, which had agreed to zero-net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. In fact, the company has already lowered its emissions to below the intensity of other competitors around the world. That oil will still be produced, it will still be burned, it will just come from outside of Canada.

● (2035)

It is not about the environment and it is not about first nations land rights. When it comes to the Coastal GasLink, 20 elected councils for first nations had supported and signed agreements to profit and benefit from that GasLink. They all support it. In terms of the hereditary leadership, many of them, too, support it. In referenda by local communities, there has been overwhelming support for these projects of which the blockaders are standing in the way.

With respect to the Teck Frontier mine, there are 14 first nations communities around the mine and all 14 support the project. The cancellation of that mine went not only against the wishes of the regulator, which recommended its approval, of the Alberta government, which has supported it, but all 14 first nations communities. Therefore, no, it is not about first nations land rights.

In fact, it is very clear that the cancellation of this project did not have the free, prior and informed consent of those first nations communities. The protesters and ultimately the government that killed the project went directly against the wishes of first nations people. First nations are being used as an excuse by anti-energy and anti-working class protesters and their friends in the government, by downtown, urban-dwelling Liberal elites who look down on the working class people of our country.

If members do not believe me, look at the Prime Minister's own remarks. He said that he wanted to phase out Canada's energy sector. He did not say he wanted to phase out global petroleum. He said that he wanted to phase out Canada's oil sands. He is not concerned about increased production in the United States, where oil production has more than doubled in the last 12 years. He is not concerned about increased oil and gas production in Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Libya and other places. Those places can go on producing and burning oil. It is Canadian oil and gas he wants to phase out.

However, it is not just oil and gas. He said that he believed southwestern Ontario should move away from manufacturing. He said, when he was abroad at a fancy conference, that he thought construction workers brought negative gender impacts to rural communities. That is the attitude of the downtown, internationalist, globalist elite who look down their noses at the working people of our country.

I will conclude on an optimistic note. Canadians are proud of working-class people and they are increasingly prepared to stand up and fight back. I believe we will have a renaissance of the working class in the country when we remove the government obstacles that stand in their way, unleash the unmatched power of free enterprise, remove the obstacles so projects can go ahead and our industries and our energy sector can come roaring back to life to give those young people the opportunity to put their God-given talents to work, to give indigenous people the opportunity to trade again in commerce and to exploit natural resources again in our country. I say again, because that had been the tradition of first nations people for thousands of years before Europeans arrived on this continent. That is the future we will fight for as a Conservative opposition and it is the future that Canadians, together with us, will win for our country.

● (2040)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are some points the member for Carleton made that I could actually agree with. Sometimes we do agree at the finance committee. However, what I absolutely do not agree with is his comment that the demonstrators and the leadership of the government, meaning the Prime Minister, along with the government, shut down the Teck mine. That is absolutely not true.

Did the member for Carleton not read the letter from Teck Resources? It said this was the market. The member talked about free enterprise, and that is what free enterprise is all about. If the market is not there, the business plan does not go ahead. It is that simple. Do not try to play politics on this issue, because this is bigger than politics.

I congratulate the leadership at Teck Resources, because they laid out the facts and said something to politicians in the House: Find a way to get together, to work the environment and the economy together, so we can prosper in this country. Let us stop playing politics with this issue that is dividing Canadians.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind members from the official opposition that the member for Carleton is able to answer this and does not need any assistance.

S. O. 52

The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, anybody who believes this mine was cancelled for market reasons is dreaming in Technicolor.

Let us look at the facts. The company invested $1 billion over 10 years. Companies do not make 30- or 40-year investments based on the daily price of crude oil. They know that prices fluctuate day to day, and they are not going to cancel a 30- or 40-year project on the spot price of West Texas Intermediate. The company knew the basic price of oil since 2014, when it originally dropped. That is not new information.

What changed the company's decision was that the government allowed for lawlessness to erupt like a volcano across the country, while imposing excessive regulatory delays. Since July, the government had a recommendation from the regulator to approve it. Until present, it had not done so. The company got the message that Canada was an inhospitable place in which to do business, and the Prime Minister got exactly what he wanted, which was the cancellation of this massive project.

● (2045)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague suggested several times that the current situation has absolutely nothing to do with the environment, which may raise some eyebrows.

In his speech, he mentioned several times that people may not believe him. I will use the same formula to show him that the current situation has everything to do with the environment.

If people do not believe me, members should consider the fact that a mining project like the Teck Frontier project would produce four million tonnes of CO_2 per year and 260,000 barrels per day. If people do not believe me, then I will read a quote from Don Lindsay, who wrote:

> ...global capital markets are changing rapidly and investors and customers are increasingly looking for jurisdictions to have a framework in place that reconciles resource development and climate change, in order to produce the cleanest possible products. This does not yet exist here today....

If my colleague does not believe me, I can give him the paper.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois supports foreign oil. The Bloc is happy to see that nearly half of Quebec's oil comes from foreign sources.

The reality is that the Bloc is in favour of oil, but it would rather send Quebeckers' money abroad and finance dictatorships and less environmentally friendly energy sources than the ones in Canada. Canadians produce the cleanest oil in the world.

That is the Bloc's reality, and we will never let them tell Canadians otherwise.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would once again remind members to respect those who have the floor. If members have comments, they need to ask to participate in the question and comment period or in the debate.

The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

S. O. 52

[*English*]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, earlier tonight we heard a Liberal member of Parliament tell this chamber that the government's goal in Canada is to produce the cleanest oil in the world. However, this is not true. We know what the Prime Minister told Canadians some years ago: The goal is actually to "phase out" the industry.

I can say this with some certainty because Canada is already an environmental leader when it comes to refining and producing its petroleum products. It is one of the cleanest producers in the world. If that is the goal, the government could say it is mission accomplished. It could get on with creating jobs and opportunity in Canada and exporting this technology and our clean ethical products around the world.

We know the decision that came down from Teck is a result of a market failure, which is produced by policy uncertainty. The result is fewer jobs, higher energy prices and less of Canada's ethical oil being consumed at home and around the world.

Teck's decision is a blow to Canada. It is devastating to Alberta's economy. It is also problematic and hurtful and is raising questions in Alberta about its place in Confederation in Canada. Jobs have been lost, opportunities have left, tax dollars are evaporating, and we now hear voices in western Canada wondering what Alberta's place is in the federation. This is a realistic question we hear, as people who look to Ottawa see a government trying to turn off this industry.

This is not the first time we have seen these actions from a federal government that is focused elsewhere. In my home province, energy east was killed. The government tried to say this too was a market decision, but energy east was following all the rules that were laid out by the Government of Canada. Those rules were changed midstream, something we never see. The company engaged in good faith in the Canadian regulatory process. It spent $1 billion trying to go through that process. Then the government changed the rules. The Prime Minister was not willing to spend a nickel of his political capital in Quebec, so the company walked away. It was another lost opportunity for Canada, an opportunity to bring the real eastern Canada, Atlantic Canada, into this nation building.

We look west and to central Canada and see jobs, growth and opportunity. We say in New Brunswick that we would like a piece of that. Instead of sending our best and brightest to work in this industry, this vital Canadian industry, we would like to see a piece of that in Atlantic Canada. However, the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party have other ideas. They want to shut it down. They wanted to shut it down in the east and now want to shut it down in western Canada.

Tonight I had the good fortune of hosting Preston Manning here on the Hill. Mr. Manning was in town promoting his new book about political involvement and engagement, entitled *Do Something!* I have known Preston Manning for 25 years now. When he sat in the House, his mantra was "the west wants in". Thirty years ago he was championing western Canadians to come to Ottawa, roll up their sleeves and work with fellow Canadians.

Teck abandoned its project, not because of the market but because of policy failure and policy uncertainty, just like TransCanada did on energy east, just like Kinder Morgan did by bailing out of the Trans Mountain pipeline, which was purchased by the federal government, because things were falling apart so quickly, because of policy and regulatory uncertainty. Today what do we hear in western Canada? Not that the west wants in, but maybe, just maybe, that the west wants out. This is deeply concerning and should raise alarm bells at the highest level of the federal government. We do not want to see this happening.

● (2050)

Our country is strong because of western Canada. It is strong because of all parts of this country. If we have a region or province that feels shut out of the corridors of power and feels its concerns are being ignored, this is a problem, almost a crisis. I hope the government will reconsider its position.

Some say this decision by Teck was made because of a downturn in prices or they say that Teck is just hitting the pause button and will return. Some are even saying that in a way Alberta deserves this because it is not saving enough of its resource. However, there is no downturn in the industry. It is a made-in-Canada problem, a made-in-Canada downturn.

One only needs to look at the United States of America. It is booming. It is being called a blue-collar jobs boom. Jobs are being created, wealth is being created and opportunities are being created. At the same time, America last year, under President Donald Trump, believe or not, was the world's largest net CO2 reducer in the world. America has figured out that one can be prosperous, can cut CO2 and can create jobs.

To the idea that Teck will return, Teck is not going to return as long as the current government is in office under these policies. In fact, dare I say this is probably the last large-scale project we are going to see come to our shores. Why would a company come here? Project after project after project has been either cancelled, abandoned or killed by the government.

As for the notion that Alberta deserves this because it is just not saving enough compared to some European countries, those countries are not part of grand federations. Alberta has shared its wealth. It has shared the wealth with this federal government and it shares its wealth every single year with provinces across this country.

My province of New Brunswick receives a third of its budget every year from transfers from the federal government, generous transfers I know Albertans and other western Canadians are proud to pitch in to help. In the past, they have been allowed to do what they do best, which is to create jobs and opportunity and to share that wealth. They have grown mightily and we have seen a population boom in western Canada.

To my western friends, when the Liberals come to them and say not to worry and they will help with more transfers and EI, I say to run to the hills. We have that in Atlantic Canada. Life is pretty good, but that is not how one creates a growing economy that is going to see families grow, people move in and economies prosper. We are fortunate and thankful to have those transfers, but that is not the road a country follows to grow itself.

Today Canada is poorer because of this decision that is a direct result of the federal government. Indigenous communities that had agreed to it and were looking to participate are poorer. The provinces are going to be poorer over the long run as well. The government is destroying reliable energy, affordable energy and Canada's ethical energy industry. For that I say shame, because increasingly we are finding energy is cheaper outside of this country than good old made-in-Canada energy, and I decry that.

● (2055)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. In today's debate on the Teck Frontier project, it is easy to engage in petty politics against the government.

I do not think my colleague across the way has read the Teck decision, because it clearly explains why the decision was made. Macleans, La Presse, CBC/Radio-Canada and La Presse+ all agree that the decision was not down to our government. One media outlet concluded that it was not opposition from environmentalists, nor hesitation on the federal government's part, that forced Teck Resources to cancel its oil sands megaproject. It was actually the price of oil.

Can my colleague opposite tell us why journalists and Teck Resources all said this week that it was a business decision, not a government decision?

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, we heard the same arguments when the energy east pipeline was cancelled. We were told it was a market-related decision. Clearly, the federal government is responsible for this decision in Alberta, just as it was responsible for the energy east decision. The Liberals did nothing. They created obstacles and then said it was not their fault. It is their fault.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member talked a bit about Alberta's place in our Confederation. I really question whether this is a smart move to be talking about separation being best for Alberta and best for Canada.

I am a proud Albertan and I am a proud Canadian but there is this very dog-whistle sort of thing going on, where we are talking about Albertans leaving if we do not get our way. That is not helping us.

We could clearly see that the Teck project was not going forward and that there were reasons why that happened. The company wrote a letter and all of us have read it. What we are doing here is debating a symbol. We are not debating solutions. We are not getting to solutions. Talking about divisiveness in our country is not helping.

Could the member please reassure me that that is not what he meant?

Mr. John Williamson: Madam Speaker, I decry where we find ourselves. I am worried about it because I think it is going to be the issue we will be dealing with between now and the next federal election.

We do not have to make things up or be mischievous to realize that Albertans might soon realize the only way they can move forward to get these projects done or to ship their product outside the country is not with a federal government like the one we have. The conclusions they draw after that will be difficult ones.

I have spent part of my career looking at politics in this country. Albertans are not stupid. They will see where this problem originates from and try to find solutions. I hope and trust they will do so within the country. I understand how the winds of change might blow and people will propose dramatic actions that I do not agree with, that this side of the House does not agree with, but that are being fuelled by the Government of Canada, unfortunately.

● (2100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague, the wonderful member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. I know he will have a lot to say very soon.

[*English*]

I want to thank the member for Lakeland for initiating this emergency debate. I know she is passionate about this issue and has asked a lot of questions about it. She is only doing what all of us in this House would do when representing our constituents, and I salute her for that.

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I understand that she is disappointed by the decision of Teck Resources to withdraw its application for the Frontier mine project, but proponents make business decisions every day and we may not always like them. In this case, Frontier had the potential to create good-paying jobs during construction and would have created new wealth and opportunities across the country. It would have generated new revenues for all levels of government. Perhaps, most importantly it carried the support of all 14 surrounding first nations communities. That was no small accomplishment, particularly in this challenging time when we must find innovative ways to balance economic growth, environmental protection and indigenous participation.

Indeed, even as Teck Resources acknowledged that it made a difficult decision based on its economic and operational interests, the company's CEO, Don Lindsay, also identified the larger issue at play. He wrote that Frontier:

> ...surfaced a broader debate over climate change and Canada's role in addressing it. It is our hope that withdrawing from the process will allow Canadians to shift to a larger and more positive discussion about the path forward.

Teck Resources is right. We need to continue to have a positive discussion, to search for common ground and move ahead as a country, which is also why now is not the time for taking sides, drawing lines or fanning divisions. That has never served Canadians well in the building of our country and it is not helpful now. Instead, we need to engage in constructive dialogue here in this House and across the country, because we are at a pivotal moment in our history, grappling with national issues that are not easy. On the one hand, the federal government has a core responsibility to ensure Canada can develop its abundant natural resources, get them to market and support good middle-class jobs. That is why major infrastructure projects like new pipelines to tidewater are essential. They create access to new markets and better prices for valuable Canadian resources. On the other hand, we also know that responsible resource development is only possible when we earn public trust by addressing local, environmental and indigenous peoples' concerns. Our government is committed to meeting this dual challenge.

We passed legislation last year that specifically puts in place new rules to better protect our environment and communities, while making sure good projects are built to create good jobs for the middle class. There are literally hundreds of major resource projects worth hundreds of billions of dollars either under way or planned across Canada over the next decade. Dozens are in the oil sands and all would help to make Canada a global supplier of choice for the materials and finished projects that will drive a low-carbon future.

Canada's petroleum sector is part of that. It is a key contributor to employment and economic growth. It enriches communities in Alberta and across Canada. According to some of our most recent data, the oil and gas sector currently contributes about 8% to the national GDP and employs upward of 564,000 Canadians in direct and indirect jobs across the country, including indigenous communities. It is also an important partner in our climate change effort and our commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. That is worth emphasizing, because there is a persistent myth that petroleum-producing countries like Canada cannot be serious about climate change. I understand why that might be. There are some petro-states with dubious records on climate change, but Canada is not one of them. In fact, it is just the opposite. We are one of 77 countries to commit to net-zero emissions by 2050 and we intend to do it, just as we are doubling down to exceed our 2030 climate targets by putting a price on pollution, phasing out coal-powered electricity and making generational investments in clean energy, new technologies and green infrastructure, because many of the breakthroughs that will get us to where we want to go have yet to be invented or need a little help getting to market.

● (2105)

That is why we announced the winners of our breakthrough clean-energy solution initiative earlier this month as part of our efforts to bring the public and private sectors together to invest in potentially game-changing new technologies.

Canada's petroleum industry has been part of this energy transformation. For example, over the past decade Canada's petroleum sector has accounted for almost 70% of all private sector spending on R and D in energy innovation across the country. This includes the oil sands top 13 producers, which have been pooling their resources to fund more than a thousand distinct innovations and technologies.

Federal scientists in Devon have been working with industry on these advancements, and our government is investing $100 million to support the industry-led clean resource innovation network, which is aimed at making Canada's petroleum sector the cleanest in the world. I know we can get there. We are doing all of this because every climate change model suggests that we can meet our global targets while having cleaner oil and gas powering much of the world.

How is this possible? There are two points. First, fossil fuels currently account for just under 80% of the energy used around the globe. Second, even under scenarios in which we keep the planet from warming more than 1.5°, fossil fuels still account for 58% of our energy and oil production is still around 65 million barrels a day.

We can and should do even better than that. We should aim for less than a 1.5° rise, but my point is that fossil fuels will remain an important source of energy for a long time. Why should the best-in-class oil not come from Canada, from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador?

Let me be clear. That does not mean that we can carry on with business as usual. We cannot. Major changes are needed now. That is why we have a vision based on four pillars to make Canada a global leader in the clean-energy future.

The first is to enhance energy efficiency, because the best sources of energy are the ones we do not use. In fact, according to Efficiency Canada, conserving energy could take us 25% of the way to our Paris goals.

The second is to be using more clean power, particularly in energy-intensive sectors such as transportation and heating, as well as mining and petroleum extraction, so that we have the world's cleanest mills, mines and factories.

The third is to expand our use of low-carbon fuels, as many indigenous communities are doing by using biomass from forests as a source of both power and jobs.

The fourth pillar is producing the world's cleanest petroleum.

All of these are global game changers that will help accelerate a generational energy transformation. Canada can lead the way through the wealth of its land and the wisdom of its people. That is our vision. That is what our government is doing.

● (2110)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, Teck came to the same conclusion that we did: The project had a bad business case and it had an even worse environmental plan. That is the reality of this situation.

We are debating this issue tonight, but I would prefer that we talk about how we can move forward and come up with a real plan for workers and for communities affected by the ongoing global economic transition by investing in public infrastructure and clean energy and coming up with a new deal for Canadians, building a future that is more sustainable. Right now, Canada is producing 1.7% of global emissions, yet we are only 0.48% of the global population.

Will the member finally give up on another bad idea, the TMX pipeline? It is way over budget, and we could invest that money into clean energy and doing the right thing for those workers and communities. We can move them forward into a low-carbon future. This is an opportunity for this member to join us in doing the right thing.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is right that governments do not dictate oil sands projects. Market conditions do. The fact is that there are already 20 oil sands projects approved, and the government is out of the way. The 20 oil sands projects are not moving forward because of one reason: the price of a barrel of oil.

I know my hon. colleague would like us to abandon the TMX project, but abandoning the TMX project is the same thing as abandoning the transition toward a clean economy. That is exactly what the TMX project is all about. It is about investing $500 million per year in clean tech.

We will not give up on Alberta energy sector workers and we will not give up on the clean-energy workers.

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Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, several members now have said that Teck made a business decision not to proceed. Obviously we are blaming the government for this unfortunate decision and the 10,000 jobs that are lost.

In paragraph 2, the CEO says in reference to this project, “it is commercially viable.”

Lots of members on the other side have said it is a 40-year time window. Production of oil and demand for that oil will peak in 2036, well within the lifespan of this project.

Has the member actually read this letter? Does the member understand what “commercially viable” means?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I am looking at 20 projects that are currently approved that will not produce 10,000 barrels of oil per day, not 100,000 barrels a day, not one million—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could we hear each other speak, please?

The hon. member.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I have a lot of good things to say for Albertans. We approved 2.7 million barrels per day of projects, and they are not moving forward, not because of government, but because of market conditions. The market conditions dictate whether or not projects will go forward. Unfortunately, the Government of Canada does not control the price of oil.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked a lot about the price of oil. If we look at some oil-producing countries overseas, we see that low oil prices offered more of a long-term benefit than giving up the market share. There are countries, for example, like Saudi Arabia, which has the largest oil reserves, and it is able to have low oil prices without harming the economy. It is very hard for Canada to compete when the oil prices are that low.

I want the hon. member to mention Teck Frontier and why it made its decisions when other countries like Saudi Arabia are reducing their cost of oil.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is right. The Government of Canada does not control the world prices for oil. Right now I believe it is at $49 per barrel. That was the last time I checked. I know some countries can produce a barrel of oil for $10 per day. In Alberta, that is not the cost per barrel. It is much more than the prices currently reflected on the stock market.

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Again I will repeat that there are 20 projects that have been approved in Canada, representing a capacity of 2.7 million barrels per day, and they are not moving forward because of the current world market prices.

● (2115)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government firmly believes that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. We are committed to a federal assessment regime that is robust, based on science, protects our rich natural environment, respects the rights of indigenous peoples and supports our natural resources sector. We know that efficient, credible assessment processes are essential to encouraging investment in Canada and maintaining economic competitiveness.

The Government of Canada understands the economic importance of the oil and gas sector and the opportunities it presents for hard-working Canadians. At the same time, we need to develop these resources in a sustainable manner.

The Frontier oil sands mine project underwent a rigorous environmental assessment that took into account scientific evidence and indigenous knowledge, and was informed by federal experts and extensive consultation and input from indigenous peoples and the public. The environmental assessment of this project was conducted by an independent joint review panel, an excellent example of how the federal government can work co-operatively with other jurisdictions.

Under the federal legislation, a final decision on the project was required by February 28, 2020. As we all know, Teck publicly indicated its decision to discontinue the project on February 23, 2020. While Teck has indicated that it no longer intends to move forward with the proposed Frontier oil sands mine, the Government of Canada is committed to working with the resource sector to make sure that the best projects get built so that we can create jobs and ensure clean, sustainable growth.

The opposition wants to focus on the discontinued Teck Frontier mining project, but let us not forget something very important: that we have hundreds of major resource projects worth $635 billion already under construction or planned across Canada over the next 10 years. Let us move on.

[*Translation*]

We know that efficient, credible decision-making and assessment processes are essential to attracting investment and maintaining Canada's economic competitiveness.

[*English*]

Better rules give companies and investors the certainty and clarity they need and ensure good projects can move forward in a timely way. To support Canada's competitiveness and to attract investment, the new impact assessment system provides clear expectations and shorter and strictly managed timelines, while aiming at avoiding duplication in other jurisdictions wherever possible with one project, one assessment. These new rules aim to ensure public confidence by making federal decisions about projects like mines, pipelines and hydro dams more transparent and by ensuring decisions are guided by science, indigenous knowledge and other evidence.

We also realize that climate change is the greatest challenge of our time. Not everyone in the House does, but we on this side, of course, do. Also, the environment and the economy must go hand in hand to be successful in moving forward. The science is clear: Human activity is driving unprecedented changes in the earth's climate, and the impacts on the environment and on human health and well-being are real. Canadians are feeling the impacts of the changing climate.

Climate change is a huge challenge, but the opportunities are even greater. Again, we need to move on. Taking strong action can protect the health of Canadians, support biodiversity and create opportunities for Canadian businesses and jobs in the clean-growth economy.

Since the 2015 election, the federal government has been helping Canadians to seize on these opportunities. We worked with the provinces and territories to develop an ambitious plan to fight climate change, increase resilience to the impacts of the changing climate and drive clean economic growth. Today, our climate plan and actions are setting us on a path for more success as we move forward.

● (2120)

We are seeing a decline in absolute emissions while our economy and population continue to grow. Canada's most recent projections estimate that our emissions in 2030 will be 227 megatonnes lower than what was projected prior to the introduction of the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. This is a historic level of emissions reductions.

How are we getting there? We are supporting climate actions that are practical, proven and affordable while creating good, middle-class jobs. We are doing it in a way that puts people at the centre of our policies. Our plan includes over 50 concrete measures, regulations, standards, programs and investments to reduce emissions, build resilience and grow the economy. It is a plan that will continue to grow as we introduce additional new and enhanced measures that will enable Canada to exceed our 2030 emissions targets, providing a foundation for net-zero.

There are also economic considerations. We know creating good jobs and economic growth for our communities across Canada is an essential part of our environmental protection. We understand the economic importance of the oil and gas sector, and the opportunity it presents for hard-working Canadians.

We also recognize that transition takes time. We cannot do it overnight. We must be realistic. We must work together to move forward. The government understands that Canadians want to know that they can count on the government to make sound decisions to ensure that economically beneficial and environmentally responsible projects are moving forward.

We will continue to engage local communities, indigenous groups and Canadians in the review process for major projects, and we are committed to making decisions that reflect the views of Canadians and the mandate that we have been given.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, that is a great speech. I think I have heard that speech in so many other debates in the House. It is a canned speech. I really appreciate hearing it again, at least the last two-thirds of it. It did not sink in the first 100 times I heard it in the House.

However, I will concentrate on what this debate is about, which is the Teck Frontier mine. I know the hon. member mentioned it a little at the front of his speech. I will address some of the things he said about it with respect to its viability. He drifted off into all things about climate change.

I am going to ask the member about the 10-year process, the $1 billion spent by Teck in getting to this stage, and the joint provincial-federal body that looked at this assessment said, "Yes, you pass all the benchmarks on this, plus you're involving all 14 indigenous bands and they have all signed off on it."

The company met all the social and environmental guidelines required of any development in Canada. Therefore, I would like to know what the quid pro quo was for Teck to back away in the last five days. Teck is a mining company. Can we talk about the commitment from the government that it will not be getting $1 billion back from some rebate on its carbon tax going forward? If the member could commit to that, I would like to hear it.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I have to say that I have only praise for Teck Resources. I feel it has done its work and it has decided, after doing all its analysis, that it was not feasible at this time.

The message Teck sent is much stronger than that. The message it sent is to all Canadians. It is that we have to work together for climate change. It is taking it seriously, and it understands.

A little while back a member opposite said that Teck had decided that it was still feasible. That is not the truth. Let us look at paragraph two. It says:

> Since the original application in 2011 we have, as others in the industry have done, continued to optimize the project to further confirm it is commercially viable.

As it is today, it is not feasible and that is why Teck walked away. Please, do not forget that the message is clear—

● (2125)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We will have another question.

The hon. member for Repentigny.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to respond to the first speech my colleague opposite gave.

Most people agree that we need to end our dependence on fossil fuels as soon as possible. I heard him say that we need to protect health, biodiversity and water. Essentially, we need to protect humans. Rather than invest money in trying to extract clean oil, which I doubt exists, should we not be investing in a just transition for workers, which would also help make Alberta's economy viable and much more diversified?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Our government invested heavily in green energy in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, and it continues to do so. As we work on this, we have to remember that the economy and the environment go hand in hand. We can take care of both, but there has to be a transition, and everyone has to work toward that.

We cannot be like the Conservatives. We could search through the Hansard and print out everything they said about the climate, about how it does not exist. They could give that to their grandchildren later on. It might help them understand.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are hearing how proud the Liberals are. The member, whom I deeply respect, said that they have $635 billion that they have created in projects. The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell said that they have 2.7 million barrels that they have approved in projects that are stuck in the ground because of market conditions. They are fighting with Conservatives over who creates more pipelines and who gives more access to oil. However, none of it is getting to market, and we know why. It is because it does not make sense right now. The price is not there. It is the same reason why Teck has bailed from this project. It is because there is no economic case for it.

I would urge the member to do the right thing and finally release the human capital, the political capital, the social capital for the youth in our country so that we can get on to clean energy and start investing in things that we are going to move forward that are actually going to make a difference for the future of the country and that we could actually maybe all agree on.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He is always very specific, he does a good job and I have worked with him on committee.

I want to share some key things with my colleague.

When it comes to the market, the Conservatives do not understand the market, because they did not ship any oil outside of the United States.

To my colleague's question, we have seen today that there are over one million Canadians lifted out of poverty. There has been major—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): To the hon. parliamentary secretary, we are resuming debate.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, before my hon. friend for Lethbridge begins her address, and I would not want to interrupt her, but the degree of heckling has become very difficult. We are in a late sitting in an emergency debate, and the voices carry even more somehow.

The heckling and the interruptions violate our rules, and so as a point of order, I wish to remind members that during the debates, standing orders 18, 14 and particularly rule 16 point out how members should conduct themselves. We are not allowed, during debate, to interrupt other members, particularly in a debate as important as this. To have heckling against the member for Courtenay—Alberni, for instance, and to keep heckling, "How did you get here?", is insulting and unhelpful in an important debate.

● (2130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for a well made point. I would like all members to remember that we have to respect each other's time. We listen, that is what we are here to do, and then we can ask questions.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to start by notifying you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

I propose members imagine a runner. She is prepared for the race and takes her place but, before the bell goes, before the whistle is blown, she takes a moment to lean down and tie her shoelaces together. Securely fastening one shoe to the other, she then turns herself so that she is backwards, facing the starting line with her back rather than her front.

Meanwhile, her opponents are lined up solidly across the start line. Their shoes are properly tied. They are facing the direction of the race in front of them. The whistle is then blown and the runners take off. The runner with her shoes tied together and facing the wrong direction is at a secure disadvantage. This is Canada.

Rather, this is Canada under the current government, with the current Prime Minister making decisions with regard to our natural resource sector, and in particular the development of energy.

This is the Canada that no one deserves to have. This is a Canada that is handcuffed. This is a Canada that is tied by a noose, and it gets even worse: not only tied up with a noose, but then treated as a pinata on the world stage. This is Canada, not the Canada that this generation or future generations deserve, but the Canada that a Prime Minister who is incredibly ignorant, selfish and dedicated to his own image is creating.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member will withdraw those words, please, because those are not parliamentary ways of describing the Prime Minister of this country.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, which words would you like me to withdraw?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I think the member knows which words to withdraw.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, sorry, but I am not able to hear you.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I think the member knows which words to withdraw. We do not insult each other in this House.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, if you could help me out, that would be helpful.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will not repeat those words, but if the member would like—

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I would like to be helpful to my friend from Lethbridge. I would guess that the words "ignorant" and "selfish" certainly were not parliamentary.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I appreciate the help from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. We absolutely do not use insults in the House to refer to other members.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, I will withdraw my words.

It is important that the House understand that Canadians are rightly concerned about the actions of the Prime Minister and that they are altogether unhelpful, not only to the current state of the country and drawing investment across the border but they are altogether unhelpful for future generations about which every member in the House should care.

We are making decisions today, but more so, we are making decisions for the sake of our future. We are making decisions for 20 to 100, I dare say, several hundred years down the road. If members of the House are not considering that, if we are not able to see with visionary focus toward our future, then we have no business in this place. We have been entrusted with some seats that are very limited, 338 of us making decisions on behalf of a country, each of us common people representing other common people who duly elected us to be here speaking out on their behalf.

With all due respect, I am here today speaking out on behalf of the people of my province of Alberta, who desire to work more so than receive a welfare cheque from the government.

I am here today speaking on behalf of every Canadian who would benefit from energy projects moving forward rather than being handcuffed by the current government.

I am here today speaking on behalf of the generations that will come after me that would like to inherit a country that is vibrant, that is prosperous, that offers them a future.

Bear with me if I become a little passionate defending my country and those who will come after me.

We have a government that has handcuffed this country, that has refused its future from being vibrant. We look at Teck. It was shut out. We look at northern gateway. It was shut out. We look at energy east. It was shut out. We look at Trans Mountain. It was shut out. Project after project has been turned down because of the climate that has been created within the economic sector of the country, and it is wrong and it is being done in the name of so-called environmentalism.

Let us look at that more closely. Let us look at the facts. By developing our own energy sector right here in this country, we are advancing the environmental state of the entire globe. If we develop our own energy sector, we bring greenhouse gas emissions down, because we are investing in technology that is leading us toward net-zero emissions. We are creating technology that is much better for the planet than when we support places like Saudi Arabia in its oil development. To say that we care about the environment is to responsibly develop our energy sector.

The matter at hand is with regard to Teck.

On February 3, Teck publicly pledged to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. This is not something it had to do. This is something it chose to do. It has met every condition that it was asked to meet. It has done everything it was asked to do, yet the goal posts continuously move. Of course it was put in a situation where it withdrew.

It was hearing rumours of the party opposite, the party in power, preparing an aid package for the province of Alberta. It is laughable and yet incredibly sad, incredibly disheartening, incredibly hurtful to a province that again just wants to work.

It is not just about the province of Alberta; it is about a whole country being unified. If the Prime Minister cannot get that right, then what can he get right?

The Prime Minister's primary responsibility is the unity of a country. His second responsibility is the safety and security of its citizens. His third responsibility is the economic prosperity of this nation. His fourth responsibility is to work with other countries around the world to advance our country. On all four fronts, energy development would advance each of them.

● (2135)

The lack of energy development or the refusal to develop that industry and draw development into our country is actually a refusal to take his place as the Prime Minister and lead the country well. It is an abdication of the role that is Prime Minister, and it is wrong. It is leaving us in this place where we are leaderless. It is leaving us in this place where we are setting up a future that lacks hope, a future that lacks vibrancy. Why are we making those decisions? Better yet, why is our Prime Minister making those decisions?

It is creating an environment of chaos. It is creating an environment where investment does not just have a closed door, but it is being altogether repelled.

Investors are not wanting to come into our country. They see that the current federal government is not in support of developing our nation in any way that would be economically advantageous. This is extremely problematic. What gets me even more and what upsets Albertans, and I believe many other Canadians, is the hypocrisy.

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The Prime Minister says that he is about the environment, but yet he will not develop the industry in Canada, which would bring down greenhouse gas emissions around the world and would allow us to invest in green tech.

The Prime Minister says that he is all about the environment, but he will go to Senegal, sit down with its government and offer to develop its energy industry, which is not at all environmentally friendly, does not have the same strict regulations that Canada has and certainly does not have the human rights record that Canada does.

In addition to that, I recently had the pleasure of going to Bangladesh and seeing the incredible work that our country was doing, thanks to the generosity of Canadians, with regard to the Rohingya, which is a refugee group that is finding refuge in Cox's Bazar. In that area, there is a million of them. They would take out four football fields worth of forest every day in order to cook their food. How did we respond? Very generously. We decided to put an LNG project in place. Where are we getting the LNG to support this refugee group? Definitely not from Canada. It is from Saudi Arabia.

We are paying to bring LNG from Saudi Arabia in order to support a project that is saving the environment, but we are not actually supporting our own industry. We are supporting Saudi Arabia's industry, which is killing the environment and has absolutely no respect for human rights.

My point is this. The government is more concerned about creating some fictitious image of caring for the environment and the Canadian people, but it is doing absolutely nothing to advance our nation, whether it be the economy or the environment, which, yes, go hand in hand. It is time that the government takes action.

● (2140)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I listen to the Conservative speeches, they seem to be refusing to confront the central challenge put forward by Teck Resources.

The letter from the president talks about the need “to have a framework in place that reconciles resource development and climate change, in order to produce the cleanest possible products.” He goes on to say about Teck Resources, “We are also strong supporters of Canada’s action on carbon pricing”, something that the Conservative Party is absolutely against.

Is it not hypocritical to try to pass the blame across the way? In their eagerness to pass the blame on the government for this, are the Conservatives not failing to address this challenge when they disagree completely with the approach of Teck Resources and when they fail to accept the challenge to actually come up with realistic climate policies that will overcome this problem?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, Alberta is an incredible province full of people who are intelligent and hard-working, innovative and creative. They are people who roll up their sleeves and put their hand to the plough in order to get the job done.

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If members were to come to my riding of Lethbridge, Alberta, they would see this incredible mix of an urban sprawl, a city of just over 100,000 people, with a college and a university, with entrepreneurs, with innovation taking place and with technology and science advancing. Surrounding us, they would see the agriculture sector. They would see fields, animals and this incredible vibrancy.

Albertans know how to work. Albertans know how to innovate. Albertans know how to identify the problems that we face and how to solve those problems. Therefore, in 2005, in my province, regulations were put in place with regard to heavy emitters. In terms of a cap on oil sands, there is a provincial cap on emissions.

Therefore, we did not need the federal government to dictate this to us. The innovative people of Alberta saw the need. They saw the need to look after the environment, because the environment is what keeps our agriculture sector strong. A healthy environment allows us to feed the world, so of course we are going to take care of the environment.

We also have an energy sector that needs to thrive. Our energy sector is what allows our province and, I dare say, our country to build hospitals, schools, roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

This is my province and this is the province that deserves to be celebrated and not punished.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech and took some notes. She spoke about our responsibility and the decisions we must take in this House for the next 20, 30 and 40 years. She also spoke about a vision for the future, about future generations and about looming chaos. Strangely enough, these are the kind of words that environmentalists generally use when talking about climate warming. I find this strange and rather paradoxical. It reminds me of when tobacco companies, years ago, tried to make us believe that cigarettes were healthy.

Does my colleague believe in climate change? Does she know that fossil fuels contribute to climate change?

● (2145)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Madam Speaker, we would first have to come to a common understanding of what progress means. I feel that it would be very difficult for us to find citizens of this fine country who would call it progressive to sit naked in a forest. If we take fossil fuels out of the equation, if we take petroleum products out of the equation, then we can throw away everything from our toothbrushes to our glasses to our shoes to the clothes that we wear to the roof over our head to the seats that we sit on to the homes that we build to the heater that heats them to the car that we drive. I do not define—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, last year, Quebeckers consumed 10.6 billion litres of gasoline. This number has been rising steadily for years. Furthermore, 62% of those 10.6 billion litres came from the United States, and 38% came from Canada.

Some may find it funny that we are supporting Donald Trump's America this way, but we Conservatives believe that Canada would be much better off if we were energy self-sufficient. To get there, we need projects. This week, Canada experienced yet another backlash under the government of the past four years.

For nine years, Teck Frontier had been working on an oil extraction project so that Canada could stop buying oil from the United States and become self-sufficient. This project would have created 10,000 jobs, including 7,000 in operations and close to 3,000 in mine construction. The project would have required investments of $20 billion that would have been beneficial to Canada's economy. We are talking about $70 billion in economic benefits for the various orders of government.

Unfortunately, this project is dead. It died due to government inaction. The government did everything in its power to throw a wrench in the works of this project.

As I said, for nine years, people spent $1 billion preparing the project. They brought in the best specialists in the world to find the best ways to produce oil with the least energy and the best environmental footprint possible. What is more, Alberta's energy sector has reduced its pollution levels by 33% over the past few years.

Everything was ready. In July, the file was placed on the desk of the Prime Minister of Canada, ready for approval. This was the last step in the process. In nine years, every provincial, federal, regional, environmental and economic step had been completed. One of the most important steps was to secure the support of the 14 first nations directly affected by the project.

The current government keeps crowing about national reconciliation. Instead of building bridges, we are seeing barricades going up across Canada. Real reconciliation means working hand in hand on successful projects, not giving away people's money.

As Felix Leclerc said, “The best way to kill a man is to pay him to do nothing”. Unfortunately, the first nations have been victims of this terrible approach, whereas these projects would allow them to work hand in hand with non-indigenous people and be a full partner in prosperity.

Last July, the Prime Minister had a potential project for approval in front of him that was good for the Canadian economy and for all Canadians. Just before the election, perhaps worried, or fearful, about the political implications, the Prime Minister left the file to gather dust on his desk. The election was then called.

After the election, he did not know what to do with the project. He found two ways to throw a wrench in the works. Even though everything had been done properly, the Liberal government, which wanted to really make sure the project was not approved, invented two new demands to see how the industry would react. It was taken by surprise when the company was able to meet both of these new demands. Everything was set to go.

Four days before the project was to be approved, Teck Resources found out that the government had let prominent members of Parliament publicly announce that the project was not good. Members from Kingston and the Montreal area spoke out in opposition to the project.

● (2150)

Everyone is entitled to their opinion, but when members suddenly contradict the government while it claims to be taking time to think, it sends a message that the government wants nothing to do with the project.

We need to remember that we certainly know people who spoke out against the project. We need to remember that elected officials from Kingston paid for ads criticizing the project. The company got discouraged and decided to abandon the project. Unlike a member who spoke earlier, I will quote the full sentence. The letter signed by the president and CEO of Teck said the following:

[*English*]

> ...we have, as others in the industry have done, continued to optimize the project to further confirm it is commercially viable.

[*Translation*]

That is contrary to what those on the other side are saying, namely that the company backed out because the project was not profitable. That is not true.

I would also like to point out that the price of oil is pretty good today. We know very well that it fluctuates constantly. This is a 30- to 40-year project, not a 30- to 40-day project. Those are the facts.

Ultimately, after spending $1 billion, working for nine years, preparing jobs for 10,000 people, garnering $20 million in investments, laying the groundwork for $70 billion in economic benefits for governments, and managing to work with 14 first nations, the company pulled the plug on the project.

Unfortunately, it is not surprising with this government. Since the Liberals came to power, 200,000 jobs in the energy sector have been lost. It would be like all the car and plane companies in Canada closing up shop tomorrow. It would be a national disaster in Ontario and Quebec, and rightly so. In the past four years, 200,000 jobs have been lost. I hold this government responsible. The leader of the government said with a straight face:

[*English*]

> We need to phase them out.

[*Translation*]

This industry is not being phased out fast enough. Pipeline workers are a threat to social security wherever they go. That is what the Prime Minister is saying. There is nothing more insulting than insulting Canadian workers. The Liberals said that they were looking forward to it and it was not going as fast as they would like. What an affront to these Canadian workers. What an affront to this industry that is fundamental to our country. It is the Prime Minister who is acting like that, and it is certainly not for everyone's good.

The Financial Post reported today that $150 billion in investments have been lost since the Liberals took office. Meanwhile, in the United States, production more than doubled over the past 12 years, including under Barack Obama. The Prime Minister's close friend was not afraid to develop his country's full energy potential. He realized that energy self-sufficiency is a good thing and that there is no shame in producing shale gas or shale oil. The United States drilled 670,000 shale gas and oil wells under Barack Obama. I look forward to seeing the reaction of the Quebeckers who love Barack Obama so much when they hear that fact. That is a leader who cares about his country's economy, not a leader who shows contempt for his economy.

Sometimes people say that Quebeckers do not like oil. Need I remind the members that Quebeckers consumed 10 billion litres of oil last year, 62% of which came from the United States? Need I remind the members that 400 Quebec businesses are directly affected by the recently cancelled project? Need I remind the members that 50,000 people in Quebec work for the petrochemical industry? Need I remind the members that Quebeckers are quite familiar with pipelines? Jason Kenney did not invent them; they have been around since 1942.

Quebec has 2,000 kilometres of pipeline. A 248-kilometre pipeline was built in 2012 between Lévis and Montreal. It crosses 26 waterways and 630 parcels of agricultural land. It works so well that nobody knows about it and nobody talks about it. That is a fact in Quebec. There are nine pipelines running under the St. Lawrence, and as far as I know, there are no cyclops fish swimming around. The pipelines were built properly.

● (2155)

Teck's Frontier project died today, and this is really not a good day for Canada or Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned in his statement that the project was not profitable. It was profitable at one point, but the fact is we are talking about the project now, when oil prices are at $50 a barrel. It does not make economic sense to go forward with that project. When oil prices were at $150 a barrel, that was plausible, but now when it is $50 a barrel, that project is not plausible nor profitable. Can the member speak to that and the price of oil at this moment?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, what I would say to the member is that I know that some people say it is not economically viable. I prefer to stand behind the guys who worked so hard for the last nine years and spent $1 billion to be sure whether it is viable. The quote from his letter confirms “it is commercially viable.”

It is not us who are saying that, but the business itself. We all know that we are not talking about a project for the next 30 days but for the next 30 or 40 years. This is why, yes, that price will be on a roller coaster. Sometimes it is low and sometimes it is high.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Quebec poured his heart and soul into defending the province of Alberta, but in recent years, Quebec's greenhouse gas emissions have dropped by nearly 10% while Alberta's have gone up by nearly 60%. Quebec is doing what needs to be done, but this is like trying to escape from quicksand.

How can my colleague stand up for polluting projects that force his own constituents, his fellow Quebeckers, to swim through quicksand?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, the oil industry has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 33%. Speaking of sand, does the hon. member know that in Quebec the most polluting project in history is McInnis Cement? Does the hon. Bloc member know that the environment minister authorized that project without a BAPE assessment? The person who awarded the most polluting project in history is the Leader of the Bloc Québécois.

I have no lessons to learn from a member of a party whose leader is the most polluting environment minister in the history of Quebec. Those people will never have any lessons to teach us.

● (2200)

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to pick up on this question of whether this project is, was or could be commercially viable.

I know Teck well. In the 2018 annual report for Teck Resources, it said, "There is uncertainty that it will be commercially viable to produce any portion of the resources."

Teck has been telling me for five years that it is concerned about its oil sands properties, because it does not see any way to move forward unless we get a price of oil above $90. It has not been there for six years and there is no suggestion that it will ever be there again.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I am also very concerned about the situation. The point is that kind of project is not for the next 30 days or 30 weeks, but for the next 30 or 40 years. In all those years, there will be a real roller coaster of prices. Sometimes the price will be high, sometimes it will be low. This is a long-term project, which is why it has confirmed "it is commercially viable."

[*Translation*]

Unfortunately, because the government and Liberal MPs made sure this project would not go through, the Canadian economy will be deprived of billions of dollars.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my esteemed colleague, the hon. member for Louis—Saint-Laurent. It has to do with the question asked by the hon. member for Kitchener South—Hespeler.

Obviously the issue of price and the viability of this project is a real concern. It is a great mystery to me.

[*English*]

In The Globe and Mail, on January 29, CEO Don Lindsay confirmed that "Teck has yet to launch a full feasibility study on the Frontier mine that would help establish whether the project could be profitable." Mr. Lindsay said, "We need a partner. We need a price."

I would love to ask Mr. Lindsay, who was without a feasibility study on January 29, how he could tell us less than a month later that this is commercially viable. The price of oil has not changed.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, first of all, I deeply appreciate the fact that my colleague works hard to speak French each and every time she rises, even if it is 10 p.m. Mr. Lindsay did confirm "it is commercially viable."

I know the Green leader is very concerned with green energy, so I am very pleased to announce, and I know she knows this, that half a billion dollars' worth of projects have been created in Alberta for solar energy. This is in Alberta.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kings—Hants tonight.

I want to start by saying that I am glad to have this debate. Canadians want to know they can count on our government to make sound decisions to ensure that economically beneficial and environmentally responsible projects are advanced, while upholding our efforts on reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

[*Translation*]

I hope the discussions we are having this evening will give us a chance to think about meaningful solutions to continue creating good jobs for Canadians and to protect our environment for our children and grandchildren.

[*English*]

Before delving into the withdrawal itself, I want to chart the meticulous and diligent process that underpinned Teck's Frontier project under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, which sets out clearly what needs to be assessed to inform government decision-making.

[*Translation*]

Canadians have told us they want a government that protects our environment and the health of our communities, and that supports opportunities and economic growth.

With its Frontier project, Teck Resources was making every possible effort to achieve those goals. Teck was proposing to build, develop and rehabilitate a 260,000-barrel-a-day drilling operation located in northeastern Alberta, 30 kilometres south of Wood Buffalo National Park.

When the project was reviewed, the environmental assessment process reflected the integrity of Canadian values, particularly regarding things we have heard about so far such as guaranteed meaningful consultation with indigenous peoples and Canada's contribution to the fight against climate change.

● (2205)

[*English*]

As an essential part of the review process, the former minister of environment and climate change entered into an agreement to establish a joint review panel with the Alberta Energy Regulator in May of 2016. The panel found the project would result in significant adverse effects on asserted aboriginal and treaty rights and would also contribute to existing significant adverse cumulative effects to the asserted rights, use of lands and resources and culture of indigenous groups.

Additionally, on July 25, 2019, the joint review panel for Frontier released its report and concluded the project is likely to result in direct significant adverse environmental effects in a number of areas, including to the physical and cultural heritage of indigenous groups that use the project area, in the current use of lands and resources for traditional purposes by indigenous groups, to the Ronald Lake bison herd and to migratory birds and other species at risk that rely on wetlands and old-growth forests. The panel concluded there would be significant cumulative effects in these same areas in addition to cumulative effects on woodland caribou.

Taking into consideration the significant direct and cumulative effects identified that cannot be mitigated, the panel made 77 recommendations to parties. The panel's role was to provide recommendations to inform the minister's decision at the end of the assessment on whether the project is likely to cause significant environmental effects within federal jurisdiction. That consideration was still in progress when Teck decided to withdraw its application.

[*Translation*]

However, on February 23, Teck informed our government that it wanted to withdraw its regulatory application from the federal environmental assessment process. Under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change can stop an environmental assessment at any time if a proponent informs the minister in writing of their intention to not complete the project.

I have no doubt that this was a very difficult decision for Teck. The letter Teck's CEO sent to the minister clearly demonstrates the need for all levels of government to work together to promote climate action and clean growth.

As Teck's CEO said in his letter, Canada needs to continue to show climate leadership. He believes that Canada has the potential to be a global provider of sustainable, climate-smart resources to support the world's transition to a low carbon future.

[*English*]

The Government of Canada understands the economic importance of the oil and gas sector and the opportunities it provides to hard-working Canadians. At the same time, we must develop these resources in a sustainable manner.

As was also noted in his letter, the Teck CEO stated we need to move beyond jurisdictional and partisan disputes. We must take action on climate change to reduce pollution and thereby provide certainty for business. As he said, “Global capital markets are changing...and investors and customers are increasingly looking for jurisdictions to have a framework in place that reconciles resource development and climate change, in order produce the cleanest possible products.” We agree.

We must continue to work with all levels of government in Canada and with the resource sector to ensure clean and sustainable growth for all. Additionally, the pathway toward indigenous reconciliation must continue to be at the heart of our actions as a government. Connecting and strengthening these goals is something this government has done and will continue to do. That is what Canadians expect from us and that is what we will continue to deliver.

[*Translation*]

The broad consultations undertaken thus far have improved the Government of Canada's relationship with indigenous groups consulted for the environmental assessment of the Frontier project. Even if the project does not go ahead, the Government of Canada appreciates the important and constructive dialogue it had with indigenous groups throughout the assessment process. The relationships it established reflect the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation and will help to manage the effects of development on indigenous peoples going forward.

I can confirm that the federal government carefully examined all the information available and questioned whether it should pursue further studies or request more information.

● (2210)

[*English*]

On all major resource projects, our government looks at the environmental impacts, discusses the economic opportunities and takes into consideration how government decisions affect our work toward reconciliation and climate change commitments. The review of the Teck Frontier oil sands mine project was balancing all of these considerations.

For projects undergoing federal impact assessments, the federal government is putting into practice the principles articulated in the recently enacted Impact Assessment Act that reflect values important to Canadians, most notably, early, inclusive and meaningful public engagement, a predictable and co-operative process and nation-to-nation, Inuit-Crown and government-to-government partnerships with indigenous people.

This government is also committed to decisions based on the best available science and indigenous traditional knowledge and to sustainability for present and future generations.

Our government understands that Canadians want to know they can count on the government to make sound decisions to ensure that projects that are in the best interests of all Canadians will move forward and that we will protect the environment in doing so. We will continue to work toward that goal in the months and years ahead for the betterment of all Canadians.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is an incredibly serious issue. I have tens of thousands of energy workers in my constituency who looked at this as a bellwether for the province's future. The fact that this company saw that market conditions, created by the Liberal government, had destroyed its capacity to build a project is incredibly concerning. For the member to relitigate some of those aspects of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There is a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, that is not the member's usual place.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I know. It has been pointed out several times. However, during an emergency debate, members may sit where they wish.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I just learned that this can be the case in emergency debates. For those of us who are new, this is something new.

Alberta has demonstrated that it is a world leader in energy production, yet the member seems to want to relitigate the process that Teck aced. Is the member aware of all the ways that Alberta has led the world in making sure that we have ethical, environmentally friendly energy?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I share my hon. member's concerns. This is personal for me as well. I have extended family members who rely on the resource sector in Alberta for their employment.

The results of the Teck process and the pulling out of this Teck project show us that we need to do better. We need to be working closer together as members of the House and as different levels of government to ensure that we show investors and proponents of projects like this that we can reconcile development of these projects with meeting our climate goals. We know we have to do this for our kids and grandkids, as I am sure my hon. colleague would agree.

I look forward to working with the hon. member and all members in achieving that goal for the betterment of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary repeated many times that the assessment was done properly. I would like to go back to some elements of my speech, which call that statement into question.

First, the assessment was based on erroneous information that set the barrel price at $95. In December, Teck itself told its investors that the price was between $60 and $70. However, the panel never asked for a review of the assessment.

Second, Teck Resources has managed copper and zinc operations, but never oil sands operations. Teck Metals was found guilty of 13 spills in two years in Alberta, which makes it the most polluting company in that province. Teck Coal in the United States has also been found guilty of releasing selenium into the environment.

Therefore, I believe that the assessment was not conducted properly.

● (2215)

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and for her hard work on tackling climate change and protecting the environment.

We followed the process that had been in place since 2012. It was important for us to prove to companies like Teck that wanted to move forward that we were following the existing process.

We realized that there were problems with this process and that we could improve it. This is why we implemented a new process, which shows people who want to develop such projects that we take this seriously. There is now a better process in place, and we invite investors from around the world to come invest in Canadian projects. We have projects ready to go and very effective ways to regulate them.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. parliamentary secretary spoke about indigenous consultation, so I will quote the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation chief, Chief Allan, who said:

> We had no choice but to go on with this thing. We were the last nation that didn't have an agreement with Teck Resources. It's not like we wanted to pursue this, but we were put in a position of do or die situation and we had to do it.

Chief Gerry Cheezie, who is downstream from the Teck project, said, "Our rights are being trampled."

The missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people report describes the relationship between work camps, which experience an influx of transient workers who arrive to work in mines or energy industries, and higher rates of sexual assault and harassment. I am curious to know the hon. parliamentary secretary's comments in regard to these kinds of resource extraction industry camps. How do they impact indigenous women and girls? Why is the consultation process one to be praised?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Madam Speaker, we realize that there were issues with the previous Canadian Environmental Assessment Act that was put in place in 2012. What we have done is put in place the Impact Assessment Act, which will take into consideration all of the issues that have been addressed in the past and ensure that issues such as indigenous buy-in to these projects and climate change are addressed at the beginning of the process, and not at the end where people perhaps feel forced to take part.

We are addressing this, and we are very proud of the fact that we have put in place a new methodology that we think will have positive impacts for Canadians as well as proponents, projects and indigenous stakeholders as well.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the chance this evening to bring my remarks to this discussion as a rural member of Parliament from Nova Scotia.

I believe it is an important time to talk about our energy sector in this country, and I appreciate that the member for Lakeland has brought this motion forward.

I will start by recognizing the role that the energy sector, particularly in western Canada, has played and will continue to play in supporting our prosperity across this country. Many of my colleagues have highlighted that in their speeches here this evening.

The economic benefit that these projects have brought to our country have helped pay for public services from Newfoundland to British Columbia and everywhere in between. In my riding of Kings—Hants there are many residents who have benefited and continue to benefit from these types of projects, and they are not just Alberta projects or western Canada projects. They are truly national projects.

My perspective on the discourse around the Teck Frontier decision, particularly in the last month, is that it was polarized in a very detrimental way. In one sense, many of my Conservative colleagues alluded to the positive impact that this project or similar projects would have on job creation and taxation for public spending in this country, and that certainly resonates with me. However, there is very little acknowledgement of the environmental impacts of these projects and our ability as a country to meet our international climate targets.

Some of my Bloc, NDP and Green colleagues rightfully pointed to the reality that these projects, like Teck, create challenges for us to be able to meet our climate targets and that they have an environmental impact both locally and regionally. However, I think they fail to appreciate that the oil and gas industry will play a reduced but still important role in the Canadian and global economy in the days ahead.

The reality is that Canadians want balance. They want a government that is focused on climate change and protecting the environment, but also supporting a strong economy. The Prime Minister has made this clear time and time again, and we have done that. We have created 1.2 million jobs since 2015 while implementing a price on pollution and reducing the GHG emission gap that the Conservative government had left us in 2015.

I want to provide a couple of examples which I believe illustrate Canadians' desire for a government that is balanced on both sides of this issue.

Canadians overwhelmingly support a price on pollution. They overwhelmingly voted in the last election for parties that want to move forward on environment and climate change. However, Canadians overwhelmingly also support the construction of Trans Mountain pipeline. Canadians are pragmatic, and they want a government that has this balance.

My concern is the tone of this particular debate and narrative in this House. The middle ground on these issues seems to have eroded.

I want to address first the narrative from the Conservatives that Teck represents 10,000 jobs, and that somehow Alberta and western Canada's only way forward is through oil and gas.

The member for Lethbridge suggested that people in her province want to work, but suggested that seemingly the only way forward or the only type of work is in the oil and gas sector. I know that is important, but to suggest that this is the only way forward is, frankly, naive of the other opportunities. I do not mean to be unparliamentary, but I think it sells short the potential that is in western Canada.

I want to talk about the 10,000 jobs. We know that there would be 10,000 jobs if construction had moved forward. However, Teck decided not to move this project forward, and the jobs would have only been created if the project were to be built. The CEO of Teck had mentioned three impediments in being able to move that forward.

One impediment was price. The Government of Canada does not control the world oil price. The project was built on an economic analysis of $95 for a barrel of oil. I believe right now the price of oil on the global market is about $50. Although my Conservative colleagues would talk about the viability of this project, there is no doubt that the analysis was originally built on an expectation of something that is far from reality at this point or in the foreseeable future.

They talked about a partner. The Government of Canada is not involved with supporting a private sector partner to move this forward, and so that would be another impediment. Of course, our government is committed to making sure the pipeline and Trans Mountain happens so that we have the ability to get our resources to market.

However, the narrative in the House has been “if only this project was approved”, which, of course, we did not have the ability to choose to go forward with, and “if only 10,000 jobs would be created” is a fallacy. We cannot tell Canadians that if only this happens they will have 10,000 jobs, because it is selling short and not explaining the nuances of this particular project.

S. O. 52

● (2220)

Here is why it is a fallacy. As far as I know, there are currently 38 petroleum or oil and gas projects that have been approved. They could start tomorrow if industry wanted to move them forward. They have gone through the regulatory process, but they are not being built. As much as my Conservative colleagues would suggest the cause is Bill C-69 or other legislative measures that we have taken forward on environment, the reality is that these energy companies are looking at a 40-year window. They are recognizing that the world is making a transition.

We are moving to a low-carbon economy. We are moving on renewable energy around the world, and they are rightfully asking whether they can return their cost of capital. We know that the Canadian energy sector is important and that they do amazing work, but we also know that the process to extract the bitumen from the oil sands is much more energy intensive.

The fact is that we have 38 projects. Some colleagues in this House would be excited by the fact that they are not being built because they would put us further and further away from our emission target, and I can appreciate that. However, I think all Canadians, not just Albertans or those from western Canada, need to understand the importance that these projects have played and the revenue that they have created for our economy to pay for public services. We need to make sure that we can transition and support, if these energy companies do not want to move forward on these projects.

Those who would suggest that the petroleum industry in Canada has no future, or that it is not economically viable, fail to appreciate that transition does not happen overnight. They fail to appreciate the work the Government of Canada has done in the last four years to meet and exceed our Paris climate accords.

In 2015, our government inherited the reality that our country was on pace to miss our international climate targets by over 300 megatonnes. In the four years that we have been in office, we have been able to reduce that gap to 72 megatonnes, and that is not including the measures that we will be bringing forward in this parliamentary session.

My message to my progressive colleagues in this chamber is that we need an industry and we need western provinces that will cooperate and help us get there. We need to be able to work with them accordingly. Having a petroleum industry that provides the needed international product and also helps our country on its path to meet its much-needed GHG emission targets is the best path forward.

I, for one, certainly appreciate Don Lindsay's words on reducing partisanship on these particular issues. We can find a way to balance the reality that the petroleum sector will play an important role in the Canadian economy and the global economy in the days ahead, but it will not necessarily play the same integral role in the next 50 years as it has in the last 50. I think we need to be mindful of that.

I have appreciated the opportunity to speak to this issue this evening, and I welcome some questions from my colleagues accordingly.

● (2225)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a very short question for the member.

His government made no decision on this. It went until literally the very last moment before there was a withdrawal from the applicant.

Would the member have favoured approval, yes or no?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I think this is the exact problem that I am alluding to, the “yes or no”. I had the opportunity to write an op-ed on my position. I am happy to send it to the member opposite. It is on what I believe to be the best process forward.

Had we chosen to go forward with approving the project, I think it would have had to include concessions in getting the province of Alberta to work on building within our climate plan. If we had chosen not to, we would have had to recognize that this would have played an important role in the Alberta economy and there would have had to be investments to help diversify their economy as a result.

This “yes or no” idea is the problem. It is “yes, and” or “no, but”.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think it was very appropriate for the member to mention that today the price of West Texas Intermediate was around $50 a barrel. I would say to my Conservative friends, who are always champions of the free market, that I think it is important for the House to understand that the price of oil is at a level which is completely unsustainable to support oil sands development.

We are looking at where we need to go in the future and the ways in which we need to diversify the economy, particularly in Alberta.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague across the way has heard of the organization Iron & Earth, which is made up of oil sands workers and people who are in the oil and gas industry, workers who are interested in transitioning their skill set away from oil and gas into the renewable energy economy of the future. Could the member offer some comments to the House on how worthwhile that project is, as it is led by workers who are in the oil and gas industry?

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I certainly enjoy collaborating with the member opposite on the agriculture committee, where we do work outside of this House.

The question in particular was about Iron & Earth. I am not familiar with the organization specifically, but the broader question was on how we can ensure that we make that transition happen.

We all know that transition needs to happen, and I alluded to it in my speech. Some of my Conservative colleagues do not give credence to the fact that we do need to transition. The oil and gas industry is not going to play the same role in the next 50 years as it did in the last 50 years.

Transition is important, but we need to recognize that the oil and gas industry is going to play a role in the global economy in the days ahead. There is no way in which we are going to shut it down overnight, nor should we.

● (2230)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the word "transition" is one of those things that papers over urgency. This is an urgent matter. Parliament passed a motion that we are in a climate emergency when Scott Brison was the hon. member for Kings—Hants. The hon. member's predecessor voted for that motion that we are in a climate emergency.

I agree that there will be fossil fuels used for some time to come, but new investments in fossil fuels are clearly not compatible with reaching our Paris objectives. I wonder if the member would comment on that.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I am glad the hon. member recognized that the hydrocarbon industry will play a role in our economy in the days ahead.

I am the youngest member of this governing side of the House. I know that we need to do more on climate change. I know that we need to move in that direction, but I also recognize that it has to be balanced. We can both support an oil, gas and petroleum industry in this country and meet our international targets and exceed them.

The proof in the pudding, so to speak, is the fact that we have done that in the last four years. We have moved in the right direction. We are only 72 megatonnes over our target. Not considering the investments that are going to be made in this Parliament, we will meet and exceed our targets while not necessarily saying no to these types of jobs that are going to be important in the days ahead.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton. I am looking forward to hearing his comments on this as well.

A lot of my colleagues have spoken very eloquently in this emergency debate, brought forward by the member for Lakeland in her passion for her constituency. I am proud to be able to speak along with her about the crisis that is happening in western Canada within our energy sector right now.

I have been here since 11 o'clock this morning and I have heard many speeches regarding the opposition motion. We can tie a lot of these together. I will touch on some of the words that our Liberal colleagues have said throughout the day.

I also want to talk from the perspective of my constituency, my colleagues, my friends and my family. A lot of people who are very close to me work in the energy sector. One of my best friends worked in the energy sector during his time at university. He was a roughneck. He was a rig hand. Now he is an anesthesiologist. People do leave the oil field and get different careers. That should be their choice, not the choice of a select few elite who think their jobs are not worth having anymore.

I have heard that a lot in the chamber today. There is a group of people within the chamber who think they should have the say as to whether oil and gas workers, hard-working men and women, deserve to keep their jobs. That is not right. They are one of the most innovative groups of people in our country. They work hard to ensure that what they do is cleaner, greener and better than any other country in the world. To have a group of people in this chamber say they are not good enough is absolutely ridiculous. Those members should all take a long look in the mirror when they get home.

Standing up for our constituents is what we should be doing. I am not sure if they are doing that. I am not sure if they sent out householders or surveys on whether their constituents are against Canadian oil and gas. I have been in the chamber for only three months, but I was an MLA for eight years. Canadians would prefer to have Canadian gas going into their gas tanks. Whether in the Maritimes or in B.C., Canadians would prefer to have Canadian energy heating their homes.

That is what this emergency debate is about. It is about whether we think Canada should be a country of yes: yes we can build a project, yes we believe in our energy sector and yes we believe in the hard-working men and women who work in our oil and gas sector. We think they have the right to try to make their companies cleaner and greener. I believe they deserve to have that chance and not be phased out by people in this chamber.

I have heard a lot of people quoting, cherry-picking quotes from the Teck CEO's letter. My hon. colleagues do not seem to be reading the whole letter. I will quote from that letter:

> We are disappointed to have arrived at this point. Teck put forward a socially and environmentally responsible project that was industry leading and had the potential to create significant economic benefits for Canadians. Frontier has unprecedented support from the indigenous communities and was deemed to be in the public interest by a joint federal-provincial review panel following weeks of public hearings and a lengthy regulatory process. Since the original application in 2011, we have, as others in the industry have done, continued to optimize the project to further confirm [its commercial viability].

I have heard comments about the spot price of oil and West Texas Intermediate right now. It is $50 a barrel. That is true. I understand businesses are still going in the oil sands in Alberta. Syncrude is still operational. It is weird. A company can still make money at this price.

For opposition members to now be captains of industry and talk about energy products and say it could not be done for commercial viability is not true. If the government had been able to approve that project and let that company make the choice after the project was approved, it would have been an interesting position. If the government gave the project the go-ahead three weeks ago, would it have agreed that the project may have continued to be implemented in Alberta?

● (2235)

Do not take my word for it that this was a political decision. Lorne Gunter published a great article a couple of days ago:

> The fault is clearly with the [Prime Minister's] government's entirely spineless response to blockades across the country.

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I will quote the article:

> Make no mistake, the end of Teck Resources' Frontier oilsands mine is [the Prime Minister's] fault—plainly, clearly, unequivocally.
>
> The project's cancellation also means the radical fringe is in charge of Canada, not the government, the courts or the police.
>
> Teck's decision, announced Sunday, will also have far-reaching effects on the entire Canadian economy, not just the energy sector.
>
> There is no doubt this is [the Prime Minister's] fault.

The article went on to say:

> [The Prime Minister] showed he wasn't interested in being in charge when, last Tuesday, he said the answer to the lawless at the blockades was more touchy-feely consultation and listening.

He ends the article:

> Don't ask a federal Liberal MP or cabinet minister what Canada's First Nations policies are. Don't even ask the majority of Indigenous Canadians who want to improve their communities by participating in projects such as Teck Frontier and Coastal GasLink.
>
> Go ask the unelected, unaccountable radicals at the blockades, because they're in charge now.

Is that the country we are going to live in? I have three young children, ages six, four and three. Is that the country we want to pass on to the next generation where there is no rule of law? Is this not the place where we make decisions? Is this not the place where we want to make sure big, nation-building projects can be built?

I have heard almost every left-wing falsehood this evening, including the Victoria MP saying we have to be cleaner while Victoria dumps 100,000 litres of raw sewage in the ocean every year. Thanks for that. Maybe the MPs should clean up their own backyard first before talking about what we should do in western Canada, in Saskatchewan and Alberta. That would be a good start.

I want to talk about some of my constituents and some of the hard-working people who put pipes in the ground: the people who work at Evraz and the people who want to go to work. When I was door-knocking, I talked with Wade on his doorstep. It was snowing so I did not see it at first, but he pointed to the "for sale" sign on his front yard. He told me he had not worked for 18 months and could not afford his house anymore. His wife just left him, so he could not afford the payments.

These are real Canadians who are having difficult times. It is incumbent upon the government to support all of Canada. The crux of the motion is that we should have had this conversation when this happened in the automobile and aerospace sectors because those jobs are as important as the jobs in western Canadian provinces. They are as important as our oil and gas sector. We have had those debates and we had comments from members saying maybe we should not have this debate. Maybe this is not a crisis and maybe this is not important.

I hear it being said about my constituents that maybe their jobs are not important and they have to get new jobs. There are 300,000 new clean jobs in this country. Can anyone name them? Probably not, because a lot of them are in the oil and gas sector, which is doing clean-energy projects.

Before we had a group of people in this chamber saying our hard-working men and women in the oil and gas sector and in the construction sector are dangerous in small communities. They help build small communities. They are not dangerous people in those communities.

Before we have a group of men and women in this chamber saying the hard-working men and women in the oil and gas sector would not get the job done and have a cleaner energy sector, we should give them that chance before we phase them out. We are going to be here fighting for them, making sure they have that chance now and in the years to come.

● (2240)

The Deputy Speaker: There are a lot of people standing now for questions and comments, so I am going to ask members to keep their interventions to about 40 to 45 seconds only. That is for responses as well as questions.

[*Translation*]

Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors.

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for his speech.

He glibly claimed that the Prime Minister is responsible for decisions that a company made for purely financial reasons.

My colleague expressed concerns about the future for his three children. I also have three children. My youngest is fully aware that the future also depends on the environment.

Can my colleague confirm whether his children are learning about both the environment and the economy? On this side of the house we know that the two go hand in hand.

[*English*]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely am telling my children that the environment is a concern. We had a great environment plan that we won the popular vote with in the last election. I am happy to say that the environment is an important issue on this side of the House, but so is our energy sector. They go hand in hand.

I can say for certain I am teaching my children that, if they work hard and are hard-working men and women, they will have a chance to ensure that they can get a job in any of the sectors they want, because we will treat all the sectors in this country the same when we are in government.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a moment to acknowledge the passion with which the member spoke tonight. I appreciate that. I appreciate that he is fighting for his constituents. While I do not agree with how he is doing that, I certainly appreciate that. I am also a mother and appreciate that he is fighting for his children's future, as I am for mine.

The member did not want us to cherry-pick, but then he cherry-picked from the letter. I just wanted to double-check. I am going to read a bit. It states:

> At Teck, we believe deeply in the need to address climate change and believe that Canada has an important role to play globally as a responsible supplier of natural resources. We support strong actions to enable the transition to a low carbon future. We are also strong supporters of Canada's action on carbon pricing and other climate policies such as legislated caps for oil sands emissions.

Could the member talk about his support for the carbon tax?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I am more than happy to talk about what we have contributed to reducing emissions.

I was part of the Government of Saskatchewan that brought forward carbon capture and sequestration. It took over 225,000 cars' worth of emissions off the road. We have done more in Saskatchewan to reduce emissions than almost any other province in the country.

When we talk about reducing emissions, we do it through technology. We do it through Evraz steel. It is one of the most environmentally friendly steel plants in the world. It should be making more steel there, because it does it through recycled steel. It does it through better practices and it does it cleaner than any other manufacturer of steel in the country. Hamilton does a good job as well. The member for Hamilton is not here, but he reminds me of that all the time.

Yes, I have been a part of a government that has had concrete carbon reductions in Saskatchewan.

● (2245)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I echo the comments of my colleague from Strathcona on emotion. It is clear that this member is very passionate about these issues. He used the words "phased out by people in this chamber", referring to, of course, the oil sands and the petroleum industry.

What would my colleague have to say about the 38 projects that are already approved and waiting to be invested in? What would he say to his constituents at home about those projects and why they are not moving forward?

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing that list of projects the member is talking about. I would be interested to see where those 38 projects are, and if there are some places where we can work hand in hand to make sure that we get those projects moving forward. I would love to work with members across the aisle on that, because it seems like they have a big commitment to being able to make sure we have energy projects going forward.

As to the words "phased out", those were not my words. Those were the words of the Prime Minister, so I was just making—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have a quick question.

The hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the word "viability" has been used a lot and certainly there are jurisdictions around the world where there is significant viability in the energy industry.

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I wonder if the member for Regina—Lewvan would have questions as to why investment is happening in the energy industry around the world, but it cannot seem to happen here in Canada.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question from the member for Battle River—Crowfoot. I understand that we have seen investment in the industry grow in Venezuela. We have seen it grow in the States. We have seen it grow in Donald Trump's America where there is no carbon tax. That is happening because the government got out of the way. I did not even mention that in my speech.

So many Canadians, so many western Canadians, so many people from Alberta and Saskatchewan say, "We understand taxes. We understand we have to pay them. We just want the federal government to get out of our way and let us get back to work. That is what we want: a level playing field." We understand that, and that is why this playing field needs to be levelled, so that we can compete with countries around the world.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to participate in this timely emergency debate initiated by my colleague, the hon. member for Lakeland, on the cancellation of the Teck Frontier mine project, a project in northern Alberta, that if completed would have had the capacity to produce up to 260,000 barrels of bitumen a day, resulted in 2,500 construction jobs, 7,000 permanent jobs and $70 billion of new tax revenue. Not only that, it was a project that was supported by and would have been beneficial to the 14 affected indigenous and Métis communities. Here we are tonight, and all of that is gone. The project is cancelled. It is history and it is not coming back.

In the face of the cancellation of the project, what has been the Prime Minister's response? It was effectively to shrug off the cancellation and say it was merely a decision of Teck, nothing more and nothing less. The vast majority of my constituents and Albertans do not buy the Prime Minister's explanation. They know there is one person who bears considerable responsibility for the cancellation of Teck, and that is the Prime Minister.

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Let us look at the facts. Teck went through all of the regulatory hurdles. The joint review panel gave it the green light all the way back in July of 2019. All that needed to be done was for the Prime Minister and his cabinet to give it the final approval. What did the Prime Minister and his cabinet do? They dithered and delayed month after month, undermining investor confidence. Then, more recently, they sent the signal that they were seriously contemplating killing the project altogether, a project that not only would have resulted in thousands of jobs but in billions of dollars of new tax revenue that would have gone some way to restoring investor confidence, which has been sorely lacking and undermined thanks to the policies of the Liberal government. They were contemplating killing a project that really sets the gold standard when it comes to clean emissions with respect to GHG intensity, which is roughly half that of the oil sands industry average, which was projected to be carbon neutral by 2050. It is indeed a project that the joint review panel noted might actually help reduce overall GHGs, not increase GHGs, having regard for alternate sources. For the Prime Minister, in the face of this devastating news for my province of Alberta, to simply shrug his shoulders and say that it was a decision of Teck truly requires a suspension of disbelief.

● (2250)

Make no mistake about it, the decision of Teck was not made in a vacuum; it was made within the context of regulatory uncertainty that arises from misguided policies on the part of the government that is literally killing Canada's energy sector. From the tanker ban off the northwest coast of British Columbia to changing the rules with respect to upstream and downstream emissions midway through the approval of energy east, ramming through Bill C-48 and Bill C-49 at the end of the last Parliament, and I could go on, the message collectively that the current government has sent is that Canada is not open for business, that Canada is not open to investment in the energy sector. The consequences have been devastating.

We have seen $200 billion in projects cancelled since the government came to office. We have seen the rig count cut in half, down 50%. Capital investment is fleeing. Indeed, capital investment is down more than 50%. There are 120,000 people out of work in the energy sector since the current government came to office.

We have seen, in terms of equity raised in 2018, a mere $650 million. Let us compare and contrast that to the United States. In 2018, equity and debt raised amounted to $19.4 billion. That is $19.4 billion in the United States and $650 million in Canada. In the United States, which is open to business and to investment in the energy industry, investment has skyrocketed, production has reached record levels, and for the first time in U.S. history, the United States is energy independent. So much for the sorry excuses across the way.

I heard one member say, “Industries could just move ahead with projects, but they are choosing not to.” It is not that they are choosing not to move ahead with projects; it is just that they are choosing to go elsewhere, to the United States and to other jurisdictions around the world that are saying they are open for business while the current government shuts down Canada's most vital sector of the economy. The number of companies that have divested from Canada in the energy sector, and are divesting from Canada as we speak, is too long to list.

In the face of that, what does the Prime Minister not get? How much is it going to take? How many more projects are going to be cancelled? How much more investment is going to flee this country? How many more people have to be laid off? How many more people have to give up hope because they have been unemployed for the last several years?

Let us talk about the social impact it has on families. They are devastated. The food bank in my constituency, each and every year that this Prime Minister has been in office, has reached a new record level, year after year, thanks to this Prime Minister. It is time that this Prime Minister woke up. It is time that he put Canada first, and as a starting point to do that, he ought to immediately reverse his failed and destructive policies.

● (2255)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite closely to the member for St. Albert—Edmonton. To take the approach in this place of laying all the blame on the Prime Minister is just absolutely plain ridiculous. The CEO of Teck Frontier said clearly that the market was the major part of the reason it pulled out. I want to read from the letter of Teck Frontier's CEO, which stated:

> Frontier, however, has surfaced a broader debate over climate change and Canada’s role in addressing it. It is our hope that withdrawing from the process will allow Canadians to shift to a larger and more positive discussion about the path forward.

We have not seen that positive discussion here tonight from the opposition at all.

There are real issues out there, and the member blames the Prime Minister. Let me tell the House something: The Prime Minister's response came long before this discussion by Teck Frontier. It came in the previous budgets we made and passed in this House, where we tried to bring the environment and the economy together. It came for an area that we get a lot of criticism on, with the Prime Minister supporting and purchasing the Trans Mountain pipeline so we can get product to a different market than the United States of America and perhaps get rid of the Alberta discount, which is costing this country $587 billion a year.

The Prime Minister has been responding. He has been trying to move forward—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I am very privileged to serve on the finance committee with the hon. member.

Is it such a coincidence that we have seen all of the investment that has left this country since the government came to office?

Is it a coincidence that $200 billion in projects have been cancelled since the Prime Minister came to office?

Is it a coincidence that the northern gateway pipeline was killed since the Prime Minister came to office, or that energy east was cancelled? We have seen the government create so much uncertainty that it had to buy a pipeline, the cost of which is skyrocketing every day.

I would say it is not a coincidence. It is directly as a result—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the debate this evening is certainly intense, but all I am seeing is confrontation. It is not the fault of my friends from Alberta, nor the fault of my friends from Quebec, Manitoba or Ontario. It is the fault of the governments that preceded everyone who is sitting here this evening.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the government invested billions of dollars in Alberta's oil sands. Today, those people have no way out. They are stuck with it. They no longer have any work. That is not the right way to do things.

I think they will ultimately understand that Alberta needs to leave this federation, just as Quebec should leave it.

Does my hon. colleague not agree that Alberta would be much better off outside this federation, which is where Quebec should be?

● (2300)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I am a proud Canadian and I will do everything I can to support Canada. What is so distressing is to see the disunity that the Prime Minister has created as a result of his policies.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton, whom I do have a lot of respect for. I served with him on the justice committee.

I noticed the price of West Texas Intermediate was at $50 a barrel. Does he really believe the price is going to come up to a level in future decades that will make this project sustainable, given all we know about world oil markets and the pressures on the world economy? This is not to mention the incredible threat we are facing from climate change. I ask him that in all honesty as a friend.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I will give a very simple answer to my friend. I would note that the price was the same in July and at that time, Teck had every intention of moving forward.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the whip's office from the Liberal Party for allowing me a speaking slot in tonight's emergency debate. I always appreciate a chance to speak. This is a very important debate and even at this late hour, I do want to discuss the emergency.

[*Translation*]

It is true. This is both a national and worldwide emergency.

[*English*]

Of course, I do not speak of this non-emergency that is the focus of tonight's debate. The private sector company has seen the writing on the wall and has decided to pull a project that it would probably never have built even if it had pushed through to try to get a permit. The writing was on the wall.

I speak of the real emergency. This House on June 17 of last year passed a motion which said the following:

> Canada is in a national climate emergency which requires, as a response, that Canada commit to meeting its national emissions target under the Paris Agreement and to making deeper reductions in line with the Agreement's objective of holding global warming below two degrees Celsius and pursuing efforts to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Now, this is an emergency. It is one that threatens not just our economy, but it certainly does threaten our economy. It does not just threaten Saanich—Gulf Islands or Alberta, and it does not just threaten Canada. It threatens the world.

Members in this place should please take the time to read the special report on what 1.5°C looks like versus 2°C. This is a special report prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change at the request of all governments that negotiated the Paris Agreement in 2015, a request that was highly specific that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change provide this specific information in time for the 2018 negotiations.

That emergency report should have sent shockwaves through every caucus in this place and right around the world, and certainly it did in many countries around the world, because it told us very clearly that holding to 1.5°C is not a political target. It is the only way we can ensure that our children will have a livable world. This is not future hypothetical children and future generations, but the children we know, our children, and for them to have a liveable world requires of us that we hold to no more warming than 1.5°C.

It is a hard concept, average global temperature, in a country like Canada that goes from -30°C in the winter to +30°C in the summer, and so 1.5°C does not sound so very significant, but do not dismiss it. Understand that on this planet between today and 10,000 years ago when where we stand was under thousands of kilometres of ice, the difference in global average temperature was 5°C.

What the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change told us in October 2018 was that holding to 1.5°C was not an ambitious target that we might do if we could get around to it. It told us very clearly that if we want our own children to have a livable planet in a hospitable biosphere, we must hold to 1.5°C. It further told us that it would be possible to do so, but it would require a global slashing of emissions by 45% all around the world by 2030.

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Now that the Liberals have given us this notion that we are going to get to net zero by 2050, it is clear that the current target which was left behind by a former minister of the environment, Leona Aglukkaq, in the administration of Stephen Harper, is the target we are talking about. The Liberals still have no plan to get to that target, and that target is approximately half of what we must do as a country.

Yes, we are in an emergency, because if we miss slashing by 50% the global emissions, and actually the IPCC advice is 45% against 2005 levels globally of carbon dioxide, then there are no do-overs. There are no second chances. We condemn future generations to an unlivable world in which human civilization may not make it to the end of the century.

● (2305)

It is very clear that globally people were paying attention to this Teck Frontier decision, because Canada has a role to play in the world, and it should be one of leadership, but we remain laggards. Earlier tonight in debate, some hon. members were mentioning what the United States is doing. At this point, the United States, yes even under the Trump administration, is doing better at reducing greenhouse gases than Canada is. That is due to the actions of subnational governments, states like California, New York and Texas. It is due to the actions of cities. Canada's record in this regard remains shameful, but we have a chance to redeem ourselves.

I have never before seen anything like the letter from over 40 Nobel laureates sent to our Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister to beg them not to approve the Teck Frontier mine. Most of them are Nobel laureates in chemistry, although there is one who won it in economics, a few in medicine and some in literature, including Alice Munro.

In that letter, they said:

> Projects that enable fossil-fuel growth are an affront to our state of climate emergency, and the mere fact that they warrant debate in Canada should be seen as a disgrace. They are wholly incompatible with your government's recent commitment to net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050....
>
> The response to the climate crisis will define and destroy legacies in the coming years, and the qualifications for being on the right side of history are clear: an immediate end to fossil-fuel financing and expansion along with an ambitious and just transition away from oil and gas production towards zero carbon well before mid-century.
>
> As recipients of the Nobel Prize, we call on you and your cabinet to act with the moral clarity required by the state of this crisis and reject the proposed Teck Frontier mine proposal.

I invite members to ponder that. There are 40 Nobel laureates specifically begging the Canadian government to act as if we understand we are in a climate emergency.

It has been said by Bill McKibben, who is one of the planet's leading climate activists and a brilliant author, that the first rule of holes is this: stop digging. Canada is in a very deep hole. We are far from our climate target, and that target itself needs to be doubled. What we cannot do here is add new greenhouse gas production. This project would have been enormous. If this project had gone ahead, it would have been twice the size of the city of Vancouver, at over 24,000 hectares. It would have, as the environmental assessment report found, done irreparable damage to the environment. It would have removed the forest, removed the muskeg, damaged wildlife and been damaging in many ways.

There has never been, by the way, any environmental assessment process in this country that has ever said no to a project. Clearing these very rigorous environmental reviews that we keep hearing about in this place cannot be that hard, because no one has ever been turned down. No pipeline has ever been turned down by any environmental assessment process in this country. No oil sands mine has ever been turned down by any environmental assessment process in this country, no matter which government drafted the law.

In this case, it is a project where even after all the environmental damage was catalogued, the panel found that the economic benefits of the project outweighed all the downsides. However, as we have heard in this House, the economics were kind of wobbly, because what Teck Frontier put forward as the precondition to this project being viable was that oil was selling at $95 a barrel. That is what they put in the report. That is what they relied upon. As we also commented in this place, there were not a lot of investors lining up.

I think the Prime Minister of this country may have remarkable talents, and the reach of his powers may prove to be supernatural, but I have not seen it yet, so I really do not think the Prime Minister can be held responsible, as the Conservatives in this House would like us to hold him responsible, for the price of a barrel of oil globally. That is beyond the reach of his powers.

● (2310)

The reality is that investors are moving away from fossil fuels all around the world. Just listing the companies and investors that have vacated the oil sands is edifying. These companies have left because they are concerned about something identified by the former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney. He refers to them as "stranded assets". Investors are left with "unburnable carbon".

If the fossil fuel business has something of a future ahead of it, it resembles a game we played as children, musical chairs. People start falling on the ground because the chairs are gone. Nobody wants to be left trying find the chair that is in the oil sands, one of the first places investors vacate because it is unburnable carbon and its stranded assets are very expensive.

Sweden's central bank left the oil sands and their investments in the oil sands, specifically stating that this province is the "highest in terms of carbon dioxide emissions". Royal Dutch Shell has left the oil sands, stating specifically that it did not want stranded assets. ConocoPhillips, Marathon, Total and even Koch Industries have vacated the oil sands and the investments there.

Earlier, some of the speakers in this place referred to people concerned about climate change as fringe groups and eco-radicals, people without a really good grip on the finance sector. Perhaps members could imagine which eco-radical said the following on January 14: "We cannot rule out catastrophic outcomes where human life as we know it is threatened."

That is a suggestion that we are on the path to human extinction. That quote did not come from Greenpeace or the Green Party. It came in a leaked document prepared by economists working for J.P. Morgan.

J.P. Morgan will be held forever on the wrong side of history for being responsible for having spent $75 billion investing in fossil fuels in recent years, but now recognizes that we cannot rule out catastrophic outcomes. In fact, it now announces that it will not invest anymore in new coal or drilling in the Arctic, but that is not really good enough.

Goldman Sachs is the first big U.S. bank to rule out future financing of some forms of fossil fuels. It is not alone. BlackRock is one of the biggest investment companies in the world. Its CEO has said that climate is "almost invariably the top issue that clients around the world raise." Climate is the number one issue its clients raise. It is moving toward divestment.

My favourite quote on this subject comes from Wall Street watcher Jim Cramer, who has a TV show that I have seen from time to time. It is called *Mad Money* and it is an investment program on CNBC. He says, "Big pension funds are saying listen, we're not going to own them anymore" and "I'm done with fossil fuels. They're done."

Obviously Jim Cramer has been heavily influenced by the Prime Minister's brainwaves across the border to the United States. No, this whole notion that the Prime Minister is in any way at fault for Teck Frontier cancelling is absurd. The problem is that the Prime Minister cannot take any credit either, because the Government of Canada is still on the laggard side. We are still on the wrong side of history.

We could do what is required. In the Liberal platform, we have a very promising commitment to a climate accountability act. Where is it? When will we see it? This Parliament will not sit that long. It is a minority Parliament. Let us work on the things we can work on together. The majority of MPs in this House want a climate accountability act with five-year increments, not these targets that no one ever has to meet.

On that note, 2020 is the year that Stephen Harper's climate promise falls due. It is this year. It was negotiated by the late and quite wonderful Hon. Jim Prentice. It was approved by a cabinet that includes Alberta Premier Jason Kenney. This year, 2020, is the year the Copenhagen target falls due, so by this year we should be emitting no more than roughly 600 megatonnes of greenhouse gases. The last figure we have is that we are at 716 or 717 megatonnes of greenhouse gases.

● (2315)

Let us imagine we could magically get to Stephen Harper's target. Politicians in this country choose targets knowing that the due date will exceed their best-before date and somebody else will note that we have missed the target once again. That is why we need a climate accountability act that measures this in five-year increments, with an independent auditing function, so we know whether we are meeting our targets.

The surest thing we can say is that Teck, as a company, had a lot of issues. It has had troubles with its mine in Chile. It had a lot of financial issues swirling around this. The business pages of this country were full of those stories, not of the Nobel laureates who warned us that to approve Teck Frontier would be an act close to criminality, when one considers the cost to our children, future generations and the peoples of the world if we continue as a country to boost our greenhouse gases rather than slash them. The business pages were full of speculation about the CEO of Teck, Don Lindsay, whose name has been raised in the House tonight more often than probably any CEO in Canadian history. He was clear: Teck had not done a feasibility study and was not sure it could go ahead. However, even a month ago he was saying we should give Teck the permit and he would see if it could raise the capital, if the price changed.

This project was never going to go ahead, but the Liberals have lost their chance for moral courage. They lost the chance to say they would never have approved this. This was, in the words of some Liberal MPs, an easy no. For God's sake, the Liberals need to stand for something while they have time in this place. They need to stand for future generations and put in place a climate target well before we get to Glasgow in November so that Canada can once again be in the lead. Canada as a climate leader is still possible to imagine.

I listened to the embarrassing response from the Liberals that it really was not their fault that Teck Frontier did not go ahead. They should stand up and say that they would never have approved it. Then we can believe the Prime Minister might have a notion of being a climate leader.

● (2320)

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Of course, there has been a lot of discussion tonight on the viability of projects moving forward and the importance of both the environment and the economy.

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The member for Regina—Lewvan asked a question about the 38 oil sands projects that have been approved and are not being built in this country. He asked for the report. I have the report here that spells out the existing projects in Alberta that are approved but have not yet been built. I understand I need unanimous consent, but I would like to table it in the House for the benefit of the member.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Heritage.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a lot of the discussion we have heard in the House today has been about jobs and the economy. I am quite happy that my friend just rose to talk about the projects that have been approved but have not gone ahead, because it speaks to the fact this project was far from certain and far from creating jobs.

The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands talked quite a bit about the economics behind this project and I thought that was helpful. Perhaps she could talk to us about what our role is in a just transition for all of this and about ensuring that we work as partners across all provinces and regions to make sure people have access to employment and have opportunities in a green economy as we move toward a low-carbon economy.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it is essential, and it is noted in the preamble of the Paris Agreement, that we embrace social justice, climate justice and a just transition. I want to credit the Canadian labour unions that were in the Paris Agreement negotiations, because they played quite a prominent role in making sure that the protection of jobs for workers in the fossil fuel sector remained critical.

Another promise from the Liberal platform is a just transition act. We need to ensure that no workers in the fossil fuel sector feel insecure about their ability to pay their mortgage and take care of their kids. This is not about hurting fossil fuel workers. Those of us who want climate action want to ensure their transition is not abrupt, like what happened in Newfoundland when the cod fishery moratorium took place and 30,000 people lost their jobs overnight. We must plan for this and not allow people to go through personal misery.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member referred to billions of dollars of funds that are not going to be invested in hydrocarbons anymore around the world, and I have read that too.

Therefore, I want some clarity on that, about where we are putting our faith in the decision-makers here. Is it the unaccountable trillion-dollar funds with billionaire owners saying, “We are going to make money at this process one way or another”? No matter how it goes, we are going to have some moral hazard borne by the taxpayer.

Does the member across the way not see that as being something that we should not stand for in this House?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with my friend from Calgary Centre. The billionaire owners and the billionaire lobby on behalf of fossil fuels is why over the last 28 years we have not made progress but have gone backwards. The fossil fuel lobby, big oil, is responsible for criminal actions such as lying about the science and keeping governments from taking action when it is required.

Right now, we know that these investors are moving away from fossil fuels because it does not make economic sense for them. However, governments have to do much more. We have to use our collective will to ensure that we are protecting our societies and planning this transition away from fossil fuels in an orderly fashion.

● (2325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to what my colleague had to say and I thank her for her lucid speech. I think this was the first lucid speech on the environment this evening.

I do not know whether she agrees with me that we wasted a good part of the evening discussing an economic project that is not viable and a private company's decision. I suppose she also believes that, if there is an emergency debate to be had, then it should probably be on energy transition and climate change.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Jonquière for his question.

I completely agree with him. It is clear that there is a climate emergency. It is urgent that we transition to renewable energy and to a sustainable, clean-growth economy.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands' speech was something we really needed here. I want to pick up on her comments around stranded assets. She talked eloquently about the environmental risk we are facing in this crisis, but there is also an economic crisis facing Canada, coming at us like a freight train. That is those stranded assets.

Jeremy Rifkin, who was the keynote speaker at the Generation Energy meetings in Winnipeg a couple of years ago, one of the world's most respected energy economists, has come out recently with predictions that there will be widespread stranded assets in the fossil fuel industry not in 20 years, not in 10 years, but in eight years, in 2028, and that Canada would be one of the most severely affected countries in the world for these stranded assets, and why that really speaks to the desperate need we have for this just transition, for a green new deal.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, there are a handful of people in the House who I know have actually read and understood the IPCC 1.5°C report and I know that, as a scientist, he is one of them. If anybody else wants to learn more, I recommend my friend.

The stranded assets issue of unburnable carbon is huge. The world of climate finance is gaining ground, with people like Mark Carney, who has now been named by the UN Secretary-General as a special envoy on climate finance around the world.

Another source, again not someone one associates with eco-action, is Jeff Rubin, former chief economist with CIBC World Markets. He has said the same thing as Jeremy Rifkin from the U.S. Jeff Rubin said that when the stranded assets start emerging, when we have to see slashing of fossil fuel dependency, one of the first sectors and one of the first regions of fossil fuel production to close down and be left with bankruptcies is going to be the oil sands.

Therefore, we need to protect fossil fuel workers from our investing in a non-future for them. We have to invest in a real future for them, for their jobs, for their kids, and again, for a hospitable climate to support us all through to the end of this century. It is still a gamble whether we can pull it off, but if we pretend to be grief-stricken by a sensible decision to stop Teck Frontier, we have a long way to go to get to real climate action.

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a rookie member of the House, I thank my colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for bringing some context into the discussion tonight and talking about the climate emergency motion that was passed in the last Parliament.

Allow me, in the late evening, to ask some dumb questions. I have two on which the member perhaps could educate me.

First, are we actually facing a climate emergency, which is so important, that in a very short period of time this whole civilization may end? I am not a denier of the climate emergency. I am just ignorant, perhaps. Why is the Liberal government still renovating the Centre and East Blocks, which will take an estimated 15 years? How much carbon will that renovation generate?

During the discussion tonight, I heard a lot of heckling. I was also involved in asking members “Did you walk to Ottawa?”

The Conservatives believe in pragmatism. We believe in conserving the environment in a way that would actually make a difference. If it is so important, then why is the House not doing something about it?

Second, Canada's accounts for 1.7% of the global carbon emissions. If we shut down, if we depopulate Canada, it would make a meagre difference. China, India and the developing countries in the world would displace it in no time.

Would it not be better if Canada provided the technology for cleaner energy, like Coastal GasLink, so the rest of the world, like China, could benefit from it?

● (2330)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, first, what can we do in this place?

I have proposed in previous Parliaments to change our sitting hours. I have proposed what I call the Fort Mac work schedule. We would come here for three weeks at a time and work for five and a half days. This would cut down on the requirements of our job to travel back and forth to our riding. Three weeks here; three weeks in the constituency. That would dramatically reduce the cost of flights that are paid for by the people of Canada. Taxpayers cover our flights to work.

On a personal basis, I have not taken a vacation that involved flying in the last 14 years. Where it is discretionary, I do whatever I can to avoid flying. The reality is that our society is hardwired to fossil fuels.

Climate shaming and guilting people is not productive. We need to move with positive solutions that allow us to transition off our dependency on fossil fuels.

The second question related to Canada's meagre role in the world. I do not really understand. For someone who aspired to be Prime Minister, I know the Leader of the Opposition thought it was a selling point to argue that Canada was too meaningless to matter. I will never take that position.

Canada led on fighting to protect the ozone layer. We were a very small contributor to damaging the ozone layer, but we led the way to protect it. That is what Canada needs to do.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Saint-Jean.

As much as I enjoy debating in the House, and I am really starting to like it, I have to say that this emergency debate took me by surprise.

On one side, we have the Bloc Québécois, which recognizes the climate emergency, believes in energy transition and ending fossil fuel subsidies, and wants to invest in clean, green energy. On the other, we have the Conservatives, who ignore the climate emergency and refuse to even acknowledge it because they see the world through an economic lens.

If we carry on like this, we are going to hit a wall. Do I really need to remind everyone that Canada's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is one of the worst in the G20? Simply put, this government does not have a real plan, at least not a credible one. Its plan involves nothing more than flowery speeches by the Prime Minister and a $12.6-billion pipeline expansion to export oil. Except that there will be nothing to export because the Frontier mine turned out not to be economically viable and will not be going ahead.

Basically, the Frontier project and Trans Mountain expansion have this in common: There is no money to be made. The Conservatives summoned us here tonight because Alberta is upset. They care only about the economy, and not at all about our planet or those who live on it.

We in the Bloc Québécois are thrilled about Teck Resources' decision to withdraw its application for its oil sands development project. We are pleased and relieved, but we are still worried. We are pleased because we are thinking that if a company like Teck Resources has finally seen the light and can acknowledge the urgent need to reduce global carbon emissions and support measures to fight climate change, perhaps the Conservatives could see the light.

We are also relieved, but perhaps not as relieved as the government, which was really saved by the bell. Teck Resources made the decision that the government probably would never have had the courage to make. It is all very convenient. We in the Bloc Québécois are relieved because, as it turns out, the project will not be going forward.

The Bloc Québécois was the first party to call out the government on the approval of the Frontier mine and to denounce the Prime Minister's doublespeak on the fight against climate change and his insistence on paying for dirty projects with taxpayers' money. I rose several times in the House and called on this government to drop the project because it was the right thing to do.

Even if this project had been economically viable, it certainly was not environmentally sustainable. I said “even if” because, from what I understood from Teck Resources' decision, this project was far from being economically viable. However, that is not what I want to discuss here tonight.

The letter Teck Resources sent to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change states that Teck Resources firmly believes in the need to address the issue of climate change. It also believes that Canada has an important role to play globally as a supplier of natural resources.

The Bloc Québécois thinks that the debate on the Frontier project withdrawal is an opportunity for Canada to clarify its position and policies on non-renewable energy development as part of the fight against climate change. The government should launch a public conversation and establish an official dialogue with partners from the provinces and Quebec on a fair transition and an exit plan for oil and gas. That is what we should be debating this evening, not the economic impact on only one part of the Canadian population. Greenhouse gas emissions know no borders. This concerns much more than a single province.

I think it is important to make the point that although we completely support Alberta's workers, we think the current issue is far more political than people are letting on right now. Instead of focusing on resentment, we should be working together on finding solutions for the future, to ensure a fair transition that will provide Albertans truly viable and sustainable economic prosperity.

I also wonder about the relevance of this emergency debate because this was a decision made by a private company. Even the government, which seems to be rather divided among its own benches, did not debate the issue. As parliamentarians, should we debate every decision made by private Canadian companies? Since that is what led us here this evening, we will indulge in the debate, but in our own way.

● (2335)

Rather than seeing this decision as an economic defeat, we are seeing it as an opportunity to develop an Albertan and Canadian economy that is no longer dependent on fossil fuels, because, with all due respect, we believe that a healthy economy is a diversified economy.

It is time to think of the future. There is nothing to indicate that the price of oil will significantly increase in the short- or medium-term. In any case, oil from the oil sands is among the mostly costly to produce.

Teck came to its own conclusions and made its decision. Perhaps the Conservatives and the Premier of Alberta could also come to some conclusions. They could start by recognizing that their economic model, their resource extraction model, is outdated. They could also start thinking of forward-looking solutions for their own people.

There is something rather ironic happening in the House this evening. While members of the House were getting all worked up defending projects that pollute, I attended a conference given earlier by Guy Dauncey on the climate emergency. What party had the most representatives at that conference? That was the Conservative Party. I am therefore wondering whether there are more Conservative members than we think who are more interested in the fight against climate change than in debates on non-existent projects that are the subject of non-decisions on the part of the government.

Mr. Dauncey believes that we can reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 65% by 2030 and by 100% by 2040. That is much more ambitious than the government's proposal.

For that to happen, we need to change our behaviour, our habits and our investments. If Teck's Frontier project had gone ahead, it would have released between 4.1 megatonnes and 6 megatonnes of CO_2 per year for 40 years. The year 2067 is 17 years past Canada's net zero deadline. Those emission levels are clearly not compatible with Canada's GHG reduction targets.

Other people always have to pay the price. Quebec's efforts to reduce GHG emissions are constantly being negated by the carbon footprint and environmentally irresponsible behaviour of western provinces such as Alberta. Canada would have to reduce its emissions by 77 megatonnes just to meet the Harper government's targets. Once again, Quebec is always having to pick up the slack for Alberta's increasing emissions.

Earlier, I had an opportunity to remind my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent about this, and I will remind everyone now: Between 1990 and 2017, Quebec's emissions fell by 8.7% while Alberta's rose by 58%. In 2017, Quebec's GHG emissions totalled 78.6 megatonnes.

The oil sands alone account for 87 megatonnes in 2020. That is more than Quebec's total emissions. The oil sands, a single industry, generate more pollution than every sector in Quebec, which has Canada's second-highest population. Nevertheless, some complain that we are not doing enough.

By comparison, Ontario produces 158.7 megatonnes of GHG emissions, which is 22.1% of Canada's total emissions. Quebec is not alone. Ontario is making a real effort to reduce emissions. Nova Scotia, the Yukon, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have also reduced their emissions.

The figures show who is doing their part in Canada. I will certainly not win any friends by saying this, but I am not here to make friends. I am here to protect my constituents. They are worried about the future of their planet. I am here to stand up for them, and that is why they elected me. I will continue to stand up for them as long as someone is trying to force polluting projects like Frontier down our throats, in the midst of a climate crisis.

● (2340)

The Deputy Speaker: I see many members rising. We will limit each intervention to 45 seconds.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let's talk about Quebec in a positive, economic way.

Is the hon. member proud of the McInnis Cement project, the most polluting project in history, which was not reviewed by the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement, did not participate in a carbon market for a year and a half, and was sponsored by the most polluting environment minister in the history of Quebec, the current leader of the Bloc Québécois?

Does the hon. member agree with the fact that oil consumption is up in Quebec? It is unfortunate for her, but that is the reality. Last year, 10.6 billion litres of oil were consumed, and 62% of that oil came from the United States. Is she okay with the fact that we are doing a lot to help the Americans under Donald Trump?

Is she aware that Alberta is getting the largest solar energy project in Canada?

Is she also aware that the Liberal carbon tax exempts big polluters, while in Alberta, Premier Kenney just adopted a measure that requires major polluters to pay a tax?

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I see that my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent really likes that argument. That was in 2012, and it is now 2020. We are talking about our future, for future generations and my generation. I invite my colleague to catch up to 2020.

[*English*]

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many comments were made tonight about the Conservative Party only talking about the economy, as if it is such a bad thing. I come from a background where I did a lot of counselling, and finances broke families and marriages. It is a very real part of the dialogue and discourse that needs to happen here. Therefore, I would appreciate that when other members in the House discuss economics, they also consider some compassion when doing so.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, talking about the economy is not a bad thing, but there is more to life than the economy. For instance, there is the current crisis. The government says, and the opposition parties say, that we have to find a balance between the two. However, projects like Teck Frontier do not really strike a balance between the economy and the environment.

● (2345)

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is staggering that the Liberals' joint review panel was not considering the impacts on our climate commitments. As we are moving forward, beyond Teck, what is needed for a framework for decision-making when it comes to looking at projects and whether they are going to help us meet our climate obligations?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I think we need to start by determining whether a project would cause pollution. In this case, the project clearly would. That brings me to the energy transition, which is what we should be working towards. We need to stop subsidizing dirty energy and start subsidizing clean, green energy. Yesterday I introduced a bill in the House to force the government to meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets. We can start by putting viable, long-lasting mechanisms in place for our future.

[*English*]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe I am of the same generation as the hon. member, being 29 years old when I was elected this past October. I am very pleased to be one of the young members of what is a very young caucus. We take very seriously the reality that is facing our children, and my two children.

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The reality is that the Canadian energy industry is by far and above the best source of clean, ethically sourced energy petroleum in the world, yet the attitude of the Bloc and the way it is approaching this debate is like the parable of removing the speck out their brother's eye when there is a log in their own.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I do not have kids yet, but I do not know whether I want to bring any into the world because I do not know where this world is heading. I understand that the member is worried about his children's future, but more subsidies for fossil fuels will not be good for our children.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a bit like my colleague, I too am wondering about the need to hold an emergency debate tonight regarding a decision made by an independent company.

To explain my point a little further, I would like to talk about a mine project. I would like to tell the story of a mine project dedicated to producing 100,000 barrels of oil a day. This mine is located 70 kilometres north of Fort McMurray. It is not the mine we are talking about today. It is a mine project that was cancelled in early 2014, when the price of oil first began to plummet. The production costs of that mine were estimated to be $11 billion. It became clear that the mine was going to become increasingly costly to run, because the production costs were increasing and the price of oil was dropping. The mine I am talking about is Joslyn North, which was cancelled in 2014, under the Conservatives.

This leads me to wonder whether the Liberals are entirely to blame for everything happening right now. I will come back to the Liberals later. I will not forget them.

However, this does raise the point that the Conservatives may be creating a tempest in a teapot by going off in all directions, possibly in the hope of promoting their political interests. I do not know, nor do I claim to know, all of their beliefs or their objective in this. However, it seems to me that, when we look at this issue from a factual perspective, there are similarities between the two projects. The Teck Frontier project was a mine located 110 kilometres north of Fort McMurray that would have produced 260,000 barrels of oil. There seem to be similarities. The context is pretty much the same, with the drop in the price of oil and the increase in production costs. Don Lindsay mentioned that this context is what led to the project being abandoned.

It seems to me that the Conservatives are, unfortunately, trying to paint the Liberals in a greener light than they deserve.

It is true that Alberta is currently facing its share of challenges and setbacks. Alberta has gotten a lot of bad news recently. Unfortunately, this evening, rather than finding constructive solutions to Alberta's long-term problems, the Conservatives are needlessly fanning the flames of Albertans' anger. This evening's debate will not bring back the Teck Frontier mining project, whether they want that or not, and I for one do not.

What is happening right now is that the Conservatives are oil junkies. They refuse to face the truth. Unfortunately for them, this is no longer the time of Ralph Klein's infamous prosperity cheques. Alberta is no longer swimming in money from oil royalties. The percentage of revenue generated from oil development in Alberta has been falling since the 1980s and reached a record low of 6% in 2009.

Unfortunately, after seeing the writing on the wall, instead of following Norway's lead and using the additional money to overhaul its tax system and create a fund to facilitate a green transition, Alberta said, “Drill, baby, drill”. Instead of anticipating an inevitable problem and reviewing its tax system, Alberta tried to keep swimming in oil royalties by telling itself that it would just produce more oil to make more money, kind of like a junkie who slowly gets used to a harmful drug and needs more and more to satisfy their needs.

● (2350)

The problem is that the Liberals also shoulder some of the blame. The Liberals did not help Alberta with its addiction. Instead of helping Alberta get out of the oil and gas business and contribute to a real green transition, the Liberals contributed to its addiction, especially with the Trans Mountain project.

Donald Lindsay of Teck Resources mentioned three conditions that were essential for the operation of the Frontier mine project. There had to be a fairly high price per barrel, which the government has no control over. There had to be investor participation, which the government has no control over anymore. However, the last condition for moving forward with the Frontier mine project was the construction of a new pipeline.

I find it odd that the Conservatives are accusing the Liberals of undermining the Frontier mine project when they contributed to one of the conditions for the project. It seems to me that they are speaking out of both sides of their mouth.

The government was responsible for the pipeline construction. It contributed to Alberta's dependence on oil. In 2017, 13 companies reserved an apportionment on the future Trans Mountain pipeline, which was supposed to transport 22,000 barrels a day. Teck Resources was one of the companies that reserved a pipeline apportionment. These agreements lasted 15 to 20 years. The government indirectly helped the Frontier mine project.

I find it sad that the Frontier mine project became an argument in favour of Trans Mountain, much like Trans Mountain became an argument for the implementation of Teck Frontier.

This may bring back some memories for some of the more seasoned members in the House who remember the popular Hygrade sausage ad that said, “More people eat them because they're fresher. They're fresher because more people eat them.” That perfectly describes the interdependence of Teck Frontier and Trans Mountain. The problem is that this massive sausage machine ultimately does nothing but force-feed us high meat.

In conclusion, I am happy for future generations that the Frontier mine project has been abandoned. The transition to green energy is inevitable and necessary. The problem is that the decision to abandon the project was not made by the government, and certainly not by the Conservatives.

I will take good news wherever I can get it. I hope that next time we will be the ones deciding not to move forward with this kind of project.

● (2355)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech and her kind words about the Liberals' responsibilities on this file. I really appreciate that.

We may not agree on everything, but we have many things in common on this file.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in tonight's emergency debate. We have had a lovely evening even though I do not see the point of an emergency debate about one business' purely economic and strategic decision.

My colleague is well aware that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. Both of our parties are supportive of environmental issues. We have targets to meet.

Does my colleague agree with us that we need to work toward the Paris targets using an intelligent, progressive, cost-effective approach for the whole country, not just one province?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, that is like asking me if I agree with apple pie. It may not be my favourite kind of pie, but I am not against it.

I cannot be against intelligent economic development and the transition to green energy. Of course I agree with those things. However, we need to take steps that will enable us to meet our targets. That is why the member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia introduced a bill to ensure Canada meets its Paris targets. Of course the Bloc Québécois will support any initiative to make that happen.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that this debate is almost finished, but I will continue to speak in French since I am addressing my Bloc colleagues.

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This is not the Bloc that I remember. I was a child of Bill 101 and a member from the west. I experienced the referendums and I saw an entire generation of young people leave Quebec to find work out west. I am a proud Albertan. I listened to the Bloc and I am trying to understand why it opposes Teck Frontier, a project that was to be developed entirely in Alberta and that was under the jurisdiction of that province.

Is it now acceptable to the Bloc that the federal government interfere in provincial jurisdictions under the pretext of the environment and that it stop a project such as this one? The company said that it abandoned the project because of the Liberals. There are more than 30 projects that will produce more barrels of oil once the price of crude is more appealing.

Is it the Bloc's current position that federal interference in provincial jurisdictions is acceptable when done in the name of the environment?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague seems to be forgetting that Alberta is still part of Canada and that Canada is still part of the world. If Alberta lived under a bell jar and it alone were affected by the impact of the megatonnes of CO2 that it produces, perhaps we would not hear that question as often and perhaps Alberta would be less happy to be living in these circumstances.

The matter must be analyzed in the context of a global crisis. The last time I checked, Canada is still a signatory to the Paris agreement, and as such, it is important that it meet its targets, that is, until Quebec is independent and able to meet them more quickly.

● (2400)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

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