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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, January 31, 2019

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, January 31, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1005)

[Translation]

BILL C-421—CITIZENSHIP ACT

VOTE ON THE DESIGNATION OF AN ITEM

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House of the results of the secret ballot vote held over the last two sitting days. Pursuant to Standing Order 92(4), I declare the motion in relation to the designation of Bill C-421, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (adequate knowledge of French in Quebec), negatived. Accordingly, Bill C-421 is declared non-votable.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Deputy 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, “Canada's purchase of the Trans Mountain Pipeline—Financial and Economic Considerations”.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, entitled “Improving Transparency and Parliamentary Oversight of the Government's Spending Plans”.

Also, while I am on my feet, I beg your indulgence to allow me to give my personal thanks to a member who has most recently announced his retirement. I am speaking, of course, of the hon. member for Kings—Hants, the former president of the Treasury Board. In my capacity as chair of the government operations and

estimates committee, it was always a pleasure to hear the hon. member when he appeared before the committee. I always found the minister to be extremely knowledgeable. I found him to be well prepared and unfailingly polite, and he exhibited his trademark sense of humour on many occasions.

The member for Kings—Hants has distinguished himself in his role as a minister of the government. From a personal standpoint, I will certainly miss his appearances. However, on my own behalf and that of my colleagues on the committee, I wish him the best of luck and much success in all his future endeavours.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will be presenting a dissenting opinion on the estimates report. When calling the model parliament, King Edward stated, “What touches all should be approved by all.” Basically, any tax expenditures should be approved by the people's representatives, the members of the House of Commons. That is how the Westminster system was created and why we exist. Unfortunately, the estimates process under the Liberal government is going against this notion that what touches all should be approved by all. We are going backwards in terms of transparency.

We are disappointed that the final version of this report does not contain more comprehensive recommendations based on the actual testimony that was heard throughout the study on estimates reform. Experts, including the last two parliamentary budget officers, provided important insights into significant gaps in the current processes. They made it clear that the Liberal government's changes to the estimates process will make it harder for MPs to analyze spending and hold the government to account.

This report had the potential for making real and effective changes to the way our government reports its spending plans to Canadians. It had the potential to give MPs the chance to fulfill the pledge that what touches all should be approved by all. Unfortunately, this report does not do that. It goes backwards. Instead of eliminating the Liberal slush fund, vote 40, it is actually a cheerleading report for the Liberals' move to take away transparency from Canadians and from members of Parliament.

We hope the Liberals take into account the very valid recommendations put forward by the Conservative Party, which are backed by the current PBO and the last two PBOs.

Routine Proceedings

● (1010)

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD ACT

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-427, An Act to amend the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Act (excellence in agricultural innovation).

He said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-427 proposes the creation of an advisory committee for the pursuit of excellence in agricultural innovation, established and composed of persons appointed by the minister, including representatives from the agriculture and agri-food sector, academics and the scientific community, the provinces, and the department itself.

The function of the committee would be to advise the minister on any matters within the mandate of the minister's purview by acting as a centre of excellence for the pursuit of innovation in the agriculture and agri-food sector, including in the fields of artificial intelligence and robotics. The committee would hold a minimum of two meetings every year outside the capital region, and the persons appointed by the minister would participate at no cost to the government. This would be on a voluntary basis.

From my experience in the agriculture and agri-food sector, it is a very broad-based industry but one that is filled with new challenges and is really striving to reinvent itself through the use of robotics and new technology. This is an excellent opportunity for the government to inform itself better.

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

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PETITIONS**PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition on behalf of my constituent, Joanne MacIsaac. In 2013, the MacIsaac family suffered a horrible tragedy. On December 2, Joanne's brother Michael MacIsaac was unfortunately shot by a police officer while experiencing the combined effects of a high fever and an epileptic seizure. On December 3, he tragically died from his injuries.

This past April, Joanne created a petition on change.org, which gathered over 21,000 signatures calling for a national database of police-involved deaths and the use of force in any incident in Canada, in response to her brother's shooting. Collecting such information could help police officers in their tactics and training, identify areas for improvement in recruiting, and drive the need for policy and training changes.

Public reporting of excessive force incidents would increase transparency between law enforcement and the public. It could lead to an increase in public safety and officer safety, and would help Joanne and the rest of the MacIsaac family get some answers about Michael.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at times Canadians take the opportunity to travel abroad and to acquire organs that are harvested in a way that is non-consensual. This is

rare, but it happens, and it is inhumane. Therefore, I am presenting a petition that calls upon us in this place to act quickly with regard to two bills that are currently before the House to outlaw this practice that is currently taking place.

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table petitions on behalf of my constituents in Pickering—Uxbridge.

First, with nearly 610 signatures in total, I have six petitions that call upon the House to rescind all plans for an airport and all non-agricultural uses on the remaining federal lands in Pickering, which encompass class 1 Ontario farmland. This issue has been going on for over 40 years, and the residents of Pickering and the petitioners would like to see this class 1 farmland used for agricultural purposes.

● (1015)

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the other petition, which contains 175 signatures, calls upon the House to support Bill S-214 and ban the sale and/or manufacturing of animal-tested cosmetics and their ingredients in Canada.

[Translation]

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by the residents and store owners of Alfred—Pellan.

[English]

The petitioners are worried about the consequences of tobacco plain packaging legislation for their business. Indeed, many mom-and-pop businesses depend on premium cigar sales and could be at risk of having to close up shop. Thus, the petitioners call upon the government to exclude premium cigars from the proposed tobacco products regulations.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, back in July 1999, the Chinese Communist Party launched an intensive nationwide persecution campaign to eradicate Falun Gong. It is worth noting that lawyer David Matas and former Canadian secretary of state for the Asia-Pacific region, David Kilgour, conducted an investigation in 2006 and concluded that the Chinese regime and its agencies throughout China have put to death tens of thousands of Falun Gong prisoners of conscience. Their vital organs were seized involuntarily for sale at a higher price. Petitioners from Canada call upon the government to do what it can to make the public more aware of this and to take action to prevent it.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government is failing to adequately address Canada's housing crisis and that, therefore, the House call on the government to create 500,000 units of quality, affordable housing within ten years, and to commit in Budget 2019 to completing 250,000 of those units within five years.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Hochelaga.

It has been over three years since the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development was mandated by our Prime Minister to develop a national housing strategy, and just a little over 14 months since the release of that strategy. Many of us, me included, after a year-long buildup to the final reveal, thought we would see a strategy that would be transformational. What we got instead were underwhelming targets for reducing homelessness and most of the funding coming after the next election, well into the future. However, what we needed was a national housing strategy that would be big and transformational, because our country is in a housing and homelessness crisis.

The homelessness and housing crisis of today is the direct result of the withdrawal of both Liberal and Conservative federal governments from affordable housing over the years. In 1993, the then federal Liberal government ended new funding for affordable housing, and thanks to this ill-conceived leadership, many provinces followed suit. Therefore, we managed the problem of homelessness due to a lack of affordable housing with emergency services, shelters and hospitals. It is a very expensive housing system, both in human costs and financially for governments and communities. This is the legacy of Liberal and Conservative federal governments: an expensive and ineffective emergency housing system.

Today's motion is about ending the federal government's rhetoric and its pats on the back when it comes to housing and homelessness and demanding that we face the reality of this national crisis with real federal leadership, real action and real and immediate investment.

There are 1.7 million Canadians who are living in what policy people call "core housing need". That means a population of Canadians almost twice the population of Saskatchewan are paying more than one-third of their income for housing that is substandard, not in good repair, unsafe and overcrowded. Of those 1.7 million, 400,000 Canadians are paying more than 50% of their income for

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poor-quality housing. I call that a crisis in need of bold and immediate action.

The national housing strategy so far has overwhelmed us with a lot of fanfare but underwhelmed me, in particular, with actual results. Very little housing has been built. Operating agreements and rental subsidies have been temporarily extended, but many non-profit housing providers, especially those providing tenants with rent geared to income subsidies, remain in precarious financial situations. Unable to fix and repair their affordable units and provide the needed rent subsidies, these affordable homes are at risk of being lost.

This country has an annual capital repair deficit in excess of \$1.3 billion annually. This affordable housing is a lifeline for seniors, newcomers, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable Canadians. Most of what we have seen so far is a rearranging of current dollars with nominal new investment, more of a tinkering around the edges of the crisis. Many of the repackaged programs need cost matching from provincial governments. However, after 14 months, only three provinces and one territory have signed the bilateral agreements.

With 10 years of austerity from the Harper Conservatives, the federal government deficit and debt cutting just simply moved that debt to the provinces. Provinces were left scrambling to fund higher health care and social service costs as the federal government cut important support programs. The ability of many provincial governments to match federal investment will be limited and, therefore, the big dreams of the national housing strategy may be greatly hampered.

The national housing strategy is not legislation but a government program. Therefore, it has been very difficult to scrutinize the government's claims about the level of investment and actual outcomes, such as the number of affordable housing units built, repaired or maintained. The government has made it extremely difficult to get a handle on what is being done and what the level of investment has been into housing and homelessness. We have had a lot of marketing-type communications but very little real information provided in such a way that elected officials are able to hold this government to account for the promises they made.

However, there are real life consequences for people for this lack of transparency. What I mean by this is that there are consequences to the government's never-ending announcements with little actual concrete action.

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● (1020)

We have heard about the Canada housing benefit, but we have not been provided any detail as to who it will help and how it will work. Unfortunately that did not stop the Saskatchewan Party government in Saskatchewan from quickly ending the provincial rental supplement last summer, citing the federal government's new Canada housing benefit, a benefit that will not come on stream until after the next federal election.

The median income in my riding is just shy of \$40,000 a year. I have many constituents who depended on the provincial rental supplement to have a home, to make their housing affordable. With the end of the provincial rental supplement and no replacement any time soon vis-a-vis the federal government, I have many constituents who are remaining in unsuitable, unsafe housing and putting up with slum landlords for fear that if they move, their rental supplement will be reassessed, they will be considered a new applicant and, therefore, will not be eligible for a benefit that no longer exists.

Governing is about priorities. Today's motion is asking the Liberals to make affordable housing for Canadians the priority of the current government, a government that has rearranged and renamed funding programs, a government that has put minimal new dollars into building housing in comparison to what is needed, a government that has underwhelmed us with unambitious targets for homelessness reduction, and a government that has not made affordable housing and ending homelessness a priority.

It is hard not to think about what if. What if our past Liberal and Conservative federal governments had made affordable housing a priority every year? One could imagine if only investment and leadership by past federal governments had been maintained. Instead of ending affordable housing, we would have had an additional 650,000 affordable housing units in this country, perhaps even more.

We can bemoan the past, but what I would rather do is have a government that is seized with this issue and getting down to the hard work and making the tough decisions it will take to pull our country out of this national crisis. The government still has time to step up. Today's motion is not about postponing investment and action but about immediately ramping up our response.

Safe, affordable housing is such a foundational piece for the quality of life for families and individuals, for our children's welfare, for healthy and thriving communities and for businesses to grow. When housing is unavailable and unaffordable, businesses cannot recruit employees. When families struggle with housing, we know from research that the state of a family's housing is a factor in one in five cases when children are admitted to care.

I would like to end my comments on a more personal note.

I am here today as an elected member of Parliament in large part because my family benefited from accessible, affordable housing. When my parents were first starting out in Brandon, Manitoba, with a young family, we lived in subsidized housing. That leg-up early in my parent's life together meant my mother was able to finish her post-graduate psychiatric nursing program while my dad began his career. They were able to save a bit of money, even in those early days, which allowed us as a family to weather the inevitable financial ups and downs of life. It meant I never questioned if I

would be able to afford university to become a social worker, the education that brought me here today as an elected member of Parliament.

It is for that reason and the many other reasons I have mentioned that affordable housing and ending homelessness must be the priority for the Liberal government. It can start today by supporting the motion, and once again showing federal leadership on the number one priority for Canadians: a safe, affordable place to call home.

● (1025)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to speak about housing and once again pay my respect to the member opposite who has been a tireless advocate for better and stronger housing policies and has sustained the debate in the House. For that I give her thanks, because for all of us who are fighting to create the strongest national housing program possible, we need the good ideas of members on the sides opposite as well as the voices of people, as the member has said, who have come through that lived experience.

The question I have for the member opposite is with respect to the details of the NDP program and it is a question that really needs to be answered.

I recognize that the NDP is calling for 500,000 housing units, half of which are to come after five years, which is not after one election but after two elections. CMHC and housing advocates and housing suppliers across the country pegged the cost of providing a house at 80% of market value at \$350,000 on average across the country. Of course it is much higher in Vancouver and Toronto where land values drive a different equation. Based on the simple math that the NDP has produced, that means its housing program would cost \$175 billion, half of which would have to be spent this year. I am curious as to where her party is going to find that money.

Second, the NDP has said it is going to subsidize every Canadian in core housing need, which that member has said is 1.7 million people. What is that dollar figure and where is her party going to find those dollars this year?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his questions, comments and acknowledging my work in the House and in the community.

We are asking the government to face the issue of the crisis in housing with an actual plan that matches that crisis. Making housing a priority around the cabinet table I understand means making difficult decisions, having to do some things and not others. I do believe the minister and the parliamentary secretary understand there is a housing crisis and that they are making that case around the cabinet table. I am asking them to make a better case and to bring their colleagues along.

I think the money is there, that we have to make decisions, that we have to ask everyone to pay their fair share of taxes because it is a crisis and that is where I believe the money will come from. However, the first place it comes from is a government that makes it a priority and makes decisions to do that instead of other things.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my colleague for her tireless advocacy for affordable housing across Canada.

Yesterday was mental health awareness day and in question period, I raised the particular challenges faced by people with mental illnesses around housing. I met with a woman in one of the communities in my riding who is living in a storage unit. I had that confirmed afterward by some of the municipal people. I wonder if the member could talk about the need for enhanced funding for both mental illness and housing and the relationship between the two.

• (1030)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to comment on how foundational housing is and how it is interrelated with many other issues we face in our communities.

When I was a social worker, we talked about the impact of homelessness on people's mental health. That was a long time ago, 30 or 40 years ago. What has happened is that when we pulled out the support for affordable housing, those who were most vulnerable were impacted first and we developed a very expensive system of picking up people's lives, almost literally, on the streets, bringing them to hospitals, helping them and putting them back out on the streets.

When we talk about making housing and homelessness a priority, we start to prioritize the people in our communities who are most vulnerable now. Not having stable, safe, affordable places to live has a big impact on people's mental health and prevents them from moving forward in their lives, to become healthier or to deal with mental health issues.

It is a key foundational piece. We could make a huge difference in this country to so many people if we made housing and homelessness prevention a priority.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be giving my first speech in this new House of Commons. I am even more delighted that this speech is about an issue that is so close to my heart, as everyone knows, an issue I have been working on for seven years now, on behalf of my party, here in the House, as well as every day in my riding of Hochelaga. The issue I will be talking about today is housing. What is more, I will not stop talking about it until the right of every person in Canada to secure, adequate and affordable housing is upheld. There is still a long way to go before that happens.

I want to thank my colleague from Saskatoon West for tabling the motion we are debating today, and I commend her for the work she has done on this issue.

The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government is failing to adequately address Canada's housing crisis and that, therefore, the House call on the government to

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create 500,000 units of quality, affordable housing within ten years, and to commit in Budget 2019 to completing 250,000 of those units within five years.

The NDP endorses the principle that housing is a human right. About 43 years ago, Canada ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In so doing, the Canadian government formally recognized a set of rights, including the right to housing, and committed itself and its successors to continue to formally recognize that right and take measures to ensure that the entire population is able to enjoy it.

Obviously, we are not all on the same page about what it means to keep an international commitment. One need only take a little walk around the streets of Ottawa or those of my Montreal riding, where the situation is worse, to see that not everyone is lucky enough to have a roof over their head. However, that does not seem to bother my colleagues opposite. When it came time to vote on the bill introduced by my colleague from North Island—Powell River, which would have recognized the right to housing, the Liberals opposed it. What is more, when they announced with great fanfare their housing strategy, which is supposed to coordinate government housing efforts, they also committed to formally recognizing the right to housing, but we are still waiting for that to happen.

We are still waiting not only for legislation that officially recognizes housing as a right and provides recourse to people in need of housing, but also for 90% of the funding this government promised when it announced its housing strategy, funding that has been deferred.

Why are they playing these political games at the expense of people in need?

While the government announces its lofty principles and bombards us with fictitious numbers to try to convince us that it is doing everything it can to guarantee the right to housing, the actual state of housing in the country continues to deteriorate. This will persist until the government takes responsibility and actually does something besides making empty promises.

Canada is in a full-blown housing crisis. Rental and purchase prices continue to rise. There is a shortage of rental housing across the country.

The fact is, since the early 1990s, both Liberal and Conservative federal governments have pulled back from funding social and co-operative housing. The statistics clearly and irrefutably show that too many Canadian families spend over 30% of their income on housing. In 2018, the rental housing vacancy rate fell to 2.4%, which is below CMHC's 3% equilibrium threshold. That means the supply of rental housing is too low to meet demand, which puts upward pressure on rental rates, which is not helpful at all. As a matter of fact, average rental rates in all provinces increased last year. That is a direct consequence of the fact that, as I found out, only 10% of new housing starts over the past 15 years were rental units.

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I think we can all agree that the situation is clearly not helping to curb soaring rental rates, which are going up faster than people's incomes, unfortunately. That means even more people are living in housing they can no longer afford.

According to the 2016 national household survey, a quarter of all Canadian households, whether they rent or own, spend more than 30% of their total income on housing. That is not affordable, according to the CMHC, which considers these households to be in core housing need.

Currently, 1.7 million Canadian households spend too much on housing.

● (1035)

When it comes to renters, specifically, two out of five families spend more than 30% of their income on rent.

Even more alarming is that, today, one in five Canadians spends more than 50% of their income on housing. We can all agree that this can hardly be called affordable housing, and it is easy to see why a growing number of these people are just one paycheque away from living on the streets. This could well be one of the causes behind the growing number of homeless people. It is a direct result of the housing crisis in Canada. It is very worrisome, and we are not the only ones to say so.

In 2016, Canada's big city mayors estimated that there were more than 170,000 households in their municipalities that were waiting for subsidized housing. We are hearing that current social housing programs in rural areas are simply not tailored to the needs of the communities.

The motion we are debating today seeks to provide a lasting solution to this crisis by increasing the stock of social and affordable housing in Canada. We want a firm commitment from the government to quickly bring in measures that would stimulate the construction of quality rental units for families in need. We are calling on the government to provide for incentives in the upcoming budget to help build 500,000 social and affordable housing units in Canada over the next 10 years, with half to be built by 2024.

I would now like to talk a bit about the unacceptable housing situation of indigenous people, both those living on reserve and those living in urban or rural areas.

First, I strongly believe that the government should develop a Canadian housing strategy specifically for indigenous people. It would be designed for them and with them. The housing would be adapted to their cultures and different weather conditions. I also believe they should be offered on-site training, which would create jobs.

Article 21 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes the right to housing and affirms that states shall take effective measures to ensure continuing improvement of housing problems. Indigenous people living in urban areas are eight times more likely to be homeless than the rest of the population. Nevertheless, the 2017 budget only allocated \$225 million over 11 years, or about \$20 million a year, for off-reserve indigenous housing. That is not a lot of houses to meet such a great need.

The Liberal government promised to invest in first nations communities, which is not a bad thing, but we must also remember that half of Canada's indigenous population lives in urban areas. The housing situation in indigenous communities is a total disaster.

Just yesterday, four of my colleagues held a press conference to talk about the mould crisis on reserves and in the north. That will do nothing to help the existing housing shortage in first nations and Inuit communities.

In 2011, nearly 41% of on-reserve households were living in homes in need of major repairs, and mould was reported in 51% of the units. In 2016, figures were already showing that the on-reserve housing shortage would reach 115,000 units by 2031. The department's data already indicated that 20,000 on-reserve units would be needed to lower the average number of people per household to four and that 81,000 homes would be required to reach the Canadian average of 1.5 people per household.

The Liberals know all of this, but apparently, taking action is not their forte. As evidence of this, even though departmental officials were aware of the situation, the government decided to fund the construction of only 300 new housing units per year in 2016 and 2017, which is only 3% of what is needed. It is time to pull our heads out of the sand, roll up our sleeves and do what is necessary. This is not rocket science. There is a shortage of social and affordable housing all across the country, and families are struggling to make ends meet. We need to create incentives for the construction of new rental units across the country. That would be a good investment.

● (1040)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to speak to the issue of social housing.

[English]

I will also extend my gratitude and respect for the member opposite. She gives good competition to the member for Saskatoon West for sustaining an important dialogue in the House and in the country. I have attended many of the seminars and public events with her to push for strong housing policy.

I am glad she raised the issue of indigenous housing, as it is not contained in the bill that was presented. I am assuming there may be more NDP promises coming on indigenous housing. I do not believe for a minute this is the end of the parade of opportunities to discuss different housing policies.

However, two days ago in the House, the member's party said that the repair of housing was not the same as housing. In other words, the fact that we have repaired 157,000 units over the last three years, with new investments as part of the national housing strategy and our budgets, was dismissed as not being housing.

I also heard the member for Kootenay—Columbia say that there were complex needs to house people. For example, sometimes they need housing and supports to stay in that housing, housing and a subsidy to make that housing affordable.

Would the member agree that a multi-layered approach is the right approach and that sometimes when we make a million investments in housing, two or three of them have to land at the same address in order to make that housing viable for the person in question? In other words, we need to fix housing, subsidize housing, build housing and support housing, not just simply construct affordable housing, in order to make our housing system work.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I would like to return the compliment. My colleague also works very hard on the housing file.

I completely agree that investments in housing should not be used only for construction work. They should also be used to do renovations. My colleague has been a member of the House for quite a while now, and he knows full well that I moved a motion in the House of Commons in 2012 calling for new investments to renovate social housing.

I have a problem with what the member said earlier. The NDP completely agrees that the government needs to invest in the renovation of social housing, but when the government publicly announces figures and is double dipping, it is not being honest with Canadians.

If the member and his Prime Minister want to tell us exactly how much has been invested in housing, they need to give us the real numbers. They gave the same figures twice, saying that they helped millions of people with a \$5-billion investment, but really they helped only about 115,000 people. They need to be careful about what they are saying in the media because it will come back to bite them eventually.

● (1045)

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Hochelaga, for her long-standing work on resolving the housing crisis in Canada. She mentioned the issue of co-operatives.

I am fortunate in my riding to have a huge number of co-operative units available to my constituents. During the 1970s and 1980s, the federal government provided a lot of support to the creation of co-operatives, which now provide very important housing, affordable housing for seniors, for immigrants and families.

The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, on behalf of the 900 housing co-operatives in Canada, has made specific requests to the government. One of those is to provide \$7.5 million in funding per year to re-enrol housing co-operatives. We know that the co-

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operatives are old and they need to be retrofitted, and they want to become energy retrofitted. However, there is a possibility of municipal land in all of our cities, certainly in my city, where we could build co-operative housing now if the government would commit long-term funding.

Could the member speak to those asks?

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I have several answers to that question. My family has been involved in the co-operative movement, so I have known about the benefits of co-operatives for a long time. There are many housing co-operatives in my riding. The first thing I want to say in answer to the member's question is that co-operatives in general and housing co-ops in particular are a very good idea, but we have not really talked about this since I was elected in 2011.

Housing co-ops need funding, but most existing co-ops are having problems because they are old and in need of renovations. Many of them lost their funding a few years ago. The Liberal government temporarily restored part of that funding, but many co-ops that lost their funding still do not have it back. They have fallen through the cracks, and if they do not get help, people will end up homeless.

Canada's biggest housing co-op is in Montreal, and most of the residents are subsidized. The federal government must help these people stay in quality, affordable housing units large enough for their families.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted and grateful to be able to speak to the motion moved by the hon. member for Saskatoon West, whom I would like to acknowledge.

It is always a pleasure, an honour and a responsibility to inform the House of important and decisive measures that our government has taken and will continue to take to provide more Canadians with a safe, affordable home.

[English]

In the past couple of weeks alone, Canadians have been able to see the impact of these actions first-hand.

We have seen new affordable housing projects break ground in Chilliwack, Winnipeg, Hamilton and Montreal. We have seen a tiny home community in Whitehorse giving at-risk individuals much-needed housing and more. It is also providing the support services they need to live independently.

In Calgary, we saw new transitional housing being created that will provide a safe haven for some 100 women who otherwise would be experiencing domestic abuse, poverty and homelessness. We have seen work on a new development in Porters Lake, Nova Scotia. This will be a place where seniors can age in place with services that allow them to live independently for longer, and happily.

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[Translation]

Last week, I also had the opportunity to meet Claudette. She was very proud to show the Minister of Official Languages and me her new home, which is one of 78 units in the Première Porte complex located in the riding of Ahuntsic-Cartierville in Montreal. This complex provides newcomers with housing and services to help them fully participate, as best they can, in life in their new community.

We also attended the launch of a new Habitat for Humanity project which will let families in Prince Albert realize their dream of owning a home. I enthusiastically lent my rudimentary manual skills to a Habitat for Humanity build last year. This activity allowed me to see first-hand the deep sense of pride and joy of the families and the entire community.

● (1050)

[English]

In each of these cases, people benefit from a place to live. However, it is much more than just bricks and mortar. It gives people dignity, a new chance to feel a sense of belonging.

Last week, we also announced a 10-year housing partnership agreement with Premier MacLauchlan in Prince Edward Island. This agreement comes with a joint \$15-million investment in affordable housing for the province. This is just one of several agreements made with our provincial and territorial partners over the past few months, with more to come.

Each one of these announcements is a direct result of the focus that our government has placed on housing from day one of our mandate. From day one, we have understood that housing matters, and we are delivering, literally from coast to coast to coast.

[Translation]

As our Prime Minister said, all Canadians deserve a safe and affordable place to call home, a place where they feel safe, where they can have confidence in their future and focus on themselves, their families and their communities. To build a strong middle class and an inclusive society, we must have quality, affordable housing.

[English]

Canadians know, and too many of them first-hand, what years of federal neglect on housing have brought. We see the challenges faced by some 1.7 million Canadians who live in houses that need repairs, are overcrowded, or are unaffordable. We see how these challenges affect some 25,000 Canadians who each year experience chronic homelessness. We also see how failure to address needs at one end of the housing continuum affects people all along it.

That is why one of our first priorities was to get the Government of Canada back into housing. We acted decisively, and since 2016, we have invested more than \$5.7 billion to make housing more affordable across Canada. It is already having an important impact, helping nearly a million families since 2016 to gain access to a safe and affordable place to call home.

[Translation]

We specified that these investments were but the first step. As we are implementing these significant investments, we are also

developing the very first national housing strategy, a 10-year, \$40-billion-plus plan that will help more Canadians find a safe and affordable place to call home.

My colleague from Saskatoon West is calling for the creation of 500,000 new housing units. She should know that the national housing strategy would fill the housing needs of more than 530,000 Canadians and cut homelessness by half. Our plan may be ambitious, but it is realistic. It was developed based on amazing consultations with people in the industry, Canadians, and housing experts.

I want to name just a few: the National Housing Collaborative, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, the Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation, Canada Without Poverty and YWCA Canada.

[English]

These are just a very small number of the wonderful stakeholders that have helped us build this historic, first-ever national housing strategy.

Our plan does indeed respond to the real need for new affordable housing. To get us there, the plan includes major initiatives to repair and increase the housing stock, including a \$13.2-billion national housing co-investment fund.

[Translation]

To maximize the results of our investments even more, we are making up to \$200 million worth of federal land available to community housing providers at a discount or at no cost.

Many housing units are in need of urgent repairs or renovations after years of neglect by the federal government, among other factors. Much of Canada's affordable housing stock is aging and has suffered from many years of underfunding. Families are living in overcrowded housing and in unsafe conditions, but the national housing co-investment fund will provide funding to renovate and repair up to 240,000 housing units and create 60,000 new units.

We opted for a co-investment fund because we know that a top-down approach does not work. We wanted to invite the provinces and territories, community housing providers, municipalities, the private sector, and indigenous governments and organizations to work with us to find lasting solutions tailored to the needs of their communities.

•(1055)

[English]

The co-investment fund advances housing priorities that matter to all Canadians by prioritizing projects that go above and beyond mandatory requirements for affordability, energy efficiency and accessibility. It focuses on people, communities and partnerships and includes specific targets to protect and support survivors of violence, seniors and people living with development disabilities, among many others.

Our major partners in housing are provincial and territorial governments. For me, an important accomplishment in our national housing strategy was reaching a historic housing partnership framework agreement with them, the first in more than a quarter of a century.

This framework includes \$7.7 billion in funding that will be cost-matched and invested in programs that will meet the unique needs of Canadians, whether they live in a remote community in Nunavut, an urban centre in British Columbia, a small town in Prince Edward Island or any point in between. These partnerships will unlock further initiatives, such as the Canada housing benefit, a direct benefit that will give at least 300,000 households an average of \$2,500 per year to help meet their housing costs.

[Translation]

Our agreements with the provinces and territories will also help keep some 330,000 community-run housing units affordable for 330,000 families. This is another critical measure that will give low-income Canadians the means to pay rent in the housing they already occupy.

The affordability of federally-run community housing will be maintained through the national housing strategy, as we are extending subsidies for some 55,000 additional households.

Last summer we also launched a new homelessness strategy, a \$2.2-billion plan to cut homelessness by at least half. The reaching home strategy will provide more funding, tools, and flexibility to a greater number of communities to fight homelessness in their own way. One of my colleagues will talk about that strategy a little later today.

[English]

Together, this work represents a very important achievement for our government. I am proud of how we have been able to collaborate with Canadians and many stakeholders to launch programs that will make a lasting difference.

Of course, there is much more work to do. As mentioned previously, we are working hard with provincial and territorial partners to sign all bilateral agreements by April 2019.

I am also working closely with the Minister of Indigenous Services, indigenous leaders and organizations to develop the first-ever distinct first nations, Métis and Inuit housing strategies. These strategies will meet the unique needs of each group and will be anchored in the principles of reconciliation and self-determination. One of my colleagues will also speak to that progress in more detail later today.

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We have also launched major research initiatives to fill the data gaps that exist around housing. I look forward to seeing the resulting research and to learning how we can continue to make progress on creating better housing for Canadians.

[Translation]

Finally, we are currently drafting legislation to protect the human rights-based approach to housing that is the moral and philosophical foundation of the national housing strategy. This will bring us much closer to the progressive realization of the right to housing in Canada, as called for in the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This bill will ensure that affordable housing remains a priority for all future Canadian governments and will benefit all Canadians for generations to come.

•(1100)

[English]

I have said it before and I will say it again: The Government of Canada is back in housing, as a leader and as a partner.

Canadians are on board with our new approach. Reena, a foundation that promotes dignity and inclusion, praised the national housing strategy, saying that the federal government is to be applauded for recognizing the importance for all citizens to have a home and for implementing a plan that will improve the quality of thousands of people's lives, and calling on provincial and municipal leaders to align behind this effort and create local solutions to serve communities across the country.

I second that call.

I urge members on the other side to join us. Working together, we can deliver an inclusive national housing strategy that will launch a new era in housing in this country, improve the lives of Canadians, and strengthen our communities and the economy for years to come.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague across the floor cares about people. In that context, I would like to read something that I received from Cheryl Dowden, the co-chair of the Nelson Committee on Homelessness. Nelson is a community in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia.

It states that a recent federally funded count identified 132 people who were homeless in Nelson, which has a population of 10,664 people. That's over 1% of the population. Of the 101 people who agreed to be surveyed, 56% reported that they first experienced homelessness before the age of 19 years. One-third of all people surveyed in Nelson experiencing homelessness were youth 24 years old and under. The overall vacancy rate for rental housing in 2017 in Nelson was 0%.

Does that not indicate a fundamental failure in the housing that is currently being offered to Canadians, and particularly the people in Nelson?

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Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I welcome and congratulate the member for his advocacy on the importance of making housing a right and a reality for many Canadians.

As I said, we have been fortunate to rely on the advice of many stakeholders, many Canadians, who were very patient with the Government of Canada for many years before we came into office in 2015. They had waited for leadership and partnership. It is now a reality, meaning that we have a new era in housing.

We started in 2016 by investing historic amounts in housing, but more importantly, by helping Canadians, including all those hard-working Canadians who face difficult housing challenges in their lives, to not only have a roof over their heads but to participate fully in their communities.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House calls on the government to create 500,000 units of quality affordable housing within 10 years and to commit in budget 2019 to completing 250,000 of those units within five years. This is not a new idea. This was tried in the province of Ontario in the early nineties, when the then government created non-profit housing corporations. It sounded good at the time. They were going to build the types of housing accommodations being suggested by the motion.

The problem was that when the public found out that the government was funnelling money into these non-profit housing corporations, which had consultants, builders, people doing retrofits and repairing buildings and building new buildings, the costs shot up tremendously and cost the government a lot of money. The program did not work. It was an absolute failure.

Has the government considered or reviewed the non-profit housing philosophy that existed in the province of Ontario in the 1990s?

• (1105)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I again thank my hon. colleague for his interest in housing, which is rather rare for a Conservative, but we can always do better and do more. I am pleased to hear that he cares about community housing issues.

Housing is more than just a roof over one's head; it is about being part of a community. It just so happens that, despite the difficulties that we know do exist, the non-profit community-based sector in Canada, especially in Quebec, plays a very important role. This role will continue to develop in partnership with the private sector. I would like to share a quotation that highlights the role of the private sector.

[English]

Kevin Lee, who is the chief executive officer of the Canadian Home Builders' Association, stated:

With regards to the Canada housing benefit, CHBA has long recommended measures to help low-income Canadians participate directly in the wider housing market.... This Benefit can provide them support and choice, rather than tying them to specific housing units.

We also have the support of municipalities and localities. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities stated:

The national housing strategy released...is a breakthrough for cities and communities from coast to coast to coast. This is the kind of federal leadership that local governments have been seeking for more than 20 years.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's advocacy on this issue. I believe it is a tough job for the minister at the cabinet table to make sure that housing and homelessness stays a priority. I want to encourage him to continue that. Through my comments, I am asking him to step it up. Although we have started, I feel that we need more, sooner.

I would like to reiterate to the minister what I mentioned in my comments, which is that the Saskatchewan Party government has ended the rental supplement in Saskatchewan in anticipation of a federal Canada housing benefit. That is very concerning to me, and I imagine it is concerning to the minister. Could the minister follow up or comment on that? I think he would agree with me that it is not helping people and is not in the spirit of a provincial-federal agreement on housing and homelessness.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct that this is a joint responsibility and that we need collaboration with every government, including provincial and territorial. However, the most welcome and expected collaboration is with cities and municipalities, which will make this not only a success now but a success in the next 10 years.

Our national housing strategy supports many other objectives of our government, including gender equity. The YWCA said, on the national housing strategy, that a gender lens on the national housing strategy is a "game-changer for women and girls in Canada".

I would add that the National Housing Collaborative, a key stakeholder in building a national housing strategy, said, "This is Canada's first National Housing Strategy, and it's a game-changer because of the size of the investment, the breadth of the policy, and the approach to how government will work with communities to shape housing going forward."

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will start by practising charity at home and commiserate with the minister. I have worked with Habitat for Humanity as well, and I think we share the same level of skill in construction.

In November of last year, CMHC put out a report showing the impact of the \$5.7 billion spent on affordable housing by the government since 2016. It showed that it built only 15,000 new affordable housing units and that 156,000 units had been renovated. That is a prodigious amount of money spent with so little to show for it. I wonder if the minister could comment on this part.

The private sector was not even worthy of a single mention in any of his commentary. It produces, on average, about 200,000 units of housing per year. There was very little focus on that.

The minister repeated the same figure of one million families helped, which has been lambasted in the media as absolutely false. Several professors have said that they cannot reproduce those numbers and that they are based on erroneous double counting. The member for Papineau repeated the same words.

I wonder if the minister could mention the private sector's role in ensuring housing that is affordable, how the stress test has made it unaffordable for millennials and young people to afford housing and how the \$5.7 billion spent on affordable housing so far has produced only 15,000 affordable housing units.

• (1110)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, maybe the member was distracted when I mentioned the chief executive officer of the Canadian Home Builders' Association, who said:

CHBA has long recommended [the Canada housing benefit] measures to help low-income Canadians participate...in the wider housing market.... This Benefit can provide them support and choice, rather than tying them to specific housing units.

That is a new and very important component of our initiative. I have been talking to homebuilders for many months, and they are delighted with the investments we will be making in collaboration with them, supporting their important work. They also say that much of the work of the private sector is in collaboration with Canadian municipalities. The mayor of Edmonton said:

we saw real and meaningful action thanks to strong leadership on this file from [the Prime Minister] and [the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development]. As a result, big city mayors across the country are celebrating the federal government's bold re-engagement in housing after decades of inaction.

On the one million households, that is correct. Our investment, since 2016, has helped one million families, and therefore more than one million Canadians, through these important investments for renovating, constructing and supporting lower-income and middle-class families in having a decent place to call home.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be the first on my side of the House, and hope not to be the last, to rise to speak about both affordable housing and housing that is affordable. I want to look at both sides of the equation. I know that the member who moved this motion has done a lot of work on this issue, and I do not want to take away from her work or belittle the work or the subject in any way.

With temperatures going so low, -42° or -43° in Regina, as Canadians, we can all agree that we should look after our neighbours and those around us who do not have permanent housing. We should look after our own and make sure that everyone has a place to stay during this cold winter spell. It is being called a polar vortex. I just call it Canadian winter. I have gotten used to it.

In my speech today on the subject, I want to make sure, being the first in my party to speak on this subject in this interim chamber, that I live up to the Yiddish proverb that says that no good comes from hurrying. I want to take some time to elaborate my thoughts on the subject of affordable housing. I think some of the things I mentioned and questions I posed to the minister are worth remembering.

One of the first things the Liberal government did was change the homelessness partnering strategy by eliminating the housing first targets. Those were proven targets to effectively reduce homelessness. They ensured that close to a million families had access to

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affordable housing. On that one million figure, the minister will know that reporters and professors have said that they cannot reproduce that number and that there is double and triple counting going on. Because it goes over multiple years, families are being over counted. That was a point raised by the leader of the NDP. The Liberals are patting themselves on the back for work they have not done, which I think all of us on this side of the House have gotten used to.

I raised the issue of the numbers being wrong on that CMHC report back in November. It looked at the \$5.7 billion spent by the government, the so-called government spending on affordable housing. It had only built 15,000 affordable housing units, and about ten times as many had been renovated. That is a prodigious amount of taxpayer dollars spent on one problem, with so little to show for it. There is very little to show for it. Who is going to pay for this mistake? It will be the taxpayers of Canada. The taxpayers are going to be required to pay more and more for very few affordable housing units to be built.

The minister will quote certain builders in Canada who are pleased with the program. Of course they are pleased. They want to build homes. They are in the business of producing private-sector units, but they will sell them to whoever wants to buy them. The \$5.7-billion figure for 15,000 affordable housing units is a pretty darn good deal for those doing the construction.

The government has created no pathways for home ownership for Canadians. That is leading to an affordable housing crisis. Housing affordability is an issue. It is an issue for young people and Canadian families, and the government has made it worse. The government has introduced a stress test of 2% on the posted rate that OSFI lenders have. The big six banks have a posted rate for mortgages. They say it is to reduce prices. That is what the Minister of Finance said, which is interesting, because it is not the regulator's job to reduce prices in any market in Canada. It is interesting that the minister admitted that there was a political reason for introducing the stress test for Canadian mortgages for those trying to get into their first homes, whether they be condos, townhouses or detached or semi-detached homes, like the ones in my riding.

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I live in a suburban riding of Calgary. When I moved there back in 2005, there were entire communities that did not exist, such as Cranston and Mahogany, communities of 30,000 people each, the largest communities in Calgary, all suburban communities with multiple types of housing. Today I hear story after story about how the stress test on mortgages is causing people to either lose their homes during refinancing, because they simply cannot afford to continue living in their homes and pay the now higher mortgage interest rates, or to not get into the homes they need due to having kids or getting married and needing something bigger or downsizing. We see the impact in the numbers. In all of 2018, there were 20% fewer mortgages for young people, millennials or generation Z, whichever terminology you want to use.

• (1115)

When we talk about affordable housing and the housing affordability crisis in our country, the Liberal government is making it worse, with the carbon tax, higher taxes, nickel-and-diming Canadians. At the end of the month, Canadians have less money in their pockets, so how can they afford to save to invest in a unit they can live in? That is simple math.

Also, for those people who are trying to move into affordable housing units, how are they supposed to afford their day-to-day expenses and then save a little on the side so they can save for their own home? They cannot do it under the current government. The Liberals are making Canadians pay for the government's mistakes, and that is not right.

We on this side, the Conservatives, are in the business of planting seeds of success for Canadians, not the government deciding where people should live and what type of housing they should live in, and, as much as possible, allowing people the opportunity to find the housing choices they want and need. Some are unable to do so because events of life make it impossible, such as fleeing an abusive spouse or a job loss, which is happening a lot in my riding right now because of the war on energy jobs that the Canadian government has insisted on leading. I know people who have lost their homes. They find themselves in temporary housing. They are looking for affordable housing units. Some of it is rundown stock that has not been well maintained. Sometimes they just cannot find anything at a price they can afford to buy or to pay rent on, because rents have not come down all that much.

We are in the business of planting seeds. We want other people to have that success. We are also thinking about future generations. We are not a one generation party. We are looking at the long term. The member who tabled the motion talked about the government's commitment to build 250,000 housing units in five years. I looked at the total production of the private sector and how many units it was building and providing. It is a drop in the bucket. A lot of housing is needed. We have high immigration levels. A lot of people want to come to Canada, bring their families and start a family here. They want great paying jobs. They want to earn a living.

When my family came here, that was a big driver. It came down to Canada or Australia. I am very thankful my uncle chose to come to Canada. Canada was the first country to issue him a passport when he was waiting, almost homeless, to come to Canada. Thanks to that,

my grandfather came here and the rest of our family was able to move here.

We do not intend to be a party that only looks at one generation. We want a Canada that is more than just a one generation society. Right now we have a government that is introducing a series of policies. It is never one thing. It is always nickel-and-diming. It is always a series of policies that lead to a situation where housing becomes unaffordable and there is simply not enough affordable housing.

The issue is supply. I compliment the NDP in at least identifying the crux of the problem, which is a supply problem. There is not enough housing being built to keep prices down. Ask Jack Mintz, one of Canada's premier tax professors, and he will say the same thing. It is basic economics. The more supply we have, the more it keeps prices down and controls pricing. Real estate is very much a regional or local good that is purchased. We rarely compare homes across two different cities or two different towns. Also, housing has become more expensive.

I want to talk more about the price of housing in Canada. That is a big driver of forcing people into situations where they need affordable housing, because they simply cannot afford to live anywhere else. We know about the problems in Toronto and Vancouver and how much prices have risen there. However, smaller communities, like the member who tabled the motion comes from and the one I come from, have been heavily impacted by things like the stress test, depressing the prices of the housing people are in already. Sometimes this leads them to have underwater mortgages, where they owe more than what they could get selling the house. It wipes them out financially. Those are policies of the Liberal government. Those are its own failures. In three short years, this is what it has managed to do.

If we were to build 50,000 units every year, it would be double what Canada used to see built in what we call the heyday of the 1970s and 1980s, when roughly 20,000 to 25,000 affordable rental units were created annually. Nowadays, about 200,000 units are being built all across Canada.

• (1120)

I have talked about affordable housing and housing affordability and why it is so important. Over 2018, we have seen the depression of prices in a specific segment of the housing market. Specifically single-family homes, residential properties, have gone down in pricing quite substantially, about 11.3%. Part of the reason for that are higher interest rates and the stress test. With regard to general affordability at the end of the month, Canadians have less and less in their pockets because of the government policy, which reduces their ability to meet their day-to-day needs. Some might consider moving into smaller units or something that is more affordable for them.

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However, during the same time period, the largest price increases, 14.7%, were for townhouses and row units. Row units actually went up 6.5% according to CREA. The government has forced a group of people, people who could afford their own homes before, who would save money for themselves through their homes. We know that whatever type of housing people are in, if they are trying to get onto that property ladder and save money, paying interest and paying into the principal on the side, they are saving through their house. The house is a savings vehicle.

The government, through the stress test, changes to the mortgage rules, carbon taxes and higher daily costs of living, is suppressing the ability of people to meet the day-to-day needs and pay for their needs. People need to eat, heat their homes and pay their mortgages most of the time, whenever possible.

The government has moved an entire segment of the population down into row houses and townhouse and has pushed others out. Therefore, we have a crunch of people in between. We have those who are trying to get out of shelters and those who are trying to move out of affordable housing, maybe because the ones they are in do not quite suit their needs right now and they want to move into that first part of home ownership, the first townhome.

I know the first property I ever bought, as an older 20-year old, was a condo in Edmonton with my wife. It was the first piece of property we had, and we paid quite a bit for it. We were quite happy we were able to do that. We stretched our finances. Today, we would not be able to do the same thing. Today, like many people I know, my cousins, other family members and many young people I have talked to, cannot do that. They have no ability to get into first ladder of housing.

Speaking of young people, 54% say that it is more difficult to buy a residential property in the past year. That is according to Abacus data. What affects affordability? This is one of my favourite figures that the Abacus data has produced. Down payments are at 47%. People are having a hard time saving for that down payment. Can we blame them? We have carbon taxes and higher income taxes. The tax credits that families were using have been eliminated. Can we blame them for not having enough money at the end of the day to save a little on the side for that home, the townhouse, or the condo or apartment, whatever it is? The second figure of 44% represents the affordability of monthly payments. There are taxes, unemployment uncertainty, loan approval and foreign buyers.

Foreign buyers account for 10% of buyers in Vancouver. It is a very small part. We focus so much time on trying to chase down foreign buyers. We spend less time looking at how the rules are working in the local municipalities to make it possible for builders to provide housing that is affordable, to build affordable housing. How complex are the rules? When a neighbourhood is made more dense, the rules become more complex. A 30-storey, 80 to 90-unit condo block has much more complex rules because there are more people living within the same type of footprint.

We are getting into the granular, micro-level decision-making at the local level, which has an impact on the macro level of federal government policy making. Federal government policy making is having a drastic impact on the ability of Canadians to purchase the types of homes that meets their needs.

As I mentioned at the beginning, I have the very recent CMHC study from November that looks at the \$5.7 billion spent on affordable housing by the Liberal government. It shows that 50,000 affordable housing units have been built since 2016. That is not me saying this. That is a government Crown corporation making a judgment call on what it is doing. It is important to remember that the government has numbers coming out of its own side which demonstrate that it is wrong.

• (1125)

We heard the minister again double down on the one million figure that has already been critiqued in the media. It has shown that it is actually not the case. Double and triple counting is going on. It cannot reproduce those numbers. It is incumbent upon the government to provide accurate information, to be clear about what the goals are and to not make taxpayers pay for its mistakes.

Under the Liberals, the cost of living has been raised and has accumulated record high deficits. We were supposed to have a surplus this year of a billion dollars. With a billion dollar surplus, we could build more affordable housing. We are going to be building affordable housing on borrowed money so future generations will have higher taxes to pay for today's needs.

I will return to the 2% stress test imposed by the government, which OSFI officials say was meant for the solvency of banks. For political reasons, the Minister of Finance said it was to suppress prices in Toronto and Vancouver. However, it has had a serious impact on Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary and Edmonton. Only three markets regionally have actually gained in prices: Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax. Twenty per cent mortgages are being denied by the big banks, sending borrowers down the credit ladder and taking on more financial risk.

I have met some of those people who have taken on more financial risk. I have met people who have gone bankrupt and then have gone into affordable housing because they have lost everything. They took a chance and then the compression, because of bad government policy making or over several years they may have lost their jobs, such as energy jobs, because the government decided pipeline construction and the oil sands and energy sector were not worthy of being championed by it or at least it getting out of the way. Now those people are finding themselves in affordable housing and going to the food banks to meet their day-to-day needs.

I volunteered at the food bank in Calgary and I met oil sands workers, trade workers, people who were proud of the work they used to do, proud of having been able to live the Canadian dream. Today they are finding it more difficult than ever to meet their day-to-day needs and to get back into the housing they need. They find themselves in affordable housing. Some find themselves in shelters. Others find themselves asking for money on suburban streets, something I have never seen before in Calgary.

On 130th Avenue, in my corner of the city in the deep southeast, is an area where we would have never seen homelessness before the downturn in the economy and the constant actions by the federal government to continue depressing the market and hurting Canadian energy jobs.

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As the rules are written today for the stress test, as the carbon tax is being imposed today, as higher income taxes have started to hit middle-income families, this problem is only going to get worse, and the impact is harshest on young people. They are having the hardest time moving into housing that is appropriately priced and that meets their needs.

Last year, there was 20% less mortgage origination by young Canadians. At the same time, the greatest generation, the pre-war generation, great grandparents, are taking out 63% more mortgages than before. We can only assume what that means. If they are taking on more complex financial risks, they are making more complex financial decisions that could lead them into situations where they could find themselves in bankruptcy.

I agree with the intent and principle of the motion. We have to look at both sides of the issue: affordable housing and housing affordability. CMHC has laid it out. The government is just not doing enough with the money it has been given, has so little to show for it and taxpayers are footing the bill. That is not right. In October 2019, it has to change. Taxpayers cannot afford another four years of this.

The Liberals could have done so much more with \$5.7 billion directed toward affordable housing. None of their programs are meeting the needs of Canadians and taxes will continue to go up. There is just no way the Canadian middle class and Canadian workers can continue to afford the Liberal government.

● (1130)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the one million household number has been used repeatedly today and I want to break it down so the House understands exactly what it means.

One million investments have been made out of the \$5.7 billion this government has invested since 2015. In other words, we have put \$5.7 billion into the housing system specifically for social and affordable housing. There have been one million specific investments attached to specific addresses made from that fund.

The numbers are important to understand. The 15,000 newly constructed units is an important one. That is new housing for new people. We have also repaired precisely 143,684 units. We have also subsidized individuals because affordable housing for some does not meet 30% of their income unless we provide subsidies above and beyond the affordability that is built into the project. We have provided 783,928 individuals with subsidies to sustain their housing at an affordable level. Without that subsidy they would not afford rent or be in deep poverty.

Additionally, we have provided both supports and rent for chronically homeless individuals, because some individuals need subsidies and supports such as mental health, addiction services, food as well sometimes and so on. For that, 28,864 distinct individuals have received support. When we total it up, one million investments have been made out of the \$5.7 billion fund that have impacted and supported Canadians.

I agree with the member opposite that the construction numbers need to get up higher and faster, but when we are starting from

nothing, getting new projects started takes two or three years' time because we have to acquire land, get approvals, build and then house people. However, when we do that, if we do not additionally provide subsidies the housing does not work for some individuals, so there will be layering, or as the NDP calls it, double counting, and they do not want to do that apparently, which I disagree with.

Supports, repairs, renovations, revitalization, as well as subsidies, constitute an intelligent and comprehensive housing system. When we do that, we have made one million investments. When we add to that the fact that there are 2.5 Canadians per average household in this country, I can say we have helped more than one million Canadians. We have preserved affordable housing, created affordable housing and supported affordable housing for well over one million Canadians through one million distinct investments through a \$5.7 billion budget.

● (1135)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member again that the one million figure has been criticized by journalists and professors as double counting. Double counting is wrong when the government lumps in a whole bunch of different subjects to try to inflate a number so one of the bullet points in Liberal members' talking points can be filled. That is wrong. The government should not be doing that. It misleads Canadians.

The member also failed to mention what the private sector is doing. I did not mention this during my talk as I ran out of time unfortunately.

There is the parable of the Good Samaritan. We would not have remembered the Good Samaritan if he had no money in his pocket to pay those two denarius to the innkeeper to take care of the stranger. If there was a Good Samaritan today, he or she would not be able to afford the Liberal government. He or she would not have two denarius to help the stranger along the road to make sure the stranger had some housing to recover in.

That is what the Liberal government is doing. That is what is so wrong with running multi-year deficits when there is GDP growth going on and there is no recession, there is no war and there is no deep international recession. One could say these are decent years for GDP growth and the government is running multi-year, multi-billion dollar deficits, accumulating debt that future generations will have to pay. That is so profoundly wrong.

For the \$5.7 billion that supposedly has been spent on affordable housing so far, the government has had three years. It is 2019.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member had me at the beginning of his comments but not so much near the end.

Business of Supply

I do want to bring to the House's attention the member's comments around housing first and the fact that budget 2018 was the first time the federal government moved away from making housing first part of the criteria around the homelessness partnering strategy. I want to acknowledge the previous Conservative government's commitment to that program, one of the only evidence-based ways to intervene in homelessness that has been proven effective.

Cities in Alberta really led the way. Both Conservative governments in Alberta invested highly in homelessness and they did that because the investment up front made for savings over the long term, because people did not have to access very expensive emergency services. I want to acknowledge the leadership of Alberta and of course Medicine Hat, which has actually eliminated homelessness.

I do understand not wanting to take a top-down approach but I also believe in evidence-based practice and that there does need to be some criteria when it comes to the homelessness partnering strategy that sticks to housing first. I may be offside with some but I really do believe that. I wonder if my colleague could comment.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, it was indeed a previous Conservative government that led the way with evidence-based policy-making on this. When the member was CEO of the United Way of Saskatoon, she went out in public to say this is the right way to go and that having targets in there makes it certain. It is a way for government to verify how the money is being spent, and that it is being spent in a way that can be adjusted later on to meet the needs of people who need it.

That is why I brought up the CMHC report, which talks about the \$5.7 billion that was spent, the 15,000 affordable housing units that were built and the 150,000 that were renovated. To me, that seems like a really bad deal for taxpayers. It is too little for so much money.

It is pretty typical of the Liberal government. It is rinse and repeat. Almost every single policy the Liberals have introduced has been the same. They are not measured by the actual success on the ground and the facts on the ground, which are typically Conservative facts. They are measured by how much money the Liberals shovelled out the door. Then they pat themselves on the back for it.

I agree with the member. It should be about what works and what does not. I do not care about intent. I only care about what works.

• (1140)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the member talk a number of times about the stress test with respect to mortgage lending. Given the way he talks about it, one would almost think that the government brought that test in and implemented it for no reason other than to just make life more difficult for Canadians.

However, as a matter of fact, if we look back historically, one of the reasons Canada was able to weather the 2008 recession better than our U.S. neighbours was that we had stricter rules in place when it came to mortgage lending than the U.S. did. We refused to put Canadians in a precarious situation that would have put them in the same position as a lot of our neighbours to the south.

Could the member comment on why he thinks it is so important to put Canadians into a precarious situation in which, if there is a

downturn in the economy, they are not protected. Now they can continue to stay in their houses, and as a result, will not have to look for affordable housing.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for allowing me an opportunity to praise the previous Conservative government. In fact, it was Stephen Harper who led Canada through one of the worst international recessions.

The member is absolutely right. Stephen Harper ensured that we had a stable financial system that weathered the storm through the right type of policy-making, which was based on the evidence before us. This is not the stress test. The stress test is a one-size-fits-all tool that punishes Canadians from coast to coast to coast, regardless of the prices in their local markets. The member should know that.

It was meant to stabilize the banks, which is what the regulator said. His own Minister of Finance said just a few days ago that it was meant to depress prices in Toronto and Vancouver and keep them down. It has made things worse. It has made things unaffordable for those at the bottom of the market who are trying to move into their first home. It has impacted young people the worst, as there are 20% fewer mortgages originating from young people.

It is not about affordability. What the Liberals have done through this rule is outsourced policy-making to the marketing branch of the bank, as it is based on the posted rate, the 5% to 5.5% applied to the public by the bank. It is not based on the negotiated contract rate. That affects every single Canadian who is trying to refinance a mortgage. A widow carrying a HELOC, a home equity line of credit, and a mortgage, who is trying to sell her home after renovating it to reach its maximum value, is faced with a stress test. She therefore has to pay more interest.

What is the best part? When people fail the stress test and they are with a major bank, they can only get a mortgage with that lender. It is a deal for big banks, not for Canadians.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Let me also acknowledge and thank my colleague, the member for Saskatoon West, for the incredible work she has been doing based on her history and her background, the advocacy she brings to the table, the reasoned approach that she takes to housing with heart and compassion, and always pushing the government to do the right thing. I thank her for all of her efforts.

Housing is one of the most important issues from coast to coast to coast. We are talking about affordable housing that people can access as a home they can afford, a place where they feel safe and where they can thrive. The truth is that we have not had that for a very long time for far too many Canadians.

Business of Supply

In 1993, the federal Liberal government cancelled the national affordable housing program. As a result, this country lost more than half a million units of affordable housing that would otherwise have been built by the non-profit sector or the co-operative sector. Just imagine for one minute what our communities would look like across this country in this housing crisis if we had an additional half a million units of affordable housing in our communities. We do not have those units because of that approach, the cancellation of the national affordable housing program by the federal Liberal government.

Since that time, the Conservatives took power and they did nothing about the affordable housing crisis. Therefore, the issue continues and more and more we see people in our communities today in desperate need.

I see this every day in Vancouver East, and it breaks my heart. I walk the streets of my community and there is an area called the Downtown Eastside where I literally have to step over people on the sidewalk because they are homeless. They do not have a place they can call home. Somehow, we think it is okay. Somehow, the government members can brag about how swell they are with their national strategy, which they say they have brought back. They pat themselves on the back and say, "Yay, we are so great."

We then learn what they have done. They double count the numbers. I am not saying that the government should not be investing in subsidies. I am not saying it should not be renewing the agreements for the co-ops. Of course it should. It should have been doing that all along. The government never should have cancelled the national affordable housing program. The Conservatives should have done that job 10 years ago. Those non-profit and co-op sectors should not have been left to this late date for someone to come to support them. Subsidies were needed, not just now but all the way through. Many non-profit housing projects and co-op housing units had to raise their rents all through these years because they did not get subsidies from the government.

When the government members say they are doing their job and everything is going to be great, they should talk to the people who are on the streets today and ask them how great it is. When they see people in the community, as I have seen, who are vying for awning space to stay out of the rain because they are homeless and they are fighting over that, there is something very wrong with this picture. Not one of us should be patting ourselves on the back to say that we have done a great job, far from it.

Using rhetorical advantage and how they double count to make it sound good appears to be the Liberals' approach to pretty well everything. Just sound good and look good in front of the media, it does not matter what is really happening on the ground. Rhetorical advantage, by the parliamentary secretary's own admission, is what they are doing: counting and double counting so that they can sound good. That is their approach to addressing the affordable housing crisis.

• (1145)

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development I might add, admitted that this week, and it was reported in the Toronto Star.

I also have to say that he also admitted it when he appeared at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on July 24, 2018. There he agreed with my assessment of the colossal mistakes made by the Liberal government of the 1990s. Let me quote him on the record. He said:

I agree with the member from B.C. The mistakes that were made in the early 1990s devastated people in this country and created the national housing crisis. The policies over the last 10 years made it worse.

That is a direct quote from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development, admitting at committee that the Liberals created the national housing crisis, which was then exacerbated by the Conservatives because of their lack of action over the last 10 years.

What happened? Let us take a moment and look at the reality of what people are faced with.

Only 10% of housing construction has been for rental units. A crisis-level shortage of rental units has led to skyrocketing rental costs while working-class and middle-class wages stagnated.

In Vancouver East, my community in Vancouver, our rental vacancy rate is at 1%. In some areas it is at 0%. Imagine that an average cost for a one-bedroom apartment in Vancouver is \$2,100.

In Vancouver, some 50% of people in the community spend far more than 30% of their total income on accessing safe, secure, affordable housing.

Housing is out of reach for people. I am not talking about French villas or anything like that; I am talking about a roof over their heads, a place that they can call home, a place that is safe.

In the Downtown Eastside community, we have some of the worst housing conditions. Some people compare it to third world housing conditions. These are the SRO—single-room occupancy—hotel rooms, which are 100 square feet and cockroach- and bedbug-infested. Some have no heat, no cooking facilities, no toilets or bathrooms, and unsafe conditions, yet those rooms have some of the highest costs per square foot, and the lowest-income and most vulnerable people rent them.

That is our reality, and even that housing stock is dwindling.

While the Liberals can sit back and say they are doing great and will flow 9% of the money after the next election to build new housing, I ask them to take a minute and think about the realities of today and what they mean for the people who need that housing now.

I had a constituent who came in asking for help. She lives in a home that is full of mould. Her doctors have said it is not safe for her and her son. However, she has no ability to find alternative affordable housing.

My colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay, has been raising this issue for many of the people in the aboriginal community, the indigenous community, the Métis community, and what has the government done about that? It is as though it is all going to be okay because the money is going to flow after the next election. In the meantime, the health of people is at risk, and they are in danger. That is the urgency of what we are talking about.

Business of Supply

I spent one night on the street, from dusk to dawn, with young people. I can tell members that I do not know how I survived that one night. Right after that I got pneumonia. I was sick for weeks. People live in those conditions because they have no other choice. That is the reality of our housing crisis.

Even young professionals are having a tough time making ends meet. They cannot afford to get affordable housing and live in their own communities, and owning a home is all but a dream for them.

• (1150)

It is time for action. That is why this motion speaks for us. That is why the NDP is calling on this upcoming budget to invest real money, flow the money now, build 250,000 units of affordable housing now and get people off the streets so that we can all do what is needed, what we are elected to do, which is to get these programs going and make a real difference in every community in this country.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having been referenced several times in that speech, let me assure the member opposite that in the early nineties I was damned angry with the Liberal politicians on this side of the House for cancelling housing programs. If members want to go back and look at the CBC archives to see my work as a reporter, or at Citytv and CP24, they will see me castigating every Liberal I could get my hands on provincially, federally and locally. It was absolutely wrong and it devastated housing systems in this country, and more importantly, devastated people.

However, when that party opposite rolled the dice with Stephen Harper and brought down a budget that had \$2.7 billion in housing investments projected over the last 10 years, when it also killed the Kelowna accord and the national day care program, when that party rolled the dice for power instead of delivering services to people, I swore I would never forgive it.

I did not quit my job as a reporter and go to Disneyland on a vacation. I quit my job as a reporter and became a city councillor to fight bad housing policy being produced by all politicians in this country, and that is how I made it to city council. When I decided to run federally, it was to change the policy of the Liberal Party to create a national housing program, and I am damned proud of it.

What I am really proud of is that the riding the member represents has received the largest investment of any riding in this country out of the \$5.7 billion, because the needs are greatest in her riding, where \$17 million dollars has been invested. Virtually every new housing project that has been built in B.C. in the last six months—thanks to a provincial government that gets it and is co-operating and was one of the first to sign the agreement—has been delivered to the cities of Vancouver and Victoria to deal exactly with the problem she highlights.

What I would just once like to hear from the member is “thank you”.

• (1155)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the member wants to be acknowledged and have people bow down and say “thank you, thank you, thank you”. Well, you know what? That is what we are

elected to do: to do the job and make sure we do not cancel programs.

He says that when he was a reporter he was so damned angry at the Liberals. Where is that anger now? What he is advocating for and is fine with is to flow that money after the next election, as though time will stand still for the people who are standing outside in the freezing cold and need housing this very moment.

To make himself feel better, to make all Liberal members feel better, what do they do? They double-count. Why? It is for rhetorical advantage, to make himself feel better. Is that what this is all about? It is not. The people who need the housing need it now. Stop patting yourself on the back as though you have done them a huge favour by doing the—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us get back to a civilized debate.

We all know Canadians are paying more because of the Liberal government's failure. That is what the conversation is about today in the House.

I come from Saskatchewan, and we have had tough times, along with Alberta and western Canada. Those who are working have found out they are taking home less money because of government policies, such as CPP increases. If someone goes to the bank on the 15th, or happens to go to the bank today, they will find more deductions and less take-home pay.

Affordability is a big question. I have seen it in the food banks in my riding. I have seen it in the schools; schools are now feeding people in the morning and at lunch and providing a snack in the afternoon. It's about affordability. We all know money is not flowing. The government over-promised and under-delivered.

A year ago I went to Nunavut. The government could have had 15,000 homes there alone, but has done little or nothing rolling out the money in Canada's north. I wonder about the object and the vision of the government in the way it treats the people of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, who probably need housing more than anyone else in this country.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the Conservatives say that we need affordable housing, need to act now and need those investments, but where were they in the last 10 years? They sure as heck did not do that after the Liberals cancelled the national affordable housing program.

By the way, they say housing is so important, but both the Liberals and Conservatives joined hands to vote against a motion that said that housing should be a basic human right, so when you Conservative members cry your crocodile tears, you should look at yourself in the mirror twice before you talk.

Business of Supply

The Deputy Speaker: I would encourage hon. members to direct their attention and speech to the Chair, and the use of the third-person mode is certainly preferred.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member for Saskatoon West for bringing forward this important motion on Canada's housing crisis and what the government should be doing to deal with it.

The housing crisis is widespread and very diverse across the country. It is different in every community, every city, every rural area. It goes from rising homelessness to ridiculously expensive housing markets that exclude first-time buyers to rural seniors who have nowhere to go when they want to downsize to low vacancy rates that are often exacerbated, at least in my riding, by online vacation rentals to crowded and often mould-ridden homes in remote indigenous communities.

When I meet with mayors, business people and service groups in my riding, the priority they bring to me is almost always the same. It is housing, housing, housing.

I recently met with the mayor of Trail, which is a small city with plenty of issues facing it. It is home to one of the biggest lead zinc smelters in the world, which owned by Teck, so international mining markets are important to Trail. The cost of power for that smelter is very important to Trail. The local hospital is in the middle of a big renovation, which is important. The local police force is understaffed. However, when I asked the mayor what her biggest priority was, she said housing.

When I went up to the road to the town of Fruitvale, the mayor said that his priority was a project they were working on. It is an old school property they purchased and want to demolish to build housing. However, it will cost \$1 million just to demolish the old school, and Fruitvale is a very small town.

Just down the road is the village of Montrose, where there are only 420 homes. It needs housing for its seniors so they can stay in Montrose as they age instead of having to move to Trail or Castlegar.

When I talked recently with employment agencies in Oliver, B.C., I heard that many local businesses could not fill openings. Hotels were hiring and senior care homes were desperate for employees. Restaurants had signs on the tables apologizing for slow service, because they only had one waiter working. The reason was that the people needed to fill these positions could not find housing, so they moved on.

The most ironic story in this vein is about a service agency in Penticton that received grant money to coordinate its affordable housing program. It hired someone, who arrived, but the person gave up the job because they could not find housing.

This is a crisis that is hitting the Canadian economy. There are very personal impacts, but it is also hitting our economy. It is expensive for Canada as a whole to have this crisis going on.

We have heard that in 1993 the federal Liberal government abandoned the housing sector, a situation maintained by both Conservative and Liberal governments since then. We have heard that 1.7 million Canadians live in core housing need, but I would like to provide a perspective from riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

The South Okanagan “Vital Signs” report provides a report card on many aspects of life in the west part of my riding. The report gives housing a C-, based on low vacancy rates, high rent cost and high housing debt levels. The rental vacancy rate in the area is around 1%, about half the national average. As well, 50% of renters in my hometown of Penticton are paying more than 30% of their income on rent.

I used to live in a little village called Naramata. The average house price there is \$740,000. In Penticton, it is only \$476,000. Who can afford that? What kind of young couple can afford to buy a house for \$470,000? That is the average cost of a house.

Just east of the Okanagan Valley is the Kettle Valley, which suffered catastrophic flooding this spring. This is another kind of housing crisis. The city of Grand Forks lost many homes and businesses to the high waters of the Kettle and Granby rivers. It has created an emergency need for housing, and the local city council and regional district board have been working tirelessly for months to meet this need. The provincial government has come through with millions of dollars, and local governments are waiting to hear back on a significant ask to the federal disaster mitigation and adaptation fund, which would allow them to proceed with long-term solutions.

● (1200)

One of the big issues in rural areas is providing housing for seniors who want to stay in their hometowns and scale down to smaller homes so they do not have to take care of their large acreages. Much of my riding is rural, and a good example of that is the beautiful Slocan Valley. About 98% of the housing there is single detached homes.

About half of the Slocan Valley population is over 50 years of age now, and that proportion will increase dramatically over the next decade. About a quarter of those seniors are living below the poverty line. There are wait-lists of over 10 years to get into subsidized non-market housing in Nelson and Castlegar. As one community member put it, there is a community hall every 10 kilometres in this valley. We have schools and graveyards, but little to address seniors' housing needs and supports in between.

Business of Supply

The Slocan Valley Seniors' Housing Society stepped up to the plate, and I want to spend some time outlining what this small but energetic and talented group of citizens, many of them seniors themselves, has accomplished. They started with plans for a 10-unit lodge in the community of Passmore. A massive community effort raised over \$600,000 to help make Passmore Lodge a reality. Seniors and people of all ages hiked for housing around the silvery Slocan, a 250-kilometre loop, raising over \$50,000.

Local sawmills donated the construction lumber and huge beams for the central common area. The beautiful birch cabinets and all the wainscoting were made locally. The common room's tables and chairs were designed and built by a Kootenay School of the Arts student. An agreement was negotiated with a general contractor to hire local EI reach-backs for some of the construction crew, bringing the costs down. The Real Estate Foundation and Vancouver Foundation dug deep, and the Columbia Basin Trust saw this community effort and stepped up. Finally, a \$940,000 mortgage and an operating agreement were secured with BC Housing, and Passmore Lodge was opened in 1999.

Inspired by that success, the society immediately began plans for a similar project in the village of Slocan and has recently opened 12 units of affordable housing there. These are in very small communities. These huge efforts have been successful.

There are other success stories like that around my riding. In Okanagan Falls, the South Skaha Housing Society is building 26 units of affordable housing, and similar projects have gone on in Naramata and other communities.

I would like to move now to the topic of homelessness, which is a crisis within this housing crisis. Many might associate homelessness with urban areas, but it is just as tragic a situation in smaller towns and cities. We need government and community agencies to come together and simply create homes for the homeless.

Penticton has become a model case for this co-operative, integrated approach. An initiative called 100 Homes has brought together more than a dozen groups with a clear vision to house the homeless, and their project has been very successful. They have already exceeded their goal of 100 homes, having produced 133 units as of last July. They are now in the process of setting new goals, with a view to housing all of the 400 people in need in Penticton.

One of the valuable lessons that 100 Homes has learned in the past months is that funding is needed for support services, as well as the housing units themselves. Given both social support and a roof over their heads, many homeless people can quickly return to normal lives. Everywhere I go in my riding, I find groups that are doing amazing work for the homeless and other disadvantaged people.

In Trail, Career Development Services has a getting to home program that provides critical support for individuals who need to find a home. In Castlegar, there is Chrissy's Place, named in honour of Chrissy Archibald, a young woman who had dedicated her life to helping the homeless before being killed in a terrorist incident in London. While the focus of Chrissy's Place is not just on the homeless, it provides a wide range of supports for people in need through the Castlegar & District Community Services Society.

We need bold action from the government now to tackle this housing crisis. We have done it before. I grew up on a Veterans' Land Act subdivision in Penticton. I still live in the house I grew up in. After the war, the government built many thousands of homes across this country, to help the people returning from war and to rebuild this country. We can do that again. I am very happy to support this motion.

• (1205)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for highlighting the complexity of rural or small community housing programs, which are just as important to protect Canadians as those in large cities. In fact, we know that when we do not invest heavily in rural and smaller communities, it migrates into larger urban centres as people come looking for work and for housing. It just makes the situation even more complex, and it also depletes the numbers of useful and participating citizens and employees in those regions. We know it is a significant issue.

I would also remind the member opposite that we have invested heavily in his riding. In fact, \$11 million has gone to support people through rent supports and renovations, and, as he said, with some new housing programs. If the NDP members think I am satisfied with \$40 billion, let me assure them that if I can get more, I will fight for more. In fact, in the last budget we added an extra \$1.5 billion for indigenous housing and another \$1 billion for rental housing construction supports. We are on the verge of identifying even new funds for indigenous urban housing programs. The housing program is continuing to build because our commitment continues to build as we recognize and partner with new opportunities.

Do NDP members understand that it is not double counting when we make investments in subsidies for rent and investments in supports for people who are homeless, who may need supports to stay housed, and when we also renovate the housing? Those are three distinct investments that may be counted as three distinct investments. They may assist one household, but they also may assist six people living in that—

• (1210)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is only enough time for a couple of questions, so I would ask the members to keep their preamble short.

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Business of Supply

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I know the member opposite is sensitive about this double counting issue. Personally, I do not care whether it is double counting or not. I just want the government to step up. I appreciate the fact that federal monies have come into my riding, and we thank the government for that, but we have to do a lot more. As I said, this is not only affecting individual people. It is hard for them, but it is also hitting our economy.

There are huge numbers of businesses in my riding that would like to expand and could expand, but they cannot find people because people cannot afford housing. That is the economic impact of this problem. There is the human impact as well. We have to step up.

This is the number one priority of everybody across this country, and the government should be spending money in an equivalent manner. We should be investing huge amounts of money in this problem, because it is holding our country back.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, my riding is adjacent to South Okanagan—West Kootenay, and my communities are experiencing the same kinds of issues and challenges. We have been members of Parliament now for three years, and in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia the situation continues to get worse. The number one issue for businesses is affordable housing to support new employees and new staff. It is just not there.

I would be interested in the member's perspective in terms of the last three years. Have things become better or worse in his riding? In my riding they continue to get worse.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I agree. When we talk to business owners and to people on the streets, they are often very despondent that things seem to be getting worse. However, I think there are enough examples of success stories. I just mentioned some of them, like the situation with the homeless in Penticton. When we get people to come together and get community groups to stop fighting for grants and come at it with a collaborative approach, things can get done very quickly that make things better for the homeless and for people who need non-market housing.

There are enough of these examples. When I talked to the mayor of Montrose, I told him about what was going on in the Slokan Valley. He had been in touch with that group. These groups need more supports. In my area it is often small groups that are doing this hard work. In general, though, the market forces that drive housing prices up to the half million dollar mark are causing a huge problem that is affecting a lot of people in my riding. These are hard-working people who really cannot find a good home.

Hon. Kent Hehr (Calgary Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Don Valley East.

It is an honour to have this opportunity to talk about the progress our government is making to put more safe, affordable housing within the reach of Canadians, especially our most vulnerable populations. I have said in the House time and again that it is difficult, if not impossible, to build a life if one does not have a home. Housing allows people a sense of dignity, a sense of purpose and a place where they can build their lives. However, too many Canadians are unable to access affordable housing, shackling their ability to improve their circumstances. Seniors, people with disabilities, vulnerable women, indigenous Canadians, people deal-

ing with mental health and addiction issues, and veterans are all disproportionately affected by this issue.

Colleagues opposite call for the creation of more new affordable units, but it is clear that boosting the supply of affordable housing is a key part of the national housing strategy, the federal government's 10-year, \$40-billion plan to give more Canadians a place to call home. Through several innovative initiatives, the plan will create 100,000 new units in Canada over the next decade.

This is already having an impact on the ground in my home city of Calgary. Four projects have already received funding under our national housing strategy, bringing almost 500 affordable housing units to Calgary.

The first project funded under this strategy was Glamorgan Place in southwest Calgary, in partnership with Horizon Housing. It offers 161 affordable units for families, individuals and seniors, with 10% of the units being wheelchair accessible. Also in the Glamorgan project is a unique place called the Cub House, where children who were previously living in the hospital with disabilities now get a place in the community to call home and build their lives. These children were living in hospital and trying to build a life there, and we know that is almost impossible to do. Their parents will also have access to live in and visit on site, and will be able to help them grow and take part in the supportive and loving community that Horizon Housing is providing at the Glamorgan project. This is truly groundbreaking.

The next project was the YW Calgary Hub in Inglewood, which offers supportive transitional shelter for 100 women fleeing domestic violence. We partnered, again with the YW Calgary, to build The Maple, a brand new, safe and accessible housing project with 26 private suites, where vulnerable women can rebuild their lives. Most recently, the Kanas building announced by the Prime Minister and located near Glenmore Park will offer over 120 new affordable and accessible apartments for families in Calgary city centre.

It has only been one and a half years since the release of the national housing strategy, and we have already rolled out four projects in Calgary alone, with more to come.

Let me take a moment to explain why the strategy's focus on accessibility is of particular importance to me. In 1991 I suffered a spinal cord injury and became a C5 quadriplegic. As a result of the lack of accessible supportive housing in the community, I ended up staying in hospital for many more months than necessary. Those were months that my life was on hold. Further, the costs to the health care system were much higher than that of actually getting me a place to live in the community.

In fact, things are not that much different in Calgary today from in 1991. Right now in Calgary there are only 400 wheelchair-accessible units for rent in the entire city. There is clearly a need for action, and our national housing strategy is addressing this shortfall in accessible housing units, not only in Calgary but across the nation.

•(1215)

However, creating new units is only one part of the solution. Keeping up with maintenance and repair needs on existing units is also a critical piece, and we are doing that as well. In communities across the country, community housing stocks are aging, in disrepair and needing significant modernization. Some have been overlooked for decades. As a result, too many individuals and families are living in homes that are drafty in the winter, too hot in the summer and do not meet codes for energy efficiency. Too many people live with poor air quality and suffer problems relating to mould. Too many seniors are forced to make do in homes that are in fact inaccessible and unsuitable for tenants as they age.

The national housing strategy is a comprehensive approach. As a result, the strategy provides funding for the repair and renewal of some 300,000 units over the next 10 years. It will do this primarily through an innovative federal program called the national housing co-investment fund. Along with creating some 60,000 new units, this \$13.2 billion fund will use a mix of contributions and low-interest loans to replace and update 240,000 existing homes. With this fund, we want to encourage renovation projects so that our affordable housing stock not only meets but exceeds standards for energy efficiency and accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities.

Beyond the co-investment fund, we know that each of the provinces and territories has unique needs in terms of modernizing their affordable housing. The joint funding, made possible through the housing partnership agreements we have reached with the provinces and territories, will give them the flexibility to invest in new housing and modernization, depending on their needs. We already have several agreements in place and plan to reach agreements with all provinces and territories by the spring. By funding repair and renewal projects, we are safely keeping Canadians in their homes. At the same time, we are ensuring that they are homes they can be proud of, homes that are a refuge at the end of a long day and homes that are energy efficient and are keeping our communities inclusive.

In closing, I invite my colleagues in the House to ruminate on what a home provides. It is more than just a roof over one's head. For too many Canadians, a decent home, or any home at all, is simply not within reach. In the worst cases, it forces impossible choices that no family or individual should have to make. That is why I am proud of the national housing strategy, a plan that will reduce chronic homelessness by 50% over the next decade and ensure that people in vulnerable situations, people with disabilities, women fleeing domestic violence, seniors and others, have a place to call home in which to build their lives. After years of past inaction, it is finally time to do something big for affordable housing in Canada, and that is exactly what our national housing strategy is doing.

I would also like to applaud the Resolve campaign in Calgary, which banded together nine non-profit organizations to raise money and collectively organize to get big projects built. They were Accessible Housing, Bishop O'Byrne Housing, Calgary Alpha House, the Calgary Homeless Foundation, the Calgary John Howard Society, Horizon Housing, Silvera for Seniors, The Mustard Seed and Trinity Place Foundation. All of these organizations do tremendous work in helping people find affordable housing and in

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helping them build their lives. We are glad to be partnering with all of them.

•(1220)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member could comment on the CMHC November report that was an assessment of the \$5.7 billion spent by the Government of Canada on affordable housing showing that it built only 15,000 affordable housing units and renovated 150,000 units. I wonder if the member thinks that is good value for money in terms of units built for the amount of money spent.

I have a second part to the question. I wonder if the member is aware of George Chahal, a city councillor in Calgary, who has tabled a motion that will be debated next week on Monday at city council, calling on the Liberal government to abandon the stress test, because between now and 2021, there will be 200,000 construction jobs that will not exist because of this government policy. The councillor also raises in his motion the fact that it is making housing unaffordable for young people in Calgary.

I want to hear from the member on those two issues.

•(1225)

Hon. Kent Hehr: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's intervention regarding the need for housing in Calgary. I think that is what our national housing strategy is hitting on.

We know that in Calgary right now, there are over 18,000 people on a wait list at Calgary Housing alone for people who are in need of affordable housing, people who right now are in vulnerable situations, people who do not have a place to live. That is 18,000 people whose lives are on hold that we know about. That is why our investments in the Calgary community and under the national housing strategy so far are making those inroads. I mentioned projects done by Horizon Housing, such as the Glamorgan project, making the ability to find a place to build one's life and community a reality. That will help the economy and help people build their lives and move forward.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to say just a little bit about the situation in my riding, where a third of people are tenants and over 40% of those tenants spend more than a third of their income on rent each month. In the last year, we saw an average of an 8% increase in rent in the community. While the published vacancy rate is 1%, in fact for affordable housing, it is 0%. What are these people supposed to do? That is my real question. For those people who cannot even afford to rent, certainly buying is beyond a possibility. The average person in my riding just cannot afford to buy a place at all.

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The government says that it has a housing strategy, housing partnerships and is doing all these things. However, we can look at the investment resulting from the Liberals being in government over the last three years. When we ask neutral authorities, such as the parliamentary library or anyone else, to look at spending in my riding, the amount spent on affordable housing, or housing of any kind, by the government is zero.

How does the hon. member explain all the good things the government has said, but the result in affordable housing is none?

Hon. Kent Hehr: Madam Speaker, as the hon. member is well aware, the federal government has been absent from this field of being supportive of affordable housing for 25 years. For 25 years, the federal government was absent from leadership on providing affordable housing and moving the nation forward in this regard. There is no doubt that a backlog occurred, that people were falling through the cracks and that there were more and more people in vulnerable situations, whether they were in homeless shelters, couch surfing or the like.

I appreciate his concern. That is why our government ran on this policy. That is why we are implementing this policy. It is to ensure that Canadians from coast to coast to coast have a place to build their lives. To have a real and fair chance at success, a person needs a place to live. Our government understands that. We will keep on working toward this.

I know that much more work needs to be done, but we are hitting the ground running. In Calgary, four projects have been started already. I know that many more across this nation will be happening soon.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my NDP colleagues question our policies to fight poverty and lament that in their opinion, our government is not addressing Canada's housing crisis, nor is it tackling the issue of poverty adequately.

Here are some facts. Since taking office in 2015, our government has invested more than \$5.7 billion in housing, more than any government in history and more than what the NDP was proposing to spend over four years in its 2015 platform.

Canada's first-ever national housing strategy is a 10-year, \$40-billion plan to give more Canadians a safe, affordable, accessible place to call home. We are implementing this long-term strategy because our housing partners across Canada have told us that they need stable, long-term funding that allows them to plan, manage and repair housing. Building houses is a long-term strategy. We need money for both capital and operating expenses. Hence, we have a three-pronged, logical approach to addressing the housing crisis. Our approach not only provides stable funding but will help with the repair of housing stock and in some instances provide support to help Canadians pay their rent or mortgages.

Our investments to date have helped nearly one million households get access to safe and affordable housing. We recognize that there is more work to be done. That is why our government continues to work with our partners in provinces, territories and municipalities, with our indigenous partners, and with private not-for-profit sector organizations to build stronger, more inclusive communities across Canada.

The practical impact of our strategy in my riding of Don Valley East has been unprecedented repairs to 68 townhouse buildings managed by Toronto Community Housing as well as repairs to seniors buildings. This allows individuals to live in dignity.

We have also created the national housing co-investment fund in the amount of \$13.2 billion. The national housing co-investment fund is expected to create up to 60,000 new homes and repair up to 240,000 units of existing affordable and community housing.

The co-investment fund is helping some in my riding of Don Valley East retrofit and make their buildings more efficient. This fund was accessed by residents of two of my buildings who were left holding the bag when the Conservatives cut the green Ontario fund. Schools and apartment buildings in my riding were being climate smart and retrofitting their buildings to be more energy efficient. However, through the cancellation of the green Ontario fund by the Conservative government in Ontario, they were left high and dry. The co-investment fund has helped them complete their retrofitting.

Mayors of municipalities have told us that the co-investment fund is an excellent way to help them, as the previous conservative government downloaded social housing to them without adequate funding. I am shocked that the NDP believes that repaired and renewed housing does not count as housing. Mayors such as Vancouver's Kennedy Stewart and Toronto's John Tory, not to mention city councillors from across the country, have told us that reinvesting in renewing and repairing housing is an essential part of meeting the housing needs of Canadians.

With an aging population, there is a high demand for affordable housing for seniors. Seniors in my riding have told me that they would like to stay at home. Helping seniors stay at home and contribute to their communities is a top priority for this government. The co-investment fund will create 7,000 new affordable housing units for seniors. It will provide much-needed support for renovations to allow seniors to age in their places of residence.

●(1230)

As part of the co-investment fund, we have invested \$3.75 billion in rental construction financing and \$208.3 million affordable housing innovation fund. These collective initiatives have given municipalities \$17.2 billion to help build more affordable housing.

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Our government believes that every Canadian has a right to access adequate housing. Therefore, it will introduce legislation that promotes a human rights-based approach to housing and will ensure that the strategy is here to stay and grow.

A federal housing advocate will be appointed to enable Canadians to raise issues or barriers they may face in accessing adequate housing.

These new initiatives will help Canadians find an affordable, secure and stable place to call home.

We have heard the debate about homelessness. Homelessness is a reality for too many Canadians and a challenge for every Canadian community. When someone is forced to live on the streets, we are all diminished.

Through reaching home, which is our redesigned homelessness strategy, we are working with other levels of government, NGOs, indigenous partners and communities across Canada to provide more stable housing to people living in homelessness. As well, we are increasing support for vulnerable groups. Together with our ambitious investments in the national housing strategy, we are committed to reducing chronic homelessness by 50% across Canada.

We understand that many Canadians are having a hard time finding affordable housing in places with high real estate prices. Strong economic and population growth, together with low mortgage rates, have been important drivers of higher house prices in Canada, but the supply response has been weak. Our government, through the national housing strategy, is also taking steps to improve supply and affordability in high-priced housing markets to ensure that the goal of home ownership continues.

Unlike the previous government, which focused on 1% of the population, our strategy has been to focus on all Canadians. With a booming economy, we need to ensure that everyone benefits from prosperity.

Our government understands that we have a lot of work to do to eradicate poverty. Every measure counts. Hence our measures like the national housing strategy, which has benefited many residence building in my riding, the Canada child benefit, which has lifted 17,000 children in my riding out of poverty, the enhancements to CPP and OAS, which has helped 16,000 seniors in my riding, as well as our cuts to taxes for the middle class, which has helped nine out of 10 Canadians, is a logical approach to eliminating poverty.

Poverty will not go away on its own. We need to act and create economic opportunities to really effect change. In other words, we need to act, and that is what this government is doing and will keep doing.

Canada's first-ever poverty reduction strategy is built on the vision that all Canadians should be able to live in dignity and represents a whole-of-society approach to tackling poverty.

● (1235)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague with great interest. She said that all Canadians should have the ability to enjoy housing.

I realize we have to tackle this issue in a multi-pronged way, but I am looking at one segment of our population, and that is young people who are trying to get into the housing market for the first time and usually need CMHC insured mortgages. The Liberal government has done two things. First, it has created a stress test that makes it almost impossible for these young people to qualify. Second, it is massively overcharging them with respect to their CMHC mortgages, siphoning that money into general revenue.

Could my colleague explain how she can possibly say her government supports all people having access to housing when the Liberals are clearly trying to destroy a section of the population's ability to access housing?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, what the hon. member has stated is non-factual. Our government has invested more than two times in the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. When we talk about housing affordability, budget 2018 focused on ensuring that people who were living in high-priced real estate markets were able to access housing. These are the young people living there.

The previous government moved away from housing. For 10 years, it did nothing. From what I know, the last housing project in my riding was done in 2006 under the Liberal government.

We are doing what we have to do. We are not complaining. We are saying that there is work to be done.

● (1240)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh, home ownership is a dream that is not achievable. We do not have a program for helping young people attain home ownership. We also have issues with a variety of housing options for seniors. We know it is important for people to live in the neighbourhoods where they have developed the informal supports they need in their senior years.

We have young people who want to establish families. We have young people who understand the importance of home equity. However, rent is so high that they cannot even save for mortgages.

We had a promise from the Liberals that it would help encourage the building of new rental units. That promise was broken in 2015. Does the member have any insights about how we will tackle the issue of high rental rates so we can tackle the issue of home affordability.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, stress on housing is a very critical issue. That is why, through our national housing strategy, we have invested a total of \$17.2 billion in the rental construction financing initiative and in the affordable housing innovation fund. This is a first step in ensuring people have access to affordable housing, that we are able to build more affordable housing and retrofit housing. Retrofitting housing is a critical component to finding dignity in housing.

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Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Courtenay—Alberni.

This opposition day motion of my New Democratic colleague, the member of Parliament for Saskatoon West, is coming at a critical time in Canada as we face the worst housing crisis we have ever experienced: Exploding housing prices, increasing rents, shortage of rental housing, long wait lists for non-market housing and more homelessness. The portion of household expenses that Canadians are dedicating to housing has been rising while their incomes are not. I thank the member for her work on this issue.

This focus shows the heart of who we are as New Democrats, that we are here for Canadians to raise their issues when the governments of the Liberals and the Conservatives have failed to hear their cries across our country on such a critical issue.

People across our country are working harder than ever. The Liberals will simply tell us that everyone is doing fine, that their policy is amazing and that it is helping everyone. There are days when I cannot understand the level of disdain they show to Canadian people when they cite this. So many people across our country are not doing fine, are not doing well.

When 46% of Canadians is \$200 away from financial trouble, do Liberals honestly think that means people are doing well? The next time they pat themselves on the back for political points, I want them to think of that number, 46% is \$200 away from trouble. That is not fine.

I cannot help but think these are the same Canadians who are struggling to maintain or get a roof to put over their heads. We cannot find one for them in our broken system. In fairness, some Canadians watching this debate today may be wondering what affordable housing is. People have a lot of different thoughts when we talk about affordable housing. We are talking about spending 30% or more of take-home pay on housing costs. If people spend 30% or more of their take-home pay on housing costs, they are not in an affordable housing situation.

Housing is a spectrum. It has to include homelessness, precarious housing, market rentals, social housing, co-op housing, all the way to home ownership, and no one on this scale is immune from this crisis. Anyone on this scale can be experiencing difficulties in their housing situation today.

Measures taken by the government are not addressing the urgency of the situation and 90% of the funds earmarked by the Liberals for the national housing strategy will not even be spent until after the next election, even though 1.7 million families are living in inadequate, unaffordable or unsuitable homes right now today.

Safe, affordable housing should be a right, but for too many, it is increasingly out of reach thanks to skyrocketing rents and ballooning home prices that have reached rural communities like the one I represent in Essex.

In Essex today, housing affordability and availability is reaching a critical level for people who would like to stay in their rural towns. I grew up in a small rural town. I live in a small rural town. In fact where I live, Puce is not even called the town, it is so incredibly tiny. In these communities, housing is even more significant an issue

because it simply does not exist. When one does come on to the market, it is gone very quickly. Social housing is non-existent.

According to the rental housing index in our riding of Essex, 46% of households are spending over 30% of their income on rent and utilities. Shockingly, 19% are spending more than 50% of their take-home pay on their housing costs. Almost one in five people in Essex is spending half of what he or she earns to pay for housing costs alone. That is not sustainable for people.

For those who own their homes, according to Statistics Canada, 11.8% are paying more than 30% of their income for their home costs. That was in 2016. I think it is safe to assume, given the housing bubble that has reached us in southwestern Ontario, that this number has increased over the last three years. I certainly am hearing that in my office and people in our community are talking about it.

● (1245)

I also know that wages have stagnated and the incomes of people in my region have not been growing. People are struggling to make ends meet and income inequality continues to grow.

In rural communities like ours, employers are not able to find workers because of a lack of housing. We need a strategy that addresses the unique needs of rural employers in communities like mine in Essex. I have many employers who come into my office who are trying to attract people from all over the country, certainly from Windsor, to come out to the county to work, but there is no place for them to live and driving back and forth every day is not an option for people. We have no public transportation out in rural ridings either. People are left to find their own way, to try to find employment and to find housing in communities where there is employment, and we know there is a severe shortage.

Human rights organizations in Canada and around the world have repeatedly drawn attention to the effects of gender inequality and discrimination in women's access to suitable housing. Senior women living alone are much more likely to live in poverty. These are serious issues that impact people across my riding.

Down in Essex, we were once a booming area of manufacturing with good-paying jobs and pensions. I see widows whose husbands who passed away had those good pensions, but they are now in homes they cannot afford to stay in or have had to sell them. They have pennies to live on, because, of course, companies have gone bankrupt and left pennies on pension dollars for widows and widowers in my area. It is really difficult for these people, these senior women, to afford the home they once built, loved and raised their family in. However, when they sell that home and look for an alternative, it just simply does not exist.

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In December, I visited the Welcome Centre Shelter in Windsor. This is a homeless shelter for women. There were several women from the county from my riding there and this one woman was in tears. She was telling me how she lived in Amherstburg, one of the towns in my riding. She had her family, friends and support system there. She was forced to come into the city because she was experiencing homelessness and could not find an affordable or available rental unit in the town she had lived in her entire life. It was heartbreaking to listen to this woman's story. She has experienced so much of the spectrum of having a home, not having a home, and she cannot find a solution. She desperately wants to get back to the town to be close to her support system, but she does not see that within her reach, and that is heartbreaking.

It is important to talk about how we came to this point. The roots of the issue we are facing and discussing today are political decisions that have been made by Liberal and Conservative governments.

In 1993, Paul Martin in the Liberal government cancelled the national affordable housing strategy and we lost 500,000 units of affordable housing. Then the Conservatives came to power and did nothing to address the shortage over their 10 years in power. Now, the Liberals are trying to clean up a crisis that they created, and they have been doing an incredibly poor job of it over the past three years. There are only two provinces that have continued to fund housing on their own, and that is B.C. and Quebec.

We can do this, but again, it takes investment in people instead of corporate giveaways. After World War II, we built 300,000 units in 36 months—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: I am sorry. I will have to interrupt my speech because I cannot hear over the member for Spadina—Fort York across the aisle. If he could please be respectful, I would appreciate it.

Again, after World War II, we built 300,000 units in 36 months. This is the kind of commitment that is required to help get us back to being a country where people are cared for and not left behind.

I will end by talking about three people in my riding who I know are experiencing difficulty with housing.

First is Crystal who came to us because her brother Darell was living in a tent as he could not find affordable housing. We helped to work with him to find a subsidy, but this story is not unique. I hear my colleagues talk about tent cities from coast to coast to coast, because people simply have no other option to have a roof over their heads.

Fred, a former co-worker of mine, met with me about his daughter. His daughter, Tracey, is a single mother with five kids, living with her father. He told us that the kids sleep in his living room because she cannot find affordable housing.

• (1250)

These are the stories that we are facing in our ridings. This is why the New Democrats will never stop talking about housing and the issues that matter to Canadians.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the hon. member for Saskatoon West for raising this important motion for debate today and for her advocacy on this file.

I thank the member for Essex for her advocacy in this chamber, not just on this issue but on other issues. I will be very candid. I share many of the concerns that she has articulated today. That is why I have been here listening to many of the speeches today.

I want to ask the member for Essex specifically about co-ops. I have five co-ops in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. It resonates with something that we heard earlier from a colleague in my party from Calgary who talked about co-ops and the fact that the issue is not just about a roof over one's head but about building a home. Co-ops take that home and build a community.

There was anxiety expressed to me at the time of the 2015 election by people who had rent subsidies. We ensured that they could maintain those rent subsidies at those federally subsidized co-ops. We have also put money on the table to ensure that co-ops cannot just survive but can actually thrive and potentially expand.

I want to ask the member for Essex this. Are co-ops a specific focus that she would like to see emphasized in terms of the work we are doing and the work that she would like this government to be doing, going forward in terms of the national housing strategy?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Madam Speaker, this has to be approached from the perspective of all of those people on the spectrum of housing, so co-ops are certainly a part of that. We are talking about subsidization. We are talking about homelessness. We are talking about shelters. We are talking about people who have home ownership but who simply cannot afford the home that they are in.

Absolutely co-ops are a part of what we need to be looking at as a comprehensive plan to make sure that we are addressing this issue. However, we cannot look only at one component of that. All of those things have to be addressed and all of those things have to see improvement. What we have seen under the Liberal government over the past three years has been a complete lack of movement on this.

If I could ask a question back, I would be curious to see whether people in the hon. member's riding feel that co-ops under the Liberal government have improved.

• (1255)

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to have a question for my hon. colleague from Essex.

Homelessness is one of the challenges facing my riding. Believe it or not, homelessness is a real problem in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. In their 2015 platform, the New Democrats said nothing about how they would address homelessness. All they said was that they would boost funding by \$10 million. We, the Liberals, have doubled the funding invested in the fight against homelessness.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

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Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Madam Speaker, I referenced in my speech that I visited a shelter for homeless women. The shelters across our country do not feel that the Liberal government is funding them properly. Funding was severely cut under the former Conservative government. They have a petition going on right now trying to get money back into shelters for women across our country.

While the Liberals and my colleague would like to only talk about what the Conservatives have done and, again, not really talk about what the Liberals have not done, this has been a consistent problem with both parties. This is not a partisan issue, although my colleague is trying to make a partisan argument about what the Conservatives did not do. This requires all of us to work together to adopt a strategy and move forward to ensure that people are not experiencing homelessness, particularly with the weather that we currently have right now with this polar vortex that is working its way across our country.

Homelessness and the reduction of homelessness is something that the Liberals could act on. They could refund the shelters. They could increase shelter spaces. This is a way to address homelessness.

I would encourage my colleague to go to her minister, have that conversation and get that funding flowing this year in the budget.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, in Timmins right now we have 1,000 homeless people in a city of 45,000. We have at least 200 who have no place to go. Living Space, the homeless shelter, is completely overrun. The city is working full out. We have the native friendship centre working full out. These are real people, yet Liberals, such as the member for Spadina—Fort York, have claimed that they have helped over a million people. He said that they made that claim for a “rhetorical advantage”.

What is the rhetorical advantage to people who right now in my community have no place to live because of the inaction of that government?

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: Madam Speaker, Canadians are tired of politicians who are playing games and making up numbers in order to make themselves look good. This is why this article was published and why the attention is on this particular member, because he was not telling the truth. Canadians know this. Canadians are experiencing this. To be able to do this, in order to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. We have a point of order from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, the numbers are accurate. The numbers are accurate and to say that they are not—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The information that the member is bringing forward is actually debate. Therefore, I will allow the member for Essex to wrap things up very quickly.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey: I would just say, Madam Speaker, that everyone who is interested in Canada can just look at the story in the Star, “Did the federal government really help 1 million Canadians find housing?” by Alex Ballingall, posted Tuesday, January 29, 2019. Canadians can learn the truth for themselves.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to talk about this very important issue and the motion that was tabled today by my hon. colleague from Saskatoon West, whom I would like to thank for her hard work and advocacy on housing issues across Canada.

Just to put this in context with the history of how we got here, we know in the 1970s and 1980s there was a robust program to build non-market housing and co-op housing across our country. I was a beneficiary of that. I was able to live in a co-op housing unit with my family, and my parents were able to save money and then buy into the free market, which of course is the most desirable place, which people want to advance to, so it worked. It worked for a hard-working family like my parents. My father is a transmission mechanic. My mom worked as a clerk. It helped them advance their lives and get some stability when they certainly needed it.

Ten per cent of our housing in the 1980s was non-market housing. The Liberal government, in the early 1990s and Paul Martin's government, axed the program to invest in Canada's housing program and downloaded on the provinces, which of course then downloaded on local governments. I was fortunate enough to serve in local government in the municipality of Tofino on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Like every municipality, we were scrambling as to how to address this difficult issue of affordable housing without the capacity, aptitude and sometimes the leadership.

Our community struggled until recently, when we found a strong leader. Our mayor, Josie Osborne, is leading a council that has put housing as a priority. We have seen some municipalities have success, like Whistler, which has 7,000 non-market housing units that it has pulled out. Most municipalities have really struggled right across our province. It is becoming a huge problem.

As we know, real estate on Vancouver Island, for example, has risen 53% in just three years, while wages have remained stagnant. People are struggling, not just to make ends meet and buy a home but just to pay rent. Over 20% of renters in my riding are paying over 50% of their income toward housing. Over 45% are paying over the 30% threshold that we deem affordable for the amount of money we should be spending on housing. We are in a crisis.

I talked about where we were in the 1970s and 1980s when we were at about 10% non-market housing. Today we are at 4%, so we have completely fallen off the charts. By comparison, Europe is at 30%. We can look at Vienna, Austria, where people have had great leadership and built co-op housing that is fantastic housing. The standard of living is quite high.

Business of Supply

We saw, over the last decade, the Conservative government follow the practices of the Martin government, downloading on the provinces and municipalities. No action was taken and the result is where we are today, with many people struggling to pay their bills and to pay rent and many people homeless. The Conservatives' answer to this was that a free market and supply will solve this issue. Clearly that is not working. We know it is not working. We need to build non-market housing.

The Liberal government of today was elected on a promise to develop and deliver affordable housing across our country, which the Liberals say they are doing. However, in my riding all of the affordable housing that has been developed and built is by the Province of British Columbia, which is building half of the non-market housing in this country.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: That is 50% federal money.

Mr. Gord Johns: I am being heckled across the way and being told that it is from federal money. In fact I ask about every project that is being developed in my riding, as I go to the ribbon cutting to celebrate the provincial government, the B.C. NDP and Green coalition, as it builds housing. It understands what the sense of urgency is and how to deal with a crisis, unlike the current federal government. We do not talk about a crisis in our own personal lives and say that we will deal with it in 10 years or roll it out after the next election. We start doing it now. We start delivering now. That is what the B.C. NDP is doing.

As we saw last night, the result was very clear that British Columbians are happy to see a government showing leadership on this issue when they elected their new MLA, Sheila Malcolmson, the former member of this House for Nanaimo—Ladysmith. I want to congratulate Sheila and I want to congratulate the B.C. NDP for the leadership it is showing in this country on affordable housing and developing non-market housing, putting people first instead of money first. I would like to congratulate her while I am here.

I was just talking to someone whom I care deeply about, a constituent of mine who reached out and who has been struggling. Her name is Marcy Remington. She said, "I wish I had a microphone. I wish I had a way of telling people that I need help and this is how it's playing out." I told Marcy that I was going to the House of Commons tomorrow and I would be her microphone and make sure that she is heard.

• (1300)

I am really glad I have this opportunity to bring Marcy's voice to the House of Commons. Marcy lives in the Comox Valley, and according to The Huffington Post, the Comox Valley is now one of the world's least affordable cities in the world. It is in the top 20 of least affordable places in the world.

As I said, real estate has gone up 53% in that community, and wages have remained stagnant. Someone has to earn \$141,000 to qualify for the median household price in the Comox Valley. Less than 7% of people living in Comox Valley actually qualify for the price of a median house, where the vacancy rate is at 0.01%. There is nowhere to live.

Marcy, who has lived in the Comox Valley for decades—and loves it, because it is her home—had been living in her van until

recently. She was fortunate enough to get off the streets in her van and graduate to a fifth wheel. She has been living in this fifth wheel, and now she has learned that she cannot live in her fifth wheel because it is parked illegally. She knew she was rolling the dice, not sleeping night after night because she knew that someone might come along and tell her to move her fifth wheel. Sure enough, someone came along last week and told her she had to move it. She has nowhere to go. She is worried about her safety. She said, "I can't legally park and live in my van. I can't tent in the forest. Where do they expect us to go?"

Good question, Marcy. It is a good question for the government, which is dragging its feet and says it is going to house 50% of homeless people in the next 10 years. What about the other 50%? What about Marcy? I am here bringing her voice to this House of Commons. We need a federal government that matches every dollar the province rolls out and shows some sense of urgency. That is what we need.

This is not just about Marcy and people who are struggling to get out of their camper and graduate to an affordable place to live; it is affecting the economy. As the critic for small business and tourism and critic for veterans affairs, I have listened to people in the community. There are six chambers of commerce, all of which identify affordable housing as the number one issue. These include Jen Dart, the executive director of the Tofino-Long Beach Chamber of Commerce; Lara Kemps of the Ucluelet Chamber of Commerce; Bill Collette from the Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce; Dianne Hawkins of the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce; and Kim Burden at the Parksville & District Chamber of Commerce.

There is Anne Dodson as well. Anne Dodson was just in the Qualicum Beach News talking about how Qualicum Beach tourism is booming but businesses are facing staffing struggles. In fact, they have shuttered more businesses in the past few years than in recent decades. She is hearing over and over again that housing and transportation are the major issues for business owners when it comes to staffing. This is a huge issue right across my riding.

We hear about first nations and the lack of affordable housing for indigenous communities. There are 10 first nations in my riding. Members across the way know this very well, because they have heard me bring their issues to the House of Commons repeatedly. I was talking with Chief Greg Louie from Ahousaht First Nation the other day, and he said that there were 21 people living together in a mould-infested house. They were given promises. The federal government said that it would build housing there. He said Ahousaht needed \$1.8 million just to get going for two 6-plexes, and the government came back and said that it had \$1.2 million. They needed \$1.8 million, but he said that they would take it and build whatever they could, so they are building substandard housing to meet the needs of their constituents.

I received a note the other day from Rob Bullock, executive director of the Ahousaht First Nation, which stated:

Business of Supply

Imagine two parents with 5 children in a one bedroom 1960s house, with black mould, thin insulation and a leaky roof. Several years later, with 7 more family members, they move to a two-bedroom 1990s equally mouldy, smelly, unhealthy and cold home.

Those houses are where this strong, driven woman calls home in...Ahousaht, a 35 minute boat ride, in the open waters of the Pacific Ocean, north of Tofino.

Waiting on one of four CMCH houses, this mother patiently waits for funding to finally be delivered to the Nation only to be told the funds will build less than they would have had just one year ago. Still a wait for a 4 bedroom home will be worth it for her one true love—her Ahousaht family.

She does not want to leave her community. She wants to stay in the nation where she is from, where her language and all of her culture exists.

The government needs to take action immediately.

• (1305)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for bringing the voice of people with lived experience to the floor. It is important to hear those voices and to make sure our housing programs respond directly to their needs.

I would also like to thank him for identifying one of the big problems with fighting homelessness, which is that those people with capacity who live in overcrowded houses are not necessarily counted as part of the chronically homeless, because they are not in shelters or on the streets. When we build new housing, those are the people most likely to access the new housing, because they have such extraordinary capacity to survive. We need to support them, but we also need to take that into account as we try to model or rightsize the housing.

The member opposite said there is no money being spent in his riding by the federal government. Let me assure him that when we tripled transfers to the provinces in our first budget, the B.C. government was one of the first governments, as a Liberal government, to sign on to that. However, let me be even more precise: The NDP government in B.C. has been the most aggressive at delivering housing dollars, and 50% of those housing dollars are federally funded.

Kennedy Stewart, a former member of this House, is now the mayor of Vancouver. When I met with him this week, he said that when he was on the other side of the House, he used to criticize Liberals, but, he said, we are doing extraordinary work. He said B.C. thanks us because without the federal government's partnership with the provincial government, none of what is being built would be possible.

In your riding, \$8.9 million has been invested, and those dollars have supported the construction of seniors housing, have supported the subsidies, and we promise to do more and do better because we have a good partner in that province.

• (1310)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address his question to the Chair, because I am sure the number he quoted is not what the government has provided to my riding.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the government for the investment in seniors housing in my riding. That project is going to make a difference in the lives of seniors, but it falls so far short. I articulated quite well that there is a vacancy rate of 0.01% and that real estate has gone up 53%. More and more people are homeless day after day in my riding, and Liberals are not delivering. While they are patting themselves on the back and Marcy is living in her van, they need to do more.

I am going to be going to a ribbon cutting next week for a shelter being opened in the Alberni Valley. Not a single dollar is coming from the federal government, not one dollar—

An hon. member: Half of it is.

Mr. Gord Johns: Not half, not one dollar.

I just want to remind the member across the way that while he is patting himself on the back for projects that are funded by the provincial government, he should support the hard work of Wes Hewitt and John Douglas and the Port Alberni Shelter Society and its board of directors, who are doing the right thing and putting people first instead of profit, unlike the government across the way.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for his contribution to today's debate. We have worked together on a lot of Kurdish issues.

I want to go back to this number of one million dollars that one member in the government caucus likes to use often. I am going to refer to the article in the Toronto Star with the headline “Did the federal government really help 1 million Canadians find housing?” It states, “I mean, obviously we’ve double counted to rhetorical advantage, but that’s how much money is in the system. That’s why it’s \$5.7 billion.”

Then it goes on. Reporter Alex Ballingall says, “However, [the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development] said the government doesn’t actually know how many individuals are affected by this spending, because it doesn’t have statistics for how many people live in each unit constructed, repaired, or targeted with a subsidy.” The article goes on to say that David Hulchanski, a professor at the University of Toronto, called the government's numbers “opaque and confusing”. Can the member comment on that?

Mr. Gord Johns: First, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my good friend from Calgary Shepard for his support. I appreciate his interventions in the House, which are well thought out and well researched. He has the same questions I have.

The government comes up with these numbers and spins them. It is like the \$40 billion for affordable housing: Liberals are stacking it. They are counting municipalities and provinces and money that is not even federal funds and talking about rolling it out again over the next decade.

What we need are numbers. We need numbers about delivering and building houses now, like the provincial government in British Columbia is doing.

Business of Supply

Instead of talking about futuristic numbers, if Liberals get re-elected and form government after the next election, which is doubtful, we would like them to roll out a plan right now, while they are in power, in the next budget that shows action and urgency in responding to the experiences that people are living. They need to demonstrate to Canadians that these numbers are real. They need to do it now, not in the future. They need to stop stacking numbers and deliver real numbers.

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I have the pleasure of speaking to the opposition motion.

[English]

I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

[Translation]

I am happy to have a chance to talk about the impact that our government's investments in housing are having in Quebec.

Last week, Minister Duclos was in Montreal to announce three new affordable housing projects valued at more than \$27.6 million. One of these projects will provide housing for 78 families and individuals, including newcomers.

It is very exciting to see community partners coming together to support this project by the Société de gestion Querbes. The Caisse d'économie solidaire Desjardins is also contributing to this project, and the Regroupement des organismes du Montréal ethnique pour le logement, or ROMEL, will offer a wide range of support services to the newcomers who will be living in this building.

This project is a great example of what can be achieved through the national housing strategy, a suite of unprecedented federal housing investments in communities across Quebec and Canada. From coast to coast, the national housing strategy offers housing solutions that meet local needs and are supported by the community.

Another great example is a building slated for construction this March in Quebec City. It will have 131 rooms for emergency and support services for homeless and vulnerable individuals, as well as 18 transitional housing units for people living with a mental health condition. Services will be provided by Maison de Lauberivière, and a \$32.5-million joint investment by the governments of Canada, Quebec and Quebec City will cover construction costs.

More and more projects like this are taking shape, and more and more families are moving into quality affordable housing units located in inclusive communities. Other projects will be announced in the coming weeks for Quebec. These innovative projects will meet the needs of vulnerable people and middle-class families.

Like all provinces, Quebec has affordable housing issues and not enough affordable housing to meet demand. In Montreal, that might mean there is a need for more affordable housing for newcomer families and at-risk populations. In the regions, recent consultations revealed needs that are different but just as worrisome.

In September 2017, we were fortunate to have a visit from the minister. He consulted with people in the community, including homeless people, people in vulnerable situations, and representatives of affordable housing groups. When it comes to housing, we often talk about metropolitan areas and the regions, but the suburbs have their own challenges. That is why the minister came to hear what stakeholders in my region had to say and get a feel for the situation. There are some very worrisome housing situations in my riding, particularly in Longueuil, where there is a shortage of accessible housing for seniors.

The low vacancy rate in Canada makes it clear that the supply of housing is insufficient to meet the growing demand. As a result, the cost of rent has gone up, which is making life increasingly difficult for those struggling to make ends meet.

As the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development said earlier, our government recognized right from day one that people across the country are having trouble finding suitable, affordable, good-quality housing. That is a serious problem that threatens the well-being of our families, our communities and our economy. That is why we started to make historic investments in our very first budget in 2016.

Since then, the Government of Canada has invested \$5.7 billion across Canada, including \$996 million in Quebec. Those investments have resulted in more, higher-quality affordable housing for 362,000 households, including families, seniors, women and children fleeing domestic violence, indigenous people, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems and addiction issues, and, of course, veterans and young adults.

● (1315)

Now the national housing strategy, which is currently being implemented, will have an even greater impact on the lives of Quebecers.

As the minister mentioned earlier, this is a 10-year, \$40-billion plan that will create 100,000 new housing units and help 530,000 families in housing need. While the member for Saskatoon West would like to see a greater emphasis on the construction of new housing, we know that it will take more than that to solve our housing problems.

We need to reinvest in renovating existing affordable housing so that families can keep living in them, without having to worry about overcrowding, drafty windows, mould behind the walls or dangerous staircases. That is why our plan will help repair and renew over 300,000 housing units.

The NDP platform makes no mention of reinvesting in existing housing and renovation. That is an important detail.

Business of Supply

Our plan recognizes that tackling chronic homelessness requires more than just new construction. Our plan includes a comprehensive strategy to reduce it by 50%. I have already talked about homelessness in my riding. Consultations have been held regarding Canada's homelessness strategy, and the community shelter in Saint-Eustache is going to receive \$281,000 between 2015 and 2019 so it can address homelessness in Saint-Eustache and the Lower Laurentians.

The national housing co-investment fund is a major pillar of the plan that supports the two projects I mentioned earlier. The objectives of the fund are ambitious, namely to build up to 60,000 affordable homes and to repair up to 240,000 existing affordable and community homes over the next 10 years.

This program focuses on local partnerships that meet the community's unique needs. We are supporting projects that bring together all levels of government, private and non-profit housing providers, and many community organizations.

In addition to this fund, there is the rental construction financing initiative, which provides low-interest loans specifically designed for developers to encourage the construction of more than 14,000 housing units in areas where the need is clearly demonstrated. By 2021, this initiative will have received \$3.75 billion, which will be used to develop rental housing projects.

The \$2-million affordable housing innovation fund is another initiative brought in by our government. It was launched in 2016 and will be used to finance 4,000 new housing units through new funding models and innovative building techniques.

These programs, all run by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, prioritize projects that exceed requirements in terms of affordability, accessibility and energy efficiency.

Quebec families trying to make ends meet will benefit the most from this fund. Investing in solutions to meet their housing needs will also benefit Quebec's economy. It will create employment in the residential construction and renovation sectors. It will also make communities more equitable, inclusive and prosperous.

Housing partnership agreements reached with the provinces and territories are another key element of our plan. We are working very closely with the newly elected Quebec government and discussions are well under way. The two levels of government are negotiating with Quebecers' needs and interests in mind.

I am extremely proud of the collaboration and productive partnerships fostered by the national housing strategy. Developers from both the private and non-profit sectors are behind us and are keen to be part of this movement, which will make our communities stronger, more inclusive and more resilient. Best of all, a growing number of Quebecers will be getting an affordable and better built home.

I hope that all members, especially my colleagues representing Quebecers, will be asked to support the national housing strategy and to encourage people in their ridings to take advantage of the incredible opportunities afforded by the strategy.

● (1320)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I remind the member that she is not to include ministers' names when she is preparing her speech.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member. I have a very interesting riding. There is a wide variety of housing available, from shelters to middle-income and high-income housing. There is also a very large modular home park, and those who are living in this modular home park are running into a crisis for a number of reasons.

First, I am told that a mortgage on a modular home is treated as a chattel mortgage and that people have a better chance of getting a chattel mortgage on a used car than on a modular home. They are treated badly by banks. They are considered high risk. However, the modular community in my riding is a high-quality, beautiful community, with mature trees, a community centre and an active community league.

Second, the problem is that the lands are owned by private people. In this case, they are people who do not even reside in my province. There are complaints that they are not maintaining basic water and sewer services, and the residents are running into serious problems.

I wonder if the member could speak about the action the federal government is considering to assist people. There is a lot of interest in modular housing. I think it is incumbent on the federal government to have a clear strategy on how we can enable that. Perhaps it could make federal lands available or persuade municipalities and provinces to make land available so that this is possible as affordable housing.

● (1325)

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her specific question about what she sees in her riding. The goal of the national housing strategy is absolutely to help Canadians. Our government is proud of helping nearly one million households and more than one million Canadians access a safe and affordable home. This is one of our objectives.

Our investments provided access to these millions of safe and affordable housing units, but the goal is to have new housing, and then to repair and renovate these units. The goal is to ensure that everyone has access to a safe place to raise their children.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Edmonton Strathcona for that intervention, because it is an incredibly important idea. Modular housing is one of the programs for the innovation fund that we supported in Vancouver. The mayor of Vancouver is looking to add additional housing at the Burrard Bridge with one of the indigenous communities that has territory in Vancouver. We are looking to provide support for that. We also provided support for an indigenous centre in Nanaimo that created passive housing, which is another innovation.

As we move into a new national housing strategy and the importance of innovation, not only to provide support for new forms of home ownership but to make sure we get energy efficiency and innovative energy-efficiency programs, how proud is the member that our government has made it a requirement for new housing so that it not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions but is cheaper to operate and rent for the residents who live in it?

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the parliamentary secretary.

Indeed, energy efficiency is a big issue in Canada. This is something I hear often in my riding. Constituents often talk to me about the environment and energy efficiency. We must therefore invest to ensure that the new housing units to be built are safe and energy efficient.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague how important it is that the Government of Canada continue to work with other agencies, such as provincial, municipal, and indigenous entities and the many different stakeholders, so that there is room for us to work and grow so that we are all-encompassing in the ongoing development of a housing strategy.

[Translation]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Indeed, all levels of government will have to work together to address the needs of different communities. No two ridings in Canada are alike. That is why it is important that all elected officials at all levels of government and stakeholders work together to find solutions tailored to each community.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour today to rise in the House to speak to what is such an incredibly important issue, not just throughout my particular riding or Ontario but indeed in the entire country. We have heard various stories from people today about the pressing need for affordable housing.

Even before I was involved in municipal politics in the city of Kingston, my first entry into politics was as a sitting member of the affordable housing development committee in the city. This was at a

time, in 2004-05, when new money had been coming along thanks to the newly elected Liberal government in Ontario. A decision was made, with the federal government, to invest in housing because of the need and how badly we needed to start moving in the direction of building more affordable housing.

We had the opportunity in my riding, and in my city in particular, to look at how that housing was going to be developed, the various strategies for building affordable housing, whether it was building social housing, investing in co-ops or looking at residential complexes that would have a certain portion of affordable housing and would reduce the rent on those units.

What I have come to learn over the years as a result of my involvement in affordable housing, particularly in the Kingston area, is that there will always be more work that needs to be done on this important issue. In my opinion, we will never hit a place where we can say that we have enough affordable housing and can stop building it. There will always be a need for affordable housing. We should always do more to improve the quality of people's lives.

In my opinion, housing as one of the first building blocks for an individual in terms of how that individual is going to contribute to society is absolutely essential. If people do not have access to housing, they are much less likely to succeed in so many other aspects of our society.

The discussion today is really about what this government is doing versus what we are perhaps being asked to do. I am proud of the direction our government has taken when it comes to affordable housing.

Since 2016, when our first budget was introduced, which started the discussion on the housing crisis and put resources toward solving the housing crisis, more than \$5.7 billion has been spent since then on nearly one million families across Canada, as we have heard many times today. Since 2016, over \$2 billion in federal funding has been provided to the province of Ontario specifically.

How is this government's approach to affordable housing different from some of the other options that have been presented? I would argue that the most important component of this was the decision to take some time and plan out exactly how this would be implemented.

Based on the motion before us, the NDP would rather just throw a bunch of money at something. From having worked, when I was mayor of Kingston and as a city councillor, with Kingston & Frontenac Housing Corporation and Town Homes Kingston on projects, I have learned that one cannot just throw money at organizations and ask them to build stuff.

For quite a while, there was very limited access to funding. These organizations do not have the capability or the capacity to take what is being proposed by the NDP and inject it without having a plan as to how they are going to do it. That is where the national affordable housing strategy becomes so important, because we plan out how we are going to spend that money and how we are going to effectively deploy the resources to the different components that contribute to affordable housing.

Business of Supply

After making the announcement in budget 2016, funding for the national housing strategy started to roll out in 2017. Last year, this government unveiled \$40 billion over a 10-year period. There has been a lot of criticism from the opposition about rolling it out over that time, but as I said, these particular plans take time to develop and implement. Twenty-five per cent of the investment will go toward projects for women and girls specifically.

● (1330)

When we talk about women escaping violence, pay equity situations and single mothers, my mother worked for the Kingston Interval House for a number of years when I was in high school. She became aware of some of the problems and situations women and girls were going through as a result of domestic violence and how that impacted their housing. It is so critically important that when we develop a plan like this, we ensure there are safeguards in particular to protect vulnerable segments of our communities.

I will talk about the national strategy, the 10-year plan and the rental construction financing of \$3.75 billion to support construction of affordable rental housing low-cost loans. Through the Canada community housing initiative, we will invest and continue to fund the provinces for half a million units of social housing to help keep affordable housing and pay for repairs. This is so critically important.

Something the NDP is perhaps missing is how important it is to repair our housing stock. The member for New Westminster—Burnaby said yesterday that repairing housing was not housing people. Coming from a background where I have been exposed to these housing corporations, I could not disagree with him more. It is vitally important that we continue to maintain our stock of housing.

In Ontario, in the early 1990s, the NDP government of the day, and some of the current members of Parliament were in that cabinet, made a decision to only invest in building new housing and totally neglected the existing stock, because it looked great. The NDP members were able to talk about the numbers and how many houses they were building. Nobody really cared about maintenance and infrastructure repairs.

As a result, when Harris came along in Ontario, after the NDP government, he downloaded all that housing, which had not been maintained and properly looked after by the Ontario NDP, to the municipalities. Now it was their problem. As a result of that, we ran into a situation where municipalities were faced with the responsibility of repairing and bringing the housing stock back up to standard.

It is critical that we invest in repairing affordable housing at the same time as we are building new housing.

I know I am getting close to the end of my time, but I want to address this. I have heard NDP members on a number of occasions today talk about the political posturing of the Liberals, what we are doing to position ourselves, what we are saying and how numbers are being reused. Let us look at the motion itself.

The New Democrats had an opportunity on an opposition day to bring to the House a motion that, by and large, could contribute to Parliament and government policy. Instead, they brought forward a motion that starts off with “That, in the opinion of the House, the

government is failing to adequately address Canada’s housing crisis...” They know, right off the bat, that there is no way this side of the House can support that. Then they go on with a whole list of demands with respect to what the government should do.

Who is playing politics? All the NDP is doing with the motion, and it is important that Canadians realize this, is purposely setting it up, knowing it will never pass. Therefore, in the election, the New Democrats can say they told the government to create half a million units of quality affordable housing, but it would not do it. Talking about politics, there is nothing more political than the motion that has been brought before the House today.

● (1335)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech. He is saying that there are no politics in the government's way of doing housing. Did he read the article in the Toronto Star, in which the government's parliamentary secretary actually went on the public record to say that the housing units had been double counted, that they exaggerated the count? What was the reason for that? Rhetorical advantage, that the housing units that were supposedly built or existed. Who is actually playing politics?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, through the member's question, she never addressed that I am was accusing the NDP of playing politics. Rather, she tried to spin it around and tell us that was what the we were doing. However, in reality—

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Have you read the article? Those words are not mine.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member had the opportunity to stand and tell us that this was not what was going on, but she did not do that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member for Vancouver East that she had an opportunity to ask a question. If she wishes to do so again, she will need to stand and be recognized.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

● (1340)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the fact that my NDP colleague brought up this great piece of journalism by Alex Ballingall, entitled “Did the federal government really help 1 million Canadians find housing?”

I am going to go back to it. At the end of the article, Jeff Morrison, the executive director of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, is noted as saying that “much of the government spending since 2016 is from the renewal of so-called ‘operating agreements’”. He goes on to say, “Most of this is just stuff they were already doing”, referring to previous governments.

A government document from CMHC, made public in November, showed that for \$5.7 billion, the government was only able to build 15,000 affordable housing units and renovate 150,000 other units. Talk about overspending and under-delivering, which has been the point that the New Democrats and Conservatives have made. How could the member defend that?

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, we know it is a new day when the Conservatives start quoting from the Toronto Star and not the Fraser Institute. This is impressive.

I feel sorry for the member. He is virtually the only member of the Conservative Party who has stood today. He is defending the entire Conservative Party on affordable housing. Members can tell that the Conservatives do not even care about affordable housing, as the only thing they have been talking about today is the stress test for mortgages. This should highlight for the Canadian people where the Conservative Party is when it comes to affordable housing.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, Erin from the homeless outreach and homelessness prevention program in Cranbrook has sent me four pages of concerns that we have in the city of Cranbrook. I will just quickly cover three of them.

A woman with a young baby had to suddenly flee her spouse after a severely violent event. All she could find was a one-bedroom suite for \$1,000 plus utilities, as her 30-day stay in the local transition house was up and there was no space in second-stage housing.

A veteran from the Canadian Armed Forces was charged \$850 for rent. When the landlord realized this person had a support animal for PTSD, this person was charged an additional \$150 per month. There were no other housing options for this person.

Young indigenous parents were struggling for the return of their three children. They worked to get their personal issues in check enough to have them returned, but because they do not have a large enough home, the children are not permitted to live with them. This is a very common occurrence.

Is the Liberal government not failing that single mother, that veteran and that indigenous family when it comes to housing?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I totally agree with the member that some people out there are struggling and need housing.

In my community, the waiting list to get into affordable housing has over 1,000 people. This is a small community of 120,000 people.

There is no doubt that we need to do more. I said this in the beginning of my speech. We will never hit a point at which we have to stop trying to improve upon the affordable housing situation in my community, in his community and indeed throughout Canada.

Yes, we need to do more. We always need to do more. However, the government has set up a plan, the right plan, and is moving forward on delivering that plan.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the issue of housing. It is one of the most fundamental issues and should be a preoccupation of government.

If people do not have a warm and safe place to sleep at the end of the day, if they do not have a place where people can contact them by mail, it is hard for them to do anything else in life. It is hard to get a job. It is hard to spend the day doing anything else other than

trying to ensure at the end of that day they will have a place where they can manage to get through the night and try again the next day.

Housing really is the catalyst for people getting back on their feet and getting started. It sounds like something really obvious to say. I feel kind of funny saying that. For those of us who are fortunate enough to have good housing, when we think of it we say of course. The fact is that millions of Canadians are not properly housed, cannot afford to take that for granted and wish they could feel that was an obvious statement. However, for them, it is not.

The point of today's motion is to try to give a kick-start to the government, which has announced a national housing strategy. We have heard a lot of numbers over the last number of years, but we have not seen the results. Therefore, we are impatient. I am not ashamed to say that. Canadians who are living without proper housing are impatient to be housed properly. The fact is that we are not doing enough quickly enough to ensure it happens.

This is about trying to have firm targets for an amount of units to be built. We are calling for 250,000 units built in the next five years and 500,000 over the next 10 years in order to get those Canadians housed and back on track.

That is why the NDP have been advocates in this place, like many other people in civil society, for a right to housing and to take a rights-based approach to housing. It is as important as anything else in anybody's life. Our political rights are very important, but they do not mean a lot if we do not have a place to sleep, particularly not in the kind of weather we have had in Ottawa this week and that we have had back home in Winnipeg, where temperatures have been -40°C to -50°C. If people do not have a warm place to go at night, their other rights do not matter than much.

When one of my colleagues from B.C. had a private member's bill in the House that would bring in that rights-based approach to housing, I heard the parliamentary secretary, who has been up many times today, say that we did not need judges deciding where to build housing and everything else. The nicest way I can describe that kind of argument is "facetious". No one has ever pretended that judges should be building affordable housing.

However, we think that where governments repeatedly fail, as the federal government has for 25 years, to make the kinds of investments that need to be made to ensure Canadians can be decently housed, there should be some kind of remedial action that goes outside the politics of this place, where Canadians can get a fair hearing and governments can be compelled to do the right thing.

That is why we are quite proud to support a right to housing. We were disappointed when other parties in the chamber did not support us in that endeavour.

When we talk about housing and the crisis happening right now with respect to it, there are a number of different facets to that. One is the problem of homelessness, and that is a serious problem right now in Winnipeg. We have a number of different shelters that have been set up over the years and in times especially like this, they are operating at capacity.

Business of Supply

I want to commend the work of IJustCity for setting up the emergency shelter Just a Warm Sleep. I have to give a shout-out for my younger sister Tessa who was involved in getting that up and off the ground. However, one thing Tessa told me was this. Of the people who were sleeping at Just a Warm Sleep, a small shelter with about 25 beds, a handful of those people were working full time and came to the warming centre at night because they could not afford an adequate place to live, despite working full time. That is because there are not enough affordable spaces.

● (1345)

It gives us a sense of what is going on in the Winnipeg housing market when we know that people who are working full time are having to go to shelters at night in order to have a good place to sleep. This is a real problem, and it affects people from all different walks of life and in different employment situations.

I will talk about the Columbus Centennial Seniors Housing Co-op in my riding. There were a lot of promises made by the Liberal government in the election, so we were looking for some leadership and answers for this co-op on two fronts. The Columbus housing co-op has faced a lot of problems because it is situated on a riverbank that is eroding, and residents are fearful for the integrity of the building over time. They have not had a great response from the municipal or provincial governments.

However, if there is significant new money for housing, and the Liberals have said they want to provide that and help fix up places, the irony for these people is that if their roof were leaking and that was jeopardizing the building, they might be able to access funds, but the fact of the matter is that it is riverbank erosion that is threatening their building.

There are 35 rent-geared-to-income units in that building that we should all be concerned to keep, because we are not going to make gains in terms of more social housing if we do not preserve what we already have. However, because of their unique situation, they are falling through the cracks.

I have asked various levels of government, including the federal government, to give consideration to the idea that they be able to access the renovation fund in order to do riverbank work, not just work on the roof itself, in order to preserve those units. So far we have not been able to achieve that, which is a disappointment for them.

The other disappointment for them is that they are one of those housing co-ops whose rent-geared-to-income units, or social units, or affordable units, whatever one wants to call them, are tied to federal funding that is tied to their mortgage. Their mortgage is set to mature in several years, past 2020. We heard in the election about the problem of operating agreements expiring, funding leaving, and then affordable units having to be surrendered or put up to market rent. With all that entails, people living there could not afford those rents, and we do not have a solution to that.

We have a temporary band-aid from the government in the national housing strategy that is going to take us to March 2020, which is kind of an extension of those agreements. However, three years into this Parliament, Canadians and certainly residents of the Columbus co-op expected that we would already know the long-term

and lasting solution for those buildings. We expected a solution to preserve those social units for the sake of the people living in them, and to build on that base of social units that exist in order to ultimately increase and expand social housing.

We have not seen that solution, and it is an important failing of the housing strategy so far that this co-op does not have the help or certainty that it needs in its medium-term forecast.

There was an announcement in my riding recently under the national housing strategy. I am glad of the investment, as many people in northeast Winnipeg would be, but it is a challenge to somebody who really believes that there is a crisis and we need to increase our social housing stock.

The announcement was about rental units in a new development. The government press release said that this funding they were announcing would be contingent upon the company setting rents at 30% of the median household income. Well, the median household income is about \$69,000 a year. If we take 30% of that and divvy it up over 12 months, that would mean the owner of the building could charge rents as high as \$1,700 a month.

While I know there are middle-class families who are struggling to find affordable housing, there is a real urgency to kick-start the building of social housing. Therefore, in terms of the announcement we have seen, I am not confident that it goes to the area of highest need. I know we need to do many things at once, but I sure hope that the national housing strategy is not just about offering some money to developers to marginally lower their rents so that the Liberals can talk big numbers like \$40 billion when they are only spending \$10 billion, and actually 80% of that comes after the next election. We have heard recently in the Toronto Star that the government is willing to have some fun with numbers.

● (1350)

It is important that we put an emphasis on social housing, that we preserve units like the ones at Columbus co-op, and that we serve our homeless population, who are in desperate need of a roof over their head so they can get on with the other important things in their lives.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Madam Speaker, all sides of this House agree about the importance of housing affordability. Even in Vancouver Quadra, which is seen as a wealthy west side Vancouver neighbourhood, we have co-ops, we have social housing, we have three-storey wooden walk-ups, we have people who are homeless, and we have a whole gamut of social housing needs there too.

What I have heard from this debate today on both sides is the extreme complexity and multi-layered nature of this subject and how to address it. Our government has put in a historic amount of funding, as well as the thought and the partnership for a collaborative and systemic approach, from subsidies to those who need help paying their housing costs, to repairs, to extending co-ops and so on.

I ask the member for Elmwood—Transcona why his party would put forward a motion that is so narrowly focused on creating units of affordable housing. It is so narrowly focused that even if the motion did not say that the government is failing, which we know it is not, I could not support a motion focused on just one aspect of this incredibly complex, multi-faceted requirement to support people in accessing affordable housing.

• (1355)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, we want to put the emphasis on building units. While we could talk all day about the complexities of this and the complexities of that, and there are complex problems, at the end of the day we have to boil it down to say that we are not going to house people in Canada if we are not building units. The problem with the national housing strategy is that it makes a fetish of complexity as an excuse to do nothing, or certainly not do enough and not do it quickly enough.

We can look at some of the provincial governments across the country, and we have heard a lot, particularly about the NDP government in B.C. When it set its mind to building housing, it started building units right away. That government is not three years into a majority mandate. It is a minority government in a coalition situation, and it is getting more units built. The B.C. government is getting it done.

The idea that somehow we need to get hung up on those complexities and miss the forest for the trees, which is missing that we need more social housing in Canada, is a mistake. This motion is meant to remind the House of that, remind the government of that, and get them on it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona and the New Democratic Party for an opportunity to talk about the critical issue of homelessness today. In particular, as my hon. colleague noted in his remarks, with the bitter cold that we are now experiencing, having shelter is a matter of life and death.

I appreciate the fact that homelessness and affordable housing are back on the federal agenda and getting attention. Although it is not immediately the question before us today, I have a lot of residents in my riding who are not critically impoverished at the level that they are homeless, but who are about to become homeless as they age and as they look for affordable housing. If they sell their homes where I live, it looks like they are millionaires, but there is no place for them to move to.

We really need affordable housing for seniors who are at the middle-income level. I know that is not the direct import of today's debate, but I wonder if the hon. member has any thoughts on that critical need.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, that is absolutely true. In fact, I was talking earlier about Columbus housing co-op, which is in Elmwood. Thirty-five of the 70 units in that building are rent-geared-to-income units, but the other units are market rent, essentially.

We held a seniors town hall in my riding back in the fall, and one of the things we heard was that seniors are facing a real challenge, particularly at the time they are thinking about transitioning from their family home into other living spaces. The member is quite right that they might have a lot of equity in their home, but if they are still

in the same housing market, that equity gets used up very quickly just to secure another place to live.

We want to see some quicker action from the government. It found \$4.5 billion overnight to buy a pipeline, not to build a new pipeline but to buy one that already existed. We are saying that if it put the same amount of effort and concentration into building housing in this country, it would be going a lot faster, which is appropriate because we need to be responding to a crisis, not getting around to it in 10 years.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Member for Saskatoon West, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, February 5, 2019, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

• (1400)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

OIL

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government paid \$1 billion too much for the Trans Mountain pipeline because it did not bother to negotiate. That is the crux of the problem today. It did not negotiate because when the oil industry asks for something, Ottawa always says yes right away.

Alberta wants new rail cars that are going to cost billions of dollars—yes. Alberta wants pipelines to export its dirty oil—yes. Alberta wants money to step up oil sands development, and Ottawa's only question is “how much”?

The federal government always says yes right away because, apparently, oil represents the Canadian identity and Canadian unity. Ottawa is putting all of its eggs in one basket. In fact, it is putting all of our eggs in one basket. That is what Canada is all about. Either we jump on that bandwagon, or we get together and do something else.

Statements by Members

[English]

PERLEY PALMER

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in Fredericton, no children's birthday party trip to the Northside Market or visit to Science East was complete without seeing Perley the Magician. For over 30 years, Perley Palmer delighted kids and adults alike with his warmth and wonder.

In December, we lost Perley to cancer, and Fredericton lost a beacon of joy. His laughter and delight spanned generations. Parents would watch their own children be wowed by tricks that Perley had performed for them when they were kids.

[Translation]

Fredericton declared July 13 Perley Palmer Day. It is a day for everyone to take a moment to remember our magic man, who was always willing to do a trick for any child he met. There was nothing Perley loved more than to see children wide-eyed with wonder at his magic tricks.

[English]

We thank Perley's wife, Valerie, and his mother, children and grandchildren for sharing Perley's incredible gifts with our community for generations.

* * *

QUINN DAVIS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): *Maran'athah*, Madam Speaker. That would be a familiar greeting to anyone who knew Pastor Quinn Davis, who passed away from cancer on December 12 of last year. Warm, cheerful, encouraging and pious, in Pastor Quinn, the Rocky Mountain Calvary Chapel congregation had it all.

Pastor Glen would describe him as "a glass of fresh water when you are parched." He loved Peru, and especially Lima, from his many ministry visits, always armed with candy for the kids. Quinn had no dimmer switch; on or off were his only settings. He would tell people exactly what they needed to hear. Sometimes he knew what needed to be said before the question was even asked.

I ask all members to join me in this House in offering our sincerest condolences to his wife of 29 years, Pam, and his daughters, Kiersten and Jessalyn.

Pastor Quinn is not lost to us. He has simply gone ahead to the Kingdom of God. *Maran'athah*.

* * *

MEL GASS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the life of former MP Mel Gass, who recently passed away. Mel, a businessman, was elected three times as a Progressive Conservative and served the riding of Malpeque for nine years with distinction. As a member of several committees, Mel felt truly honoured to lay a wreath at Dieppe as chair of the veterans affairs committee, and he especially enjoyed his time as parliamentary secretary to the minister of fisheries and oceans. I can sincerely say

that he stood up for fishermen in Canada and in his community. In 1989, Mel served as leader of the provincial PC Party.

Returning to private life, Mel continued to operate Silverwood Motel and served as a local councillor. As well, he was president of the Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island and was granted several awards for his work in tourism.

Afflicted with ALS in recent years, he retained his good nature and sense of humour. His love of life, people and community always showed through for the proud Canadian he was. Our condolences go out to his family.

* * *

● (1405)

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as Black History Month begins, the theme across Canada this year is "Black Canadian Youth: Boundless, Rooted and Proud", highlighting the importance of providing youth with positive role models, celebrating the achievements of people of African descent throughout Canadian history and learning what we can from their stories of overcoming.

In our region of Windsor-Essex, we have a powerful history of more than 30,000 former enslaved people of African descent who freed themselves and made their way to freedom in Canada, sometimes with help from Underground Railroad operatives but often relying on their own intelligence, critical thinking, courage and determination.

Mary Ann Shadd, born a free person of African descent in Delaware, moved to Windsor in 1851, where she opened Windsor's first black school. She is the first woman in Canada, and the first woman of African descent in North America, to publish a newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*.

Elijah McCoy, who was born to formerly enslaved parents in Colchester in 1843, went on to become one of North America's greatest inventors, with 57 patents in his name.

This year, we lost former New Democrat Dr. Howard McCurdy, who was Canada's second black member of Parliament.

This month, as we celebrate, I encourage all Canadians to learn about our rich black history by sharing stories of incredible Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

LAKE MEMPHREMAGOG

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting Lake Memphremagog remains a top priority for me.

On January 22, a public hearing was held in Newport, Vermont, concerning the expansion of the Coventry landfill. This landfill is located upstream of Lake Memphremagog, and 175,000 people in Magog and Sherbrooke are very worried because their drinking water comes from the lake.

Statements by Members

The main thing I want people to know about the hearing is that it showed that more and more people in both Canada and the U.S. are worried about the situation. Municipal and provincial elected officials, organizations, the media, and Canadian and American citizens have shown that they care about preserving the water quality of Lake Memphremagog.

I just want to thank Robert Benoit, president of Memphremagog Conservation. Let us continue our efforts to ensure that future generations have clean water.

* * *

[English]

FRANCIS GODON

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Francis “Frank” Godon, a Métis World War II veteran and extraordinary Canadian who passed away on January 12.

Mr. Godon joined the Canadian Forces in 1942, and on June 6, 1944, he landed on Juno Beach with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. He was taken prisoner and put in a concentration and labour camp. Thankfully, with liberation, he returned to Canada in 1945.

In 2014, he returned to the beaches of Normandy for the 70th anniversary of D-Day, representing the participation of first nations and Métis soldiers in the Canadian campaign in Europe during World War II. He is featured in Veteran Stories for The Memory Project, for which he shared a powerful account of his experiences as a Métis soldier. He said, “If your buddies got hurt during that and the yelling and crying, you couldn’t stop, you had to keep going.”

To Mr. Godon’s family, I extend my sincere condolences on the loss of a great Canadian hero. His dedication and sacrifice for his country shall never be forgotten.

* * *

GNOME FOR A HOME CARDS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to stand and recognize a member of my community, a 10-year-old named Lylia. Concerned about homeless people in our community being alone at one of her favourite times of the year, Lylia decided to raise money for them. She hand painted seasons greetings cards of gnomes and started selling them for \$5 each. Her endeavour, “Gnome for a Home”, has received orders from people in Kingston, Montreal, Quebec and even Paris. Her goal was to sell 100 cards by Christmas of 2018. However, she was able to sell 200 and raised \$1,000.

Lylia then took all the proceeds to Martha’s Table, a not-for-profit agency in Kingston that helps provide meals for those in need. However, it did not stop there. Lylia now has a new goal: to sell 200 Valentine-themed cards by February 14.

I am so proud to have such a determined and caring individual in my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

[Translation]

Lylia, thank you for taking the initiative to help the homeless.

[English]

FISHERIES

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my community of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge is home to many passionate organizations, such as the Alouette River Management Society, the Kanaka Education & Environmental Partnership Society, the Katzie and Kwantlen first nations, and indeed, both the cities of Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge, which are working hard to protect our environment and waterways.

Over the years, our waterways have been disconnected, creating challenges for those who depend on the well-being of the Alouette watershed. This week I presented to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard my report advocating for safe fish passage for the Alouette dam as well as the Kennedy Road Pump Station in Pitt Meadows. This report comes from three years of consultations, meetings and round tables. Together we are stressing the need to ensure that both of these projects are no longer obstacles. For our salmon to thrive, there should be no barriers to their life and spawning cycles.

I look forward to working with the minister to provide long-term solutions to ensure sustainability in our communities. There is no better time to act than now.

* * *

● (1410)

CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after three years of Liberal waste and failures, Canadians are no further ahead than they were in 2015. Adding to that, we have learned that the Liberal carbon tax will cost a family of four up to \$5,000 a year. We have found out from the Liberals own documents that their carbon tax will be 15 times higher than it is now and that they plan to implement this increase after the election. In fact, we have asked the Prime Minister several times this week about this plan, and each time we asked he did not answer the question.

I have heard from the people in Barrie—Innisfil how this tax grab will affect them, the costly impact it will have on businesses and on moms and dads driving their kids to soccer, hockey and dance, and how it will drive up the costs of heating and eating for seniors. They are rightly concerned.

While many Canadians struggle just to get by, the Prime Minister will not have to worry about paying his carbon tax on the necessities of life, because the millions in his trust fund will look after his family just fine.

*Statements by Members***CITIZENSHIP**

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the winter, I had the chance to attend many events in my riding of Surrey Centre that celebrated our diversity. However, the highlight was to host a celebration of citizenship party. During the event, I had the opportunity to meet people and hear about their diverse backgrounds, the journeys they took and what it means to be Canadian. The event was an incredible opportunity to celebrate Canada's multiculturalism and diversity, the fabric of this great country.

The event was a huge success, with over 100 people attending, including children, seniors, parents and siblings. All of them applauded Canada's new citizenship changes, which make it easier and simpler to become a citizen.

Surrey Centre is an incredibly rich community with respect to diversity. Since October 2015, we have welcomed over 2,500 new citizens from places such as India, the Philippines, China, Latin America and Africa. I look forward to following their future endeavours. I would like to thank them for choosing to call Surrey Centre home.

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BUILDING BRIDGES

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we come together in our new Parliament Building, I want to also recognize an event that brings people together in Guelph.

Earlier this month, the Muslim Society of Guelph hosted the third annual Building Bridges event. With support from Canadian Heritage Canada, this event celebrates Guelph's diversity and inclusion, led by the Muslim Society along with members of other faith-based groups, NGOs and cultural groups, to gain awareness of the important contributions and connections that build bridges between groups in our community.

There is unity in diversity, and we are all stronger when we celebrate our differences. I want to thank Muhammed Sayyed and his wife, Sara, for their vision to bring Guelphites together to showcase our incredible community spirit. I know that the Building Bridges event has become an annual tradition that the whole community looks forward to.

* * *

*[Translation]***GOVERNMENT OF CANADA**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the past offers a window into the future.

In 2015, I read on social media and in traditional media that the Liberal Prime Minister was promising to balance the budget in 2019. We will have a \$20-billion deficit. He promised an open and transparent government, and he became the first prime minister to be found guilty of a breach of ethics. He promised a new approach to foreign affairs. He went to India, and now we are the laughingstock of the international community. I think Canadians could have used a fake news detector three years ago, in 2015.

This week, the Liberals refused to commit to balancing the budget by promising not to raise taxes. When they say they want what is

best for the middle class, we can believe them. Their track record of mistakes and out-of-control spending is clear. The Liberals are going to take our money right out of our pockets by raising taxes. All Canadians will have to pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes.

The only way to stop the Liberals is to elect a Conservative government on October 21.

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*[English]***UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA**

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the University of Ottawa and its 126 projects that will receive over \$6 million in funding under the SSHRC talent program and insight development grants. The University of Ottawa is one of 79 universities to benefit from the \$141 million to support close to 3,000 researchers at institutions across Canada.

● (1415)

[Translation]

These types of investments are important for fostering research talent, and they are key to developing a healthy innovation ecosystem.

[English]

Our government's commitment to supporting research is fundamental to making decisions regarding our communities, our economy, our health and our future prosperity.

[Translation]

Congratulations to all of the recipients at the University of Ottawa. I am confident that their research findings will help us make sound decisions in the future.

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*[English]***AGRICULTURE AND CARBON SEQUESTRATION**

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in my role as the NDP's agriculture critic to give recognition to the important role Canada's farmers can play in combatting climate change.

Farmers are on the front lines of climate change. Heat waves, forest fires, droughts and floods can all bring about economic disaster to farms and have significant negative mental health effects on farmers.

While the entire food supply system is one of the biggest contributors to climate change, it is a well-known fact that agro-ecological and agroforestry methods can improve the soil's ability to sequester carbon. In some scenarios, a well-managed hectare of soil can sequester between 10 and 20 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere each year.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***FINANCE**

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are becoming more and more aware of the fact that they have a Prime Minister in charge of the finances of this country who has no idea whatsoever how to manage a budget or keep a balance sheet. That is because he has never had to worry about his own. He is accustomed to lavish spending and the money always being there to pay his bills.

Over the last year, the Prime Minister has been spending lavishly, and he expects Canadians will cover his costs. When will the Prime Minister finally admit he is going to have to raise taxes to pay for his out-of-control spending?

● (1420)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to be clear. The very first thing we did when we came into office was that we lowered taxes on middle-class Canadians. I imagine what is going on from the opposition Conservatives is that they are remembering they added \$150 billion to our debt, and they are feeling a little guilty about that and thinking if they came back they might want to raise taxes.

We would not do that, because we are focused on helping the middle class and those people working to join it. We have done that by reducing their taxes, by increasing their benefits, like the Canada child benefit, and making a real and long-term difference for Canadian families.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives kept their word and we delivered a balanced budget, because we, like Canadians, know that budgets do not balance themselves and we cannot spend our way out of debt. The only person who does not seem to know this is the Prime Minister, who just keeps spending and borrowing.

We know that today's deficits will be tomorrow's taxes. Canadians are going to have to pay higher taxes for his out-of-control spending. Will he be honest and tell Canadians just how much he is planning on raising taxes on them after the next election?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts are very inconvenient for the Conservatives. The facts are that they left us with an additional 150 billion dollars' worth of debt and no growth to go along with it. We decided what we needed to do was to invest in Canadians so we could actually grow the economy and help Canadians across the country. That is exactly what we have done. We have the lowest unemployment rate we have seen in 40 years. We have families who are \$2,000 better off this year than they were under the previous government. Our approach, our plan, is working, and we certainly do not want to go back to the bad old days of the austerity budgets that did not actually get anywhere under the Conservatives.

Helping our farmers move towards alternative agro-ecological production systems can help maintain yields without sacrificing people and ecosystems. Agricultural methods that reduce our emissions while sequestering carbon will be a big part of the solution to combatting destructive climate change, something I hope all political parties in the House will recognize.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if re-elected the Prime Minister will continue to increase taxes and make the lives of middle-class Canadians more expensive. The Liberals' carbon tax is already driving up prices and it is not even fully implemented. On April 1, the cost of fuel is set to jump, increasing the cost of everything.

The Prime Minister keeps arguing his carbon tax will not continue going up, but even his own caucus does not believe that. One member said, "The higher the carbon tax is the faster people may change behaviour." Does that sound like someone who believes the carbon tax should not increase?

After failing to keep his promise of a balanced budget, the Prime Minister's words mean nothing. He has increased taxes on small businesses, tried to tax benefit plans and is making families pay more in taxes before the carbon tax.

The Prime Minister's plan will take more money from Canadians' wallets. Do not let him tell us otherwise.

* * *

*[Translation]***BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the first day of Black History Month.

[English]

It is a time to reflect on the remarkable contributions made by black Canadians to our country, a time to learn from their diverse lived experiences and to share their stories.

The Shiloh Centre for Multicultural Roots in Edmonton has done award-winning work in bringing some of these stories to life. With funding from the Alberta Human Rights Commission, its documentary titled *The Roots* explores the lasting legacy of black settlers who fled racism in the United States to settle in the Prairies.

This project has helped researchers to discover an entirely new scholarly body of research that sheds light on this important community in Alberta and across the Prairies.

On Monday, the Shiloh Centre was awarded the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Community Programming. May this project inspire us all to be vigilant in our efforts to end discrimination against black Canadians once and for all.

Oral Questions

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been asking the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for the last year when the budget would be balanced, or as the Prime Minister likes to say, when the budget will balance itself. We have had no answer, so we asked, “Do you have a plan to keep your word and balance the budget?” Again, we had no answer. That is because the Prime Minister has never had to actually worry about money, so he does not worry about Canadians' money.

When will he just admit the only plan he has is to keep spending like a celebrity on a shopping spree and give Canadians the tab to cover his bills?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the good news for Canadians, especially middle-class Canadians, is not only do we have a plan but our plan is working. We moved immediately to lower taxes on middle-class Canadians and we increased the Canada child benefit, two measures that helped our economy to get going, reduced unemployment and put people in a better situation. This is the sort of plan that works.

The Conservative plan, on the other hand, was to leave us with an additional 150 billion dollars' worth of debt and find us in a position where we had high unemployment, and they wanted to move us into austerity. Our plan is working. We know we need to continue to help middle-class Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. When we were in government, we were facing the worst economic crisis in the world. Our government was the first in the G7 to come through that crisis with its head held high, and we left a surplus, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer said.

What did the people over there do the minute they came to power? They took their platform and chucked it in the garbage, because a zero deficit in 2019 is not happening.

What is the government's plan for balancing the budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our plan is clear: we are going to keep investing in middle-class Canadians to make their lives better and improve our economy.

I am glad to say that our approach is working. Right now, we have the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years, and a typical family with two kids is \$2,000 better off this year than in 2015. This is a plan that really works. We will keep going with our approach, which is good for our economy and good for Canadians.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether you noticed this, but Canadians have. Any time we ask a question about the deficit, the government members make no mention of it in their response. I can understand that because the Liberals were elected on the promise of a zero deficit in 2019. They took their platform and chucked it in the garbage. We have no idea when Canada will get back to a balanced budget.

The minister likes talking about plans. What is his plan to balance the budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to consider the situation. The Conservatives added \$150 billion to the national debt. That means that our economy was

in big trouble under the Conservatives, with a very low rate of growth. That was the situation.

We have a plan to invest in the middle class and improve its situation, and that plan is working. We are in a better position now, with a much lower unemployment rate and a better quality of life for Canadian families. Our approach is working.

* * *

● (1425)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Liberals promised to cut off oil and gas subsidies. Canadians believed them. They promised to properly consult indigenous communities about projects affecting their territory. Canadians believed them. Today the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the Liberals overpaid for the Trans Mountain pipeline. They just gave away one billion taxpayer dollars. This comes shortly after the Federal Court sent them back to the drawing board for following the Conservatives' flawed consultation process.

When will they stop throwing good money after bad?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. We bought the pipeline, which was a good thing for our economy. The project makes good business sense.

We found an approach that will strengthen the economy. This project makes very good business sense and will benefit the economy as a whole.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Parliamentary Budget Officer is saying is that the economy and the environment do indeed go hand in hand, but the Trans Mountain project is bad for the environment and the economy.

The Liberals promised to deal with climate change and instead they are here arguing with the Conservatives over who is the strongest supporter of pipelines. They decided to go back on their campaign promises and invest \$4.5 billion, or \$4,500 million, in purchasing a pipeline, and possibly \$10,000 million more in its expansion. The Liberals could have helped Alberta develop its transition plan, not only for its industry, but also for workers.

Why did they not take that route?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that it is very important to be able to get our resources to international markets. It is very important because we are currently sending 99% of our resources to the United States. Therefore, it is important to find a way to access international markets. That is why we decided that it was important to buy the Trans Mountain pipeline.

We paid a fair price, a market price, to ensure that we have a stronger economy in the future. That is our approach.

*Oral Questions***CARBON PRICING***[English]*

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep telling us how the environment and the economy must go hand in hand, but on the Trans Mountain disaster, the Liberals on the one hand are hammering the environment and on the other hand are hammering our finances. The PBO reports that the Prime Minister panicked, overpaid a Texas oil company by \$1 billion and it is now costing Canadians an extra \$700 million every year because the Liberals' flawed environmental assessment was tossed out of court.

Will the Liberals just stop this nightmare, stop throwing good money after bad and finally start investing in the green economy, like they actually promised Canadians they would?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. What the Parliamentary Budget Officer said was in fact the purchase of the pipeline is positive for the economy. We want to make sure that those benefits accrue to all Canadians. What officials also said was that, from their analysis, there was a range of potential purchase prices and in fact, our purchase price was right in the middle of their range. Clearly, not only a good commercial purchase but one that is going to be very positive for our economy.

We believe that getting our resources to international markets so that 99% of our resources do not go to the United States is the right decision for Canada and for Canadians.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would love to see this guy at an auction. He just keeps bidding against himself.

The Liberals paid \$4.5 billion for a 65-year-old pipeline, \$700 million more lost every year because of their own failed review, and these clowns want to go out and spend another \$15 billion building more pipelines and they do not even have a permit. What could possibly go wrong?

It is like the Prime Minister went out to buy a house, overpaid for it, did not insist on a home inspection and now the roof is leaking. The Liberals panicked. They were fleeced by a Texas oil company and now we are on the hook for their failure.

How many boil water advisories could be lifted? How many green jobs could be created? When are these guys—

• (1430)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we should start with the fact that the member is incorrect. He apparently did not read the report. What we know, though, and most important, is that we see that it is important for us to have the capacity to get our oil resources to international markets. We are dependent on right now sending 99% of our resources to U.S. markets. If there were ever a time where Canadians believed that it is important to diversify, now is that time.

This purchase is going to be good for the long-term health of our economy. It is obviously going to be good for our oil sector. We believe that both those things are quite important.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the National Airlines Council of Canada stated that the Liberal carbon tax would make air travel more expensive for Canadians and really would do nothing to help us reduce our emissions.

Unlike the Prime Minister, who inherited a vast family fortune, most Canadian families save for years to afford to fly. According to the council, families will pay hundreds of dollars more to visit grandma and grandpa, making it unaffordable for many.

Why do Canadians have to keep paying more for the Prime Minister's mistakes?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, had the hon. member attended the committee hearing of the same environment committee Monday, she would have seen that Stephen Harper's former director of policy gave testimony, indicating that the most effective thing we could be doing to bring our emissions down was putting a price on pollution and returning the revenues to Canadian citizens. It actually is going to make life more affordable.

I do not know why the Conservative Party seems committed to campaigning on a promise to take money from its constituents so pollution can be free in Canada.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the Liberals who are making pollution free again by mass exemptions to industrial emitters and dumping sewage into the ocean.

The Prime Minister has no concept of managing money because he inherited, in his words, a great "family fortune". According to his own government's documents, the Liberal carbon tax is expected to cost a family of four up to \$5,000 a year. He has already introduced Bill C-69 and Bill C-48. He cannot build a pipeline. How does he now expect that struggling families are going to pay for this?

When will the Prime Minister stop making Canadians pay for his mistakes?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how? Let me count the ways. Big emitters will pay under our system. That is why families are going to be better off.

When the Conservative Party is lost and has no argument to present on its own, it resorts to snide personal attacks against members on this side of the House. Politics deserves better.

We campaigned on a commitment to grow our economy and protect our environment at the same time. We are putting a price on pollution that will bring emissions down, make life more affordable for Canadians. It has been 277 days since Conservatives said that they were going to come up with a plan. So far their only plan is to mislead Canadians.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, the finance minister paid \$4 billion for a \$2-billion pipeline. The word is that he is now in the market for some oceanfront property in Arizona.

As for his carbon tax, it will be a lot more expensive than he admits as well. He received a briefing document in 2017 which said that the tax would have to be much higher than the government admits. Based on other government figures, it could be as high as \$300, which translates into a \$5,000 per year bill for a family of four in Canada.

Will he tell us now what is the full and final price of the Liberal carbon tax?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the desperate scare tactics that the Conservative Party has resorted to are completely disingenuous. It knows that we have never indicated once that we plan to move forward with a figure anywhere close to the one he is talking about. We have been putting it on our website.

I have told the member in the old chamber at Centre Block before, that Canadians are going to be better off. I note that in his constituency, a typical family of four can expect to receive \$307. He is going to be going to the polls in the next campaign with a commitment to take that money from his constituents.

We are going to bring emissions down and we are going to make life more affordable for Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so that is the Liberals' trade-off. They will give families a \$300 cheque before the election for a \$5,000-bill after the election. He suddenly disputes these numbers.

In the year 2022, the tax rate is scheduled to go up. The minister has admitted that, the government documents have admitted that and everyone else knows that it is true. The fact is that the Liberals will not tell us by how much it will go up. The only figure that we can find in government documents is \$300, and that translates into a \$5,000 bill.

If that is wrong, what is the real price?

● (1435)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member opposite has the same confidence I do that we are going to be in government after the next election.

However, where I would like to correct the record is where the hon. member is using astronomical figures to scare Canadians about the policies we are implementing to fight climate change. We are going to put forward a price on pollution that is going to return revenues to Canadian citizens, which makes life more affordable for families.

It is no surprise the Conservatives are opposing this policy. When we introduced the Canada child benefit to make life more affordable, they voted against it. When we introduced the middle-class tax cut to make life more affordable, they voted against it. When we put a price on pollution to make life more affordable for Canadians, they—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only a Liberal would say that a tax makes life more affordable, but that tax is not even effective. According to the government's own documents, they will fall 80 million tonnes short of meeting its Paris targets.

How will they fill the gap? According to the environment minister, "we will evaluate both the need for and opportunity of utilizing international credits." That is right, forcing Canadians to send billions of dollars to California and other jurisdictions to pay for the government's failures to meet its own targets.

What is the full and final cost of buying international carbon credits under the Liberals' plan?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to correct the record, the way our system is going to work is that we are putting a price on pollution and returning the revenues to citizens. Eight out of 10 Canadian families can expect to be better off, and the hon. member's constituents will receive in excess of \$300 at tax time.

We are moving forward with a plan that does not just include a price on pollution to bring our emissions down. We are also making historic investments in public transit. By 2030, 90% of our electricity is going to be fuelled by renewable resources. We are phasing out coal over 30 years in advance of when the Conservative government would have.

The reason the Conservatives start throwing non-factual information forward is because it has been 277 days and—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what Kathleen Wynne said. She planned to spend \$2.2 billion sending money to California for carbon credits. The auditor general of that province said, "these funds may be leaving the Ontario economy for no purpose other than to help the government claim it has met a target." Now we know where the carbon tax money will really go: outside this country.

Will the member confirm how much will Canadians spend buying foreign carbon credits under the government's plan?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said a number of times that Canadians can expect to be better off as a result of our plan. It is clear that the hon. member does not believe me, so I would direct him to the testimony that was given by Mark Cameron, Stephen Harper's former director of policy. If he does not accept him, I would direct him to Doug Ford's chief budget adviser who told us previously—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There is way too much noise. The questions have been put. I am sure all hon. members would be interested to hear what the parliamentary secretary has to say, but it just a little too loud for members to hear that.

We are going to go back and letting the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment finish up his comments and then we will be on to the next question.

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to provide some further information, because it is not just me who is putting this information forward. As I mentioned, Stephen Harper's former director policy supports our plan. Doug Ford's chief budget adviser said that the single most effective thing we could do to transition to a low-carbon economy would be to put a price on pollution.

The winner of last year's Nobel Prize in Economics won the prize for developing this kind of a plan. Forty-seven economists, including the former chairs of the federal—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Columbus Housing Co-op offers safe and affordable housing for seniors in Elmwood, but not without its challenges. The riverbank near the building is eroding. If a leaky roof were jeopardizing its units, it would be able to apply for renovation funding. However, the rules prevent it from getting money to shore up the riverbank. Its operating agreement is going to expire in several years.

While the Liberals promised a fix for this co-op and those like it, after three years, all we have is a Band-Aid to get them through the next election.

A proper national housing strategy would provide help and certainty to housing co-ops like Columbus, but that is not what the government has delivered. I want to know how much longer they are going to have to wait.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from day one, we announced that we believed every Canadian had a right to a safe and affordable place to call home. I am delighted to answer the question.

The member knows already how ambitious we will be in supporting co-operatives and not-for-profit housing providers in the future. We have done this since 2016. Our investments of \$5.7 billion has helped a million families since 2016.

We look forward to doing this for many other Canadians until we are able to fully implement our national housing strategy.

● (1440)

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the key was “in the future”.

Safe and affordable housing is a right. Skyrocketing rents and ballooning home prices in Essex are making it impossible for people to keep a roof over their heads. People like Crystal's brother Darell, who was living in a tent because he was not able to find affordable housing. People like Fred's daughter, who is a single mother with five kids and living with him. The kids are sleeping in his living room because she cannot find affordable housing.

Oral Questions

Instead of making up numbers to make themselves look good, what will the Liberals do for people like Darell and Fred's daughter?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand and, indeed, know very much how important it is for all Canadians to a right to access a safe place to live, for seniors, for veterans, for people living with disabilities. We understand that and that is why we have invested, since 2016, over \$5.7 billion in helping a million families. That is why over the next 10 years we will be implementing the first-ever national housing strategy, a 10-year, \$40-billion plan, because we believe exactly that. Canadians have a right to have safe and affordable places to live.

* * *

ETHICS

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a case of déjà vu in an Ottawa courtroom today when a former Kathleen Wynne and current Liberal staffer was asking questions about lost emails. She appears to have been referring to Vice-Admiral Norman as a “certain naval officer” in an attempt to sabotage his defence. This deliberate attempt to sabotage access to information requests is a political attack on Vice-Admiral Norman's right to a fair trial.

Did anyone within the Prime Minister's Office ever have discussions about delaying the trial of Vice-Admiral Norman?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all employees are required to maintain official records and to save them in an appropriate fashion. These policies are laid out very clearly in the Access to Information Act and in the related access to information manual. The government takes those responsibilities very seriously.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was not an answer to the question I asked, so I will ask it again.

Did anyone within the Prime Minister's Office ever have discussions about delaying the trial of Vice-Admiral Norman?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 11, 2015, the Hon. Peter Van Loan said:

Members are expected to refrain from discussing matters before the courts, or under judicial consideration, in order to protect those involved in a court action or judicial inquiry against any undue influence through the discussion of the case.

Minister Van Loan was saying “avoid undue influence”. Apparently, the opposition is in favour of it.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is easy to fall back on that line. However, we have information coming out of a trial that is happening right now. We are learning that there was interference. The political staffers in the Prime Minister's Office were doing things that did not follow standard procedure.

Could someone tell us whether anyone within the Prime Minister's Office ever had discussions about delaying the trial of Vice-Admiral Norman?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition continues to defy the advice of Mr. Van Loan. He said that the practice, which is called the *sub judice* convention, applied to debates, to statements, to question period. It is deemed improper for a member in posing a question and improper for a minister in responding to a question to comment on any matter that is before the courts. The previous Harper government took that position 300 times.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is proper in the House is to tell the truth. We are faced with an attempt to sabotage a trial, an attempt to cover up information that would protect Vice-Admiral Norman.

We want to know, did anyone in the Prime Minister's Office ever have discussions about delaying the trial of Vice-Admiral Norman?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a legal proceeding before the courts. The courts are being managed by very distinguished judges. Both sides have competent counsel to represent them in the proceedings.

Under our Constitution, those matters are dealt with in the courts of Canada, not on the floor of the House of Commons. This is not the court of Star Chamber.

* * *

• (1445)

HOUSING

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I met a constituent, a single mother who has raised her son by working two jobs to make ends meet. She sacrificed everything so that her son could go to university. She has had to move four times because of rent eviction and lives in constant fear that she will lose her current home. She has been on the housing wait-list for four years and has no idea where she will go next.

How can the Prime Minister hear these stories and not understand the urgency of the housing crisis? Why is he patting himself on the back but making my constituent wait?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, we are never happy but it is important to remind ourselves of the difficult circumstances in which many of our families live. That includes women, women living in difficult circumstances and sometimes in conditions of family violence.

If I may, I will quote the reaction of the YWCA when the historic national housing strategy was launched a few months ago, “A gender-lens on the #NationalHousingStrategy is a game-changer for women and girls in Canada”.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister bragged that his response to the Cat Lake crisis lifted the long-term boil water advisory. What he did not say was that it was for one building on a well at the edge of town.

With 100% of the homes facing fire risk from bad electrical and poor stoves, the Minister of Indigenous Services' staff said that they would ship them light-switch covers. I am not kidding. A grab bag from Home Depot was their response.

Would the minister please come out from under the desk and tell us if his staff were serious? Is that the plan? Is the minister even ready to deal with a crisis like Cat Lake?

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working closely with Cat Lake to make vital improvements to the community infrastructure. Last year, we funded two comprehensive inspections to assess the state of their infrastructure.

Following Cat Lake's housing declaration, the minister and the chief agreed that the next step should be a meeting between senior officials and the community to develop action plans going forward. That meeting occurred yesterday and we look forward to working with Cat Lake on a plan moving forward.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the most highly educated workforce among OECD countries. Last week, in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country, I was pleased to announce nearly \$16 million in infrastructure funding for the University of British Columbia—Okanagan.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development please tell the House how the government is supporting our post-secondary institutions in producing world-class students?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country for being a great champion for his residents and the businesses in his community. He is absolutely correct. The \$16-million investment will help students to get the right skills that they need for the jobs of today and for the jobs of tomorrow as well.

This is a part of our government's overall plan of a \$2-billion investment for a post-secondary infrastructure program to invest in our post-secondary institutions. This means more jobs, more growth and more opportunities and middle-class opportunities for individuals living in Kelowna—Lake Country.

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is revolting to see the Liberals involved in yet another fundraising scheme, which only proves once again that the Prime Minister and his Liberal team still think they are above the law and the rules of ethics.

The Liberal member for Brampton East raised \$600,000, but no one will tell us how.

Did people have privileged access to the Minister of Innovation or any other Liberal cabinet minister, as per the Liberal tradition?

[English]

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite would know that we brought in some of the strictest rules with regard to fundraising. This side of the House has been following them since even before they came into effect this January. We are aware that members opposite have had some with the Leader of the Opposition that have not been made public.

We encourage all parties in the House to ensure that they abide by those rules, open them up, have the media present and let Canadians see what they are talking about.

● (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, although the Liberals are once again trying to appear squeaky clean, it is obvious that they are avoiding the question about the dubious means employed by the Liberal member for Brampton East to raise a \$600,000 jackpot for the Liberals.

We may be in a new House of Commons, but the Liberals' schemes are still the same.

What will we learn this time about how the Liberals raised that money?

Who was there? What are the Liberals hiding?

[English]

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be able to rise in the House to remind all members about the strict fundraising rules that we have here in Canada. Whether it is for an electoral district association or whether it is for a political party, all donations are disclosed to Elections Canada.

Let me remind all members of the House that Bill C-50 enacted the strictest and most open and transparent fundraising rules for leaders of political parties. I would encourage all political parties to ensure that they are abiding by that and open up their fundraisers to the media and to Canadians, so that we all know what they are talking about.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim they have cleaned up all of their fundraising practices. Yesterday the Prime Minister claimed that the Liberals now follow all of the rules of openness, transparency and accountability. However, the PM still stonewalls on questions linked to the former

Oral Questions

Liberal member for Brampton East, questions of gambling addiction, money laundering, outside employment, the India trip, RCMP investigation and the member's \$600,000 fundraiser when he was still a Liberal.

What are the Liberals hiding?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I remind the House that it was this government that brought in Bill C-50. It was this government that brought in the most open and transparent fundraising rules in Canadian history with regard to political leaders and it was this government that began following those rules even before they came into effect.

We know that the Leader of the Opposition had a fundraiser, did not open it up to the media, did not tell Canadians what he was talking about. What was he hiding?

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Conservative contributions are disclosed on the Elections Canada website.

Let us get back though to the Liberal Brampton \$600,000 undisclosed. Who attended the fundraiser? Were ministers there? Were lobbyists in attendance under the Liberals sneaky Laurier Club dispensation? Where did the funds go, the bumpstiously claimed \$600,000? How many cheques were unacceptable under Elections Canada regulations?

Who are the Liberals protecting? What are they hiding?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is making conjectures about things.

Elections Canada has very strict rules. We have strict fundraising rules and strict financing rules here in Canada. All donations made to electoral district associations, to political parties, are disclosed to Elections Canada. If it is over \$200, it is on Elections Canada's website. We can all look at that for every member and every political party represented in the House. It is as clear as that.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Pacific herring is the prime food source for endangered Chinook salmon, which in turn is the prime food source for the endangered southern resident killer whales. It is a crucial part of the Salish Sea ecosystem.

Thirty-two thousand British Columbians have already signed a petition to shut down the Pacific herring roe fishery with the support of local first nations. If a moratorium is not enforced to protect this critical food source and to allow the stocks to rebuild, we are endangering these interdependent species.

Will the minister do his due diligence and immediately place a moratorium on the herring roe fishery?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, decisions with respect to fisheries are based on science and evidence.

Oral Questions

There are five different herring fisheries areas off the BC coast. Three of them are presently closed. One is open for a commercial fishery and that is based on the abundance of the stock that exists there.

As I said, we make our decisions based on science.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2016, the Prime Minister promised on a live newscast that he would enhance employment insurance sickness benefits. The Liberals have not brought up the subject since.

Mélanie Pelletier is a constituent of mine who lost her life savings after being sick for 15 weeks. She, like hundreds of thousands of other sick people in the same boat, is stressed and exhausted. How is she supposed to get better?

Fifteen weeks of sickness benefits is not enough, and the Liberals know it.

Will they keep at least that one promise and enhance employment insurance sickness benefits?

● (1455)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me an opportunity to talk about this extremely important issue for families and workers coping with very difficult health issues. This is not just about illness; it is also about parenthood. There are other factors that affect our families' quality of life.

I am pleased to remind the House that, since 2016, we have made all special EI benefits, including sickness benefits, significantly more flexible and generous. There is still a lot of work to do, and we are excited to keep doing it.

* * *

[English]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians fill out their taxes, they only have to fill out one form unless they live in Quebec. In Quebec, the system is so complicated that most Quebecers have to hire an accountant to do the paperwork. The Prime Minister can afford an accountant due to his vast family fortune, but for everyone else this is a waste of money and extra bureaucracy. A single tax return would simplify life for Quebecers.

Why will the Prime Minister not actually listen to Quebecers and give them a single tax return?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Harper Conservatives had 10 years to help Canadians and Quebecers when it comes to filing their tax returns. What did they do? They cut services and staff without evaluating the consequences. Chop, chop, chop.

We on this side will continue to invest in services in order to really improve the lives of all Quebecers and Canadians.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when one is truly committed to the welfare of families, one does not make an announcement saying “chop, chop, chop”. Instead of making excuses, fearmongering and grandstanding in the House, the Liberals should be trying to come up with solutions.

The consensus on a single tax return is clear. Quebecers, the Premier of Quebec and the National Assembly all want a single tax return. The only ones who disagree are the Liberal members, who are laughing at Quebecers right now. That is what is happening here.

Why do they oppose a single tax return?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that the Conservatives, who claim to be great champions of spending cuts, are also saying that they are prepared to pay more for work that the CRA is already doing. Quebec and Canada do not have the same definition of revenue.

What is the Conservatives' real plan? Are they asking Quebecers to harmonize with the rest of Canada, or are they asking the rest of Canada and the provinces to adopt Quebec's definition?

I wonder if they will say the same thing in Toronto and Calgary. On this side of the House, we will continue to invest in Canadians and Quebecers.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is so used to seeing Quebecers as a threat that they refuse to even talk about it. What we are saying, we will say here, in Winnipeg, and in Calgary. We are prepared to defend our position wherever we go. We are prepared to tell the Government of Quebec to have an administrative agreement to ensure that it processes the entirety of tax returns so that there need not be two. It is simple. It is an administrative agreement. That is how the GST was handled and it works quite well.

On this side, we have confidence in Quebec and Quebecers.

Why do the Liberals not have confidence in Quebec and Quebecers when it comes to the single tax return?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Harper Conservatives or today's Conservatives, it is all the same. In the next few months, the Conservatives will be making two sets of promises: one for Quebec and one for the rest of Canada.

Divide and conquer. That is the same tactic they used in 2015. With respect to the single tax return, I would invite my Conservative colleagues to follow the NDP's lead and do their homework—

● (1500)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek.

*Oral Questions**[English]***ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is an important part of Canada's national identity, with 145 years of history and indispensable service. We know that every day members of the RCMP put their safety at risk to protect and help all Canadians, but they also deserve to feel safe and respected at work.

Could the Minister of Public Safety update the House on the work he is doing to advance cultural change within this organization?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP and its employees deserve to feel safe and respected at work. To that end, we are implementing all 13 recommendations from the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission and from Sheila Fraser, including immediate steps to establish a management advisory board to provide Commissioner Lucki with expert advice and support in leading the force through a vital period of transformation and cultural change. Maintaining a modern, healthy, inclusive workplace is not a single event. It is a process that must be relentlessly pursued and we are.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that due to the Liberals' fake capability gap, taxpayers are now on the hook for an extra \$18 million to stay in the F-35 program.

Let us get this straight. The Liberals are buying old Australian fighter jets we do not need to fill a capability gap that does not exist, and now we are paying tens of millions of dollars on a plane the Prime Minister said he would never buy.

Why do Canadians always have to pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to making sure that the Royal Canadian Air Force has the equipment it needs.

Unlike the previous government, we will not neglect our NORAD and NATO commitments. We have directed the department to prepare options to actually approve the combat capabilities of the CF-18s. We will make sure we not only have the right aircraft to fulfill our missions but that we have the right future fighter aircraft through our competition, which is ongoing.

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*[Translation]***TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, disappointed and frustrated by this Liberal government's failure to listen, the mayor of Otterburn Park presented me with a petition opposing the building of a Telus tower in a protected area, which was signed by thousands of people. Worse still, we have obtained e-mails in which a senior bureaucrat specifies my political affiliation as well as my election results in a briefing note to the minister.

My question to this government is this: does the minister believe that it is appropriate to have this kind of political interference in a decision that has such a significant impact on our community?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question. It is a very important issue. I will work with the member to address the problems he has raised.

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

M. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, northern and rural communities are vibrant and full of potential. However, our local economies are struggling because employers cannot find enough workers to fill all of their job vacancies. That is why I have joined with a number of colleagues to call on the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to find a way to attract and retain more immigrants to meet the skills shortage in our rural communities.

[English]

I am thrilled that our government has listened and acted. Could the minister please update the House?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear: Immigration is key to growing our country's economy. Our new rural and northern immigration pilot program will ensure that immigration and its economic benefits are felt right across the country, especially in communities that are facing labour shortages and population decline. I encourage those communities to apply by March 1.

Our government is committed to making sure that we harness the economic potential of immigration to create good middle-class jobs, both in large cities as well as in smaller towns.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of us were shaken by the terrible terrorist attack in the Philippines on the weekend. Christians at prayer were killed as a bomb exploded in their midst. Another attack occurred this week, this time at a mosque. We express our solidarity with all those who are grieving.

Could the government update the House on any engagement it has had with the government of the Philippines on this issue, including support for its ongoing fight against radical extremism?

Business of the House

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government, and I believe all Canadians, are absolutely of the view that religious freedom is an essential part of human rights, and these are freedoms we should enjoy not only in Canada but around the world. We are very engaged with our partners around the world in protecting the religious freedom of all people, whether they be Christian or Muslim.

* * *

• (1505)

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I tabled a very simple bill with a clear objective: to allow newcomers who are residents of Quebec and who want to obtain citizenship to integrate into their host society. Communication is essential to integration, and in Quebec, the common language is French.

Why do the Liberals have a problem with the fact that French is the common language in Quebec?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during my first election campaign in 2015, Canadians had a choice between the Harper Conservatives' politics of fear and division and an approach that was more positive, optimistic, future-oriented, committed and respectful of differences because, in Quebec and Canada, differences and diversity are a source of strength and pride.

Canadians understand that and so do Quebecers back home.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals do not seem to understand what a common language is.

The Liberals, and no doubt the Conservatives and a few members of the NDP, have decided that the debate on adequate knowledge of French will not take place and that we will talk about it as little as possible.

Meanwhile, the Government of Quebec is proposing that newcomers who want to obtain permanent residency must have an adequate knowledge of French.

Does the Liberal heritage minister support the Legault government's desire to require newcomers to have an adequate knowledge of French?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada remains a welcoming, open, sharing and supportive country. I understand this very well. It all goes back to 1535, when Grand Chief Donnacona, leader of the Huron-Wendat nation, welcomed Jacques Cartier to Quebec City. Jacques Cartier had heard that Canada and Quebec were a welcoming, open, supportive nation. That will not change.

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[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my constituents—indeed, all British Columbians—are irate at the money-laundering scandal that went on in B.C. with government-

owned casinos. A billion dollars a year was laundered through those casinos from drug profits, illicit gambling and extortion, and it fuelled directly the housing crisis and the opioid crisis.

What did the RCMP know? Why did it turn a blind eye? Are we looking into it?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure, as always, to respond to a question from my hon. colleague.

Our government takes the threat posed by money laundering and organized crime to Canada's national security and to the integrity of our financial sector very seriously. We are taking action to combat this threat by enhancing the RCMP's investigative and intelligence capabilities, both in Canada and abroad, and our financial intelligence unit further helps protect Canadians and our financial system.

Specifically in reference to British Columbia, the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction met recently with both Dr. Peter German and B.C. Attorney General David Eby about how to reduce instances of money laundering in British Columbia and all across Canada. We promised Canadians we would take action. That is exactly what we are doing.

The Deputy Speaker: That will conclude oral question period for today.

The hon. member for Edmonton West on a point of order.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, if the House will allow it, I would like to submit a document from the Library of Parliament showing the full-time equivalents for the Canada Revenue Agency. It shows that the Liberal government chop, chop, chopped 800 jobs when it took over, and it is further forecasting, according to departmental plans, to chop another 800 jobs.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Edmonton West have unanimous consent to—

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: We will now go to the traditional Thursday question from the hon. opposition House leader.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has indeed been an interesting and good first week back. We are adjusting to our new home here in West Block and getting used to the new lights and acoustics, and I know we will have more to adjust to.

I want to ask the government House leader if she could let us know what business the government will be bringing forward for the remainder of this week and for the week when we come back next.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, any move has challenges that come with it, but it has been great to be able to work together to overcome them, because it is a beautiful new space.

This afternoon we will continue debate on the NDP opposition day motion.

Tomorrow we will debate the Senate amendments to Bill C-64, the abandoned vessels act.

● (1510)

[Translation]

Next Monday and Tuesday will be allotted days.

On Wednesday, we will resume third reading debate of Bill C-78, an act to amend the Divorce Act.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the people of Sherbrooke to speak to the opposition motion moved by my NDP colleague from Saskatoon West. This excellent motion reminds us of the importance of housing in Canada and the real crisis that is gripping our entire country.

Although some real estate markets—those that are more saturated, where prices are higher and housing is more scarce—may be harder hit, I can assure members that the crisis is affecting the entire nation, including my riding of Sherbrooke. Every year, in July, there are families who are unable to find affordable housing that meets their needs. Large families are particularly affected.

This is a reality in Sherbrooke, and I am very pleased to rise in the House to speak to this issue in order to help find solutions. Our hope is that our constituents across the country, including my constituents in Sherbrooke, will have safe, quality housing that meets their needs and provides them with the ideal environment in which to work, experience personal and financial growth, have a good quality of life and thrive in our country. That would help everyone prosper.

When there is a crisis, we have to take urgent, concrete, immediate and specific steps to resolve it. We see this as a crisis because it is not a problem that can be fixed sometime in the distant future, after the next election, with a 10-, 15- or even 20-year plan. A crisis calls for urgent, immediate action. That is what is lacking right now. I am sure everyone here understands that this is a crisis. The only thing lacking is the government's commitment to treating this as a real crisis that calls for urgent, immediate action.

I do not want to question the Liberal government's intentions on this file. I am sure it recognizes the need for housing. However, it does not recognize that the need to act is urgent. We are glad its strategy includes billions of dollars in investments, but the problem is that none of that money will flow for several years, well after the next election.

That is why we have to wonder whether the government really understands the importance of investing in housing now. That is what affordable housing groups would really like to know. They

Business of Supply

know there is an urgent need for action, but they do not think the government feels the same sense of urgency.

Just this past Tuesday, back home, the Sherbrooke tenants' association and FRAPRU, a social housing organization that is well known in Quebec, spoke out about the current crisis in Sherbrooke. To meet the needs of the very long list of people waiting for social housing, the association estimates that it will take 300 social housing units every year for five years.

We see the same thing across Canada. Canada's big city mayors estimate that 170,000 people are waiting for social housing. In Quebec, we often talk about low-income housing. In Sherbrooke, low-income housing is the responsibility of the Sherbrooke municipal housing authority. The waiting lists keep getting longer. That is why the need is so great. Unfortunately, nothing is being done to shorten the list. We need 300 units a year for five years to get to the end of this waiting list and finally provide quality housing to all those in need in Sherbrooke.

There are some important statistics on housing that are worth mentioning.

● (1515)

The most troubling one is that some households are spending as much as 50% of their income on rent, just to put a roof over their heads. The higher that percentage goes, the more precarious their situation becomes. Some people in Sherbrooke even spend as much as 70% or 80% of their income on rent. That does not leave them with very much to spend on groceries, just to put food on the table.

We know that basic needs include shelter, food, clothing and the love of family and friends. Indeed, the love of family and friends is crucial in life. When someone has to spend 50% or 80% of their income on rent, that is problematic. It is even said that it should not be more than 30%.

When people have to spend so much of their income on rent, they have less to spend on things like leisure activities, food and clothing. On top of that, heating is sometimes not even included in the rent. That is a problem for many people in Sherbrooke. Sometimes rent costs so much that it is hard for people to find a clean, comfortable place to live that has clean air and is maintained at a reasonable temperature. These are real-life situations.

The Sherbrooke tenants' association reports that even when people do find housing, it is not necessarily safe. Landlords sometimes fail to update housing units and to install air conditioning and proper insulation. God knows that right now, temperatures across Canada are well below zero. Heat is a necessity. No one can live in Canada without some form of heating to ensure that their home has clean air and is maintained at a reasonable temperature.

Business of Supply

The disturbing crisis we are seeing in Sherbrooke calls for immediate investment. Every day, the association hears from people in need who cannot find housing or who have been evicted and are looking for somewhere to spend the night. It is vital to consider all emergency resources, which is why we fought for the homelessness partnering strategy, now called Canada's homelessness strategy. It is an important part of this strategy to help people get off the street and into adequate housing.

When people are chronically homeless they must be able to go to an appropriate place where they are safe. In Sherbrooke, organizations such as Partage Saint-François are very important. I supported this organization that helps the homeless in Sherbrooke by donating \$15,000 from my annual golf tournament. This organization provides a bed, food and warmth to those in need. We have to remember that.

That is why it is so disappointing to have to move this motion today to point out once again the government's lack of leadership on this crisis. We are particularly decrying the fact that what has been announced does not meet the pressing housing needs.

As I said yesterday, the Liberals are all talk and no action on several files. They like to talk and pat themselves on the back, but when the time comes to take action they are nowhere to be found. They are just big talkers. Talk will not help people find housing.

Parliamentary secretaries are double counting to try to lead us to believe that the government is doing more than it really is. Unfortunately, that is why, today, we are being forced to push the government to do more and invest in the construction of at least 500,000 social housing units. That is what is needed so that every Canadian can have a roof over their heads. When people have a place to live, anything is possible. They can get ahead in life and contribute to the development of our great country and our economy.

• (1520)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with the members opposite quarrelling over the words I used. Let me assure them that the numbers are real. In his riding alone, for example, we invested in 25 units at the Rive Gauche co-op. Les enfants terribles was another investment.

We count those investments on a unit-by-unit basis, but we do not count the people in those units. We have invested money well over a million times. That is the \$5.7 billion. That is absolutely real. When we say that we have invested in more than a million people's lives, we have. Whether that is rhetoric we can argue on a different day.

The issue I want to ask the member opposite about is very simple. Their plan is a 10-year plan. Half the money would not be spent for five years. If we take a look at the electoral cycle, that means that half the money would not be spent after the next election. They would actually save it for two elections from now.

Members opposite criticize us for a 10-year plan, but I can tell you that we are proud of a 10-year plan, just as they should be proud of a 10-year plan. Housing providers across the country have asked for long-term, stable funding. They have also asked that it not be simply for building housing. They also want the subsidies. They also want repairs, and they also want support for vulnerable populations.

The NDP plan only speaks to building. In fact, the member for Elmwood—Transcona stood up here and said that the other supports were complexities that constituted a “fetish”. Accessible housing is a fetish? You should be ashamed of yourselves.

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind hon. members to direct their speeches to the Chair.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what my colleague is referring to exactly. That is something another member said.

What I would say to him is that there is a pressing need, as I mentioned earlier. What is missing is immediate investments. Should we form the next government, and we hope that will be the case by the end of this year, our plan is to make immediate investments in real, concrete projects that are ready to be built.

Of course, we want to contribute to renovations and housing subsidies. Those are practical measures we will take once we are in office. I hope that the member will support us so that, in a few months, our party can finally keep its promises, something that the Liberals have not managed to do over the past few years.

[English]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was not going to comment, until I heard the comments from the member for Spadina—Fort York.

We know that he is passionate about housing issues, and I respect that, but he is attacking his NDP colleague in the House, saying that he should be ashamed of himself and the NDP position after having had to clarify which portions of the Liberals' housing claims are real. In fact, he used the language that it was “absolutely real”. Do members on the Liberal side of the House have grades of real? Is there “absolutely real” and then “maybe real”?

The Toronto Star, which serves his constituents, has been questioning the Liberal claims on housing statistics. He suggests that maybe there is some slight hyperbole and that there is “absolutely real” and “partially real”.

I would like the NDP to comment on whether we can trust the parliamentary secretary, when he himself has suggested that on their own deliverables claims with respect to affordable housing, a big issue in the greater Toronto area, he is only being partially forthright. I would like to know whether the NDP finds that absolutely offensive.

*Business of Supply**[Translation]*

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks and for giving me the opportunity to comment on the Toronto Star article, which reveals the Liberals' tendency to go on and on about how they have done things and to inflate the numbers to convince people they have taken action.

In light of that article, it is difficult to believe the parliamentary secretary when he tries to convince the House that his government has done a lot of stuff. From now on, it will be hard to believe any numbers he gives us. The article is disturbing because the Liberal government seems to have several different interpretations of reality when it comes to statistics and counting. There is one reality when they are making speeches to convince people they are doing good work. The facts tell of another reality, the reality we see in actual numbers from the Government of Canada, numbers that are impartial and non-partisan, unlike the parliamentary secretary, whose every word is partisan.

• (1525)

[English]

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to rise on this issue. In Cambridge, Ontario, affordable housing is easily the number one issue. In the Waterloo region, there is a wait-list right now of almost 3,700. It is critical that we move forward, and I am very proud of our government's decision to move forward with a national housing strategy.

The previous question talked about what is real. What is real is 175 Hespeler Road, a brand new facility housing people who were previously in precarious situations. To speak to the NDP with regard to the idea that repairing facilities is not adequate, I have been to these sites and to co-ops in my riding. They have thanked me and said to me that we need to extend the funding on this.

The newest co-op in my riding is over 30 years old, and I want to know what the plan of the third party would be with regard to trying to fix these 30-year-old co-ops if the funding is not there for that. How do we protect the units we already have?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked an excellent question on an important issue. We have experienced this back home, in Sherbrooke. Some co-ops have to renew their mortgage. Those co-ops faced tremendous uncertainty under the Conservative government. Indeed, there has been some progress in that regard, and I thank the current government for that.

It is important to recognize that co-ops are an important part of the solution, but not the only one. Sherbrooke is developing more innovative co-op ideas thanks to co-operative housing.

My colleague raised an excellent question regarding renovations. Renovations are also part of the equation, as I said earlier. We recognize that renovations are a key part of the solution, including in Sherbrooke, where the needs are huge. As we have said, renovations are important to the NDP. Building new housing units is also very important, because there is such a huge need. Since this is a crisis, we need to take action immediately, not in 10 years.

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a good day when we talk about housing in the House and I want to say a couple of things. It is fair game to quarrel with the words I used to describe the language around the program that we have produced, but the numbers are real. The numbers are very simple: \$5.7 billion to date has been invested by our government in public and social housing and that includes 14,703 new constructions. Those numbers go up day by day. It includes 143,684 repaired household units. That keeps people in housing. It is not a fetish.

Second, we have also provided subsidies and this is really important. The biggest part of any federal housing program, the most important part of federal housing programs is the subsidy to make the units affordable and we have, to date, provided supplements to 783,928 households. Again, those numbers go up as we renew and extend co-op operating agreements beyond two years, now to 10.

Additionally and finally, it is important to note that housing people requires supports sometimes, especially for addiction or mental health issues, or seniors who are getting frail and have accessibility issues. We need to support people in housing and the HPS program in particular has supported 28,864 individuals who are homeless.

Totalled up, out of the \$5.7 billion we have announced in budgets, we have delivered one million investments into households across the country. Where the rhetoric comes in, if we look "rhetoric" up in the dictionary, it also means effective political communication, not just the popular meaning that has been used to criticize me today. Where we have to understand how our system works and why complexity is such a critical part of it is that these supports for Canadians layer into people's lives depending on how the core housing needs are presented.

For example, if people are in a co-op and aging, they may get no rent subsidy currently because they are not on fixed income, but when they move to fixed income, RGI subsidies kick in. We built the unit with public housing money and we are now subsidizing them, so that is a second investment to support their new housing needs. If at the same time they suddenly become so frail that they have accessibility or mobility issues, we may renovate that unit while we subsidize it, after we have bought it, to become accessible. Now they are being provided with three layers of subsidy at a single unit of housing.

Business of Supply

Members may say that is three times counting. It is not. It is three different ways of supporting people and the important part about that is the renovated building and the building itself will be there for the next Canadian who needs it, so it is a permanent investment into accessible and sustainable housing. However, the other side of this is that there may be more than one family member in that household. Most often, Canadian families on average have 2.5 people per house, which means we have reached well over one million Canadians with our housing program with our \$5.7 billion investment.

We have been trying to break down how to explain that \$5.7 billion on a riding-by-riding basis and make it real for Canadians. If the use of the word “rhetoric” confused people, I definitely apologize. The reality is, and the truth is, and the facts are that more than one million Canadians have been supported, more than one million investments have been made in specific housing units across this country, and we are proud of the complexity and the comprehensive approach to housing that we have put in place.

I would also argue—

• (1530)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order because I truly appreciate the parliamentary secretary's efforts here with respect to debate and rhetoric. He has apparently been trying to clarify the public record with respect to rhetoric. He keeps referring to claims he made and I am glad he is doing that.

However, I am wondering if the member might actually clarify the claim that he is now clarifying. I think that would help the members with debate in the House today and with men, women and kids watching at home.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. There will be an opportunity to pose questions of that nature during the time for questions and comments.

We will go back to the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, let me assure you, it is not the first time a Conservative is confused as to what constitutes good housing policy or facts and figures in the House.

Let me then move on to what the problem is with the NDP motion before us. First of all, it is akin to the way Doug Ford campaigns. It is like the buck-a-beer promise. It is real easy to make, but when we start asking New Democrats to explain it, it begins to get a little fuzzy as to how they are going to deliver it. For example, one of their biggest criticisms is that we are delivering our money after the next election. Ten-year programs in four-year mandates happen to work out that way mathematically, especially if one back-end loads them intelligently and grows the system as one grows the size of the housing program.

When new housing systems are added to existing ones, and new units to existing units, the subsidies grow over time and the repair bill grows over time. If a program is not back-end loaded, housing providers are put in an incredibly difficult spot. That is what the co-op sector has been telling us right across the country. We funded the co-ops at the start, and then the subsidies started to disappear under

Conservative rule overnight and all of a sudden they could not do repairs and could not sustain affordability.

Front-end loading housing systems puts people in extraordinarily difficult circumstances and does not help housing providers grow and sustain a system. It actually shrinks a system over time. Therefore, we reject front-end loading of housing programs. In fact, so does the NDP. Its campaign platform last time was \$500 million for new housing, for the entire country I might add. That was the way it addressed the problem in its platform. That \$500 million was zero dollars in the second year, zero dollars in the third year and zero dollars in the fourth year. That would have failed as a housing program.

Now the NDP has produced a 10-year program, saying half of it is going to be withheld until five years from now. Check the elections cycle. There will be two elections, minimum, between now and the end of the five-year term in its housing program. This means half the money comes after not one election but two elections. It is the same with ours. Long-term sustainable funding cannot be done within a single election cycle. As well, one-term funding and building a comprehensive approach to housing in this country cannot be done. It will not work. That is why the co-op agreements were 25 years in length.

Now, we have changed the co-op agreements and that approach to subsidies because they were previously tied to mortgages. Many of those co-ops no longer have mortgages. They also expired one by one as those mortgages were basically assigned to these projects, so they were expiring overnight one by one and disappearing. We are putting the whole system on a single timetable so that never again will a federal government be able to walk away from those subsidy programs. As well, we are going to create political clout within the housing system to make sure we comprehensively address and politically support housing providers, in particular, co-ops. It is a good program. The co-op sector is thrilled. All one has to do is ask the presidents. They will say that it is a good program.

The other thing that just astonishes me are two comments. One was made by the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, who referred to repairs to housing systems as not housing people. The city I come from has a \$3-billion housing repair backlog, started by the NDP at Queen's Park I might add. In the middle of a recession, it chose to defer maintenance and lean into building and did not provide long-term funding for maintenance. When Mike Harris downloaded it to cities, he downloaded it with the deferred maintenance the NDP thought was a good idea.

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby stood here and criticized the Prime Minister for repairing a 150,000 units of housing that would have been lost to the system if they were not properly repaired, the very thing the NDP talks about with indigenous housing. It is a lack of repair budgets that de-houses people, not the existence of four walls and a roof.

The NDP says that it is not a system of housing, and then the member for Elmwood—Transcona dismisses it as a fetish to fix housing because that is part of the complexity the Liberals like to explain their policies with. I can assure the House that repairing housing is the most urgent need in Toronto. Adding to housing is the second most urgent need in Toronto. However, providing supports, which are just as critical to get homeless people into long-term sustainable housing situations, is also fundamentally important. All of that has to be done. We have to build, repair, subsidize and support. The national housing strategy does just that.

We have also remodelled programs the Conservatives had in place. One of the members of the NDP said they liked the housing first approach, and the Conservatives often stand and say that it worked. It worked for some, but it will work better under the Canada housing benefit because it is a much bigger program. It does not require someone to wait six months and live on the street before they qualify, and it does not only have to be spent in the private sector. It can also be spent in public housing, which means shallower subsidies can be used and more people can be housed. We also have taken away the arbitrary requirement that 65% of the funding be spent on rents and nothing but rents.

● (1535)

Individuals on the street can still acquire rent subsidies through housing first, but what we have heard in Quebec is that with the very strong provincial program around rent subsidies, the real missing piece of the equation is meal programs, counselling for addiction and mental health services, visits and socialization, and help and support in transferring people from core housing need to self-sufficiency.

This is what we heard as we consulted and talked to housing providers across the country, and homelessness and front-line workers in particular. If we do not have the full range of supports and if there are not people there to support vulnerable populations as they re-house themselves and stay housed, those people cycle in and out of the housing first program and we do not solve the problem.

Most specifically, housing first used to require that people be classified as chronically homeless before they could get support, and that they be in that state for six months before a penny of rent would be paid. That put children and youth in this country in harm's way in a way that no other government ever has or ever should. Youth aging out of care, who are the most vulnerable kids in our communities, were told by the former government that they would not get any help with rent unless they lived on the street or in an emergency shelter for six months. That is appalling. We changed that rule.

We also know that youth aging out of care need more than just to be given a set of keys and a roof over their heads. They need support in their circumstances to thrive. In other words, they need support with things like income. They need support with things like budgeting and how to live independently, because they have been

effectively housed in provincial housing systems that have not afforded many of them that capacity.

Business of Supply

We know that when kids aging out of care simply get warehoused in a motel and stuffed into single-room occupancy motels, hotels and inns in places like Vancouver, we end up with people like Tina Fontaine on the front page of the news. Tina lived in a housing program in which a five-year-old child was living alone. Let us think about that. The other teenagers were asked to volunteer time to check in on the kid.

If there is a lack of supports, in particular for vulnerable youth, they do not thrive. They do not succeed in housing even if they have a roof over their heads. If they are denied rent for six months, God help them, because that is the only person looking after them.

In terms of the other programs we put in place as a government to alleviate poverty and address core housing need, such as the Canada child benefit, the change to the GIS, the improvements to EI, the changes we made to CPP, and the reduction in taxes, there has been an across-the-board effort by this government to alleviate poverty. We have lifted 650,000 people out of poverty, close to half of whom are children.

That is also one of the ways to address core housing need. A person can pay the rent with a rent supplement cheque or with their Canada child benefit, but what we need to do is to make sure dollars arrive in those households to meet all of the needs of Canadians: transit, food, housing and health care. Pharmacare will keep people housed. Transit investments will keep people housed. The Canada child benefit will keep people housed. The Canada summer jobs program will keep people housed.

Therefore, yes, our approach to housing is a \$40-billion program, largely being spent on construction and repairs. Yes, the majority is going to subsidies, because good housing programs build, repair and subsidize affordability. We have put this in place for the next 10 years. That is the profile of the next phase of investments. However, the first phase of investments, the \$5.7 billion, is hard at work in communities right across the country: in Nanaimo, in Victoria, in Toronto and in Winnipeg.

We have heard today that even the NDP members, in a good moment, will say thanks sometimes. The member for downtown Vancouver East pretended that there have been no housing investments in her riding, yet her riding has received some of the most important investments to help people in the most dire situations.

Business of Supply

The mayor of Vancouver sat in an office with the minister and me this week as part of the big city mayors visit to Ottawa. The mayor of Vancouver, Kennedy Stewart, who used to sit on the opposition side of this House, admitted to me that when he was on that side, he used to give me criticism. That was his job. He got the lines. He hammered us, and that's what he did. He said, though, that as the mayor of Vancouver he was now receiving support from the federal government, and he had to say the Liberals' program is pretty good. He wanted to know how he could get more, because it is fantastic.

As he stands there and talks about the housing initiatives that have gone in, and as we think and start to talk about solving the situation with indigenous urban populations, and as we talk about the Burrard Street Bridge project, we are there to help.

• (1540)

The member from Edmonton talked about the need to try to figure out what people in mobile homes or modular housing are dealing with, as they cannot get mortgages. That is an important issue. That is a great topic to have a discussion about. We are here to help, and the complexity of our problem happens to address that.

We do not always have to build a house to house somebody. Housing is not just four walls and a roof. Housing is a system and a process that delivers support to people to make their lives secure and gives them the capacity to participate and make contributions across the full array of areas in which citizens can make their participation and contributions known.

I am very proud of the \$40 billion. I am very proud of the million households we have helped. I am very proud of the real housing we have handed to real people with real money being invested in real communities right across this country. I am very proud of the fact that we renewed the co-op agreements and gave hope to those people, in particular seniors, who were being systematically de-housed by the Conservatives.

I will address the issue of this notion that rhetoric is somehow the problem in this conversation. When we live by the sword, we die by the sword. When we live in a political world and use words, sometimes our words are not the perfectly chosen words we want them to be, but at the end of the day I could not care less about the argument, and I could not care less about the words.

I care about the numbers and getting the number of homeless people in this country eliminated as a figure and a dataset. I care about the waiting lists from coast to coast to coast in cities and rural communities. I care about the people in core housing need, and I am focused on the dollars and the figures and the numbers. They have to be strong, and they are; they have to be better, and they must be. We are working hard to make new investments, and we have to make sure that Canadians from coast to coast to coast get housed.

It does not matter what words I use. What matters is what dollars we invest. The dollars are real and they are helping real people. They are building housing, they are repairing housing, they are subsidizing housing, they are supporting people with core housing needs, and they have been opened up to be blended with other government programs: veterans programs, mental health programs, addiction services, and immigration and resettlement services.

They have been opened up to work even more effectively in collaboration with other programs, and I do not consider that double counting. I consider that layering in the appropriate needs in the appropriate way, to model support into people's lives so their housing needs are no longer their big concern and they can dream about other things and other challenges to address in their lives.

I will also say that the complexity of the Liberal program is its sophistication, and the strength of the Liberal program is the duration of the investment and its consistency and reliability. Municipalities, indigenous governments, housing providers, provincial and territorial governments, and federal agencies can rely on that long-term investment.

However, the other thing that is critically important is that it grows over time, because as we build a housing system, that housing system needs to grow and accommodate complex needs in Canadians' lives, which change over the time they are tenants in public housing.

If we do not back-end load our money, we de-house people. If we do not back-end load our housing, we leave people with disabilities that are acquired through aging at the side of the corridor. If we do not back-end load our money, inflation takes away the rent subsidy. If we do not back-end load our money, repairs are not done. Hundreds of Canadians, thousands in Toronto, are being de-housed because of decisions made not to repair public housing, and that is as bad as not funding new housing. Our system grows. It is long term. It extends past the election, and thank God it does. It also is housing real people right now.

The NDP may laugh that we have a long-term commitment to Canadians to alleviate poverty, and they may laugh that our investments are working because it shames them into understanding why their housing policy is so deficient.

I will leave New Democrats with one last thought. Part of the complexity of the housing system is indigenous people. I have read the NDP motion, and indigenous people are not mentioned. There is not a single word to address the housing needs of indigenous people on or off reserve, inside or outside of the treaty system.

Something else that is not mentioned in the motion is homelessness. There is nothing for homeless people, not a penny for the homeless, just new housing units that they can hopefully afford. When one builds housing, one buys land in the market, sources materials in the market and pays for labour in the market, which incidentally is often 20% above what the private sector pays for labour. It is a real issue in the housing sector.

When one competes in the market that way, housing cannot be brought in at 30% of income. There need to be subsidies. Homeless people are quite often divorced from the supports they deserve. If there is no subsidy, if we do not provide a targeted and focused approach to solving homelessness in this country, and if all people think they have to do is show them a house and give them the keys, they are fooling themselves. More importantly, they are letting the homeless down.

Business of Supply

• (1545)

I know that the NDP members know that, because I know they have told people who have criticized the program, “Don’t worry, there’s more to come.” I am glad there is more to come, and I am glad the member pushes us to work harder and faster. It is absolutely necessary. It is fundamental to solving this problem.

We do not always get it right. I certainly did not choose my words right this week, but I will be certain to make sure Canadians understand that the money is real, the housing is real, the repairs are real, the supports are real, the subsidies are real and our commitment is real. We have fulfilled our promise, but we are working twice as hard to do even better because, as the Prime Minister so proudly says, and rightfully so, “Better is always possible.”

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will say from the heart that the member is talking about indigenous people without any knowledge or experience of what it means to live in northern Canada and on reserves. How dare he sit there and talk like that?

It is stupid, how you are talking. Your plan is a 10-year plan, and you want—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We will take that as a question posed.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I understand the urgency and the exasperation in the voice of the member opposite from Saskatchewan. I appreciate and understand the need to work with and listen to indigenous leadership on housing issues, because lived experience drives the right answer to the finish line.

However, let us be clear. The motion in front of us does not talk about indigenous housing. It does not talk about the investments, which are above and beyond the \$40 billion. There was \$2.5 billion in the last budget, of which \$1.5 billion was directly assigned to the national indigenous organizations to start to address the issues and lay the groundwork for an indigenous housing strategy, which we need.

Also, the missing part, and what I would love to see the NDP push us even harder on, because believe me it is the issue that keeps me up at night, is the indigenous urban housing strategy across the country.

Our policy is open to all indigenous groups to apply. That is part of the way we make sure all Canadians can profit from it. However, until we get to an indigenous-led, indigenous-designed and indigenous-delivered program in urban centres, this country will not have a true national housing strategy. I have said that everywhere, across the country. Based on exactly the lessons the member just gave me, and I thank her for them, we have to listen to indigenous leadership if we are going to solve the problem.

• (1550)

The Deputy Speaker: Before we continue with questions and comments, I would remind hon. members that one of the reasons we encourage members to direct their speech to the Chair and to speak in the third person mode is that it keeps the debate in that particular focus and not as an across-the-aisle kind of exchange.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed with the parliamentary secretary's speech, but not because I do not admire his passion for the topic. He said in his speech that it did not matter what words he used. We are in Parliament. It is about speaking the truth and accuracy. I agree with the member: in the GTA, in Vancouver and in indigenous communities, affordable housing is an issue. However, we cannot let passion turn us into misleading Canadians, and that is what the member has been doing.

Let me review this year. Last week, The Canadian Press had to do a story calling his attack on the NDP's plan on housing “baloney”. They assessed it on their “baloney meter” last week.

This week, his comment and the Prime Minister's comment saying they built one million units caused a furor in the papers in his own community. The Toronto Star did an article to say that, no, it did not. The member's speech was about justifying. He used the words “partially true” and “absolutely true”.

We demand more, even if one is passionate. Even today, he said “a million” again. CMHC used “almost a million”, to clarify the remark, when it is actually 770,000. There are subsidies and a whole range of things, but he is still misleading the House. Will he take this opportunity to tell us the real numbers and commit in this Parliament to say that words and claims do matter?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, what is clear is \$5.7 billion since we took office and \$40 billion over the next 10 years. The \$5.7 billion has been invested in such a way that one million housing units across this country have been affected by our support for people living in those units. The numbers are very specific, and I will come back to those numbers and give great detail on them.

We have built 14,703 units, and new ones are being added to that list every day. There are 143,684 households that have had their units repaired and restored to livability.

We also have 783,928 subsidies that have been delivered to unique and specific addresses. On top of that, 28,864 households have received support from this government.

In other words, and I want to be clear about this, more than a million Canadians have been impacted by our investments. That is because households do not have just one person each. When we add up those individual investments, yes, some of them are multi-layered, but most of them have multiple family members. Therefore, we have overachieved when we say a million.

The rhetoric I used was to describe the language, not the figures. The figures are facts. The figures are real. We have helped real people stay housed, get housed and remain in housing. We are very proud of the statistical truth of that statement.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, there are so many aspects to the housing crisis. We know that for many Canadians affordable housing and the ability to ever be able to buy a home of their own or, for many people, to even find a place they can rent is a multi-faceted problem. I am really pleased the federal government is back in the business of paying attention to the housing crisis.

Business of Supply

Because I struggle with it in my own community—and this is a bit outside the box—I want to ask the hon. member if there is a way we can figure out problems in a more collaborative, co-operative and community-based way.

My suggestion is this. Where I live, land prices are through the roof. There are seniors in my riding who really want to downsize but know that once they sell their house, there is no place they can live in their community. There are also young people struggling to find a place to live. We also have inadequate home care and seniors who are living on their own. One solution could be if the government—or it could be the private sector, but I would rather it was non-profit—found a way to mix and match and screen young couples who want to live with an older person to help them find a way to share a house, share accommodations, without all the rigmarole of bylaws and nanny suites and approvals and costs, and just helped people find each other to make their lives better intergenerationally.

• (1555)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, this housing program embraces just that kind of collaboration and co-operation.

There is a great co-housing movement that we are talking to as part of the process moving forward. It does that work of matching people together to create co-housing solutions when people need companionship as well as housing in order to thrive in their housing. The co-op housing sector does it as well, as do other organizations that provide support to tenant groups. That is also included in the complexity and all-encompassing reach this housing strategy has put in place.

The co-investment fund also brings together and rewards collaboration. We look for those partnerships in particular with municipal governments and service providers.

We have a great program for veterans coming out of Bala, where a Legion surrendered its parking lot to a housing program. It is building units of affordable housing for seniors, and also accessible housing for injured vets. The Legion is volunteering time for service, the city is waiving development fees, and we are providing financing and a grant to get that project going.

It is exactly the kind of collaboration that was unavailable to housing providers under the Conservatives, who did not like co-operation and collaboration. In fact, they would pull CMHC funding if there was veterans' funding on the site. That was their approach. We are rewarding that approach and making sure it happens.

I want to take this one opportunity to tell the leader of the Green Party that she failed to mention the environment. I am shocked.

One of the ways to making housing more affordable is to make it so that it reduces its greenhouse gas emissions and consumption of energy. We have a great program in Nanaimo that saw 36 units of passive housing built under the innovation fund by an indigenous friendship centre, outside the indigenous housing program but as part of our program. That particular housing program has supportive housing for youth and aging out of care. It has places for elders to live and families to live, with common rooms and supports, in a community setting. It is beautifully designed in the west plank tradition, but get this: Because it is passive housing, the heating and

cooling costs are \$20 a month. It is better housing, cheaper housing, and it is reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

When we embrace complexity, we get brilliant solutions. When we open up the housing policy to everybody, including indigenous partners, who have some brilliant ideas, we get the best housing this country has ever produced. That has come out of the national housing strategy.

If the member for Durham would like to come and visit some housing programs as opposed to talking about the language I used, I can show him projects from coast to coast to coast that would take his breath away and maybe even make him decide to reinvest in housing if he ever got back into government, which is not going to happen soon.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Salaberry—Suroît.

[Member spoke in Dene as follows:]

K'oldhere nedhe marsı nedheñ sı, norıya1 dırı motion sets'enı Saskatoon west hots'ı begħa dayaitı ha yoh bası, duħu dzıne k'e hots'ı duħu t'a dene yorel ıh beba yatı ha Canada k'eyaghé nuheñ yastı sıniyé sı du dzıne k'e, der horıcha á yoh bası yatı ha nuħı NDP dethılthı eyı begħa dayaitı edere Tsamba K'oddheré Nedhé Liberal Government detthı edıñı dıadanıdheñ k'e heñdé hoñeñ neñe ha nodorıl ıh ha á du dzıne k'e soła t'ıs neñe hutó, hotthé ts'en nats'edé bekué beba

hotthé hots'ı dene daiı, yoh hodórl ıh, yoh tı horet'ı t'ok'e hesat sı nıtelasé tué, tulú k'e hesal lı dene das ıh la, bekué doródlı hu, tu dada, tu horel ıh be badé hutó, hétézés kué dodı sı La Ronge nıya dé, eyı t'a Scattered Site hetúlyé nıya dé eyer nadaretyá nes ıh fı la, eyer tthı koťé

eyer bedharedı walı kı há edıñı bekué darodı hı, t'ok'e watése k'odorelyá t'ok'e noróde k'odorelyále

hel tthı nuhel k'orushı nesdheñ la, t'ahı dene bekué dodı hotthēñ nats'edé dene, ası betst'ıle, koťé yu tthı dabets'ıle hu, ber tthı dabets'ı, thetesé tthı bekué darodı, bela daiı t'a beba doréñá ası k'adé naidı á hutó koťué a huto beba dorená, eyı tthı yeh dabets'ıle sı Denegodhé erıhtııs kué naradé t'ats'en bekué ch'ası hedeł dé, erıhtııs kué nadé ha, bekué dodı a ba darená la tı'o watés hıle, t'a la għa datheı, ten nadaghıñı chu tı dattıı chu, eyı tthı bekué sı tı t'a yutthēñ naradé beskeñe hel eyı ts'ekui beskeñe hułı dé, tı huto tałtı huto nahı danéchele se eyı tthı bekué dorodı, bebá daróná deneyu tı dabéghaı tı deneyu

Business of Supply

ta'le beghai hots'en a'nedhé hots'e heli eyi tth'i beba dorená a'nedh dené ta'lagh ghehi bets'edi taghe sa k'e eyi t'ahi a hená beba horé ba horená nahí bek'esoredí lu, k'ot'i hu, koldheh hu, beba dorená, kalu yarólini yaróli wasile así t'asídene yah yets'orónile a, eyi a'nedh dene tsamba aze segharelchuth a hunaghé nadáana gha' naghá ha, k'alí la'te tahu kosi hegál ber naní kuli horíti, hotthe ne'n ts'en nats'edé eyi a horelyu basé, a'nedhe basé tth'i tsamba be u neí a tth'i hu así díti hu yeh dabets'ilé, taghi ts'akui Montreal Lake hots'i La Ronge nadheri, eyi kot'ela, tsamba K'odheri nedhe Saskatchewan hots'i, tsamba K'odheré ja Ottawa hots'i

yets'enilé, ta' kuli yets'enilé, wé beníni chu etelt'é, t'ahi tsamba daitsi ghadalaredá, ta' daitsile ta' daitsi chu, tthi beba doréna la, yeh nóini n'idheh dekulí tsamba kel...tsamba denenalyé kue tth'i tsamba yeghanolyi lo yaróli, así basí eyi chikalé nilyé kulé eyi besheh yé nilyé kuli díti lá eyi a t'a hotthe nats'edé hotiye t'i hadóreina s'i, Tsamba K'odhere deitth'i yenidanarenilé s'i ber naní kul tie díti la sekui ha así hote ha honidheh li eyi tth'i ha tsamba horet'i la tsamba dodí de, tie díti hu así ts'en nawadé hile horelyu kot'e dawunilé la, dene ta' estúdanet'i adalaredá kuli

ta hedhi ye, kut'a, bela dayi noreltth'i hotthé nats'edé, Tsamba K'odheré nedhe, tie dene ts'erani chole s'i

hotthé ts'en nats'edé, s'i tok'e hots'i ast'i Nitelas to s'i kolé, t'a nastheré rent nasni, s'i sekuelé s'i, dene kue nasther chu telt'e s'i

eyi a kohut'e s'i t'a yuttheh ts'en nats'edé begha yatí kulé, dene ha horená la

talsé ja la'te koni dedheh la, s'i seba honidheh la hot'i dé, ta, K'odhi... dhi K'olde so'a t'is hogai ne'n ts'en k'oldé beba doréna ti doretdzai, yeh basí, Tsamba K'odheri hel dat'u yeh hega ha, dat'u tsamba nilyé dene yoh hega hutó, yoh serolyé ha eyi ha kolá, ti horená la hel tth'i, t'a Samba K'odheri nedhe Saskatchewan ts'i, eya t'at'u s'i k'adé eyi a kuli, dene ta tel'del hu bekue dodí dareitth'i Sandy Bay kuli, dat'e dene bekue tedet bekue ts'i, naradé kulí dodí s'i t'ats'en naradé k'olyali, kuli eyi Tsamba K'odheré nedhe bekue nathetsi, eyi naini yet'si t'ak'e nadéle duhe, dene ts'inoilé dene ts'ení lé s'i eyi a kohut'e s'i hel tth'i hówusni, nehel korúsi nesdheh, t'a ba dorená yoh bets'i lú, ya bets'i chu, beba dorená, eleráda chu

ts'edi chu etelt'e, tsamba ta' horet'i, yeh naní chu ni'ha naní há Conservatives t'o Tsamba K'odheré daghi'é, eyi tth'i dene ta' kenit'ath tsamba nilyé tth'i kenit'ath hi, eyi dodí halá s'i diri Liberal tsambe K'odheré dene deitth'i eyi tth'i kot'e s'i, hone'na ne'ne hots'en nóts' deitth'i horel ih, du dene ha horená hu, bets'en hozel té hó du dene ha horená a, bets'en nayaiti hu yoh horet'i a yawi a, dene ts'en deit'ile s'i hone'na ne'ne ha nozet ih ha, nizulé ala

eyi a kuhut'e sa ediri yoh, nahí ta' t'a naradaí so'a t'is ne'ne, hu, t'ahí hogai k'e nats'edé, dene kue hel tuni a, nahí chuth arat'ila, chuth araja de dene ye a kuli bore'dé hu senalé ko ra tsamba horet'e lá eyi kot'u, t'a Tsamba K'odheri nedhe et's'oradi li kot'ile, tahi, d s'i hots'i, tsamba K'odheri nedhe dene ts'ení horet' ih ni ye yuwe t'a tahi

samba k'odheri nedhe, nayetsi la, eyi a dene ba darónala ediat'u yoh senalyalo a? dat'u natside wali kó a dat'u? yoh horit a kóli dene, dene godhé huto atedhe huto t'a lasi yoh nawasdhi s'i xare sekue hores ih a honidheh ko ha due la'te tsamba horet'i hu, tsamba hedí de, ni'ha naní hu tsamba hedí de tok'e nats'edher tth'i nawaní la eyi du dzine k'e, s'inye s'i, ja nuwehet yawusti yoh basí t'at'u hotthé k'e nats'edé huto, so'a rith'is ne'n huto hogai k'enats'e yoh basí, beba yatí ha

noni dek'ath dethiltth'i kóli, eyi ba ya'ití la eyi a, s'ini s'i ja nuxal thiyi ha nuha yasti diri dene a nuhel yasti, nuhel hosni, yoh basí, horicha ts'edi s'i dene hotthé t'at'u daghéna, so'a rith'is ne'ne hu, tanis ts'en beyas dene hu deschogh hotthé ts'i dene naradé, eyi koret'i s'i ba hoba, edini t'adaniidheh hi k'e eyi kot'u de tu k'adhi li s'i, eyi de tsamba K'odhere nedhe dene ts'edel ni ha la kot'ile dé, beba horená etelt'e i ho ha tsamba K'odhere nedhe dia daniidheh k'e, kot'u het'et horel ih a

konidheh de hone'na ne'ne ts'en, nozet ih hadé, dene nu'dé ha la sekui tth'i, ta' beghai hané halá node nodedhilé eyi kot'i benahedher de heitth'i k'odhi nedhe dene ts'ini de, edé k'adhi wali la, honidheh, honedheh a ja huheh yasti s'i dat'u dene ha, yoh hu'li wali ha

[Dene text interpreted as follows:]

Today I rise to support the motion that my friend, the member for Saskatoon West, has put forward to create an immediate and necessary response to the housing crisis in Canada. I am glad to be speaking today as a follow-up to the important call to action that the NDP put forward to the Liberal government to immediately address the crisis in housing in on-reserve and northern homes.

As a northerner, I see the crisis. We need a lot of housing in my community of La Loche. Walking the streets of La Loche, I see people who are struggling without homes and without water and do not know where they are going to get their next meal and where they are going to sleep. When I go to La Ronge, in front of the shelters like Scattered Site in La Ronge, I see people who are trying to get a meal.

It is important to see that the homeless people do not just sit on the streets all day.

I want to say more here about people who do not have houses. They do not have much with them. They do not have clothes or food or shelter or anywhere to sleep. People who are struggling with addictions, with alcohol, need housing too; they do not have housing. Youth and students who are away from their homes to attend school do not have homes when they are attending schools or university. People who are low-income wage earners who make money and single mothers who are often with young children and babies are people who do not have homes, and they are struggling too. Men of all ages are struggling as well. Those people do not have homes, and they are struggling too.

Business of Supply

Elders and seniors across northern Saskatchewan are more likely to be abused, and they are less likely to report the abuse they experience. They will not tell the RCMP, because they feel the RCMP will not help them. The cost of living is higher for seniors and the costs of medication and transportation to see a doctor are increasing. Even food is expensive. Money is scarce, and they do not have much. One elder I know from Montreal Lake is living in a shelter. The federal government and provincial government are ignoring her. She is forgotten by a system where nobody wants to help her.

People with low incomes and people who make lots of money are struggling to buy and maintain homes in the north. To borrow money is hard for them too. The cost of supplies and to transport lumber to the north is expensive. Maintenance costs are only increasing for the average person in the north. The cost of food for everyone is increasing. For those earners who have children, the cost of food, clothes and education is up too.

People who are working are in poverty too. What people in the north want is different from what the government is providing.

• (1600)

In my own community of La Loche, I see homeowners where I am living. I am a renter. I feel like I am living in a homeless place, because there are no places to go.

It is hard to talk about these kinds of things. It is kind of embarrassing too.

People on reserve have a tough time too. They try really hard to talk to the government about how to build houses and how to put money away for housing issues. It is difficult to do that too. In Saskatchewan, sometimes people get evicted and lose their houses. In Sandy Bay, dozens of families are victims of the cost of living. They do not know where to go. The government took the money and could help the people of the north. Furthermore, people who are struggling with housing and also people who have houses, whether working or not, still need a lot of money for housing and property.

The Conservatives, when they were in power, cut off funding for a lot of people, and there is no more money for that. The Liberal government is the same, cutting the funds for housing. It is hard for people in the north to ask for help with funding. They need a lot of money for housing.

People wait quite a bit for housing, at least 10 years. For people living in housing, on reserve and in municipalities, many of the houses are in bad condition with, for example, mould and they get diseases from that. None of the government departments is providing answers or hope.

It is kind of confusing for people, young or old, to find a house, to just try to live. They need funding for housing. They cannot buy property without money. That is why I am proud today to support a motion today that provides a measurable goal that means something to people, because funding formulas are always changing and confusing Canadians' measure of the success of housing. I am happy to be here to talk about this.

Speaking Dene about housing issues is a huge thing for me. People living on reserve, Métis people and far north people need

money for housing and to be supportive of them and the way they think about housing. We need the government to reach out to the people who need housing. When government thinks about the funding, it thinks about what is best for them.

Kids are going to suffer, and when they get older they will not know where to go. To also think about those kinds of things, we need the government to help the Dene people. That is why I am here to talk about housing for the people. That is why I am standing here today asking.

[English]

• (1605)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the most humble way possible, I would like to thank the member for the words delivered in her language. They communicate to us not just the elegance and the beauty of her culture, but also the importance of the issue we are debating today. I am proud to stand in the House and in a country that has moved toward accepting those words with that voice in the House. It makes us all better.

As someone who has clearly not chosen their words in their own native tongue this week very well and who struggles with French, saying *ᑭᓄᓐᑭᓐ* would be just the beginning of the way to say thanks to the member, but it is *chi-meegwetch* in the language of part of the country I represent.

I know the member is a fierce advocate for her people and for her riding because of the question she asked on the floor of the House just before we rose in December. The question was about getting supportive housing and a housing project for women, who were fleeing very difficult circumstances, built, supported and installed. We worked together to get that money. People should not have to ask questions in the House of Commons to get housing or funding. Governments need to provide those dollars systematically, fairly and equitably across the country.

The question I have for the member opposite is a simple one. There is no specific carve out for indigenous housing in the NDP motion. Could we expect a better promise from the NDP than in the last campaign where it only put \$25 million into indigenous infrastructure on an annual basis? Could we expect a comprehensive approach to indigenous housing on and off reserve in remote and urban settings before the next election so we can all understand, from the member's perspective, how we can do better?

Ms. Georgina Jolibois:

[Member spoke in Dene as follows:]

e Churchill River... edınlı t'otı sorıkeré sıttı kottu ts'en boresker hores ıh dıat'a a ne t'a tı erıttı's dathuıtsı hotthé dene deıttı, hotthe nats'edé hutó tanıs ts'en beyas dene huto soıa rıttı's neıen huto yutthé ts'ı dene ha ası tıttı's le lahot'ı la eyı ha ttı, t'at'u yoh hoıe ha, t'at'u tsamba nııye ha, ttı dodi lahot'ı la loıa neıe, nózet ıh dınlı ne dene esotonet'ınlı la hola

Business of Supply

ɗaɗ'e a eyi bets'úni horúɪ ɪh le a? neɪ nozól ɪh ha dɪni hɪdu, kót'u darúti daɪyoɪti la, due sɪ dene a núnɪ t'at'u nesdheɪ thɪ ts'eyahíti la.

[Dene text interpreted as follows:]

Mr. Speaker, whatever the member asked me, I am asking him the same question too. Why the policy his government made for people in the north, on reserve people, Métis people and northern Saskatchewan people? It seems like the government did not do anything to understand how to make houses, to put funding away for housing. It seems like there is not enough money over there. It seems like the government is waiting at least 10 years for that and people are poor there most of the time.

Why will the government not help them? Stop waiting and help them. It is the way the government speaks about helping people. To speak Dene is the way I speak and to help members.

[English]

• (1610)

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her advocacy on behalf of the people she represents not only in Saskatchewan and across Canada but also with my colleagues. As our housing critic, she has helped to remind me of the issues that need to be included when we talk about housing. We have moved from somewhere to somewhere better, but all members, all caucuses, all parties have a way to go to acknowledge and really work in partnership.

My colleagues have brought forward the need for a distinct strategy for indigenous people in rural, remote and urban centres in Canada quite separate from a housing strategy on reserve. It was my understanding that it would be part of the conversation today when we talked about building more housing, moving investment sooner. It was my understanding that they would be an integral part of what we talked about.

I wonder if the member would comment on what might be included in such a strategy.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois:

[Member spoke in Dene as follows:]

Misinipi Churchill River Marsi chogh diri Canada k'eyaghe naidé, t'anesdheɪ t'a yuttheɪ naɗadé hotthé naɗadé chu heɪ tth'i solá ríht'is neɪ ts'e de tth'i yoh haiyonla nats'edé, ena dene hu, taɪt's'ebeyas dene hu hotthé hots'i dene, eyi horelyu, ta k'esi, horelyu ba yatɪ hu etth'i erith'is dett'is hu, t'at'u dok'e tsamba het'el het'eli ha honidheɪ t'at'u bets'edi walɪ eyi kót'u dé, horelyu dene ts'edi etelt'é sɪ, marsi.

[Dene text interpreted as follows:]

Mr. Speaker, in Canada where we live, this is what I think. We need to talk to people who are living in the north, people who are living on reserve and people who are living in the communities, indigenous people, Métis people, about housing as a whole and about where the funds are going, how to help people deal with the housing crisis. That is the way we can help people.

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure members in the House that there is a separate and distinct approach to indigenous housing that is under way with this government, with \$1.5 billion in the last budget. It is a specific approach with the Inuit, a specific approach with the ITK, a specific approach with the Assembly of First Nations and a specific approach with the Métis nation.

We also are embarking on a distinction-based approach to indigenous populations living outside the treaty system, outside not just urban centres but also in the north. Members will see work on this in the very near future.

We also have invested and changed the way in which the homeless partnership strategy, now called “Reaching Home”, reaches into indigenous communities and the north. Robert Byers, who was an indigenous housing provider in Saskatchewan, has said that there is no reconciliation without housing, and we take that wise counsel seriously.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to rise in the House to support the motion moved by my colleague from Saskatoon West urging the government to invest—

The Deputy Speaker: I apologize, but I forgot to recognize the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for her reply to the question.

[English]

Ms. Georgina Jolibois:

[Member spoke in Dene as follows:]

sɪ, t'at'u beneresni tsamba k'odheri nedhe etth'i nuhel hóniɪ le eyi hotthé nats'edé u eyi ɗaɗ'u henɪ eyi t'a k'oldé, dene daylál la ɗaɗ'u beneresni, t'a basɪ solá ríht'is neɪ ts'ɛɪn ɗalı, t'a k'oldé, t'a dene yayla, eyi dene ha dayatɪ al haɪ t'ai, hogai ke k'oldé naɗadé, ɗalya, k'oldheri ɗalı, eyi tth'i dene ha dayatɪ la eyi behayaltɪ horeɪ ɪh la, t'at'u yoh ha tsamba ghet'eli ha, ba yatɪ ha kót'u kót'u tsamba dhe, k'odheré nedhé ts'ɛɪn kót'u orekɛ la, ɗaɗ'e koyehilɛ a due a?

[Dene text interpreted as follows:]

Mr. Speaker, the way I understand this, the government is not telling us the truth, the people who are living in the north. The way he is talking about it, the people are in charge. The way I understand this, the government is doing that for the people who are living on reserve. The people who are voted in, they talk for them. Also people who are living in communities, people who are leaders talk for their people. We can talk to those people too about housing, how the funds are distributed and how to ask the government for the funds. Why can they not do that?

• (1615)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everybody makes mistakes. All is forgiven.

Business of Supply

Again, I am very proud to rise in the House today to debate and support the motion moved by my colleague from Saskatoon West. This motion deals with a very important issue, the housing crisis in Canada. The motion calls on the government to do much more than it is doing right now. We are in a crisis situation. Many people are living on the streets and are forced into homelessness because they cannot afford housing, when that should be a right.

Canada is experiencing an unprecedented housing crisis. We are seeing skyrocketing house prices, rising rents, rental shortages, long waiting lists for social housing, and a rise in homelessness.

An RBC study shows that the average cost of home ownership in major cities amounts to 48% of a household's income. Half of the household income goes to housing. Generally speaking, for housing to be affordable for an individual or a family, they should be investing a maximum of 30% of their after-tax income. The study shows that on average, households spend half their income on housing. That is truly exorbitant. It is very hard to get by. In Vancouver, that number spikes to a whopping 88%. People in Vancouver have a hard time surviving when housing costs nearly 100% of their earnings. It is therefore not surprising that far too often, many graduates and young workers can neither buy a home nor find a decent place to rent.

Paul Kershaw of Generation Squeeze, which is based in British Columbia, conducted a study in 2016. He found that while the cost of housing had doubled across the country since 1976, and tripled in metro Vancouver, incomes had fallen for younger Canadians. After adjusting for inflation, full-time earnings for a typical Canadian aged 25 to 34 had fallen over \$4,000 since 1976. This drop in earnings makes it even harder to buy a home, especially in major urban centres.

In the 40 years between 1976 and 2016, the rate of home ownership among young Canadians dropped 24%. Between 1976 and 1980, it took five years of full-time work for a person aged 25 to 34 to save a 20% down payment for a house. Because wages are down and housing prices are so much higher, it now takes younger Canadians nearly 12 years of work to save a comparable down payment. In short, it is becoming harder and harder for young people to put a roof over their heads, even working full time.

Immediate action is needed to combat Canada's housing crisis. The lack of social and affordable housing is deeply troubling. In a country as rich as ours, it is unacceptable that so many people are desperately searching for social or affordable housing.

I want to remind members that housing is a right and that Canada signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, or ICESCR. The first paragraph of article 11 reads as follows:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

As a signatory to the ICESCR, our country has a duty to take concrete action on this right to housing. This means that the government is required to provide a sufficient number of low-cost

housing units and to guarantee access for the poorest citizens. This is absolutely not the case right now, since 1.7 million families are living in inadequate, unsuitable or unaffordable conditions. The problem with the national housing strategy proposed by the Liberals is that 90% of the money allocated will not be spent until after the next election.

• (1620)

The money was announced two years ago, but 90% of it will not be spent until after the next election. There is no light at the end of the tunnel for people living with stress, anxiety, depression and addiction issues, because the funds are not flowing. The government is handling this crisis as though it is no big deal, as though it is not even a crisis.

Even government members, following the Prime Minister's lead, boast about making housing available to vast numbers of Canadians. The harsh reality is that there may be as few as 15,000 new units and about 100,000 repaired units. All of the money that has been spent had already been earmarked. That is not tackling the crisis; that is just maintaining the existing housing supply.

The member for Spadina—Fort York grudgingly admitted that the Liberals inflate figures to rhetorical advantage. That is absolutely scandalous. We know that families and children are suffering because of the nationwide housing shortage. What should I tell Claude, a constituent of mine who is having a hard time making ends meet while he waits for housing? The Liberals just see housing as something to be used to rhetorical advantage.

I will outline the situation in the biggest city in my riding. There is a desperate lack of social and affordable housing in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield. A family making less than \$21,000 must spend between 40% and 70% of its income on rent and hydro. Thousands of people back home in Salaberry—Suroît are in that situation.

Claude, whom I mentioned a moment ago, is a young man in his 40s living with an illness that has kept him from working for the past two years. He gets some assistance from the provincial government, but nothing from the federal government. His monthly income is a little over \$1,000, which is not very much. Half of his income goes to his rent and hydro. After he pays all his bills, he has only \$80 a week left to buy food and clothing or to get a haircut. He has requested subsidized housing, but since he just moved to Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, he will have to wait for several months before he can even apply. Even once he does apply, he will be on a wait list that is between three and five years long.

In a country as rich as Canada, why do our vulnerable citizens have to wait so long just to get a roof over their heads, when housing is a right?

Business of Supply

This has been going on in Canada for decades. The Conservatives and the Liberals have let the situation deteriorate. No, the right to housing should not be fodder for rhetoric. We are talking about the lives of millions of Canadians, among them thousands of people in my riding. Anyone who does not believe me can talk to people working on the ground, like Christina Girard, the coordinator of the Comité logement Beauharnois, who says that there is an urgent need for new social housing units.

This housing crisis is particularly hard on women, whether they are by themselves or have children. Salaberry-de-Valleyfield has a very high rate of single-parent families, or 32.4%, compared to all of Quebec, with about 25%. Women are strongly affected by not being able to afford rent or the possibility of ending up on the street, which can cause mental health or addiction issues. The most common solution to this instability is to provide single-room housing, in spite of the health risks associated with this type of housing. The bathrooms and kitchens in these buildings are shared and are rarely in good shape.

A study shows that the rising use of single-room housing, where the other rooms are shared, exacerbates women's inequality. The authors of this study observed various types of abuse against women in this type of housing, including lack of security, difficult living conditions, paternalistic rules and even employees demanding sexual favours in exchange for providing access to the women's mail. Abusive acts coupled with women's unstable situations make them more vulnerable to eviction and force them to challenge such abuse.

In 2015, in the Suroît area, 8.6% of families with children between the ages of 0 and 17 lived below the poverty line, after taxes. In Salaberry-de-Valleyfield alone, the average cost of housing is \$678 a month. The Valleyfield housing committee intervened 533 times in 2017. In 2018 there were 366 homeless persons and 1,176 people at risk of becoming homeless in the Suroît area.

• (1625)

The situation is so urgent and alarming that housing issues are part of the social development plan of the Beauharnois-Salaberry RCM. Reeve Maude Laberge invited me and other municipal and provincial elected officials to discuss a strategy and to ensure that housing, among other things, is a priority. When a rural area is not a priority, as is the case with our area, it is difficult to obtain funding for affordable housing, since we are not a major urban centre. All the money is spent in major urban centres, and regions like Salaberry—Suroît are left with the crumbs. We have the data to prove that rural areas have a desperate need for housing, and it is about time that the minister woke up and changed the funding.

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about generation squeeze, which is an idea that has come from an academic in British Columbia who is particularly focused on the inaccessibility of private housing to first-time buyers on the west coast. The average home price in Vancouver is \$1.6 million. That requires a down payment of \$320,000. To put that in context, that is more expensive than the condo I own, and I live in Toronto. Quite clearly, there is an impediment to first-time buyers getting into the market.

New Democrats have promised to spend \$125 million to subsidize people who have \$320,000 to put on a down payment and can carry mortgages of \$1.3 million, which is beyond any of our salaries. Their priority for homebuyers in their election promises being made in the by-election is to get an extra \$750 into the hands of millionaires as a way of solving the housing crisis.

I am wondering if the member opposite is concerned about generation squeeze. Why would New Democrats spend \$125 million on people who have \$320,000 in their pockets now to get housing, as opposed to using that \$125 million to build housing for people who need it?

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, if I were him, I would not laugh so hard at the NDP's proposals.

The Liberals invested \$4.5 billion in the Trans Mountain pipeline. According to the report we received, they overpaid by \$1 billion for a pipeline that is going to pollute the planet even more and contribute to increasing greenhouse gas emissions instead of reducing them. All those billions of dollars could have been invested in the housing crisis.

We are trying to find solutions to ensure that young people, seniors, indigenous people, vulnerable persons and women can find housing and escape poverty. There are solutions on the table. The government has consulted enough organizations that work on the ground with the homeless and people living in poverty. At some point, the Liberals will have to take a look in the mirror, try to come up with solutions, implement those solutions and invest money where it is needed. We cannot wait another 10 years or until after the next election to invest 90% of the money allocated where it is needed on the ground. I think it should be invested right now. That money should have been invested years ago.

[English]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member was talking about the pipeline and how it affected the environment and everything else. If it was not going to be built or added on, how does she expect those homes to be heated? How does she expect the material to build those homes to be delivered to them? How does she expect the materials that come from our forest industry to be developed? How does she expect this whole thing to happen without having a pipeline to supply fuel so that those products can be delivered to be built, etc.?

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the housing strategy, and, indeed, a lot of investments are needed. The Conservatives should not really talk either. When they were in power, they cut \$119 million from the housing strategy. They are talking out of both sides of their mouths today.

Business of Supply

A number of experts would be prepared to collaborate with the Conservatives on the development of sustainable energy sources if only the Conservatives believed in climate change, if only they were not climate change deniers, and if they were prepared to find solutions for the transition. According to many experts, Alberta is the ideal location to develop solar energy to heat homes and businesses. I am no expert, but I meet with experts who are able to provide figures, strategies and plans, which the government currently does not have. A number of experts are saying that we are at an impasse, because there are many targets but no way to achieve them, since national departments have no plan.

• (1630)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Victoria, Veterans Affairs; and the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, the Environment.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton West.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share my time today with the amazing member of Parliament for Lethbridge.

Notionally, I support the bill. Who would not support better housing for those who cannot afford it? We have a housing affordability issue in Canada. We have an issue regarding too many regulations, which are adding costs to housing and slowing down the development of housing. Local municipalities are limiting the amount of supply. We have higher interest rates, which are pushing people out of the market. We also have an affordability issue, period, in Canada.

We have a Liberal government that sits smugly, day after day, telling us, in the face of all the evidence, that everything is fine, the economy is great and not to worry. It reminds me of the black knight in the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. He has an arm and a leg chopped off, but he is bouncing around on one leg saying that everything is okay and that he is fine. It is the same denial that we hear from the current government.

Meanwhile, we have investment fleeing from our country at record rates and interest rates are on the rise. Just recently we heard that almost 50% of Canadian families are just \$200 a month away from not being able to pay their bills. We are creating fights with our international partners: America, China, Australia and Japan. Despite what the government says, evidently we are not okay.

Let us look at how the government is making things unaffordable.

It is killing jobs. I want to talk about Alberta. The Prime Minister has stated again and again that Alberta needs to phase out the oil sands. The Liberals are doing a great job on it. They killed northern gateway, which would have brought Alberta oil to the northern B.C. coast and then to overseas Asian markets. Let us not be fooled by their claims that this was done by the courts. This was killed by a government order in cabinet.

Despite the member for Edmonton Mill Woods, a senior cabinet minister from Alberta, being at the table, he did not raise a complaint

when the government killed northern gateway. Before he was punted from cabinet, the member for Calgary Centre stated that he would pound on his desk at the cabinet table to make sure a pipeline got built, yet he sat quietly and did not say a thing while northern gateway was killed. Just a couple of weeks ago, the member for Edmonton Centre stood in the old place to say that he was proud of the pipeline-killing Bill C-69. He was proud of the government for banning tankers off the northern B.C. coast only carrying Alberta oil. He was proud of that record.

The Liberals killed energy east. Do not be fooled again by their saying it was a business decision. They killed it with regulatory changes that made us consider upstream and downstream emissions from that pipeline.

Did they make the same requirements for the Saudi oil coming in? No, they did not. This is the same Saudi Arabia that the foreign minister was bashing on Twitter regarding human rights. Nevertheless, the government can bring in the oil no problem without the same regulations as are in Alberta.

What about Venezuelan oil? Were there any issues? Of course there were not. The government is happily bringing in oil from Venezuela without the same regulatory requirements or emissions testing as exist for Alberta oil.

The government put Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain project into a coma and then nationalized it. Members have to ask themselves, who in the world, with such immense oil reserves, has the problems that exist in Canada and has to nationalize oil? It is Venezuela and no one else.

The government nationalized it to the tune of \$4.5 billion, and we just heard from the PBO that it overpaid. It was published in the paper that the Liberals overpaid by \$1 billion. That is \$1 billion if it gets built. If it is blocked, which is what I am sure the Liberals want, the existing pipeline would only be worth \$2 billion.

In response to an earlier question, the finance minister told us to read the report. I would suggest to him that he read the report himself so that he can see how much he overpaid.

The loss of revenue from the pipelines ranges from \$40 million to \$100 million a day. Scotiabank says it is \$40 million. The Government of Alberta says it is \$80 million. GMP FirstEnergy says it is \$100 million. The lowest of those numbers, from Scotiabank, works out to \$15 billion a year in lost revenue, lost wages and lost resources for the government. We have to ask ourselves what we could do for social housing with that \$15 billion.

• (1635)

There are two sides to the housing issue. It is not just a lack of available housing but a lack of good-paying jobs, and the current government is killing those jobs.

Business of Supply

The Liberal government is forcing through a carbon tax. The government's own report shows that it needs to go to \$300 a tonne to be effective. That works out to about \$5,000 a year for a family in Alberta, and it is higher in Saskatchewan. On top of that, the Liberals eliminated the sports credit for children, the arts credit for children and the public transport credit. Here they want more public transport, but they eliminate the credit for low-income people to take advantage of public transport. They eliminated income-splitting for families. They cut the tax credit for text books. Of course, they are hiking the CPP. They like to say that they are providing for the future with the CPP, but we are paying a tax now that will not benefit us for decades. Of course, there is the middle-class tax cut. Those making between \$90,000 and \$170,000 will get tax break of \$2.50 a day. However, people who are low-income, those making less than \$45,000 a year, who are hurt by the lack of affordability will not get penny from the Liberal government's tax cut.

I want to talk further about the carbon tax. We are very blessed in this country. I am very blessed in my riding of Edmonton West. We have a phenomenal number of churches, charities and not-for-profits that deliver services to the needy. We have an incredible food bank with an incredible number of volunteers, but they expect the carbon tax to hit them with between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. I am sure people opposite are confused when they see banks raise their rates, but a food bank cannot pass costs on to its clients. The churches cannot pass on the cost of the carbon tax. These are churches that go out and provide help for the food banks and help to the needy.

One of my favourite organizations in my riding is called the Elves Special Needs Society. It looks after Edmonton's most disabled and disadvantaged people from ages one or two up to 55. It cannot afford the added carbon tax. Some of its clients cannot feed themselves, breathe for themselves or care for themselves. Members of the Elves Special Needs Society had to go the food bank and beg and borrow to get adult diapers for some of their clients, as it is so stretched for money, yet the government wants to add a carbon tax on top.

I want to talk about the fast and loose numbers for the Liberals' housing program. The Prime Minister said in this place that the government has already helped one million people find housing. However, here is the truth. The government's own document from the department shows that they have actually helped 7,500, not a million. The government's own document said 7,500 last year, which dropped from the previous year and the year before that.

The Liberals said they have spent \$5 billion this year on housing. A report from the former Parliamentary Budget officer, Kevin Page, says that they have actually only spent \$1.3 billion over the last couple of years. The Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy said:

This all begs the question: Where is the proposed \$40 billion National Housing Strategy funding? By following the funding throughout the years and tracking what is "new" money, we have painted a picture of what the NHS looks like apart from the glossy document that accompanied its announcement. And unfortunately, for now, the NHS is virtually nowhere to be seen in the federal fiscal framework.

Once again, for the government, I give it an A for announcements, but Canadians give it a D for delivery.

We have an affordability crisis in housing and day-to-day living in this country, and the Liberal government is making it worse, as I made it very clear. Heaven forbid the Liberals get re-elected. They

are going to jack up taxes and make it even worse for common, everyday Canadians.

● (1640)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, listening to the Conservatives talk housing policy is like the Monty Python sketch with the parrot. They insist it is a housing policy. No, it is not. They say, "Yes, it is." No, it is not.

If someone says to Conservatives that people are on the street or that people are being de-housed because they have cut subsidies to co-ops, they say, "No, they are not". If we say that they are not building any housing, they say, "Yes, we are." They are not. It is not funny, but that is the Conservatives' approach to housing.

They do not have a housing program, do not think they need one and do not want one. In fact, over the last 10 years, they actually evicted people and grew the number of homeless people on the street. They grew the backlog of repairs in public housing while they refused to co-operate with provinces, municipalities and indigenous governments to deliver housing programs.

I will give credit to the NDP members. When they talk about housing, they are talking about housing. When the Conservatives talk about housing, they are talking about pipelines. On that issue, they also get their numbers wrong. When more than 700,000 Canadians are subsidized and the affordability of their housing is sustained because they may have disabilities, may not be able to work because of mental health or addiction issues, or may have income issues because they are veterans and are on fixed incomes, which they cut, by the way, and the subsidies are not sustained, which are real dollars helping real people, people are evicted, homelessness is created and affordability is taken away. Are the Conservatives not sorry for cutting the operating subsidies for seniors residences in Alberta, which is one of the biggest cuts they made?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving the opportunity to the hon. member to continue misleading Canadians. It is funny. I offered to table a document in this House showing that since the Liberals came to power, seniors poverty has risen. Just a couple of days ago, they stood in this House, hand over heart, saying how much they have done for seniors. The Library of Parliament has shown that under this government, seniors poverty has increased.

Business of Supply

The Prime Minister said, “We invested in a national housing strategy, which has already helped nearly one million people find housing”. This is the Prime Minister stating that they have helped almost one million people find housing. It was not “assisted”, not “upgraded”, not “helped out with some renovations”. They “helped nearly one million people find housing”.

The following is from the departmental results report from the hon. member's own department. The minister is actually in the room. He probably signed off on it. I am sure he did not read it. It says that the target for the number of people placed in more stable housing through the program was 15,000, and what they achieved last year was 7,145. The government cannot be trusted on anything it says in this House or outside this House.

The Deputy Speaker: A reminder to all hon. members not to invoke either the presence or absence of other hon. members in the House.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question about housing for indigenous people.

In my opinion, it is clear that the needs are enormous. During question period, the NDP showed several times how concerned it is about this problem.

We are seeing a real housing crisis both on and off reserve. For example, mould is a big problem. That is a serious health concern, particularly for indigenous adults and children and first nations people living on reserve. A national household survey showed that almost 40% of homes in indigenous communities need major repairs, and close to 35% are not suitable for the family's size. In some Inuit communities, the proportion of unsuitable housing exceeds 50%.

Does my colleague agree with me that indigenous people living both on and off reserve are experiencing a real housing crisis and that the government needs to take immediate action to address this very harmful situation?

• (1645)

[English]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, yes, it is an issue that has to be addressed. I would like to point out that two years ago, the budget actually included more money from Canadians for subsidized charging stations for Teslas for wealthy Canadians than money put aside for first nations housing up north. That is the hypocrisy of the Liberal government. It stands again and again and says that nothing is more important than that relationship, but when it comes time to deliver anything, it is nowhere to be seen. The hypocrisy must end. We have to start looking after Canadians, and not just have announcements from the government.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about it. All people across this country, from coast to coast, should have the opportunity to have a roof over their heads, food on the table and a warm and comfortable place to call home. People should feel secure in that place and should be proud to live in that place.

The motion before the House has an excellent intent. It highlights the need that exists in our country. We know that there are vulnerable

populations that currently do not have access to housing. We know that there are others who live in housing that is perhaps not to the standard it should be, so the intent of the motion is certainly very good. I would highlight that first and foremost.

There is some excellent work being done by organizations across this country to help those individuals who do not have access to housing. I wish to take a moment to commend them for the incredible work they are doing, whether that is churches or not-for-profit organizations or individuals in our local ridings across this country, because they are doing some phenomenal work with those who need their help.

That said, there is a larger question being asked here, and that is with regard to overall affordability and access to housing. We know that the majority of Canadians wish to own a home. Rent is okay, but home ownership is the ultimate dream for most individuals. We know that with it comes a sense of pride, a sense of accomplishment and a sense of autonomy. It is an honour to own a piece of property, a home or a shelter, a place to build a life.

In my parents' generation, it was common that a couple could purchase a home at approximately age 20 to 25 and perhaps then have children and outgrow that home. They would then be able to purchase a new home after the sale of the smaller one and would continue working their way through the housing market.

Unfortunately, this is not the way things are today. Instead, people in the millennial generation still have the dream of owning a home. They want that sense of pride, that sense of autonomy and that sense of accomplishment. They want that place of security to establish a life for themselves. Sixty-four per cent of young people recently surveyed by Abacus Data said that the federal government should place emphasis on housing affordability. They said that it is a dream of theirs to own a home. That said, it should be highlighted that they face a very different scenario than my parents' generation faced.

For those between the ages of 25 and 34 looking to purchase a home in 2017, the average price of a home was \$510,000. The average salary of an individual in 2017 was just under \$50,000. This equates to a ratio of 10:1. The cost of a house was 10 times annual income. In 1976, the scenario was very different. The average price of a home was about \$213,000 in this country, and the average salary was about \$54,000, so it was a ratio of about 4:1. We can see that in the 1970s, we were dealing with a ratio of 4:1, and as of 2017, we are dealing with a ratio of 10:1, which makes it incredibly difficult for young people to save up and afford a home and realize their dream. As a response to this, then, young people are actually giving up on this dream. There was a recent survey done that highlighted that more than half of Canadians who once dreamed of home ownership have actually put that dream aside.

Interestingly, this just happened in 2017. Why did it happen in 2017? I would like to take this opportunity to explain why that was such a significant year. It was a year after the current government put some very significant changes in place with regard to the mortgage rules. The Liberals are making it very difficult to save for a home to begin with, because a first step is being able to put a little money aside each month after working long hours.

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●(1650)

However, people are having a hard time doing this because they cannot even afford to pay their basic bills. Forty-eight per cent of Canadians are within \$200 a month of not being able to pay for their basic necessities, including food on the table, fuel in their vehicles and a roof over their head, let alone being able to put aside money toward a mortgage. It is here that we have to start: just the basic place of being able to save toward that dream.

The second place we need to look is at the stress test that was implemented by the current government. It is a mortgage change and it makes it incredibly difficult for a young person or anyone who is looking for a first home to purchase. In fact, 20% fewer people are being approved now than before the stress test was implemented.

The rules that have been put in place are now unfairly hindering people from purchasing homes and they are depressing the market at the same time. This means that for those who already own a home, the value of those homes is depreciating, which is discouraging for them because many are looking to their homes to provide for their retirement.

Fewer people being able to qualify for mortgages means many of them are putting the dream aside. However, for some who are fortunate enough to have parents who might be willing to sign off on the mortgage with them, it means this is happening more and more. These parents are signing on the dotted line. For parents who sign their children's mortgages, it impacts their personal financial well-being, security and ability to retire. We can see the detrimental impact of just the stress test.

Individuals who purchase a home not only have to save for the home and then qualify for the home with the application and the stress test, but then they have the ongoing payments to keep that home. To be able to make these payments, life needs to be affordable in general. It is not just the house but there is the fuel in their vehicles, the home heating costs and the food on their tables. All of these things are part of the cost of living.

Growing interest rates make mortgages more difficult to pay, which is a challenge for many Canadians and will continue to be so. Also, there is the simple math of the margin, a person's income versus what a person needs to spend to be able to live. We know that margin is getting slimmer. We are seeing that. We are watching as the current federal government is making life less affordable for everyday Canadians. We are watching as the Liberals are putting policies in place that are punishing Canadians rather than rewarding them for their hard work.

One of the big things that has come up in the House recently is a government document that shows the carbon tax and what it would do to Canadians. The Liberals have said that they are going to implement a carbon tax. That is going to come into effect right away. They have tried to assure Canadians that it is not going to be a big deal. They even like to use the line that Canadians will get more back than they pay. I would love to know how that works, but I do not think I ever will because the Liberals are not able to give a straight answer.

Here is what we do know, because here is what the government documents show. Following the election, which is interesting, the

carbon tax will increase by about 15 times and will cost a family of four about \$5,000 a year. That is a ton of money. It might not be a lot of money for the Prime Minister, who has a trust account, a family fortune to rely on, but for all other Canadians across the country who are dreaming of home ownership and stability and who are working hard to realize their dreams, their future and their desires, \$5,000 a year is a lot of money.

If we want to talk about housing affordability, let us talk about the grand picture that is taking place here, and that is Canada's overall economic well-being: the ability to bring investment into our country; the ability to create jobs; the ability to sustain ourselves as a nation economically on the world stage; and, more important, the ability for everyday hard-working Canadians to make ends meet. This is the grand picture at stake here and it all needs to be considered when we talk about the affordability of housing.

●(1655)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for a very detailed explanation of how the private housing market is moving away from first-time buyers. Government policy has played a role, but inflation and scarcity have played a role. It is a complex issue, but it was a very good dissertation as to what some of the challenges are.

She kind of lost me at the end though when she complained that our government had not made life more affordable for Canadians. She knows that Canadians are \$2,000 a year better off now than they were under the previous government. Things like the child benefit, the changes to EI, the GIS improvements, CPP improvement, as well as the 850,000 jobs that have been created, are all creating a sustainable and prosperous way of life for Canadians.

We know that 85% of Canadians get their housing needs met through the private market. That is a good thing, we support it and we have to ensure that market does not collapse. That is why some of the stress tests are there. However, she failed to mention anything about the 15% of Canadians who cannot. I am curious as to what policies are put in place beyond a suite of tax credits that do not apply to people who do not have the income to get tax credits. How is she proposing to support people who are homeless, who cannot afford to even find a place, let alone dream of home ownership?

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Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, there are so many points to make here. The member opposite would like Canadians to believe that they are somehow better off by about \$2,000 a year. Let us just say for a moment that is true. Then here is what we know. The government is going to put \$2,000 in one pocket and take \$5,000 out of the other pocket. Simple math says that \$5,000 taken out of the pocket, \$2,000 put into the pocket, results in a negative number of \$3,000, which means the member opposite just told the House and the Canadian public that it will actually cost them \$3,000 a year. That is a large amount of money. I thank the member opposite for his omission.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for explaining that a lot of people are having trouble making ends meet.

She mentioned a recent study showing that 52% of participants were within \$200 of being unable to pay their debts and bills. That is very troubling. Statistics show that one in five Canadians spend over 50% of their income on housing.

Does my colleague therefore think that we should invest in housing immediately instead of waiting until after the election, as the Liberal government is doing?

[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. The data does show that people are within \$200 a month of not being able to pay those basic bills. This is a huge problem and it has largely been created by the current government and the policies it has put in place.

One of the main responsibilities of the federal government, regardless of the party in power, is to create policies that facilitate an environment of economic prosperity. If the government fails to put those policies in place, then all Canadians suffer with respect to being able to afford life. That is the problem the House is discussing today. It is a problem that needs to be discussed. Therefore, I commend the NDP for bringing the motion forward.

• (1700)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I may regret this, but I would like to try to explain for the hon. member for Lethbridge how carbon pricing works and how average Canadians will likely receive back more than what they have paid in. That is because carbon pricing applies across the economy and our largest polluters are not individual Canadians.

Our largest polluters are large corporations, like the cement industry, power plants and oil and gas. When the money is returned to Canadians, particularly if it is prorated like the Green Party plan of carbon fee and dividend, those who are low income and students who do not drive a great deal in particular will receive more money back than they have put in and the pricing signal will help Canadians, especially industry, reduce their emissions over time.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, my answer is short and sweet. There is a huge problem here. The member just said that large corporations were going to pay in a ton of money. Then we would take from that big pool of money and give it out to individual Canadians, so they would be getting more money back.

We have a fundamental problem. The Prime Minister just exempted these large corporations. He just let them off the hook. Those who are actually emitting the greatest amount of carbon, the greatest amount of pollution, are actually not going to pay a dime. They are going to walk away free.

With all due respect, the member should really stop propagating false information.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I believe the direct statement by the member for Lethbridge, that I was propagating false information, is an attack on my integrity and honesty. I ask her to withdraw the comments and urge her to look at the testimony of the five economists who were before the environment committee this week. They explained that the way in which the large final emitter tax was applied was not an exemption. It is an incentive to further reductions. It is a different treatment, not an exemption.

I really find it offensive that I would be attacked in this place for false information when, in fact, I am absolutely honest in everything I say, and I do my research.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her intervention. She is right, of course, with respect to unparliamentary language. Members are certainly, in clear terms, advised not to go down the route of implying that a member has deliberately misled or, in worst cases, has lied to the House or other members. There is a distinction, however. If a member is accused of advancing information that in the opinion of the member speaking is false, then absent is the essential part of a lie, which is to impugn motive.

In this case, while I appreciate the explanation of the point by the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, I did not hear anything that was unparliamentary, even though it essentially raised the fact that in the opinion of the member for Lethbridge that information was false.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise for my first 10-minute speech in this new House of Commons. I have already had the opportunity to give a few short interventions, but this is my first speech in this new temporary House of Commons, although 10 years is more than temporary.

What an honour it is for me to speak to a subject that is so important to the people in my riding of Drummond and across the country. I am talking about the housing crisis and the importance of access to affordable housing and social and co-operative housing. This is a very important subject, and I thank my colleague from Saskatoon West for moving this motion on housing. She is calling on the Liberal government to create 500,000 units of quality, affordable housing within 10 years and to commit in budget 2019 to completing 250,000 of those units within five years. As we have said, the situation is urgent. We have explained several times during this debate why this is a serious and urgent situation.

As we have shown, there is a housing crisis right now. Housing prices are skyrocketing, rent is going up, and there is a rental housing shortage. There is a long waiting list for low-income housing in places like Drummond. The Drummond housing corporation needs space, especially for single people and seniors. The need is great right now.

The housing crisis also calls for immediate measures because the lack of social and affordable housing is a social problem we need to tackle without delay. As I believe we have said repeatedly, the Liberal government is not doing enough. It does not hurt to say that again. Families are suffering, but the Liberal government is telling them they just have to wait because 90% of the money earmarked for the national housing strategy will be not be distributed until after the next election. People need that money now. About 1.7 million Canadian families are living in inadequate, unaffordable or unsuitable housing. We cannot wait 10 years to tackle this housing crisis.

As we have said again and again, we in the NDP believe that housing is a right and that it is extremely important in the fight against poverty. First and foremost we must ensure that everyone has a roof over their head. Housing is not just an expenditure, it is an investment in our society. That is why we can no longer wait, as the Liberal government is asking us to do.

As I said earlier in one of my comments, it is important to remember that one in five people in Canada spend more than 50% of their income on housing. It is probably roughly the same percentage in Drummond. An increasing number of people are just one pay cheque away from homelessness. As we heard earlier, in a survey conducted recently, 52% of participants reported they were just \$200 away from not being able to pay their bills and their various debts. It makes no sense for people to live with so much debt and so much financial insecurity. That is why significant investments are needed. As we have pointed out, investing in social housing will go a long way in relieving the stress and anxiety weighing on Canadians.

Since I am on the topic of inequality, I would add that an Oxfam report, which members have probably heard about, has shown the importance of fighting inequality. According to the report, the world's richest 1% get 82% of the wealth.

● (1705)

That is completely unacceptable. I will repeat: 82% of the money generated last year went to the richest 1% of the global population. As for the 3.7 billion poorest people in the world, they did not see any of that wealth or growth.

We need to take action, and the measures we are highlighting are the important ones. Things are difficult in Drummond. According to the latest CMHC data, the vacancy rate in Drummondville is 1.7% or about half the break-even point of 3%. This is a worrisome situation. According to Véronique Laflamme, the spokesperson for the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, which works on social housing, the situation must be addressed, or the people of Drummondville will have a housing crisis. We are in a precarious situation that requires concrete measures.

Housing is an extremely important issue for me. The NDP has been interested in social housing for a long time. Jack Layton made

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housing one of his top issues. I began working on this file in Drummond in 2011. I helped L'Envolée des mères, a housing organization, by sponsoring a house with my own money and I named it after Jack Layton. There is a house bearing the name of Jack Layton. That was my contribution to Drummond's social housing.

All kinds of investments are being made in housing, and a number of organizations are helping the homeless in Drummond. One example is Maison Habit-Action, which primarily looks after young adults aged 18-30 who are struggling. There is also the Réseau d'aide le Tremplin, which is a support network for people struggling with mental health issues. Another example is Ensoleilvent, a short-term emergency shelter. There are many similar organizations operating in Drummond. I want to acknowledge the excellent work done by all those who work at these organizations, who are members of the boards of directors and who are helping improve the lives of people in Drummond. I am proud and happy to support them. This is another reason why I think this motion is important.

Let us not forget the housing crisis that is affecting indigenous peoples across the country both on reserve and off reserve. There has been much talk about that in the House of Commons, including during question period. It is another issue that is extremely important to us. Just look at the indigenous community of Cat Lake in northwestern Ontario, where a state of emergency was declared because of the disastrous housing conditions, including the presence of mould. Ninety houses, or 75% of the homes, have to be demolished immediately.

The presence of mould in homes on reserve is frequently caused by shoddy construction and overcrowding. That is not the only problem, either. There are broken windows, holes in the roofs, crumbling foundation piles, and so on. Something has to be done. I would add that it is critical that first nations housing be designed by them and for them. They are best placed to fix this situation.

In closing, I am very proud of this motion moved by my colleague from Saskatoon West on social and affordable housing. I hope the government will support it.

Private Members' Business

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity one last time to remind Canadians that \$5.7 billion has been invested by this government. That includes units that have been constructed to the tune of 14,703. It includes 143,684 households that have had their housing repaired and restored to safety. It includes 783,928 households, including households with children, having their subsidies restored and protected. It also includes direct support for 28,864 people who are homeless and need support to stay in housing or to be housed because of the circumstances they are challenged with. That is close to a million different ways in which this government has invested \$5.7 billion to make sure Canadians get the housing they need.

We are not done yet. Indigenous housing and the national housing strategy of \$40 billion over the next 10 years are additional investments above and beyond what I have just described.

Like with the NDP's plan, there is funding that will come after the next election. We cannot have a 10-year program to accomplish that without its having an impact in that way. I would ask the New Democrats to stop criticizing 10-year plans, when they have a 10-year plan. They should stop criticizing plans that do not come in until after two elections, because half of their money does not come until after two elections. Could they please not recognize—

• (1715)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Drummond.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the government that it is possible to have long-term plans but, when there is a housing crisis like the one we are currently experiencing, immediate investments are needed.

The problem is that the investments are being made too slowly. The government cannot wait 10 years in the midst of a housing crisis because 90% of the funding will be allocated only near the end of the 10 years. That is too late. The government needs to invest more.

We are calling for an investment to deal with the housing crisis. I explained how many Canadians are \$200 away from insolvency because of all the difficulties they are going through. The government needs to take action and resolve this situation. The housing crisis is extremely serious for indigenous people. The time for talk is over. It is time to take action. The motion is very respectable, honourable and balanced. I hope that the Liberal government will support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It being 5:15 p.m., 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 Tuesday, February 5, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m. so that we can begin private members' hour.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.?

Ms. Elizabeth May: No, Mr. Speaker. May I ask a question first? I cannot agree to going to private members' hour when I did not have notice of a Senate private member's bill—

The Deputy Speaker: I only caught the back half of that. Perhaps what I will do is, as the member wanted to intervene on this particular point, I will let her have the floor momentarily.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, my concern is only that, through inadvertence on the part of the larger parties, I nearly missed Bill S-203 moving to Private Members' Business a few weeks ago because the House saw the clock at 5:30 p.m. at 5:15 p.m. My concern is to make sure the member whose business is on the agenda for today and his or her seconder are present. Then, absolutely, it would be wonderful to see the clock at 5:30 p.m., because as I see it, it looks like 5:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

I will ask the question again. Is it the pleasure of the House to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS*[English]***FOREIGN LOBBYIST TRANSPARENCY ACT**

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC) moved that Bill C-278, An Act to amend the Lobbying Act (reporting obligations), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour on behalf of the hard-working people of the great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to rise in my place and lead off the debate on legislation I have proposed before the House, Bill C-278.

Bill C-278, which would amend the Lobbying Act, would require lobbyists to disclose whether they are funded by a foreign national, a non-resident corporation or a non-resident organization, and whether they use or expect to use grassroots communication to seek to persuade organizations or members of the public to take measures to obstruct, delay or otherwise negatively affect any process that requires the Government of Canada to consult with the public before embarking on a specific course of action in an attempt to place pressure on a public office holder to endorse a particular option.

I was encouraged to propose this legislation by my concern to protect the jobs of my constituents in the working forest. The forestry industry is a significant employer in my riding, as it is in many other parts of Canada.

It was brought to my attention that certain organizations were disseminating false information about the forestry industry in Canada. While some of the organizations operate under the pretext of having their anti-forestry activities financially supported by Canadians, careful research that was only possible by examining filings in countries outside Canada confirmed these organizations were being funded by non-Canadians, foreign actors with a hidden agenda.

As it has been noted by Canadian author Robert Lyman in “Dark Green Money: A Glimpse Inside the Big Green Funding Machine”:

Canadians should not have to find out about the funding by foreign foundations of political interest groups in this country as a result of a various citizens researching tax filings to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service....

This problem is not confined to the anti-forestry lobby or those individuals who lobby to support or oppose the building of pipelines, to use a different example, and this challenge to Canadian democracy is not confined to any one country. This challenge, which my legislation would seek to address by requiring funding transparency, cuts across all levels of Canadian activity.

This past weekend in one of Canada's leading national newspapers, the National Post, in a full page article, the following question was asked, “The long arm of influence of China in Canada: Is a shadowy agency shaping opinion here?” The shadowy agency in question is the United Front Work Department, a so-called shadowy offshoot of the Chinese Communist Party. That article proceeded to give specific examples of foreign funding, such as the Confucius Institute, described as a propaganda or espionage arm of the Chinese state, and how it is now operating at three school boards and on nine university and college campuses across Canada.

I quote political scientist Charles Burton from that story about a cultural association he was familiar with:

An organization that once had another purpose has gradually been taken over to serve China's national interest. Where United Front work becomes problematic is when it's engaging persons of Chinese origin who have Canadian citizenship...to serve the interests of the motherland, when in fact the motherland should be Canada.

This is a concern in the Chinese Canadian community. I quote Cheuk Kwan, head of the Toronto Association for Democracy in China:

A lot of people don't think of the long arm of influence of China in Canada, because they're under the influence, to put it mildly.... Outsiders like me, who is a Hong Kong immigrant...we see very clearly that this is a United Front effort, a very subtle, soft-power kind of advance into Canadian society.

While China may be in the news because of Meng Wanzhou and Chinese infotech giant Huawei in the ongoing Canada-China diplomacy crisis, let us not be too smug in Canada to dismiss the Russian meddling controversy playing out south of the border.

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute has prepared a paper entitled “Stemming the Virus: Understanding and responding to the threat of Russian disinformation”.

• (1720)

This document gives examples of Canada being a victim of Russian disinformation, including planted stories about the Minister of National Defence and in the case of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, focusing on her Ukrainian heritage. The stories about the

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Minister of Foreign Affairs were planted in order to discredit Canada's position on the illegal occupation of Crimea by Russia.

Another example cited by the article is the Russian foreign policy priority to use misinformation to put pressure on our Parliament to repeal the Magnitsky legislation, which targets human rights abusers with targeted sanctions.

In addition to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, my colleague on the national defence committee, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, has been targeted by Russian propaganda for his Ukrainian heritage and his championing of international Magnitsky legislation. I also understand the member for Scarborough—Guildwood received a letter attacking his support for the Canadian Magnitsky legislation.

Another Russian foreign policy priority, which I am personally aware of as a veteran member of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, is the targeting of NATO. NATO has been a pillar of peace and stability since the end of World War II. It is one of the most important world organizations for peace and security, and perhaps the most important one.

While not in the media lately as prominently as China and Russia, another country that is mentioned as being active in Canada is Iran.

When it comes to foreign disinformation, there is one thing in common: Canadian democracy is under attack. The purpose of using the Chinese and Russian examples was not intended in any way to single out members of those communities, the majority of whom are model Canadian citizens. It is as Cheuk Kwan stated: The problem is that many Canadians do not even realize they are under the influence of a disinformation campaign. While Parliament has focused on lobbying once the writ drops, many Canadians have already been influenced by a subtle misinformation campaign paid with foreign money that has been ongoing for years, so it is not good enough to look only at measures to combat election interference; Parliament needs to deal with foreign interference between elections also, which is the intent of Bill C-278, the bill we are debating today.

When members of the public think of lobbying, they think of the so-called public relations companies and the advertising firms that go along with those organizations. It goes far deeper than that. The announcement this week that five environmental non-profit groups are lobbying the Senate environment committee not to consult directly with the Canadian public is an attack on democracy.

While it was reported that one of the environmental groups has received significant taxpayer funding from the federal government, what was not reported were the millions of dollars the other environmental organizations received from foreign sources.

Let us start with the non-governmental organization Ecojustice, formally known as the Sierra Legal Defence Fund, which is the name of its American parent. According to the Canada Revenue Agency, this particular NGO, in the 2000 to 2017 time period, had gross revenues of \$115,319,392.

That is a lot of money.

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Where did it get all its millions? Ecojustice received eight direct grants from the controversial U.S. Tides Foundation, totalling \$545,380. The U.S. Tides Foundation flows money to its Canadian subsidiary, Tides Canada. CRA records show that Tides Canada gave 10 grants, totalling \$903,845. They even tell us what Tides U.S.A. expected Ecojustice to use the money for: The money was used to attack the Canadian oil sands and the thousands of jobs that go with the oil sands.

The next question that needs to be answered is, who is donating millions of dollars to Tides U.S.A., and what do they expect to get for their money?

• (1725)

Could it be American pipeline interests? Could it be American oil and gas interests? Could it be the owners of American rail who financially benefit when oil is shipped by rail rather than by pipeline? Canadians have a right to the answers to these questions. Bill C-278 would provide those answers. In an era when foreign interests can launch a million emails with the push of a button, we need those answers now more than ever.

In a democracy, a free and independent press is counted on to provide unbiased information and informed opinions that aid public debate, expose corruption and highlight major social issues to enable an informed public to make participatory decisions. Today's reality is far from that ideal. In Canada, media is looking at an almost \$600 million government bailout that their corporate owners claim they need to operate. This creates more opportunities for foreign entities with deep pockets to buy public acceptance for policies that promote their interests.

The role played by foreign governments as well as foreign foundations and campaigns to influence public policy in Canada should be of interest to all concerned about the independence and integrity of Canadian political and governmental processes.

The increasing globalization of corporate, institutional and geopolitical interests would seem to require that Canadian democratic institutions be more vigilant about these possible intrusions. This, in turn, demands that reports on the activities of foundations, other non-profits and charities seeking to influence policy be made more transparent to the public and more useful to parliamentarians who wish to exercise oversight.

Greater transparency afforded in two areas that would benefit greatly from a more open system of reporting and increased oversight are the lobbyist registry and the reporting requirements to the CRA by non-profit and charitable organizations. In addition to the concerns expressed previously about the role of foreign and corporate actors, the transparency of disclosing by lobbyists and charities is being increasingly obscured by the efforts of various interests to mask self-dealing and self-vested interests.

Within the United States, there is a large body of academic studies examining the strategies and practices used by private foundations to influence public policy. Many of these foundations have enormous financial resources, including billions of dollars in assets and hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenues. Increasingly, U.S. studies have addressed the strategies used by private foundations

and the many other groups they fund, most of which have charity status, which is non-taxable, in influencing policy.

The strategies include broad communication and education programs to influence public perceptions of policy issues and to garner public support for specific actions, the lobbying of governments at all levels, infiltration of the media and concerted, coordinated action to achieve specific objectives.

While there is less information and academic analysis available in Canada, some private researchers have made efforts to follow the money in terms of how foundation and charity funding is used. These efforts are impeded by superficial reporting requirements and the lack of publicly available information from organizations like Canada Revenue Agency, which administers provisions of the Income Tax Act related to charities, and the lobbying registry compiled by the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada.

Researchers such as Vivian Krause, who have endeavoured to find out more about the use of domestic and foreign foundation funding for anti-oil and anti-pipeline campaigns, have learned that they must often rely on the U.S. Internal Revenue Service records, since the information they seek is not available from Canadian sources.

In the United States, a donor-advised fund, DAF, is a charitable giving vehicle administered by a public charity created to manage charitable donations on behalf of organizations, families or individuals. Although DAFs are more developed in the United States, they are increasingly being used in Canada.

To participate in a DAF, a donating individual or organization opens an account in the fund and deposits the cash, securities or other financial instruments. The donor surrenders the ownership of anything put in the fund, but retains advisory privileges over how the account is invested and how it distributes its money to charities. In the charity sector, the increased use of DAFs makes it increasingly difficult to determine the ultimate source and purpose of funding.

• (1730)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her efforts in a private member's bill for greater transparency.

I wonder if the member is disturbed that the Fraser Institute has received \$4.3 million in foreign funding to run campaigns that include ones that defend pipelines, and amounts of money staggeringly larger than the ones that U.S. foundations have given some environmental groups.

• (1735)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, obviously, for the member in the back corner, this is disturbing to her, which is why this really should be a non-partisan bill. Transparency should include all parties. It should unite us all. If foreign donations to an organization that is Conservative in nature are of concern, then I hope that she too will lend her support to this bill so that not only Conservative-oriented foundations and institutes declare where they are getting their money from but other foundations and charities as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, within the Lobbying Act there is a statutory review of the legislation. My question to the member is related to that aspect of the legislation. Has she looked into the possibility of how she might be able to bring this type of issue up once that act is under review by the House of Commons?

Second, has the member anticipated what the additional costs incurred would be? Surely to goodness if we were to expand in this area, there would be a fairly substantial cost to it. I am sure she is not trying to imply that we would in any way not properly resource the current commissioner in being able to do the fine work that this office currently does.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, once again, I appreciate my greatest fan being here when tabling another piece of legislation. I appreciate his input immensely.

In fact, we are approaching an election and time is of the essence. We know the Liberals are very concerned about foreign interference, because earlier this week they put forth a plan to ensure that there was no interference in the electoral process. However, even before the election starts, we have active campaigns that are trying to influence Canadian policy under way. While a review may happen in another few years, we need this to pass now.

It does not involve a lot of money. It is just doing more reporting, which we are already doing. The reporting should be done on the part of the people lobbying. Therefore, the lobbyists, instead of just putting the list of partner organizations, parent organizations, would have to indicate all the organizations, the ultimate donors, the individuals. If they are going to engage another grassroots organization to influence the opinion of Canadians, they would have to report what that grassroots organization is and the method it is going to use to convince people to go to their way of thinking. Any foreign income coming towards this would have to be reported.

Also, on the part of the grassroots campaigners and non-profit organizations, if they are going to be accepting foreign dollars to influence how Canadians are going to form our own laws, they would have to report it. We are not saying they cannot accept money from foreign entities. We are saying, if they do accept money from foreign entities, they would have to disclose it.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has achieved remarkable success as a free, open and prosperous democracy. We can be proud of our reputation as one of the best countries in the world to live in. We have world-class cities, and I would be remiss if I did not mention

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my own city, Vancouver, which was recently ranked the sixth most livable city in the world out of the top 140.

Many have played a crucial role in the success of our country, including our public service, which was recently ranked as the most effective in the world. That was the finding of the International Civil Service Effectiveness Index, which is a joint project of Oxford University and the U.K. Institute for Government.

The public service operates as part of the executive in a well-functioning system that consists of a number of important components. These include the legislature, the judiciary, civil society actors and lobbyists. In fact, legitimate lobbying has played a key role in ensuring that the government remains responsive to the needs of Canadians.

The public perception of lobbying is often negative, but lobbying is not about influence peddling or bribery. Lobbying is the process through which individuals and groups articulate their interests to parliamentarians and to government in order to inform public policy or decision-making. In fact, I have learned that they also educate, because they are deeply knowledgeable about their subject, and I as a parliamentarian may not be that deeply knowledgeable about so many subjects.

Many interest groups, such as non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups, have government relations staff or consultants who speak with the government on their behalf.

Take the environmental movement. Many of these organizations lobby or hire lobbyists to advocate for a range of causes, such as reducing greenhouse gases, conserving our wildlife and protecting our lakes and rivers. These lobbying efforts help government to develop policy that better reflects the views and interests of Canadians. This is an important aspect of lobbying that is often forgotten.

Clearly, lobbying, when done ethically and transparently, is a legitimate and fundamental part of our democratic system. We cannot ignore the significant contribution from good and ethical co-operation among diverse interests. It can lead to the collaborative development of sound policy that reflects the expectations and needs of Canadians.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Furthermore, individuals, organizations and businesses can and should communicate their opinions and ideas to government decision-makers and policy-makers. The challenge for us as lawmakers is establishing clear rules to ensure that lobbying is done openly. That is why the Lobbying Act is so important.

The purpose of the act is ensure transparency in lobbyists' activities without restricting access to government institutions. It requires lobbyists to register and report their lobbying activities every month. That includes communications with designated public office holders. That information is available online in a public registry maintained by the Commissioner of Lobbying.

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The bill before us today proposes two changes to the act as it stands now.

The first amendment would require all corporations and organizations that lobby the government to disclose all funds received from foreign nationals, non-resident corporations and non-resident organizations. The act currently requires any entity that lobbies the government, whether domestic or foreign, to register with the office of the Commissioner of Lobbying. The act also currently requires corporations to disclose their parent company and subsidiaries, which may include foreign companies.

Second, Bill C-278 would also expand the types of activities that lobbyists must report as “grassroots communications”. As it now stands under the act, lobbyists must identify the techniques they use to communicate with public office holders, including whether they use grassroots communication. Under the Act, “grassroots communication” means appealing to the public directly or through mass media to try to persuade them to communicate directly with a public office holder to influence their opinion.

Bill C-278 would expand the definition of grassroots communication to include situations where lobbyists are encouraging the public or organizations to undertake activities that could indirectly influence public office holders.

Any proposal to amend the Lobbying Act should be assessed against the principles of the legislation itself, which state, first, that free and open access to government is an important matter of public interest; second, that lobbying public office holders is a legitimate activity; third, that it is desirable that public office holders and the public be able to know who is engaged in lobbying activities; and fourth, that a system for the registration of paid lobbyists should not impede free and open access to government.

The amendments proposed by Bill C-278 could increase the reporting burden on lobbyists. They could also generate additional costs for the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying to implement the changes to the registry and to monitor compliance. It is important that any amendments to the Lobbying Act respect the principles of the act, which seek to strike a balance between transparency and ensuring that the compliance burden imposed on lobbyists is reasonable and fair.

I welcome consideration of any measures to improve transparency in lobbying. Our government is committed to raising the bar on openness and transparency in government. For example, our government was the first to open the door for Canadians to see cabinet ministers' mandate letters, which under previous governments were kept secret. We publicly report on how far we have come in keeping the promises we made, and government departments track the outcomes of their programs with indicators and then publish the results online for public scrutiny. We have an open data portal, which makes vast amount of government data accessible, and we have taken this data portal from being a pilot project to being a permanent program.

● (1745)

[Translation]

We are also trying to take the idea of open by default to a deeper level through a pilot portal that provides public access to internal working documents. We recently proposed important changes to the Access to Information Act, such as mandatory proactive publication for 240 government institutions as well as ministers' offices.

[English]

Accomplishments like these are what led Canada to being elected chair of the Open Government Partnership Steering Committee for 2018-19. Our track record on openness and transparency speaks for itself.

Make no mistake; we are committed to the continuous improvement of the Lobbying Act, and we welcome this debate on the subject. I encourage all members to look carefully at these proposals with a view to balancing the interests of all stakeholders, the rights of lobbyists to advocate, the rights of those they represent, and the rights of Canadians to know how their government does business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go on to the next speaker, I just want to remind hon. members that these wonderful new chambers are fantastic as far as carrying sound, so if they are having conversations across the hall or even in the back benches, all of us can hear what they are saying, and I am sure they do not want us to know what their private conversations entail.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to rise in the House of Commons as shadow minister for democratic institutions to speak to Bill C-278, also known as the foreign lobbyist transparency act. This private member's bill, brought forward by the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, would make crucial adjustments to the Lobbying Act to counteract foreign interference in our free and democratic system. The bill would be an effective and invaluable piece of legislation that would increase transparency of foreign lobbyists and their influences, seen and unseen, on Canadian politics.

Bill C-278 would accomplish this with two primary legislative changes. First, lobbyists who are funded by a foreign national, a non-resident corporation or a non-resident organization would be required to publicly disclose that information. Second, these entities would also have to disclose whether they were using grassroots communication that could negatively impact the government's ability to consult the Canadian public on a specific course of action. Together, these changes would provide Canadians with information necessary to see how foreign lobbyists could be impacting Canadian politics.

• (1750)

[Translation]

Currently, the Canadian Registry of Lobbyists gives Canadians important information on the companies and organizations that try to influence government policy. Canadians can know who is lobbying on behalf of these organizations and see which topics are discussed, and even which lobbying activities are taking place.

This change to the Lobbying Act simply adds two new categories to the long list of information already collected by the Officer of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada. It is a small change that will offer some big advantages.

When implemented, this bill will give Canadians a better overview of the lobbying done by foreign entities and a greater awareness of foreign influence over public policy-making.

[English]

Healthy democracies provide their citizens with transparency. Canadians deserve an open government that can assure them that they are not being unknowingly manipulated by foreign entities. We cannot assume that foreign corporations or organizations do not have malicious motivations. Canadians and the government need to know what organizations or corporations are foreign funded so we have a greater understanding of the possible conflicts with the issues that they may be lobbying on behalf of. We cannot have foreign lobbying groups pretending that they have domestic concerns when in reality they represent foreign interests. Canadians should be the only ones determining their domestic policies.

Foreign lobby groups can be especially malicious when using grassroots lobbying strategies. Grassroots lobbying occurs when lobbyists persuade the public on a given issue instead of government officials. Public support of an issue can aid in the persuasion of policy makers. Foreign lobbyists using grassroots strategies can be alarming since the public may not be receiving the bigger picture of the issue and can be manipulated into believing in a policy that is beneficial for these foreign entities, but bad for Canadians.

Grassroots campaigns also have the ability to interfere with government consultation processes. The government and Canadians deserve a fair and accurate consultation. If this is being impeded by groups with foreign interests, Canadians should have the right and ability to know this.

The use of grassroots lobbying is easier than ever. With social media, lobbyists can deliver information to citizens faster than ever before. Individuals are posting and sharing constantly whether the information is real or fake. Canadians deserve to know not only if foreign corporations or organizations are lobbying Canadian officials, but whether they plan to use Canadians to do their bidding. When these groups are internationally funded, their motivations should have the opportunity to be questioned. Canadians deserve transparency and the ability to know when they are being manipulated.

[Translation]

The government needs to start taking foreign interference seriously. The members on that side of the House tried to prevent

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foreign interference in Canadian elections with Bill C-76, but they left some significant shortcomings in the bill.

Canadians should be the only ones to determine the outcome of elections in Canada, not foreign entities. The Liberal government is not doing enough to eliminate the possibility of foreign interference. Canadians deserve to know where the money spent on elections is coming from, and it is up to the government to ensure that all third parties are completely transparent. If third parties decide to do any advertising during an election, they must be transparent and tell Canadians where that money is coming from.

The government is not taking foreign interference in third-party campaign financing seriously enough in Bill C-76. Today we are offering an opportunity to at least impede foreign influence exercised through lobbying. The laws currently in place simply do not go far enough. Our democracy is at stake. Canadians, and only Canadians, should have any influence over our democracy. As Conservatives, we believe that every Canadian vote counts, but the government needs to work harder to prevent foreign entities from undermining our democratic institutions.

• (1755)

[English]

We need to continue working on keeping our democratic institutions safe. Foreign influence in elections is a credible and global threat. The Communications Security Establishment has already recognized, as well as the Prime Minister himself, that foreign influence took place in the 2015 election and is expected to increase significantly in 2019 as it has in recent elections around the globe. We cannot have our elections or our domestic policy influenced by foreign entities. Our democratic institutions and government will begin to crumble if we let them succumb to foreign influence.

Canadians deserve a system of government they can trust. This bill put forward by my hon. colleague is a way for Canadians to be confident that Canadian policy is not being unduly manipulated by foreign entities who wish to interfere. It is essential that Canadians maintain trust in their democratic systems for our government to be effective in protecting Canadians and providing them with services. When foreign actors start having an impact on domestic policies behind closed doors, that trust begins to fade.

Canadians should be the only ones making the decisions for Canada. When foreign-funded entities are getting involved with lobbying the government or getting involved in our elections, Canadians have the right to know.

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My colleague mentioned Vivian Krause, who has been researching the oil sands for nearly a decade, and this touches dearly upon my home in Alberta. She said that her studies have led her to believe that the push against the oil sands is funded by American philanthropists in an effort to landlock Alberta oil so that it cannot reach overseas markets where it would obtain a higher price per barrel. She estimates that about \$90 million over the last 10 years has gone towards various efforts to restrict oil and gas development and exports from Alberta.

Again, Canadians in my home province of Alberta and also across the country have a right to know when their democratic institutions are being compromised.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to address the legislation introduced by the member opposite. It provokes a great deal of thought that collectively, as a House, we should be looking at the broader issues related to lobbying, especially if we take into consideration, for example, technological changes. When I look at social media today and compare it to the day I was first elected back in the late 1980s, there has been a great deal of change. One needs to be aware of the potential influence that lobbyists or even, to a certain degree, individuals can carry nowadays through social media.

I listened to members on all side of the House address the issue and a couple of things came to my mind.

We need to recognize that lobbyists have rights also. We do not want to in any way prevent lobbyists from being able to approach public officials. There needs to be accountability for that. Let me provide a specific example I have really appreciated over the last couple of years.

The constituents I represent are very much in tune with the idea of having a national pharmacare program, in which prescribed medicines are made available to Canadians. This is long overdue. For the first time in decades, we now have a government that seems to be sympathetic to it.

Having said that, I use it as an example because I have been lobbied on this very issue. I was lobbied by unions and different types of health care workers. A few individuals have advocated as to why we should not move in this direction. I have tabled a number of petitions in the House, probably a couple of dozen, on pharmacare. In fact, I tabled one from my constituents earlier this week.

When we think about how policy comes to be, we often need to take into consideration that it is multi-faceted. Everyone has a role to play, even multinationals. For example, a corporation like Pfizer would have a vested interest in not having a national pharmacare program in Canada. I would be very interested in knowing the possible lobbying efforts in that area. Equally, in order to ensure the sense of fairness, we should know when lobbying takes place from different organizations, whatever they may be, that advocate for a national pharmacare program.

I invite and welcome all those interested in this subject matter. I know pharmacare is an important issue for my constituents. I know the government is, and I suspect all members are, following this issue very closely. The critical component is transparency. This is all

about that. We need to know when money flows and when individuals, or corporations or non-profits are engaged in lobbying.

• (1800)

To me, that is very important. I believe we have seen a prime minister and a government demonstrate a great deal of goodwill, and even more than goodwill: We have seen legislation dealing with enhancing transparency for Canadians on issues such as lobbying, and in particular legislation dealing with election financing. That is something that I think is worth noting.

With regard to the question I forward to my colleague across the way, there is a statutory study that is done on the Lobbying Act. I would like to think that the issues she and others have raised this afternoon will come before the committee when it comes time to review the act, with the idea of coming up with some ideas and recommendations that would improve and enhance the position of lobbying commissioner. Part of that discussion also needs to incorporate the potential costs and value.

Hon. Scott Brison: A cost-benefit analysis. You are right.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: A cost-benefit analysis: The former Treasury Board minister knows this stuff like the back of his hand.

When it comes to accountability and transparency and the whole nine yards, I can assure members that this is a government that takes it all very seriously. That is one of the reasons I believe we need to recognize right up front that when we deal with issues of this nature, what we really need to spend a great deal of time talking about is the issue of transparency. Let me give members an example of something tangible that we saw in the last year from the government that dealt with the issue of transparency.

We talk about the engagements that ministers or leaders of political entities conduct. They call them fundraising events. Not that long ago, the Prime Minister indicated that we wanted to open the doors of accountability and transparency so that even during fundraising events, media members would be afforded the opportunity to participate and observe. We have nothing to hide. We want Canadians to know who is financing and lobbying the party once it hits a certain level.

We even went further than that. For people who ultimately want to become a prime minister—for example, the Leader of the Opposition or leaders of other political entities—there should be an obligation. That is why we brought that in through legislation. It was because there was resistance from opposition parties to making sure the public knows who is attending and lobbying our leaders, whether they are ministers or leaders of political parties. Therefore, not only are we a government that talks about the importance of transparency; our record clearly shows that we have acted on it.

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One of the nice things about the House of Commons is that we have independent offices. The lobbying commissioner has done outstanding work. When we talk about ways we could possibly expand that responsibility, it is important that we go back and reflect on the issue of resources, because at times there may be a need for us to expand, whether in this area of Elections Canada or with other independent offices of the House. We want to make sure that they are properly resourced and that the ideas that ultimately flow into the legislation have been well vetted, not only by parliamentarians but also by our constituents. The constituents of Winnipeg North are very much opinionated when I go out to ask for their thoughts on issues, and the different stakeholder groups themselves have a great deal of input on issues of this nature.

I appreciate the bill coming forward. I look forward to the ongoing debate on the matter.

• (1805)

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to rise in this place and contribute to the debate on Bill C-278, an act to amend the Lobbying Act, regarding reporting obligations, proposed by my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. The goal of Bill C-278 is to expand the lobbying registry, to make public the sources of funding for all lobbying conducted here in Canada.

Within the United States there is a large body of academic studies examining the strategies and practices used by private foundations to influence public policy, and that is important to understand. Many of these foundations have enormous financial resources, including billions of dollars in assets and hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenues, and they are influencing federal governments. Maybe that is fine, but the legislation would help us make sure there is transparency and that the public understands it.

Increasingly, U.S. studies have addressed the strategies used by private foundations and the many other groups they fund, most of which have charity status in influencing public policy. The strategies include broad communications and education programs to influence public perceptions of policy issues and to garner public support for specific actions, the lobbying of governments at all levels, the infiltration of the media, and concerted, coordinated action to achieve specific objectives.

While there is less information and academic analysis available here in Canada, some private researchers have made efforts to “follow the money” in terms of how foundation and charity funding is spent. These efforts are impeded by superficial reporting requirements and the lack of publicly available information from organizations like the Canada Revenue Agency, which administers the provisions of the Income Tax Act related to charities, and the lobbying registry, compiled by the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada.

Researchers such as Vivian Krause, who has endeavoured to find out more about the use of domestic and foreign foundation funding for the anti-oil and anti-pipeline campaigns, have found that they must often rely on United States Internal Revenue Service records, as the information they seek here in Canada is not available from Canadian sources. That is a shame.

In my riding, we have seen the first-hand influence these new strategies and practices can have on Canadian industries and jobs.

Vivian Krause has been interviewed throughout Canada, certainly by Global. I saw an interview done by her where she showed how monies went to charities and then went directly to campaigns against Alberta's goal of seeing more pipelines to tidewater and of seeing more of our energy go to new markets around the world. We see people from the United States, as Vivian Krause has pointed out, doing all they can to prevent that goal of Albertans seeing their energy sold around the world, while the world needs new access to our energy. This is very much an issue for my province of Alberta but it certainly is an issue for all of Canada.

In recent years, we have witnessed a real change in how Canadians participate in our democracy. The rise of social media and the ubiquity of mobile devices has dramatically empowered individual Canadians. Many children in junior high have iPads or mobile phones. Each one of us has the ability to access any type of information we want but we also have access to influence a certain issue.

While many, if not most Canadians, might not appreciate the extent of their personal political powers, members of Parliament never forget it, and they better not forget it or they will become former members of Parliament. However, if most Canadians are unaware of the influence they can have over their elected officials, foreign actors have been quick to realize it.

Twenty years ago launching a grassroots movement to affect some policy change required considerable manpower and massive amounts of resources. Today, these campaigns can be launched for the cost of a domain name. In the past, one would have to spend millions of dollars on advertising and direct mail just to reach out and persuade a few thousand people on whatever issue or whatever topic they wanted.

• (1810)

Now, for a few hundred or a few thousand dollars, one can launch a Facebook ad campaign with the potential to reach literally millions of people. It can be targeted to certain areas specifically, but broadly, it can go around the world. This is more and more becoming an issue Canadians are attuned to. They know that a foreign actor can launch a million emails with just the push of one button.

Social media and mobile technology are enabling Canadians to participate more meaningfully in our political and policy debates. If that is true for Canadians, it is also true for non-Canadians. It is true for non-Canadians that most people, when they see their ad, might actually believe that they are Canadians. Foreign actors have access to the same tools and can have the same impact.

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Just when Canadians are awakening to the opportunities to influence their own laws, they could find those efforts swamped by foreign interests without even realizing where this attack or this campaign was coming from. The role played by foreign governments as well as foreign foundations in campaigns to influence public policy in Canada should be of interest to all concerned about the independence and integrity of the Canadian political and government processes.

The increased globalization of corporate, institutional and geopolitical interests would seem to require that Canadian democratic institutions be more vigilant about these possible intrusions. This, in turn, demands that reports on the activities of foundations and charities seeking to influence policy be made more transparent to the public and more useful to the parliamentarians who wish to exercise oversight.

While the foreign lobbyist transparency act would not block foreign actors from launching fake grassroots campaigns, requiring disclosure of their funding of Canadian organizations to do so would give additional tools to public officeholders in understanding where the latest round of form emails may really be coming from or where they originated. A transparent registry of foreign lobbyists and their campaigns would provide journalists and researchers with a new way to follow the dollar.

I would also add here that when we give to charities in this country, we expect a certain return. We expect that they abide by certain rules. However, many charities in other countries may well not apply those same restrictions and rules, and they may indeed be the ones that start some of these campaigns. Rather than taking an approach that attempts to restrict or regulate the speech of foreign actors, restrictions that would inevitably hamper Canadians' own rights and freedoms, Bill C-278 would simply require disclosure. Foreign entities would need to report when they were funding campaigns to influence federal officeholders and officials.

Truth and transparency are always our best defences in preserving an open and democratic Canada. It is my genuine hope that these are changes that all members of Parliament can support.

One can say that there are Conservative organizations that may be doing it, there are Liberal organizations, there are socialist organizations, and there are Green-backed organizations that may well be doing this. Some of that may be all right, but let Canadians know who they are. Too often, questions about foreign funding of different sides of a policy debate are dismissed as being partisan by one side or the other. We can all play that game. The foreign lobbyist transparency act would cut through the partisan divide by applying equally to all foreign actors, whether they were supporting a cause we hold dear or opposing a policy we would prefer.

This bill would not limit Canadians' ability to solicit foreign financial support for an issue they were pursuing. It would simply require them to disclose to their fellow citizens the ultimate source of those funds. Individual Canadians could then assess for themselves whether the source of funding was material to the issue.

• (1815)

The digital transformation of our democracy is still in its infancy. Who knows what the next year or the next five years will hold for

the digital world? It presents an opportunity to meaningfully increase Canadians' participation in our laws, but only if we have faith in it. By ensuring greater transparency for foreign funding of lobbying and public relations campaigns, we can restore a measure of trust in our democracy. I know we all want to do that.

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-278, an act to amend the Lobbying Act.

Our government is committed to the continuous improvement of the Lobbying Act and welcomes this debate on the subject. Lobbying has been part of getting things done in the country politically from its earliest days. Apparently, even the grants, monopolies and concessions that made possible the early voyages of Cartier, Frobisher, Hudson and others were obtained through lobbying at court.

Today, lobbying refers generally to an effort to communicate with legislators or other public officials against or in favour of a specific cause when carried out for compensation. It is the normal way organizations and interest groups inform and influence the policy-making process. It is vital to the healthy functioning of a government that is open and responsible to the will of the people.

At the same time, lobbying is subject to checks and balances that provide disclosure about who is working to shape government policy. Transparency as a curb on potential corruption of public officials is every bit as important as influencing and ensuring the system works. The purpose of the bill before us is to increase the amount of information lobbyists are required to disclose under the Lobbying Act.

I think we can all agree on the importance of both free and open access to government as well as the need for Canadians to know who is lobbying their government. Both are in the public interest and must be carefully balanced. In fact, the recent history of lobbying legislation in the country is the story of trying to get the balance right.

Until July 2008, lobbying at the federal level in Canada was governed by the Lobbyists Registration Act, which came into force in 1989. The act established a registration system intended to foster the public's right to know and to be informed about who is trying to influence government policy.

• (1820)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Bonavista—Burin—Trinity will have eight minutes coming to him so he can complete his elocution when we take up the bill again.

[Translation]

The time provided for consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a question I have been pursuing for a great deal of time concerns the inability of women who marry military people and the inability of Canadians over 60 to get access to their late husband's pension.

In my case, I was first alerted to this issue by Patricia Kidd from my riding of Victoria. I have also had letters from across the country on this issue. She and her late husband Piet were married 33 years ago. They were married for 31 years before he died. They raised two sons. However, Ottawa will not give Patricia a penny of the pension money that other veterans' widows get because of an archaic rule dating back to 1901 that was inserted into the pension legislation before the First World War to prevent young women from marrying aging veterans.

That clause is not unique to the armed forces. It is in other pension plans, such as those pertaining to judges, Mounties and other federal workers. The clause has been the source of enormous injustice, which the government has acknowledged. It acknowledged it by making clear in the 2015 mandate letter of the minister of Veterans Affairs that eliminating the so-called "marriage after 60" clawback clause was a priority.

That was in the 2015 mandate letter. I have spoken with the then minister of veterans affairs, the member for Calgary Centre, and wrote to him on September 13, 2016. He said help was on the way. Then I spoke to and wrote to the minister of veterans affairs, the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, to the same effect. I wrote to him September 25, 2017, and again in February 2018. Then I asked a question in question period, and that minister said he had heard about this, that it was very important to many veterans and their families, and said "I can assure the member and the House that we are indeed working diligently on this file".

That is not diligent. I cannot seem to get an answer from the government. It was a commitment made to me and to Canadians in the mandate letter that there would be a change. Patricia Kidd and so many like her are waiting for justice.

I ask the government when we are going to see this Liberal promise kept.

• (1825)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising

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this very important issue in the House of Commons and giving it significant national attention.

As previous ministers said in response to the member's questions last October, this issue has been raised in town halls and we continue to work diligently on this file.

The answer remains the same. The provision the hon. member speaks of is part of the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act. Under the power of the Minister of National Defence, the provision indicates that survivors who marry a pensioner under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act after the veteran turned 60 years of age do not automatically receive a survivor pension. The optional survivor benefit is provided to pensioners who married after age 60 under certain conditions.

[English]

We are well aware that this is an issue affecting a number of Canadians and their spouses. This is why finding a solution to the issue has been part of the mandate of the Minister of Veterans Affairs and why the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of National Defence are working together to address those provisions in the legislation impacting marriage after age 60. It is not that easy.

[Translation]

The Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs understand the implications of the marriage after 60 provision and are trying to find the best way to address it. This is part of the efforts being made to ensure that Canadian Armed Forces pensioners receive the appropriate survivors' pension and sickness benefits.

Over the past three years, our government has delivered on its promises and made many improvements to the benefits and services offered to veterans, their spouses and families. We have also improved how they are delivered. We have invested nearly \$10 billion in new funding in benefits and support for veterans and their families.

[English]

We immediately increased the maximum lump sum pain and suffering compensation from \$310,000 to \$360,000 and increased income replacement for veterans in rehabilitation from 75% of their pre-release salary to 90%.

[Translation]

We increased support for survivors and partners by eliminating the one-year time limit to apply for the rehabilitation services and vocational assistance program. This gives families some flexibility so they can access a program when they need it.

Benefits provided to family members include the caregiver recognition benefit, which pays \$1,000 a month, tax-free, directly to the people looking after eligible veterans.

Veterans and their families have access to the veteran family program and the 32 military family resource centres across the country.

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Common-law spouses of veterans may now be eligible for career counselling, job search training and job search assistance, of course.

We also made a commitment to the well-being of our veterans and their families, and we delivered on our promise for a pension for life. Beginning April 1, this monthly non-taxable benefit for life will provide the option of a monthly benefit giving veterans and their families financial stability and focusing on wellness services such as rehabilitation, education and career training.

For example, a young corporal who served for six years before sustaining serious injuries, mental and physical, would receive nearly \$6,000 a month in—

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The member for Victoria.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has told us about the money being spent on veterans, for which I am grateful. He has told us about efforts continuing. He has told us that a number of other programs are being expanded, which is terrific.

However, that does absolutely nothing to keep the promise that the government made in 2015 to widows like Patricia Kidd in my riding and so many others I have heard from across this country. The parliamentary secretary has tried to change the subject here tonight. He has done nothing for Patricia Kidd. This is another broken Liberal promise.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary again: Will this promise be kept, the promise made in 2015 in the mandate letter to Canadians? Will it be kept before the election in October of this year?

• (1830)

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, the current government intends to bring the policies and regulations that affect veterans and members of the Canadian Armed Forces into the 21st century.

Our government is determined to honour the service and sacrifices of veterans and their families, as indicated in the mandate letter.

We are working hard to give veterans and their families the care and support they need when and where they need it and to encourage Canadians to remember those who served.

We will continue to listen to veterans and to work with veterans, their families and stakeholders across the country.

Thanks to all the comments we received during our open and frank conversations, we can continue to give priority to what is really important to veterans and their families while continuing to fulfill our mandate.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to be able to pursue tonight in adjournment proceedings one of the most important questions I have ever asked in this place, which was for the Prime Minister on October 16.

The night before we had held in this place quite an extraordinary emergency debate, thanks to the Speaker's ruling that it was, in fact, qualifying as an emergency. The IPCC, the United Nations agency of the world's best scientists, had just delivered a report that warned humanity that unless we held the global average temperature increase to no more than 1.5°C, we could face unimaginable consequences up to and including the loss of human civilization and potentially our own extinction.

I put it to the Prime Minister that on the eve of the climate negotiations in Poland, now was the time to improve our targets. The IPCC report made it very clear that Canada's targets were wholly, and are wholly, inadequate to the task ahead of us. The good news, and I must stress this, from the IPCC report is that we still have time to avoid those consequences, but we no longer have time for procrastination.

Of course events have taken place since then. The climate negotiations, in which I participated in December in Katowice, Poland, are over. Canada did not step up to improve our targets. I have to say not just lamentably but shamefully that the only countries that improved their targets were Fiji and the Marshall Islands. However, it is very clear that we must take a role of global leadership. Where other countries are not improving their targets, surely Canada, with the weakest targets within the OECD, must do so.

The Prime Minister's response to me was “we are working hard to meet our 2030 targets.” I want to stress that these 2030 targets to which Canada is now committed have not changed since May 2015, when the former government of Stephen Harper placed them with the United Nations. We know from the IPCC report that the targets we put forward are not just inconsistent with the Paris agreement, they are dangerous and reckless.

The Prime Minister went on to say, “We are reversing the Conservatives' reckless changes...” I put it for my friend, the hon. parliamentary secretary, that the most reckless change of the Harper administration was to cancel Kyoto and weaken our targets, not once but three times. We have now embraced, and the Liberal government has now embraced, the weakest of the targets from the three times Stephen Harper changed them. They are clearly inconsistent with the Paris agreement. They clearly do not take us to 1.5°C. In fact, it has been calculated by other scientists that if all countries on earth were pursuing Canada's weak efforts, global average temperature would go to 5.1°C, or well past the danger zone.

We now know we have very little time. We know that other levels of jurisdiction within Canada are recognizing this is a climate emergency. Halifax just did, Vancouver has and other cities are considering it. However, in this place, it seems as though the major political party with the most seats in this place thinks we can just pretend, until we get through the next election, that the Harper targets are good enough. If the small efforts being made by the Liberal Party and the government, for which I am grateful they are not as weak as the Conservatives, lead us to extinction, in the end it will not make a difference.

● (1835)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always it is a pleasure to engage in a thoughtful debate with my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I will take this opportunity to congratulate her, on the record, on her upcoming nuptials.

Canadians know that the impacts of climate change are very real. We see them in our communities every day, and we need to take them very seriously.

We understand the importance of limiting the temperature increase to 1.5°C, as examined in the IPCC report that the hon. member has referred to. That is why we supported the goal of 1.5°C in the Paris Agreement, with significant discussion around targets. The real target that I am most concerned with is 1.5°C. It is going to prevent a catastrophe that could potentially render our planet uninhabitable for future generations.

The Government of Canada knows that growing the economy can be done while we protect the environment. I had the opportunity to take part in a panel with the hon. member this morning, during which we discussed, in fact, the notion that protecting the environment can lead to economic growth.

We have made significant progress in implementing our pan-Canadian framework on climate change. In December of this year, we published our second annual progress report, which details some of the work that has been done so far.

The focus in the short term is on doing the things that will have the maximum impact. I note in particular that we have implemented new regulations to help significantly reduce methane emissions from heavy-duty vehicles, and importantly, we have accelerated the phase-out of coal-fired electricity. I anticipate that by 2030, 90% of our electricity will be generated by renewable resources.

We released a clean fuel standard regulatory design paper for consultation. We made significant investments in clean technology, innovation and green infrastructure, which is going to drive growth while we reduce pollution.

I do not want to just rhyme off a list of accomplishments, but suffice it to say, we are focusing on the things that are going to make the biggest difference.

Of course, the price on pollution that we are introducing is a marquee policy of the government that is going to be the most effective tool we have in the tool kit. Members do not have to take my word for it. They can look at the many endorsements of this approach from groups like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and

Adjournment Proceedings

from a number of economists in the United States and Nobel Prize winners, to name a few. Our analysis found that pollution pricing alone in Canada is going to reduce pollution by 50 and 60 megatonnes. This is a policy that will have a significant impact.

We are always going to be looking to see what other policies we can be adopting to go further and to do more to achieve the decarbonization we need to ensure that we do not put our planet's health in the way of irreparable harm.

In certain provinces, of course, there is push-back against the policy that we are trying to implement. However, we will not be stopped just because there is a lack of political will to implement what we know is the most effective policy for reducing our emissions.

We remain committed to meeting our target of 2030. We want to achieve that 1.5°C maximum that we discussed in the Paris Agreement. We are going to work with our partners both across Canada and in the international community to try to get more people and countries on board to ensure that emissions come down so that we all have a safe planet to inhabit not just in this generation but, going forward, for our kids and grandkids as well.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, this has been the government's response on every occasion. It is as though what we are doing now is enough, while at the same time, as the government recognizes, it is not enough. It is an extreme case of cognitive dissonance.

I was so moved by the statements of the young Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg. She recently spoke in Davos at the World Economic Forum, and she said, "Our house is on fire.... I want you to panic."

I will continue with her metaphor. Let us say a house is on fire and there are people on the roof of a four-storey building who need rescuing. If people rush forward with a stepladder, the assembled crowds will not cheer for the stepladder.

Our house is on fire, and the government policies to date are the stepladder. We cannot reach the fourth floor unless we aim for it. We need to improve our target. We need to do it now. As Greta Thunberg said, first we have to panic; then we have to act.

● (1840)

Mr. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the speech to which the hon. member refers, and I appreciate the point of view.

In the face of great danger, our preference is not to panic, but to start doing the most that we can as soon as we can. That is why we are advancing some of the policies that I outlined in my initial response.

However, I want to also point out that it is not just government that is going to help us get there. There are opportunities for enormous progress if we look to the private sector. There is an ability to innovate. We can accelerate, with the government's help, the adoption of technologies like electric vehicles. We could look to groups like CarbonCure, which is in my hometown of Dartmouth. It sequesters carbon and turns it into concrete forms. We could look to partner with groups across Canada to help sequestration by transforming our landscape.

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We will always be open to doing what we can, when we can and as quickly as we can, while working with those who can take us further than we currently stand today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:41 p.m.)

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