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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[English]

ATTACK IN LONDON, ONTARIO

The Speaker: Before we begin, following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand that there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence for the victims of the attack in London, Ontario.

[Translation]

I invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ATTACK IN LONDON, ONTARIO

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *assalam alaikum*.

Lately, a lot of Canadians have been enjoying evening walks to get a bit of fresh air after long days at home during this pandemic. On Sunday, in London, Ontario, that is what a grandmother, two parents and two children went out to do, three generations of the Afzaal family, Salman, Madiha, their children Yumna and Fayeze and their grandmother. But unlike every other night, that family never made it home. Their lives were taken in a brutal, cowardly and brazen act of violence. This killing was no accident. This was a terrorist attack motivated by hatred in the heart of one of our communities.

[Translation]

I am horrified by the attack that took the lives of four members of one family and seriously injured a 9-year-old boy on Sunday evening in London, Ontario. Our hearts go out to their loved ones at this very difficult time. We all hope that little boy will be able to heal from his injuries quickly, even though we know he will have to live a very long time with the sadness, anger and incomprehension caused by the cowardly, Islamophobic attack.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident. There was also the attack on the Quebec City mosque.

[English]

The cowardly murder of Mohamed-Aslim Zafis at a mosque in Toronto, the violent attacks against Black Muslim women in Edmonton and so many other people across the country who have faced insults, threats and violence were all targeted because of their Muslim faith. This is happening here in Canada and it has to stop.

[Translation]

We must not become inured to this violence. We must not become desensitized to it. We must not accept this as normal. Every time we witness such hate, we must call it out. That starts with doing little things.

• (1010)

[English]

Words matter. They can be a seed that grows into an ugly, pervasive trend and sometimes lead to real violence. The jokes that are not funny, the casual racism, the insinuations that are only meant to diminish, the toxic rhetoric, the disinformation and extremism online, and the polarization we see too often in our public discourse and in our politics, as leaders and as Canadians we not only have to say enough is enough, we must take action. We cannot allow any form of hate to take root, because the consequences can be far too serious. We have seen it in Christ Church. We have seen it in other places around the world. We have lived it here at home.

Right now, Canadians are outraged by what happened on Sunday and many Muslim Canadians are scared.

Last night I spoke with the mayor of London, Ed Holder, and a representative of the local Muslim community, Nawaz Tahir, to share my condolences and discuss the urgency of what more we must do to keep our communities safe.

We stand with the people of London and Muslim communities across the country. We are going to continue to fund initiatives like the security infrastructure program to help protect communities at risk, their schools and places of worship. We will continue to fight hate online and offline, which includes taking even more action to dismantle far-right hate groups like we did with the Proud Boys, by adding it to Canada's terror listing. We will continue doing everything we can to keep communities safe.

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

The perpetrator of Sunday's vicious attack in London does not represent who we are as Canadians. We know that we are stronger when we live in peace than when we live in hatred and violence. We also know that we need to acknowledge the truth: this sort of hate and violence exists here in Canada, whether it be on the street, online or elsewhere. As long as it exists, we still have work to do.

[English]

If anyone thinks racism and hatred do not exist in this country, I ask of them this, how do we explain such violence to that child in hospital? How can we look families in the eye and say, Islamophobia is not real? When we listen to the Black Muslim woman who constantly looks over her shoulder at the bus stop, fearing someone will pull off her hijab or hurt her, she will tell us that Islamophobia exists. If we listen to the parents who beg their children not to wear traditional clothes for fear of them being harassed or attacked simply for what they are wearing, they will tell us racism exists.

Muslim families have often felt uncertain or even fearful when they go out on the streets wearing traditional garb. The reality is most Canadians have not necessarily been aware of that fear that far too many racialized and Muslim Canadians carry with them any time they go outside.

If the attack in London has any follow-up or impact on non-Muslim Canadians, it should be this, to understand the anxiety and the fear that our fellow Canadians carry, that they should not be carrying. It is on all of us to understand that experience and be there to support and to help. We can and we must act.

As Canadians, we have been fighting a global pandemic for over a year now, and we did it by coming together and by working together. That is the only way of confronting the ugly face of hatred. I want all Canadians to know that we are all diminished when any one of us is targeted. We need to stand up and reject racism and terror, and work together to embrace what makes our country strong, our diversity.

May peace and blessings be upon you.

• (1015)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in London, Ontario, there is a nine-year-old boy lying in a hospital bed. If he is awake, he may already know that his family will never be the same.

Just before 8:40 p.m. on a tranquil Sunday evening, as his family went out for a walk together, they were struck down by a brutal act of terror, as a family went for a walk on a Sunday evening on a street in Canada.

[Translation]

Right now, there is a nine-year-old boy in a hospital in London, Ontario. If he is awake, he already knows that his family will never be the same. Just before 8:40 p.m. on Sunday, his family members were struck down by a horrific act as they were walking around their neighbourhood.

[English]

We grieve for his family. We grieve for the Muslim community in London and across the country, because this is a pain they have known before.

[Translation]

Despite our sorrow and pain, we must find a solution.

[English]

There is a nine-year-old boy lying in a hospital bed, and we have to strive to learn and be better. The Canada of his future needs to be better than the Canada of Sunday evening. He deserves a Canada where his family can go for a walk on a tranquil Sunday evening. He deserves a Canada where he can go to a mosque and not worry about his safety. He deserves a Canada where Muslim women of faith can wear a hijab without fear of being accosted or harassed in public.

[Translation]

He deserves a country that is free and without fear, a country where people can go for a walk in total safety.

[English]

Over the last year, we have become more separated from one another. Police services have warned of a dramatic increase in hate crimes, violent extremism, Islamophobia and other signs of intolerance for one part of our country to another. It feels like we are having conversations in grief and fighting intolerance more and more. As hard as that is, it is important for us to shine light collectively to fight against the darkness.

It is important that we measure the distance between the Canada that we have and the Canada that we want, but it is more important for us to not just recognize the distance between those Canadas, but to conquer the distance.

[Translation]

When we talk about a society in which all people are free to practise their faith, to speak openly and to go wherever they like, let us remember that five people in London, Ontario, could not even go for a walk.

[English]

Someone else's hatred of their faith is the only reason why.

The Canada we have is one where four of these people are never going home. The Canada we want is the one that we owe to that nine-year-old in a hospital bed.

The Muslim community has known a lot of sorrow and much of it is all too recent. In the hours since learning of this attack, I found myself thinking of my many Muslim friends and their young families, people I have known for decades, children I have watched grow up. It frustrates and indeed terrifies me that they have to live with the fear that this could have been them on a walk with their children, children who do not yet know or understand the hatred that far too often lives in this world.

Freedom to worship cannot exist without freedom from fear and every Canadian has a right to that. That is a basic promise of this country. It is something that comes from just putting one's feet on the ground here. It has felt like a bit of a false promise lately to Muslim Canadians and a horrible attack like this shows us why. This country has always said that it can do better, but today we must pledge that it will do better.

Today, to my Muslim friends and to those grieving across the country, I am reminded of the universal message contained in chapter 41 of the Quran: Good and evil are not equal. Repel evil with good and be patient.

While Muslim faith asks them to be patient in the face of evil and adversity, our first duty as political leaders is to ensure the security of our citizens and to ensure that Canadians can be free to live, work and pray as they wish. Muslims' patience in the light of this horrific attack will transform our resolve to stand with them and fight against intolerance and evil.

Tonight, as the people of London hold a vigil for the family lost to this horrific attack of terror, let us resolve to do more than just grieve. Many Canadians, including one nine-year-old lying in a London hospital bed, need us to do that more than ever.

● (1020)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can we end hatred? How can we end violence? How can we end fear of difference?

In the wake of the London tragedy, we must reflect deeply. We cannot allow such incidents to occur over and over again while we do nothing but express condolences every time. It has to stop, and it has to stop now.

We owe it to that family in London, we owe it to the families of the Quebec City mosque, we owe it to all ethnic, sexual and religious minorities, and we owe it to women and our first nations brothers and sisters. We must seek and find solutions to end this violence, these violent acts that target people who believe differently, love differently or have a different skin colour. It all has to stop. Let us commit to working to end it.

However, it is not yet time for solutions. It is time to remember. This time belongs to Salman, Madiha, Yumna and Salman's mother. This time belongs to Fayez, the little boy who has suddenly and horribly become an orphan.

I cannot imagine the pain awaiting that child. He is going to need love, and a lot of it. Love is perhaps the only answer to hate. Our first thoughts are for Fayez. It is our sincere hope that he will recover from his injuries and that with the support of the whole community—Muslim or not—the wounds caused by this sad event will heal. This young boy lost his family, whose lives were cut short, taken because they were Muslim. Is there anything more important than family? Is there anything more painful than losing one's family?

On Sunday, an early evening family walk ended in tragedy because of a senseless and degrading hatred for Muslims. On Sunday night, something not unlike the tragedy in Quebec happened, another

tragedy that shattered lives. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I offer my sincerest condolences to the Muslim community, the friends and loved ones of the Salman family, and the people of London and of all Ontario. Our hearts go out to you.

May Fayez be comforted by the London community and find the strength he will need to get through this terrible ordeal. May he find a larger family within his community, a family that will not replace the one he lost this week but who will love him, support him, help him through the most difficult times and be there when this young man finds happiness again.

The hate must stop. Islamophobia and all forms of racism must stop. The violence must stop. These tragedies must stop. It is time for love, friendship and family to carry the day.

● (1025)

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, *as-salam alaikum*.

Today is a hard day. We think about what this means to Muslims and their families across this country. We have heard people mention this, but it is so common. All of us have gone for walks with our families in this pandemic, because there is nowhere else to go. There are places that are shut down, so we go for a walk. To think that a family going for a walk could not make it home, that a casual walk around the block in our neighbourhood would be one's last, that one cannot walk safely down one's own street, we need to think about what that means for a Muslim family. Right now, people are talking to their families and saying maybe they should not go for a walk. There are people literally thinking about whether they should walk out their front door in our country.

We think about what that means. Some people have said that this is not our Canada, and I think about what that means, when people say that this is not our Canada. This happened in London, Ontario. I lived in London, Ontario for five years. I loved my time there. I think about the fact that my parents chose to make Canada our home. I love my home. I love this place, but the reality is that this is our Canada. This is our Canada. Our Canada is a place where 215 little kids were found dead in unmarked graves. Our Canada is a place where people cannot walk down the street if they wear a hijab, because they would be killed. This is our Canada. We cannot deny it. We cannot reject that, because it does no one any help.

The reality is that our Canada is a place of racism, of violence, of genocide of indigenous people, and our Canada is a place where Muslims are not safe. They are not. They are not safe. Muslims are not safe in this country. I have spoken to Muslims who wonder how many more lives it will take, how many more families will be mauled in the street and how many more families will be killed before we do something.

Routine Proceedings

Innocent people were killed while praying in a place of prayer, in a mosque in Quebec, gunned down. A Muslim man in Toronto was knifed and killed. In both of those incidents, we know very clearly that it was directly because of hate. There was so much hate toward people they did not know, just because of who they were, how they prayed and what they looked like. That is a reality. People live with that every day. They walk the streets wondering if they will be attacked, just because of the way they look, not because of an enemy they have or because of someone who has a problem with them. Will I be attacked today, just because of the way I look? That is a real question people ask.

What a life to live, to have to wonder about that. We think about people who left violence. They fled persecution. Refugees come to this country thinking they are going to be safe here and that this is a place of safety, but they are not safe.

To Muslim Canadians, I am so sorry they have to live like this, that they have to live in fear, but there are things we can do. When we think about the lives lost, we think about Salman, Madiha, Yumna, young Fayez, who is still alive, and his grandmother. We think about those lives lost, and Fayez, who is still living. What can we do now? Things have to change. We cannot just do the same thing. We cannot just continue as if nothing has happened. There have been so many lives lost, and people are frustrated. What can we do?

I want to acknowledge that this is the reality we have to deal with. This is Canada. This is a part of the country we live in. We have to deal with it. We cannot deny it. We cannot ignore it. We have to confront it. This is a part of the country we live in, and we have to find a way to make things safer for people. We have to acknowledge that the real and urgent threat to Canadians' safety is coming from hate. It is coming from extreme right-wing ideology. It is coming from white supremacy. It is coming from hate groups that are expounding this type of hatred and radicalizing people. That is the real threat to Canadians' lives right now.

• (1030)

Something has to change. There have to be resources put in place to address these real and urgent threats to Canadians' lives. This is not coming from other places; it is coming from Canada. It is coming from people who are radicalized to hate people who look different, who pray differently. This is the real threat that Canadians are facing. Someone has to listen and acknowledge that if this is the real threat, then resources have to be put towards addressing this real threat.

We know, and this is a harsh reality, that politicians have used Islamophobia for political gain. They have used it as a divisive tool, and that has to end. No one can ever use Islamophobia for political gain, and we all know when it has been done. We all know how it has happened. I am not saying that it is solely those politicians who have used Islamophobia for political gain who are to blame, absolutely not, but they are surely a part of the problem. If they have used Islamophobia for political gain, thinking they can divide people to get votes, this is the result of it. This is what happens when they divide people. When they inflame hatred, people die.

We also need to tackle online hate. It is a real thing, and online hate is radicalizing people. Online hate is spreading messages that

teach people to hate and that create this fear of the other. We know it is happening, and we have to be serious about tackling it.

Something has to change. It just cannot continue. Another life cannot be lost while we do nothing about it. Another family cannot be mauled in the street while nothing happens.

[Translation]

What happened was an act of violence, an act of terrorism and an act of hate, and we must confront hate directly.

What happened was senseless and incomprehensible, but we must act. Now is the time to show determination, the time to do something to stop the hate and stop this kind of violence.

• (1035)

[English]

We have to make this a moment when we decide to do something different as a country, when we come together and say that we are going to put an end to hatred, that we are going to put an end to violence and that we are not going to allow political leaders to use this type of divisive hatred to gain political points. This has to end; it cannot continue. We have to be serious about this.

To all in the Muslim community in Canada who are suffering and feeling pain right now, I feel their pain. I understand their pain, and we are going to work towards making sure that they do not have to live in fear, that they do not have to walk the streets in fear. We are going to fight for them.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands seeks unanimous consent to respond to this statement.

All those opposed to the hon. member responding to this statement will please say nay. Hearing none, it is agreed.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for putting my request forward, and I thank all my colleagues for this opportunity to speak to this horrific event.

Assalam alaikum.

I start with these words: "Our hearts are broken, our minds are numb." This could speak for all of Canada. These are the words of Omar Khamissa, who works in community outreach with the National Council of Canadian Muslims.

To everyone on that council, to everyone who is a regular visitor to the Islamic Centre of Southwest Ontario, I have had the great honour to meet with imams, to speak of the true Islamic spirit and to talk about the enormous contribution to Canada from our Muslim community.

[*Translation*]

The Muslim community and Muslim families are an integral part of Canada. We are one, big Canadian family. This is a time of great sorrow unlike any other.

[*English*]

We say these words over and over as we experience this. I have heard them from my hon. colleagues, the right hon. Prime Minister, the hon. leader of the official opposition, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, and the leader of the New Democratic Party, who so movingly reminded us of all the ways that our society is not the one we think it is.

We have been holding a mirror up to ourselves for some time now, and it is hard to like what we see, especially when Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir announced the preliminary findings of the 215 children who had long since died, but not that long ago. They were the bodies of little children from the Kamloops residential school.

This event reminds us of how we stood together. Many of us here today in this chamber will remember standing in the bitter cold of Quebec City in 2017 with the Islamic community of Quebec City after the shooting in the Quebec City mosque and saying, “Never again.”

What strikes me now, as we gather together again to repeat our frequent calls that we do better, is that I think of the hon. member for Mississauga—Erin Mills and her Motion No. 103. I think of her courage because I know she was targeted. There were some very nasty messages after she stood up and said that we have to do something about Islamophobia, as well as anti-Semitism and hatred of all kinds. We have to look at ourselves in the mirror and figure out what we will do about it.

One thing that Motion No. 103 did for many of us in this place who were serving when it was put forward, was it exposed us to Islamophobia. Many of my constituents are dear, sweet people who I know. I had to write back to them saying they had misunderstood, that Motion No. 103 will not elevate Islam above Christianity.

They were afraid of that. I had to say that Motion No. 103 would not mean that we are going to have sharia law in Canada. There is a level just below the surface. Constituents sent me links to websites, by the way, with news sources that they wanted me to read, which said that Motion No. 103 would do all these things.

I wish I had taken notes yesterday when the minister of heritage, before the ethics committee, rattled off a bunch of statistics of how many hate crimes had been fuelled by an increase in hatred online, along with how many police chiefs are reporting an increase in incitement and radicalization to hate people based on their faith or the colour of their skin.

I am at a loss. I am the former leader of the Green Party, of course, and our leader has expressed the deep, deep sorrow of all of

us. However, all of us together as elected people, I think, have to actually stop for a while and listen, maybe just invite people from the Islamic community to come and talk to us, because there is something very, very wrong in a beautiful community like London. I have had the honour to spend a lot of time there.

Routine Proceedings

I want to send my condolences to our former colleague in this place because, of course, the mayor of London used to be the MP for London West. I also want to send my condolences to the current MP for London West, the current MP for London—Fanshawe, the current MP for London North Centre and all of the MPs touched by this personally. I know their hearts are broken, and they do not understand how this could happen in their community. Neither do I.

I just know that as Canadians, we have to do much, much better. That starts with acknowledging that we are broken, that we allow people to be infested by a seething hatred that would look at a beautiful family out for a Sunday walk and with premeditation, according to the police, try to wipe out that whole family.

We will never as a country be able to tell young Fayeze how sorry we are, how much we hope for his future and how much we mourn the loss of the people of his family, the Afzaal family.

With that, I do not think it helps us much as politicians to pretend we have answers, but I do agree with the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party that, if we ever again see a political party trying to divide us based on someone wearing a hijab, we must call them out.

Let us make sure that we say to all of the Islamic community of this country that, from the bottom of hearts, we ask for their forgiveness for letting this hatred live among us. We love them. We care for them, just as we do for all the members of this human family, which is so very broken. Our hearts are broken. Our minds are numb.

* * *

● (1040)

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the 19th Annual Parliamentary Transatlantic Forum in Washington, D.C., United States of America, from December 9 to 11, 2019.

*Routine Proceedings***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following two reports of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration: the sixth report, entitled “Supplementary Estimates (A), 2021-22”; and the seventh report, entitled “Safe Haven in Canada: Special Immigration and Refugee Measures are Urgently Needed for the People of Hong Kong”.

I want to thank all of the members and the analysts for working together on this report.

* * *

● (1045)

IMPACT ASSESSMENT ACT

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-308, An Act to amend the Impact Assessment Act.

She said: Madam Speaker, I rise today to table my bill, Bill C-308, an act to amend the Impact Assessment Act. It is a great privilege to table this legislation on behalf of the incredible community members, activists, indigenous people, farmers, ranchers and Albertans who has raised their voice against coal mining in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta.

For generations, Albertans have enjoyed the majesty of the Rocky Mountains, their peaks, forests, lakes and rivers. Their beauty awes us. The mountains have made Alberta a destination for nature lovers, hunters, anglers and outdoor sports enthusiasts, providing billions in tourism dollars and tens of thousands of jobs. I grew up hiking, skiing and camping in these mountains, and I am raising my two children to have deep respect and love for these wild places as well.

For generations, Albertans have understood the importance of our Rockies, so for generations we have protected the Rocky Mountains and their slopes from the devastation of coal mining, until now. Now our beloved Rocky Mountains, their diverse ecosystems and life-giving waters are at risk. The provincial Conservative government has opened the Rocky Mountains and the eastern slopes for new coal mine development.

Foreign-owned coal mining companies, trailing a legacy of environmental devastation behind them, are at this very moment fencing off public land, building roads, hauling equipment and drilling exploratory holes for massive open-pit and mountaintop removal mines through Alberta's Rocky Mountains and eastern slopes.

These mines will divert millions of litres of water for their operations in areas where water is already scarce and needed to sustain delicate ecosystems, farms and ranches, as well as the millions of Canadians living downstream. These mines will damage ecosystems, pollute rivers and streams, and destroy our beloved mountains forever. Coal mining is an industry from our past. Coal mining is not our future. Tens of thousands of Albertans have signed petitions—

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member will have an opportunity to make a speech when the bill is properly debated. This is just a short introduction of the bill.

* * *

PETITIONS

ADDICTION RECOVERY

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of over 500 Canadians from across the country. These Canadians are indicating that, because connecting people to community is key to successful long-term addiction recovery, and because recovery service providers across Canada working together to overcome addiction is a key element, they are calling upon the House of Commons to support having Canada designate the month of September every year as national recovery awareness month.

This would be a month to recognize and support Canadians recovering from addiction and to demonstrate that recovery from addiction is possible, attainable and sustainable.

TRAVEL ADVISERS

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am presenting two petitions.

The first petition is from independent travel advisers. They seek an extension for travel advisers of the CRB for six months past the lifting of all travel advisories. They would also like government maintain the current CRB at the current amount for the sectors hit hardest by COVID, including travel advisers.

The second petition is again from travel advisers. They call upon the government to ensure any financial assistance to airlines and their subsidiary travel companies be conditional on the protection of travel advisers' commissions and to ensure commissions already clawed back by the airlines and their subsidiary travel companies are repaid to travel advisers in a timely manner.

● (1050)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions on behalf of the independent travel advisers here in Canada. There are two issues they wish to raise, and of course we know there are tens of thousands of independent travel advisers across Canada and in our small communities.

Travel advisers make their living from commissions from people they are providing services for, including airlines. They are hoping two things will happen now as airlines are getting bailed out. First, they hope that there will be a stop of the clawback of their commissions, which have been going on over the past 15 months.

Second, they are asking for the CRB to be extended and be maintained at \$2,000 a month. They are also asking that it be extended an extra six months after the travel industry opens up again, so independent travel advisers can continue to limp through until we get to a point where they can be back in business.

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

AIR CANADA

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition signed by hundreds of citizens who are very concerned about the offshoring of some of Air Canada's activities.

Whereas: Air Canada receives hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance from the government; Air Canada helps create jobs, but outside the country using Canadian taxpayer dollars; and 20,000 employees were laid off by Air Canada in 2020, these citizens are calling on the Government of Canada to ensure that Air Canada planes parked outside of Canada are brought back to Canadian soil so that maintenance is done by Air Canada employees in Canada.

[English]

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to take the floor this morning to present a petition from residents of Vancouver Island who are deeply concerned with the fate of old-growth forests. Of the remaining forests in British Columbia, only 2.6% is old-growth.

The petitioners, in a particularly timely petition, call attention to the need to work with first nations to work toward partnerships in forest protection that focuses on harvesting only second- and third-growth forests; to work with first nations and provinces to develop deferrals and set asides for old-growth forests, preferencing instead value-added industries; and to ban the exports of raw log from Canada the conversion of standing forests to wood pellets as biofuels.

It is particularly timely given an announcement yesterday from the Pacheedaht, Ditidaht and Huu-ay-aht first nations of Vancouver Island calling for an end of the logging of old-growth in Fairy Creek and the upper Walbran Valley.

MYANMAR

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I am pleased to rise and present this petition from 543 petitioners in Saskatoon. They spoke passionately to me about the military coup in Myanmar, where tens of thousands of people were protesting, but the military and police had cracked down on them. They also mention that more than 540 people have been arrested, and some people were even shot by the police.

Petitioners ask that Canada not remain silent. They are calling on the House of Commons to impose sanctions against the State Administration Council of Myanmar and to form a subcommittee under the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to monitor, study and report human rights violations there. They would also like the House to condemn the fatal shootings and arrests of the people who oppose the military coup and to support all non-violent movements in Myanmar and Canada that are against the coup.

[Translation]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, today I have the pleasure of tabling petition e-3270 in the House of Commons.

This petition is on Air Canada's outsourcing, or at least contracting out, as the company is having its aircraft maintenance done abroad.

Whereas: Air Canada receives hundreds of millions of dollars, even billions of dollars as a result of the Air Canada bailout deal, and employees have been hard hit with more than 20,000 people laid off, it would be only natural to favour workers here instead of giving work to companies abroad.

I hope that we will receive a response to this petition as soon as possible so that people here can get back to work.

● (1055)

[English]

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I am presenting three petitions on behalf of my constituents regarding human trafficking.

The U.S. Department of State's 20th Trafficking in Persons Report indicates that Canada "meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking". The TIP report notes that Canadian governments did not provide comprehensive data on investigations, prosecutions, convictions or victims' services. The range, quality and timely delivery of trafficking-specific services vary across Canada, and there are persistent funding shortages. Coordination between the federal and provincial governments on anti-trafficking measures is poor. The TIP report urges Canadian governments to increase the use of proactive law enforcement techniques.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the government to do more to end human trafficking.

[Translation]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I am pleased to present petition e-3254, which 672 people have signed.

We know that Air Canada received hundreds of millions of dollars in assistance from the government; Air Canada is helping create jobs outside the country with taxpayers' money; and Air Canada laid off 20,000 employees in 2020.

The petitioners are calling for the work to convert Boeing 767 aircraft from passenger to cargo be done by Air Canada employees in Canada.

Privilege

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Jack Harris: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe there is consent that I be given an opportunity to intervene on the question of privilege raised yesterday by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member has the floor.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

GOVERNMENT'S ALLEGED NON-COMPLIANCE WITH AN ORDER OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today, virtually of course, to speak and intervene on the question of privilege raised yesterday by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, the opposition House leader, in reference to the order of this House that was issued on June 2, 2021, by a motion before the House. The matter has been referred back to the House, as it has not been complied with. It was raised yesterday by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, and the member for Jonquière spoke on behalf of the Bloc Québécois. I wish to add my remarks. I will not be long.

It was a lengthy intervention by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, who gave an extensive outline of the authorities. I want to underscore the importance of obeying House orders, in particular when it relates to the issue of sending for papers and records. The government ought to recognize the supremacy of Parliament in these matters.

This has been a long-standing issue before the House, and it is very clear that the power to send for persons, papers and records is part of the privileges, rights and immunities of the House of Commons, which it inherited when it was created. This is found in section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, and also in section 4 of the Parliament of Canada Act. This constitutional right is essential for Parliament as a legislative and deliberative body, so that it can deliberate, legislate and hold the government to account. This, of course, is outlined in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 137.

As is very clear:

The Standing Orders do not delimit the power to order the production of papers and records. The result is a broad, absolute power that on the surface appears to be without restriction. There is no limit on the types of papers likely to be requested; the only prerequisite is that the papers exist in hard copy or electronic format, and that they are located in Canada.

No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect, or unless the House

adopts a specific resolution limiting the power. The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records.

This is also from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at page 985.

A number of authorities have been mentioned by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent in this discussion, and I will not repeat them all here. The principal one for the House is the decision of Speaker Milliken from April 27, 2010. As Bosc and Gagnon note, he ruled that "it was within the powers of the House to ask for the documents specified in the House Order, and that it did not transgress the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of Government." That is the basis for the order and request, and the failure to fulfill it is, in my view, a *prima facie* breach of the privileges of the House, which the Speaker has been asked to find.

I support that request and will go on to say as well, as mentioned by the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent and the member for Jonquière, that the government's solution to the order is an excuse. It sees putting the documents in their unredacted form before the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians as a reference to a parliamentary committee. That is clearly inadequate and is, in fact, quite wrong in law and fact. The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians is not a committee of Parliament and does not report to Parliament, except by way of filing documents that have been vetted by the prime minister. This is explicitly stated in its legislation. I will read it for the benefit of members. Subsection 4(3) of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians Act states:

(3) The Committee is not a committee of either House of Parliament or of both Houses.

● (1100)

It is designed with a job and mandate, as specified in the legislation, to review:

(a) the legislative, regulatory, policy, administrative and financial framework for national security and intelligence

This is the power of the committee, under the aegis of the legislation. It reports to the Prime Minister, who can delete anything from its report, and is essentially not a function of the House. It is, rather, a separate body that provides some oversight of the national security issues of government. However, it is a governmental body, not a parliamentary body.

My party and I reject the notion that this is an adequate response to the request and the order of the House, and I wish to underscore and support the expectation that the Speaker will rule this a *prima facie* breach of the privileges of members of Parliament, and that we will have to consider the appropriate remedy as a House, in the exercise of its powers, to deal with this breach of a question of privilege.

Those are the remarks that I wish to make today in support of the notion that this be a breach of the privileges of the members of the House of Commons.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statements, Government Orders will be extended by 35 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1105)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—HOUSING POLICY

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

- (i) the cost of housing continues to rise out of reach of Canadians,
- (ii) current government policy has failed to provide sufficient housing supply, the House call on the government to:
 - (a) examine a temporary freeze on home purchases by non-resident foreign buyers who are squeezing Canadians out of the housing market;
 - (b) replace the government's failed First-Time Home Buyer Incentive with meaningful action to help first-time homebuyers;
 - (c) strengthen law enforcement tools to halt money laundering;
 - (d) implement tax incentives focused on increasing the supply of purpose-built market rental housing units; and
 - (e) overhaul its housing policy to substantively increase housing supply.

He said: Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

In the Building the Future Together report, Canadians told the government that the most important outcome from the national housing strategy would be “an increase in the supply of housing that they can afford and that meets their needs.”

At a time when many expected the cost of real estate to drop, prices skyrocketed to stratospheric levels, leaving young Canadians, new immigrants and those seeking to enter the housing market with a general feeling of hopelessness as their dream of home ownership slipped away.

I table this motion today because housing is farther out of reach than ever before, and we find ourselves in an affordability crisis across the housing continuum. I will be using my time to speak to each aspect of the motion and to address the integrity measures, demand policies and supply deficit in our housing system. This crisis is multi-faceted and there are no easy solutions, but the status quo is not okay.

My first point addresses Canada's foreign buyer issue. We need to calmly, openly and comprehensively talk about the very real and at times negative role foreign buyers play in Canada's residential real estate markets. We know the actions of foreign speculators and investors are increasing home prices for regular Canadians.

Dr. Josh Gordon's report, “Reconnecting the Housing Market to the Labour Market: Foreign Ownership and Housing Affordability in Urban Canada”, has found that the decoupling of housing prices from local incomes can occur, and arguably is occurring in Vancouver and Toronto especially, when there is substantial foreign ownership in the market. This is defined as “the use of untaxed foreign income and wealth for housing purchases”.

While he makes good use of the data at hand, in my conversations with Dr. Gordon it became clear that the available data is insufficient. CMHC, StatsCan, and provinces and territories need to

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be collecting better data for this reason. For instance, a CMHC study found that in 2016-17, one in five new Vancouver condos was owned by non-residents, but we need more current and more comprehensive data. Housing in Canada must be for Canadians, first and foremost.

If we do not have the data, we cannot achieve this objective. The government's own parliamentary secretary for housing publicly admits that our system works better for foreign investors than for Canadians trying to find homes. However, the government's solution is a proposed 1% annual tax. It has not even begun consultations on this yet, and the exemptions are already longer than my arm.

Will the government commit to a meaningful disincentive to foreign buying of Canadian real estate? Why not a 10% tax? Better yet, the government should do what this motion calls for and freeze the flow of foreign money into our residential real estate sector until the supply deficit has been met and Canadians can afford homes in their own country.

People are losing faith in the institutions that are supposed to protect their interests. When the pandemic ends, and before foreign investors come back to our markets in force, we need to know who is purchasing homes and the sources of the funds they are using. UBC Professor Paul Kershaw of Generation Squeeze has suggested harnessing foreign investment for the types of housing Canada needs, such as co-operatives and affordable purpose-built rentals.

Point number two addresses first-time home buyers. We must ensure that there is a pathway for hard-working Canadians to achieve home ownership, but this dream is quickly moving out of reach for the middle class. Home ownership should not be based on being born to wealthy parents. It should be based on hard work and a fair system.

Habitat for Humanity recently shared that “home ownership matters for every social determinant of health”. Home ownership lifts families and helps them build bright futures for themselves.

The Liberal government, unfortunately, is absent on this issue. Its first-time homebuyer incentive program is a failure. Its original objective was to help 200,000 Canadians over three years. We are now in year two, and it has helped approximately 10,600 families. How on Earth can the government consider this program successful?

Why does it not look at extending amortization periods and mortgage terms to reduce monthly payments and provide more security for both lenders and borrowers, or help young families save for down payments through tax incentives?

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• (1110)

What about adjusting mortgage qualification criteria in favour of first-time home buyers rather than investors, or expanding some of the initiatives from the private sector, including new shared equity programs?

The third point is money laundering in Canada. Yet another failure of Canada is our inability to address money laundering. The reason terms like the “Vancouver model” and “snow-washing” exist is because our nation is a global case study in how not to stop money laundering. Not only are our laws and regulations ineffective, but we poorly enforce the ones we have. Report after report shows that Canada largely fails to successfully convict money launderers. Almost three-quarters of people accused go free, a 2019 Global News investigation found. The Toronto Star found that 86% of charges laid for laundering the proceeds of crime were withdrawn or stayed. B.C.'s Attorney General shockingly found years ago that Ottawa had assigned precisely zero RCMP officers to fight money laundering in B.C. That only changed after January of this year.

At the finance committee, Transparency International highlighted that the 2016 release of the Panama papers showcased Canada's global reputation as a desirable place for dirty cash. Five years later it found that nothing had changed.

The government needs to implement recommendations from the numerous experts who have explored this issue. These include Peter German's “Dirty Money” reports parts 1 and 2, the Expert Panel on Combatting Money Laundering in B.C. Real Estate and the ongoing Cullen commission of inquiry into money laundering in B.C.

The fourth point is purpose-built rentals. Purpose-built rental construction has not kept pace with demand. Quite simply, there are no incentives for developers to build rental units in Canada and this needs to change. Much of Canada's current rental housing stock was built in the 1970s and 1980s through the multiple unit residential building program, or MURB. It was not a grant or a loan program, but a tax incentive program that unlocked the private capital of Canadians and directed it to rental housing. According to the Library of Parliament, MURB is estimated to have led to the construction of 195,000 units of rental housing at the lowest estimate. Studies have indicated that number could be as high as 344,000 units. It did all of this for the comparably low cost of \$1.8 billion in forgone revenue, and that is in today's dollars.

The government is spending \$70 billion on the national housing strategy, including provincial money, for 125,000 units. At some level, the federal Liberals know this is the way to go, hence the rental construction financing initiative, but this still ties developers to the federal bureaucratic process, which is slow. The Rental Construction Financing Initiative, RCFI, has quietly become the largest single funding envelope of the national housing strategy. Now at \$25.75 billion, it promises to deliver 71,000 units of housing in approximately 10 years. This is not a great comparison with MURB's 195,000 units for \$2 billion.

CMHC's new CEO, Romy Bowers, shared with the HUMA committee that the private sector is the only way we will meet Canada's housing needs. I agree. There are additional tools that could unshackle contractors as well. For instance, why not waive the GST for the construction of purpose-built market rental housing, or al-

low those with aging rental stock to defer the capital gain when selling provided the money is reinvested in rental housing? Increasing the nationwide stock of purpose-built market rental units serves to better everyone along the housing continuum. Canadians have never had more disposable income. Why not direct that to a social policy that could do some good?

The fifth point is increasing supply. We know Canada has a housing supply shortage. According to a recent Scotiabank report, Canada has the lowest number of housing units per 1,000 residents of any G7 country. Experts have been saying this for years, and COVID illustrated it better than anything else. Now many but not all of the policy levers to increase housing supply rest with provincial and municipal governments. Yes, red tape at these levels is a problem, but the federal government should incent the removal of restrictive zoning and NIMBYist bylaws by making any infrastructure investment conditional on their removal. Of course, any infrastructure funds must be accounted for transparently, unlike the current government's haphazard approach condemned by the Auditor General in report 9—

• (1115)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have been trying to signal to the hon. member that 10 minutes are up.

It is time for questions and comments.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Thérèse-De Blainville.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his presentation on what is a major problem in Canada, the housing crisis.

We had the opportunity to discuss these issues at several meetings of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, because it is a matter of concern.

What the Bloc Québécois is really concerned about on the issue of housing and affordable housing is that we know that this is Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdiction.

Does my colleague not believe that the solution is to have the Government of Canada transfer the amounts to the provinces and to Quebec based on their socio-demographic profile? That is the solution being proposed by the Bloc Québécois.

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, yes, a lot of the responsibilities to address supply rest at the municipal and provincial levels. That said, the federal government can use tax incentives to increase supply and work with its provincial and municipal partners to address this big crisis impacting Canada. Scotiabank recently wrote an article in *The Globe and Mail* calling for the federal government to get moving and work with private sector partners, provinces and municipalities to do just this.

Secondly, the finance minister and the Prime Minister, after budget 2021, said that housing supply was a real problem and now we need to act on it. Why did they not do anything in budget 2021 when they had the opportunity?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite has an interesting list of ideas. Not a single one of them appeared in the party platform when the Conservatives ran in 2019. It is good that the Conservatives have finally decided to talk about housing, but I will remind them that the housing market we are trying to fix, the housing market that the national housing strategy is addressing and the crisis and the emergency in this country around homelessness, most importantly, are never mentioned in any Conservative speech and never mentioned in any Conservative policy platform. While the Conservatives talk about tax cuts, the change to the MURB and to the rental housing tax code was done by a Conservative government. The previous minister of housing, the member for Carleton, used to brag about how unregulated the housing market was and how much the Conservatives did not want to regulate the housing market.

Why have the Conservatives suddenly discovered this issue, and why are they so late to this game?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, let me just point out that indigenous groups such as the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association Indigenous Caucus have long been calling for a “for indigenous, by indigenous” housing strategy, which the current Liberal government talked about doing but did not deliver. Instead of pointing the finger at the opposite side of the House, the parliamentary secretary should acknowledge, as the Prime Minister and the finance minister did, that Canada has a supply crisis. This member was in committee with me the other day when the CEO of CMHC, Romy Bowers, indicated that if the federal government is not working with the private sector, we are not going to address the affordability challenges we have in Canada.

We have to get to the bottom of supply.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, when there is a complete decoupling of house prices from domestic incomes, I think the conclusion is clear that foreign capital is definitely skewing the market. I agree with my hon. colleague that it is time to put effective curbs on foreign speculation, which is destabilizing our local housing markets and putting affordable housing out of the hands of millions of Canadians. However, I must

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say I disagree with him when he says that the solution is the private markets. If there is one thing that is clear, it is that the private sector has not provided and cannot provide affordable housing for all.

The member mentioned co-ops. Does he agree with the New Democrats that it is time to reimagine and deliver the very successful federal co-op program of the 1970s and 1980s to provide that form of home ownership and hundreds of thousands of units to Canadians?

● (1120)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I do not know the 1970s co-op strategy at length, so I cannot comment on that, but our leader, the hon. member for Durham, has signalled that co-operatives need to be a part of addressing the supply challenges we are facing in Canada. He made those comments to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to the motion moved today by my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Housing is of fundamental importance to Canadians across the country. Most Canadians dream of having a house, a residence, a home, a place of their very own. Housing is also an essential need for many others who unfortunately do not have access to housing or the ability to buy a home. In other words, as the motion says, the cost of housing has increased so much that buying a house is quite simply not an option for many Canadian families right now, and especially young families. The cost of housing continues to rise as we speak. To sum up the situation we are currently facing, Canada's housing market is out of control.

Over the past two years, total housing sales in Canada increased by 75%, compared to the United States, where home prices increased by just 13%. In the past year, the average house price increased by 32%. That increase is nearly twice as high as the increase in the United States.

Available data from Canadian Real Estate Association statistics indicate that, in Quebec, housing prices have increased significantly since the start of the pandemic. In April 2020, the average cost of a house in Quebec was just under \$340,000. By April 2021, the average cost of a house had climbed to nearly \$450,000. That is a 32.6% increase.

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Here is a brief overview of what has been happening in Quebec's regions. According to the Quebec Professional Association of Real Estate Brokers, in the first quarter of 2020, single-family home prices rose by 32% in Gatineau and 29% in Montreal. In Quebec City, prices went up by 15%; in Saguenay, 24%; in Sherbrooke, 32%; and in Trois-Rivières, 21%. The market is absolutely crazy. That is not my opinion. That is what Michel Girard said in his analysis of the real estate market, an article entitled "Un marché immobilier fou raide", published on April 3.

Over the last year, residential construction has increased by 22%, despite the rising cost of materials, and has brought the share of housing in Canada's GDP to 9.3%. That is a record.

What are the Liberals doing about this unacceptable situation? Do they even realize the extent of the crisis?

The ministers, of course, have their canned answers and their talking points that they can repeat ad nauseam today, but they are once again unable to present a credible plan to fix the problem.

In May, the Bank of Canada reported that household debt and market instability had increased over the last year, as we have just seen. On the subject, the Bank of Canada said, "The vulnerability associated with elevated household indebtedness is significant and has increased over the past year." It also said, "If house prices and household incomes were to fall in the future because of a shock to the economy, some households could need to cut back on spending. This would slow the economy and possibly put stress on the financial system."

The Governor of the Bank of Canada pointed out six vulnerabilities that could lead to the collapse of Canada's financial networks if they were affected by a severe external shock, such as a recession. Two of the six vulnerabilities identified were related to housing. The first is the high level of debt that Canadians have been forced to take on in order to buy a house and the second is the ever-increasing cost of housing and accommodations.

Bank of Canada researchers believe that households whose mortgages represent over 450% of their income are particularly vulnerable to bankruptcy. There are already very telling figures with regard to bankruptcy and financial hardship. According to Government of Quebec real estate statistics, the number of acts of financial difficulty increased by 49% from April 2020 to April 2021, going from 357 to 533 acts, even though interest rates are still very low right now.

• (1125)

Generally speaking, when Canadians are continually forced to increase their already high levels of debt because of an imbalance between supply and demand, Canada's future growth is at risk.

Unfortunately, the government is not really doing anything when it comes to giving Canadians access to affordable, or even adequate, housing. The current policy has failed to create a sufficient supply of housing to meet the demand in Canada. As a result of this failure, young Canadian families are having more and more difficulty obtaining affordable housing. That is a reality that far too many young couples and families are facing as first-time homebuyers. Housing options are limited and out of reach. The pandemic

boom, as we could call it, has resulted in a 30% increase in housing prices in many cities and towns in Canada.

One of the Liberal government's solutions in budget 2021 was to impose a 1% tax on foreign owners of vacant housing. Unfortunately, this policy is nothing but a farce. What is 1% to ultra-rich foreign business people who see their investment grow by between 20% and 40% in a single year? This is merely a minor inconvenience for wealthy foreigners. Meanwhile, the situation is a disaster for many Canadians who continue to put their dreams of owning a home on hold. The fact is that speculative foreign buyers in the Canadian real estate market distort the market and ultimately put home ownership out of reach for Canadian families and workers.

Rather than simply inconveniencing foreign buyers, the government should seriously consider a temporary freeze on home purchases by non-resident foreigners. If the government really was concerned about foreign speculation, it would have taken concrete action by now.

Why does the government refuse to do something about the fact that the Canadian housing market is secure for foreign investment but unaffordable for Canadians? Why is the government turning its back on young families while continually allowing foreigners to buy up properties on the market in order to make a quick buck and, in many cases perhaps, pursue illicit activities?

Steps should also be taken to get rid of the Liberal government's failed first-time home buyer incentive. This program, designed to provide eligible buyers with an interest-free government loan, is a huge failure. A year and a half into this three-year program and only 9,100 homebuyers have used it. That is a far cry from the 100,000 buyers the Liberals anticipated would use the program when they introduced it. Not only did Canadians reject the idea of the government having a financial stake in their home, but this program does nothing to resolve the accessibility problem currently plaguing Canada's housing market.

Housing experts note that the program's eligibility rules simply do not reflect the reality of the skyrocketing prices of homes in Canada's largest cities and, as we are now seeing, in the majority of the towns and municipalities in every province across Canada. The \$1.25-billion amount that was given to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to operate this program could certainly be better used to legitimately help first-time homebuyers in Canada.

The housing supply is insufficient, so the government needs to focus on building more housing. As a result of policies introduced by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in the 1970s, Canada has not managed to build enough housing to meet the needs of our growing population, which led to the crisis we are now seeing. While low interest rates and other economic factors did contribute to this situation, the policies unfortunately did nothing to address the housing shortage plaguing our market.

In conclusion, Canadians cannot ignore this issue any longer. We need to ensure that Canadians no longer have to shoulder the cost of the Liberals' mismanagement. We need real measures to even out the housing market and provide housing for the young families and Canadians who really need it.

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is fascinating listening to the Conservatives talk about housing, because they talk about one very narrow part of the housing spectrum continuously at the expense of all others.

The last story I covered as a journalist was the first budget of Stephen Harper in a majority government. There was not a single dime for housing in that budget. When I asked the prime minister at the time why that was, he told me to read the Constitution, and being the good Conservative and fundamentalist that he was, he said that housing was not a federal responsibility.

In fact, the Conservatives tried to sell off CMHC. The Conservatives, when they double-crossed their voters, and double-crossed their own caucus, eliminated every single income trust except for real estate income trusts, and we can go right back to that decision and see housing prices just take off like a rocket.

The Conservatives destroyed Canada's housing market, and we have put in place a national housing strategy to fix it. All the Conservatives can do now is come back and talk about tax cuts and supply. They have not talked about the homeless. They do not talk about co-op housing. They do not talk about the need to create purposeful rental housing. They do not talk about anything other than first-time buyers, and when it comes to that, where is the policy—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable an opportunity to respond.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I can see my colleague is quite nostalgic about his time as a journalist, but I must remind him that the Liberals have been in power for nearly six years. Also, I did mention that low-income Canadians unfortunately do not have access to housing and that we need a more robust housing strategy to build homes for people who do not have them.

Unfortunately, the national strategy my colleague is referring to does not actually work. I think he should be looking at the Liberals' record over the last six years instead of trying to look at what happened before that. His government is unable to keep its promises, and Canadians are the ones who end up paying more for everything and becoming homeless.

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Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, the triennial progress report on the national housing strategy clearly demonstrates that the three targets set in 2017 have not been achieved. In concrete terms, only 39% of the planned new housing has been built, only 42% of renovations have been completed and just 12% of subsidies have been disbursed.

That said, I just want to remind my colleague that housing is an exclusive provincial jurisdiction. We cannot say this enough.

What is his reaction to that? Does he also remember that although the strategy was put in place in 2017, it took three years for Quebec and Canada to come to an agreement on it?

I just want to hear his comments on that.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

It is completely unacceptable that it took three years to figure out what logo would be on the cheque. My colleague is absolutely right.

It shows once again how little respect the Liberal government has for the provincial jurisdiction of housing. It should have quickly reached an agreement with Quebec. If it had, perhaps the issue of access to affordable housing for most Quebecers who presently have none and are struggling would already have been solved.

Instead, the federal government wasted three years trying to score partisan points negotiating an agreement that should have benefited Canadians first and foremost, instead of being used for political gain. I completely agree with my colleague that it is wrong.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I was pleased to see that the Conservatives are interested in the housing issue, because it is a veritable crisis across the country, including in my riding in Montreal. However, there is something missing in their motion. There are two words that do not appear anywhere: “affordable” and “social”. Affordable housing and, in particular, social housing are the best solutions for providing decent housing for people based on their income.

Why are the Conservatives not interested in social housing?

• (1135)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the more housing there is, the more we can ensure that affordable housing will be built and the easier it will be to find a solution to this problem. As my colleague mentioned, we are very open to the idea of co-op housing. We need to find a solution, and the Liberal government must present—

*Business of Supply**[English]*

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just spoke with a London city councillor about the impact the tragedy of the last few days has had on her community and on the city of London. I am also thinking of members of my own riding, their walks to mosque and what that is like these days. I too would like to add my voice to a chorus of voices that are calling for us all as Canadians to be better in fighting racism and Islamophobia. That is where my heart is, even if the words that I am now going to share are focused on housing.

I have often risen in this House and said anytime the House of Commons talks about housing, it is a good day. No one will ever find an MP who fights harder for more affordable housing, whether the choice is to own or rent. It is a fundamental human right and I am very proud to be part of a government that has legislated the right to housing into a national housing strategy, that has brought forth federal leadership, which started to disappear in the late 1980s and was devastated by the cuts that were made in the early 1990s. I am very proud to be part of a government that has changed course. I am very proud that my party has embraced housing as a federal responsibility and has invested now close to \$72 billion and beyond, if we include some of the indigenous investments as well, to change the conversation on housing in this country.

The Conservatives will talk about market solutions and New Democrats will talk about social housing, but my party will talk about both. While the Bloc may think it is just a federal responsibility, the reality is that housing Canadians and meeting the fundamental rights of Canadians is all governments' responsibility. Whether it is an indigenous government, a municipal government, a provincial government or a federal government, we all must tackle this housing crisis together, we all must end homelessness together and we all must make sure that Canadians have a housing system that meets their needs and supports their choices, whether it is to rent or own.

Our government has made historic investments. If we take the rapid housing initiative alone, with \$1 billion over the last six months, it created 4,777 units of housing for homeless individuals. That \$1 billion did more in six months than the Harper Conservatives did in eight years. We have added \$1.5 billion to that program and hope to get even more remarkable results.

What is also amazing about that particular investment is that as we move toward an urban, rural and northern indigenous-led housing strategy and deliver on that program, while working very hard with indigenous housing providers to realize the funding and that program, almost a third of the housing that was delivered to the rapid housing initiative was delivered to indigenous housing providers in urban, rural and northern spaces. The largest investment in the history of the Northwest Territories was part of that announcement and for the programs and projects that we could not pick up through rapid housing, we applied the co-investment fund.

Let me help the House understand exactly how the national housing strategy is working and how much more work it needs to do. As I said, I will always support a call for more action, more investment and more thought on this issue. The national housing strategy approaches every single component of the spectrum of housing, from homelessness to people with high-income needs that require deep subsidies to secure their housing. We have to also make sure that people who are in rental housing are protected in that space, can afford their rental housing and save to buy a house, if that is the choice they want to make. We also have to make sure there are pathways and bridges to home ownership for new buyers so that people can secure their place in the housing market and the housing system in this country.

However, we also have to make sure that the market is stable. While I have no interest in protecting the speculative equity that is created in the housing sector, that is not my focus, we have to make sure that when people purchase homes, the market does not collapse around them and erode the principal they put down to acquire their housing. We have to protect the housing market as we also deliver social housing solutions, as we make sure we end chronic homelessness in this country and deal with the different regional, urban, rural and northern dynamics that challenge so many people in this country to find safe, secure and affordable housing.

Our national housing strategy, the \$72-billion program, addresses all of these issues, from supply to maintenance to subsidy to purpose-built supportive housing. It is a comprehensive strategy that I am very proud of, but it is built on almost 50 years of housing policy in this country. In fact, if we go back far enough, to the 1800s, we will see that the west was settled with offers of free homes. It has always been a federal policy to secure the growth of this country with strong investments in housing.

● (1140)

What has the national housing strategy accomplished? Let us review some of the accomplishments and take a look at the plan that was introduced in 2017. It was a \$40-billion plan, but in every single budget, we have added additional dollars to get more supply, more options and more choice in front of Canadians.

As we look at some of the extraordinary records, one of them is the move to get purpose-built rental housing being built again in this country. We have invested, as the member who introduced the motion identified, close to \$25 billion in supports to deliver new purpose-built rental housing.

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When I was a city councillor in Toronto, we were building fewer than 60 purpose-built rental housing units every decade. There are now 2,400 units being built in my riding alone. That is across the street in the new Toronto Centre riding, where there is purpose-built rental housing in partnership with the private sector. These new, permanent affordable housing units are just the start, because we have added additional dollars. There is a major program coming out with an indigenous group in Vancouver, the Musgamagw, that is also now getting support from our government. Why? Because we have a program that focuses on purpose-built rental housing.

That is one part of it, but there is also the co-investment fund. The co-investment fund was ridiculed by the House leader for the NDP. He said we should not be focusing on repairing housing units. I was at a housing announcement in Burnaby where we stepped up and repaired a co-op housing program. If we had not stepped up, it would have lost the units of housing. We would lose affordable housing just where we need to build it.

The co-investment fund provides funding to get projects started. It provides funding to repair social housing and government housing. There is a \$1.3-billion transfer to the City of Toronto to deal with TCHC's repair backlog. That funding protocol has now been replicated in Hamilton where it is tackling its funding backlog. It has also been attached to the city of Victoria. The city of Victoria was very close to being at functional zero on homelessness before COVID happened and ran into some headwinds, but the co-investment fund has partnered to deliver hundreds and hundreds of units. I have been there with Mayor Helps to open the units, to look at the units to see their very imaginative approach to building housing.

The targets and the dollars that are arriving are substantial. There is also the rapid housing initiative, but partnered with that is the reaching home program. The reaching home program, which started out as the homelessness partnership strategy, introduced by a Liberal government in the late nineties, untouched by the Conservatives for their eight years in rule, has not only been doubled in size, which is what we did in our first budget in 2015, the funding is now a half a billion dollars a year.

To put that in contrast to where the NDP members want to take it, if we go back to their 2015 election campaign, they promised a one-time infusion of \$60 million into the homelessness partnership strategy and that was it. We not only doubled that investment immediately, but at the start of COVID we doubled it again and now we have made that doubling of the reaching home program close to \$400 million to \$500 million a year over the next three years. We wired that into the system to help us realize the goal of ending chronic homelessness.

The other thing that our national housing strategy has done, which is quite remarkable, is that it has restored the funding agreements and the subsidies to co-op housing right across the country. These were set to expire. If we had done nothing, if we had not taken office in 2015, the federal government would be spending less than \$1 billion a year on housing right now. That was the Conservative trajectory for social housing.

Not only have we invested \$72 billion in construction and repair, but the subsidies we put in place are making housing even more affordable for people. For example, the co-ops that saw their agree-

ments expire have now been picked up and reinvested in. Subsidies to the rent geared to income have been restored, not just to the co-ops that were still on the books, but also the ones that lapsed while the Conservatives were in power. We brought them back on. This year's budget finishes that job and brings the entire co-op sector into one unified program for the very first time in the history of the country. Instead of having these agreements expire overnight, they are now on a timetable under the national housing strategy legislation. That agreement must be renewed before it expires in 2027. We have the co-op housing sector back whole and we are starting to build. In fact, I just had a text message from the Co-op Housing Federation of Toronto that seed money for a new co-op has just been advanced by CMHC and I had thanks from the federation.

We are now in the position of building and adding to the co-op sector because is exactly what the national housing strategy envisioned. We have put federal lands into the mix and we are adding federal lands where we can to the housing programs. In Ottawa, for example, there is a new housing project that is being built on federal lands with federal support to realize the housing aspirations of the city of Ottawa and the Region of Ottawa-Carleton.

Everywhere we go across the country, we are seeing change happen. Is it enough? Of course it is not enough. As long as we have people sleeping in tents, in ravines and by rivers, as long as we have homeless shelters still populated by people without housing, there will be work to do.

● (1145)

This government has set about changing what I think was the biggest mistake a Liberal government ever made, which was the cancellation of the national housing programs in the early nineties. It has reinvested now and brought back a strong, cohesive and comprehensive policy that is moving the dial in the right direction on every single housing front.

However, the issue being spoken to in this motion is not the social housing investments we have made. It is about how we are helping first-time buyers achieve their dream of home ownership. We put in a tax on offshore speculators, we brought in new rules around beneficial ownership to disclose who is behind some of these very questionable real estate deals and we put in a shared equity agreement for first-time homebuyers. For the first time ever, CMHC is starting to model its programs around regional housing markets and not just here in Canada as one large housing market. Hopefully this spurs even more people on to home ownership.

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We are also bringing in new block funding for things like Habitat for Humanity, which is now working with equity-deserving groups, equity-seeking groups, to meet the housing needs of very particular communities that have very low rates of home ownership to help secure their movement into the middle class and to secure their place in Canadian society and the Canadian economy.

That \$58-million block grant to Habitat for Humanity is also starting to build homes in indigenous communities as well. I was up in Tobermory with the Chippewas of Nawash to watch them as they broke ground and started the construction of 19 new homes, which was funded with Habitat for Humanity program dollars but supported with national housing strategy funding as well.

Everywhere one goes from coast to coast to coast, whether it is Nanaimo, Kelowna, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto or St. John's, one can find national housing strategy money at work. Is it enough? No. As long as we have a housing crisis, we have work to do and more to invest.

What I can say is that going back to the days of the Conservatives, where we had a prime minister who did not want to touch housing policy, where we have a party that thinks it is only a question of supply but only supply into the private sector and only supply as it relates to first-time homebuyers, is not going to work. If we allow the continual creep of financialization and we do not support our partner governments in delivering housing, we are simply not going to solve this crisis.

The \$72-billion program is moving every one of those parts of the housing continuum forward, and we are finding new ways to do it in ways that are innovative, from modular housing to barging houses up to Iqaluit and realizing the renewal of housing with loans for the greening of our housing stock and the upgrading of the energy performance and making it more livable. We are also doing things like requiring to overachieve on energy efficiency in new builds when it comes to social housing.

We are also, for the first time ever, requiring that universal design be a characteristic of all new builds at 20%. We are also providing funds to retrofit old buildings to make them more accessible for people with disabilities. We are also making sure when we partner up that we lock in provincial spending levels so as federal dollars arrive at the front door, provincial governments are not allowed to take it out the back door and simply tread water.

We are also working with our infrastructure dollars to make sure transit investments have a positive impact on social housing construction, and we are tying social housing goals to our infrastructure investments to make sure as we invest and create strong communities, we build communities for all. Again, it is not part of the national housing strategy but it is part of this government's approach to housing and making sure all Canadians have the housing opportunities they need and have their choices realized.

I respect the fact it has been a very difficult year in the housing market for Canadians and respect the fact some of the ideas the Conservatives are talking about require more action on the part of this government. I understand it, but to say we have done nothing is wrong. To say we have not focused on every part of the housing continuum is wrong as well. To say it is only a question of social

housing, market housing or supply is equally oversimplifying a very complex issue.

I am proud to be part of a government that has restored leadership in federal housing. I am proud to be part of a government that is building more co-ops, more rentals and more homes for more people than at any other time in the last 30 years in this country. I agree, there is more to do, and we will continue to add dollars to the national housing strategy, new chapters.

The next one coming is the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing program for indigenous by indigenous. We are building on the report from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, we are building with the housing advisory council and we are building with indigenous housing providers to deliver on that commitment, and we will.

• (1150)

Until we have every Canadian housed, we are open to criticism. All governments will be open to criticism. Until we solve this housing crisis, there will be work to be done. I hope that all parliamentarians will join me in supporting the initiatives we presented in budget 2021.

I hope the Conservatives can reverse course and start voting for things like a tax on vacant and foreign-owned homes. I hope they can support our measures around benefits for home ownership. I hope they can support the rapid housing investment of \$1.5 billion, the rapid housing 2.0 that I spoke of, to deliver even more housing to the most vulnerable Canadians.

I hope they can find it in their hearts to start supporting the investments we are making on reserves and with the distinctions-based programs with the Métis council, the IITK, AFN and partner indigenous governments.

I hope they can support the movements we have made around investing in repairs, boosting the Canada housing benefit and targeting in particular women escaping domestic violence, because we know how hard women in that sector have it when they look for housing with their kids, coming out of a very dangerous and precarious place.

I hope they can support more than doubling the investments we are making in Reaching Home, and now the half-billion-dollar annual investments.

I hope they can reverse the policy they used to have, which forbade federal funds to support young teenagers who are homeless. They actually had a policy, which was one of the most mind-blowing policies any government has ever produced around housing. The Conservative government under Stephen Harper had a policy that if a young person was homeless on the street, they had to stay homeless for six months before federal dollars could support them getting into permanent housing.

Imagine taking the most vulnerable kids in this country and punishing them for six months for running away from home. At the time, the minister said they did not want to incent young people to run away from home. People run away from home to live on the street because they are escaping an even more precarious and dangerous situation. Instead of finding a way to house young people, the Conservative government actually, by policy, left those kids on the street for six months before it would allow Reaching Home dollars to support them with rent supplements.

Policy after policy after policy in the Conservative playbook did nothing for the hardest to house in this country. As I said, when I covered my last story as a reporter, I was so infuriated by the Conservatives' approach to housing that I left journalism and entered politics at the local level. When I saw no progress being made in Ottawa at all, I left city council and ran federally to re-establish leadership on this file. I am very proud of the response that the Prime Minister and cabinet have had. I am very proud of the work our caucus has done. I am very proud of the work of a lot of opposition members who have housing projects in their community.

To pretend that we have done nothing is just political spin. To demand we do more is the demand we hear every day from our constituents and the people we represent. We are with them on that path to do more and do better, because more is possible; better is always possible. There is more to do. There is more to come, and we will not rest until the right to housing is realized by all Canadians, regardless of which choice they want to make, to rent or to own. Whichever part of the country they choose to live in, we have a responsibility as the federal government to create a housing system that meets their needs.

Our national housing strategy, now at \$72 billion, does exactly that. We will work with our partner orders of government, indigenous, municipal, provincial and territorial, to deliver on these commitments. We are not done yet, but it is getting better. As it gets better, I hope the opposition parties can join us in pushing even more housing through the budget process, even more housing through the approval process, and get Canadians the housing they rightfully deserve.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know this is an issue the parliamentary secretary cares deeply about. He has given a lot of things for all members to think about today.

One part of his speech, though, did catch my attention. This is a good-faith debate here, I hope. He mentioned that the government has an obligation to keep stability in the housing market. Especially in terms of financialization and its impacts, which he did mention, I do think there is an argument to be made for stability systemically,

but there should be a natural fluctuation, as with any asset or investment, where prices go up and prices go down.

Could the member elaborate a bit more on what he meant when he said that the government must ensure stability in housing and house prices? Does he not agree that there are concerns from younger Canadians that they will not even have the opportunity to get into a home if prices are kept at their current rate forever and continually out of reach?

• (1155)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, I was speaking with a young family that had been working in Fort McMurray. They had stayed there long past employment had disappeared as an option, but they stayed because of housing prices. Their mortgage went below water. In other words, the collapse of the resource sector and the drop in the global price of oil had created a housing surplus, effectively, in Fort McMurray. There have been some floods and fires recently, which have provided some real challenges there.

There are people in this country who cannot move to new jobs, cannot move to new schools, cannot start new families because the housing market they find themselves in is so unstable. Their principal is what is being impacted.

We, as a government, have a responsibility to make sure that when Canadians invest in a home, their home is safe, secure and affordable. It does not mean we are required to protect the speculative value. It does not mean we are required to protect inflation or protect people's investments. However, we do have a responsibility to make sure the housing market is safe, secure and affordable for all Canadians. That means a regulated market. That is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague is trying to embellish his government's housing record, but the reality of the matter is very different. There is a serious housing crisis in Quebec caused by the delay in the signing of a Canada-Quebec agreement as part of the national housing strategy launched in 2017. The billions of dollars earmarked for the program have not yet been spent.

Here is a good example. In early May, in Montreal, Minister Hussen announced the renovation of 500 housing units under an agreement concluded in December. That is all well and good, but it will take three years before people can move into these units. Had the agreement been signed three years ago, construction would not be just beginning, families would be moving in. Does my colleague not find that unacceptable?

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Madam Speaker, the national housing strategy funds housing, but it takes time to build housing.

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The agreements we signed with the provinces locked in their spending levels and contributed our dollars to increase supply, but also deepen affordability and maintain the housing stock. We are very proud that we have agreements with every province and territory. Did it take a little longer in Quebec? Yes, it did. There was a change of government that was part of the timetable, but we achieved it.

In the interim, we have also found ways to work directly with cities. If members talked to the mayor of Montreal about the impact the rapid housing initiative has had on the fight to end homelessness, they would see that our direct funding to cities in Quebec has paid off in the delivery of new housing almost immediately. In fact, the national housing strategy did very well in terms of unit count in Quebec.

We work with all governments, and all of those efforts have paid off in more housing and more funds, and a commitment to those dollars. The dollars that were assigned to Quebec were not not spent in Quebec. It may have taken a little longer to get there because of the length of time it took to negotiate the agreement, but the reality is that those dollars—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. We noted that there was no funding in the last Liberal budget for the urban aboriginal strategy. My colleague lives in an urban area and represents the people there.

Some 40% of indigenous people live in urban centres and, although they represent only 5% of Canada's population, they account for 30% of emergency shelter users. Can my colleague tell us where we are with the urban aboriginal strategy?

• (1200)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that we are committed to co-developing an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy and that the dollars are there, but we are waiting for the indigenous housing providers to articulate exactly what the new urban, rural and northern housing centre should look like, how it should be funded, what priorities should be set, and what kind of communities should be built.

For the government to arbitrarily set a dollar figure and to arbitrarily and unilaterally decide which program funding models are going to be pursued would betray the “nothing about us without us” concept and the “for indigenous, by indigenous” principles that indigenous housing providers have demanded of the federal government.

We are in the process of setting up the other side of the table and supporting indigenous housing providers as they move forward on that project. We will see the full weight of federal spending arrive when that table is constructed, to start building housing in urban, rural and northern centres.

In the interim, every single part of the national housing strategy is open to indigenous housing providers. If members look at the recent rapid housing initiative, close to a third of the dollars and almost 40% of the units went to indigenous housing providers.

We are very serious about solving the urban, rural and northern indigenous housing crisis in this country. We will work with indigenous housing providers to deliver the housing that is needed to meet those needs. We are fully committed to realizing—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his leadership and his advocacy in the field of housing.

I recently hosted a round table discussion with stakeholders in my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga, talking about the national housing strategy. One of the things that came up was, in smaller communities, seniors wanting to be able to downsize and stay in their community. Can the member discuss how we can work together as a federal government with municipalities and developers, even churches and organizations that have land, understanding the needs of their local realities, especially in these smaller municipalities, so people can age at home in their communities and stay with their families?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, the national housing strategy sets a target for seniors housing and, for the first time ever, has a carve-out specifically for seniors in retirement living. We are also stepping up with long-term care investments, which is another form of housing, with deeper supports that benefit not just seniors but all sorts of Canadians who live in long-term care facilities, who require supports to realize the highest quality of life possible at affordable rates.

Working with seniors-led organizations, there is a project in Woodstock, a fascinating project that is off the grid. It actually contributes more electricity to the city than it takes. It was built not just with national housing strategy dollars but also with some of the funds made available through NRCan and through our programs that support the conversion of housing or the upgrading of the environmental performance of housing. It is a form of housing that is actually cheaper to operate and therefore has a lower price for seniors.

It has been working with the local city government to waive fees; it has been categorizing the waiving of fees as a contribution. It delivered seniors housing to keep people in a small rural community and to allow the homes they used to occupy to be made available to more Canadians to purchase.

All of the elements of the national housing strategy approach all of the different housing needs, and seniors are not forgotten in this calculation, nor are people with disabilities or people with specific medical needs who require specific kinds of housing to be built to accommodate the choices they need to make in their lives. Seniors are a very strong—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a moment for one last question.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, to my hon. friend, the parliamentary secretary, I know the sincerity of his deep commitment to housing.

I am looking at the budget for this new tax, which he mentioned briefly, of 1% on non-resident vacant housing. I note in the budget that there will be consultations and more details. Can the hon. parliamentary secretary tell us whether he thinks 1% is enough, and whether this might apply to the increasing use of online bookings for what is replacing bed and breakfasts now, as people book in non-resident vacant housing for their vacations instead of staying in hotels?

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, as several other members have spoken to, the federal government does not act alone in the housing sector. B.C. also has some very strong measures around foreign ownership and vacant housing, so we are adding to that. It is not the federal government alone that is trying to curb that speculative force out of the market. We are working very hard with the B.C. government to explore other options and other methods, including using FINTRAC to trace some of the questionable money-laundering techniques that are hurting housing prices in this country and pushing them away from Canadians.

We have also worked with municipalities that are bringing in regulations to limit Airbnb or ghost hotels emerging in new projects. We have worked very closely using the tax codes to track ownership, to tax it properly as income-producing property, and to make sure that we try to return much of that housing to the market so that Canadians can buy it, instead of having it rented out in a speculative manner. We are working with municipalities on that front to provide a solution.

Each one of these methods by itself may not appear to have a comprehensive approach to solving the problem overnight. I wish there were a flip of the switch that we could trigger to solve the crisis, but we have to work on all these fronts: limiting Airbnb's impact on the market, limiting foreign ownership, limiting the money laundering, limiting the way speculation is driving housing prices. All of these measures are being approached through the national housing strategy, while we also focus on social housing supply and new market rentals. It is a comprehensive, coordinated approach—

• (1205)

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to end that segment.

I will ask members to indulge me for a moment before we resume debate.

Last Thursday, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands offered some wonderful words in tribute to my work here in the House and, in my haste, I did not properly thank and recognize her

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for those words and the wonderful way in which she expressed them, as she always does. I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Joliette.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my friend, the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

The housing issue is a major cause of concern. Like food and clothing, housing is an essential need. Any self-respecting society must at least be able to ensure that every individual has access to housing.

The cost of housing must also be reasonable. These concerns are shared by virtually every country, city and village in the world. No place in the world seems to be immune to rental and real estate market disruptions, despite the fact that we do not live like Jack London's *People of the Abyss*.

When a problem arises, solutions appear to be varied and complex, and several crises have shown that, when the situation gets out of hand, it can be serious and long-lived, causing much suffering. We need to take this very seriously, we need to be concerned about the housing shortage and skyrocketing rents, and we have to take strong and concrete action right now.

It has become difficult to access not only affordable housing, but home ownership as well. People's ability to become homeowners must be protected at all costs. On this, I would like to refer to Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. In this book, Piketty stresses the historical importance of the emergence of the middle class. Higher income levels allowed the middle class to build up a little capital, which largely manifested in the purchase of property. It was a real revolution, and we must preserve our gains.

Preserving the ability of the working class to become homeowners is a crucial issue for anyone who wants to live in a society where wealth is not over-concentrated. Today, though, how can a person who earns \$45,000 a year, the median salary in Quebec, buy a \$690,000 house, the median price of a home in Montreal?

Even a \$385,000 house is virtually out of reach. Still, that is the median price of a house in the most affordable area, the north shore of Montreal. Even with two salaries it is very difficult to afford buying, even a condo.

We are witnessing an alignment between income and real estate and rent prices. Prices of real estate are rising, making it a good investment for people who can afford it. However, rising real estate costs reduce home ownership opportunities for the less fortunate, which is eroding the middle class. The situation is leading us away from the type of society we want.

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Skyrocketing real estate prices have led to a boom in rental costs. Individuals and families are spending far too large a percentage of their income on housing. As a general rule, housing costs should not exceed one third of income, and ideally they should account for about a quarter. Unfortunately, this is less and less the case. We are now at the point where this basic need is becoming less and less affordable.

Let me give two examples. Today, if I want to rent a small apartment in Montreal, I will have to pay \$1,200 a month. This is 30% higher than in 2019, and three and a half times more than I was paying when I was in university about 20 years ago. Obviously, salaries have not increased by 30% since the beginning of the pandemic, and they have not tripled in the past 20 years. The upshot is that many individuals and families are devoting a much larger proportion of their income to housing. The corollary is that they have to cut down on other costs. First they cut out the little extras and treats, but they soon find themselves having to choose which basic needs to forgo. That is the point that regular folks have reached, and it is not acceptable.

My second example concerns Saint-Jean-de-Matha. About 15 years ago, I went to see a small house for sale on a nice lot right in the middle of town. The house was really cute. The seller, a friend of mine, was embarrassed to ask for \$34,000 because he had bought the house from another friend a few years earlier for \$25,000. That is how things are in Saint-Jean-de-Matha: everyone knows each other, and everyone is friends with one another. He ended up selling his house for \$30,000 because he could not bring himself to price it at full market value. Today, that house or its equivalent would sell for at least \$150,000. However, salaries have not increased 500% in the past 15 years. The price will probably even continue to rise, because \$150,000 is well below the median house price on the north shore, never mind in Montreal proper.

In recent decades, there has been an overall increase in residential real estate prices and rents. Of course, all this has gotten worse since the beginning of the pandemic. It is not all that surprising, since people spent more on housing during the pandemic. There were fewer places to spend money, and people wanted to spend the lockdown in a bigger place with more space. However, this latest surge in prices is highlighting a problem that has existed for decades. There are several factors involved, and there is no simple solution for stabilizing the market. Low interest rates played a role. Mortgage payments are monthly. When interest rates fall, people can buy a more expensive home and keep the same monthly payment. That makes sense.

• (1210)

However, when interest rates begin to rise again, then they are in trouble. That is why I agree with the new measure that requires people to demonstrate their ability to pay a higher interest rate before they obtain financing. That should help bring the market to a more acceptable level.

Obviously, the issue of foreign investors is troubling. The promise to grant citizenship to a person who comes and buys a \$500,000 condo has always been a bad idea. The goal was to attract capital, but it caused real estate prices to climb and reduced the number of available housing units, since these condos usually

sit empty. This sucks the life out of the downtown cores, because there are not as many people living there. We need to revise this policy, and I am not certain that the 1% tax will help.

We are having the same type of problem with foreign money laundering in real estate, which is causing prices to shoot up and reducing the number of housing units available. We need to address this problem as well, since it is unacceptable and extremely detrimental.

We also have to tackle the issue of Airbnb and other sharing platforms. The prospect of renting one's home to a tourist is appealing, but it becomes problematic when many homes are rented to tourists and are no longer used to house people. That exacerbates scarcity and drives up rent. That has to change.

The government plays an essential role in the social housing supply. When it plays its role well, it supports low-income individuals and families and indirectly helps keep prices more realistic across the market. Unfortunately, Ottawa has been neglecting that role for nearly 30 years. New investments are still nowhere near historical levels, and that has consequences. When Ottawa chose to cut funding for social housing, it was well aware that its decision would lead to misery and distress, and it knew full well that its actions would contribute to the problems we are having today.

I welcome the new funding for social housing and homelessness. It is a step in the right direction, but it is not nearly enough. Actual dollar amounts may have increased, but Ottawa has in fact reduced its funding as a percentage of GDP. We need the government to keep up, not gradually fall behind. I also condemn the lack of predictability and the unjustified delays in transferring the money to Quebec.

The Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, or FRAPRU, points out the importance of specifically targeting social housing.

Whether it is co-operative, non-profit or public, social housing protects tenants from exorbitant rent increases, repossessions and renoventions.

We must also remember the whole issue of housing for first nations people, especially in urban areas. That is very important.

Let us also consider that with such an increase in housing prices and rent, we should expect an increase in residential construction, because an increase in the housing stock will help rebalance market forces. We must figure out how to juggle the land shortage and the issue of urban sprawl, while bearing in mind concerns about climate change. This increase is also held back by the availability of resources. Building housing takes time, and we are currently seeing that the construction sector cannot meet demand. As a result, prices are increasing, especially for building materials.

I would like to remind my colleagues that Quebec and the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction over housing. Since housing needs vary considerably depending on the socio-demographic context, the provincial and municipal governments are in a better position to assess and identify their residents' needs, since they are closer to local issues. They are asking the federal government to increase funding for social housing and to immediately transfer the necessary funds to Quebec and the provinces, no strings attached.

In conclusion, I would like to remind members how important it is to have a healthy real estate market. The well-being of regular people and the less fortunate depends on it. That is the type of society we want to live in. We must also watch out for real estate bubbles. Think about the bubble in Tokyo in the 1990s, when the land value of downtown Tokyo surpassed the value of the entire state of California, or the subprime crisis in the U.S. When these bubbles burst, there are always terrible consequences, and we need to avoid them at all costs.

• (1215)

[English]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the intervention by the member from the Bloc Québécois. He was very thoughtful and covered a number of areas.

In the speech given earlier in the chamber by the member from Toronto, he talked about how Mr. Harper tried to teach him a lesson about the Constitution. I remember that during the Harper years, Mr. Harper negotiated affordable housing frameworks with British Columbia to provide services. I see that the member from the Bloc Québécois also thinks that local areas and the provincial government, which has a responsibility under the Constitution, are the most effective choices for doing this.

It seems to me that there is a disagreement in how the government operates. It seems to want an Ottawa-knows-best methodology, or mythology depending on how we see it, instead of directly supporting agencies that have the expertise. What does the member have to say about that?

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. First, I want to remind him of the Liberal government's cuts to social housing in the 1990s. This caused hardship to ordinary people, and we must not forget that.

Second, as my colleague and I both mentioned earlier, elected officials in the municipalities, the provinces and Quebec are more familiar with their communities and are in the best position to implement successful social housing policies. The role of the federal government is to transfer money, because Canada is a federation. The federal government needs to stop trying to manage everything and stick its nose in everywhere, trying to set conditions. That is not a federation; that is a central government. Ottawa is disconnected and out of touch with the people.

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned FRAPRU and the strong

work it does in advocating for better housing policy in Quebec. I have had many conversations with its representatives over the years, including when we launched the national housing strategy and dealt with the demand that all the dollars simply be shifted to the provinces while we hope for the best. They were very critical of that approach. They said that some pockets in Quebec were favoured and others were being punished by the provincial government. They need federal money to be available to all housing providers in Quebec, not just simply sent to the provinces so they can play their political games with housing dollars.

The housing sector and the activists in Quebec say they want a blended system operated by federal, provincial and municipal governments. They want options to pursue so they can get funding when one level of government is not responding to their analysis of the housing need. How are we to respond to them and to FRAPRU if all we do is simply ignore them?

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments. What FRAPRU is asking the federal government for is more funding.

Even with the funds announced in recent years, federal investments in housing have fallen as a percentage of GDP. Then there are the interminable delays. It is terrible that social housing and homelessness initiatives are being subjected to longer and longer delays. Parliament voted for funding, but no money has been spent. In the meantime, families are ending up homeless or without social housing. The federal government needs to do more and do it faster. It needs to transfer the money.

More decision-making centres, especially in areas that are not under federal jurisdiction, means more bias, more bureaucracy, and fewer public services. We need to act now and provide better funding.

• (1220)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Joliette, who always has something interesting to say. There is a shortage of social housing, yet social housing is the best tool for putting a decent roof over people's heads and reducing poverty.

Does my colleague not also think that social housing can benefit people who want to buy a home, because it helps cool the overheated housing market?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I salute and thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his tireless advocacy on behalf of ordinary people, particularly on the housing issue.

When there is a good social housing system in place, it reduces the pressure to raise the rent across the housing market. That is the system we want, because housing is a necessity. Our society must ensure that there is enough housing to accommodate everyone. There is a clear link between the two.

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Ottawa must do a better job of funding social housing by restoring funding to the levels that were in place before the cutbacks of the 1990s.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by echoing the comments made by the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Bloc Québécois and the leader of the NDP earlier regarding the tragic events that occurred in London yesterday.

Like all Canadians, I was shocked by what I heard about this tragic event. We obviously still have not found the right words in this country to ensure that events like this do not happen again. On behalf of all Quebecers and all Canadians, my thoughts go out to little Fayez Salman, who is about to go through a truly difficult time. We need to do more, and we need to do better. I think this is the responsibility of all Canadians, including all parliamentarians. That is what I wanted to say about what happened in London.

Now, as for the motion before us, I am quite happy to be talking about it, to say the least. At the same time, a question comes to mind. This is a Conservative motion. Today in the House, we are going to talk about housing, at the behest of the Conservatives.

I have been an MP for a year and a half. I was elected a year and a half ago, and I am the Bloc Québécois housing and homelessness critic. I do not recall seeing the Conservatives rise once on the issue of housing. I do not remember seeing that at all.

Are they doing this because there is an election on the horizon? They might be thinking that it is time to talk about housing, which seems to be an issue since there is a housing crisis. No, I did not forget. I have just never heard them say a word about it. I am not always here, but it is an important issue. There is a housing crisis going on in Quebec and Canada. In fact, it is more complicated than that. There was a housing crisis before. Now there is a pandemic housing crisis, and there will be a housing crisis later.

I recently spoke with members of the Réseau SOLIDARITÉ itinérance du Québec. According to them, we are going through a health crisis, but we are facing a social crisis that could last five to 10 years. They think that the adverse effects of the current pandemic will linger for years.

The government we have right now is not doing anything, or at least not enough. There are problems with housing, and the government needs to step up. I want to give some context about how this crisis is playing out in Quebec. What is the issue?

Right now, there are 450,000 households in Quebec in serious need of housing. That is equivalent to about five or six federal ridings' worth of people who are spending 30% of their income on housing or living in substandard or inadequate housing. Some people may be paying a reasonable amount, but to share a one-bedroom apartment with seven other people. That does not work.

Some 200,000 households are spending more than 50% of their income on housing. These figures are from before the pandemic. Last, but not least, is a shocking figure that I have been repeating in the House for the past year and a half. I do not even understand how we can allow this to happen. Before the crisis, 82,000 house-

holds in Quebec were spending more than 80% of their income on housing.

To give members an idea of what that means, 80% of an income of \$20,000 means that \$16,000 is spent on housing, with nothing or practically nothing left over. If we divide the remaining \$4,000 by 12 months, members can just imagine what kind of life that is. My mother called it living in squalor. We are letting that happen.

Right now, in Quebec, 40,000 households are on the waiting list for low-rental housing in Longueuil, Saint-Hyacinthe, Rimouski, Brossard and Montreal. There are 23,000 households on the waiting list in Montreal alone.

We are talking about numbers. With regard to homelessness, Mayor Valérie Plante said that it appears the homeless population doubled during the pandemic. It went from 3,000 to 6,000 because people were made vulnerable by the crisis. We saw it last year in the streets. People set up camp along Notre-Dame Street. This year, they have been moved, but it does not seem as though the situation has been resolved.

We know that house prices have increased by about 20%. That also contributes to making people vulnerable. Obviously, the federal government has a role to play in this. Obviously, this is an area of provincial jurisdiction. In 2017, the federal government launched a major, multi-billion dollar strategy, saying that it would house everybody, that nothing like this had been done in 30 years, and that everyone would see that the government was going to take care of people, people who were vulnerable and at risk.

• (1225)

I do not remember how many billions were promised as part of that strategy. For three years, the federal government spent money everywhere in Canada except Quebec. The crisis raged on, but no money was spent, not a penny. It took three years to sort the situation out, and the Canada-Quebec agreement was signed in October of last year. However, I have heard that sectoral agreements are still being signed and that things are still being worked out.

Earlier, while I was asking a question that my colleague, as usual, did not answer, I provided a striking example relating to renovations. The agreement includes nearly \$1.2 billion to renovate decrepit low-rental housing. That is a good thing, and we are happy about it because our cities are full of boarded-up low-rental housing that we need to invest in.

In early May, as part of the agreement that was signed three years after the national housing strategy was launched in 2017, it was announced that 500 new units would be renovated in Montreal. However, no one could move into these units for three years.

If the agreement had been signed three years ago, we could have housed a single mother in my riding who was the victim of domestic violence. She made the headlines in the *Journal de Montréal* about a month ago. This poor woman does not have a home and is in a vulnerable position. She was trapped in a toxic relationship, but the government is doing nothing to help. In Longueuil, a single mother in her situation needs a two- or three-bedroom apartment, which costs between \$1,500 and \$1,700 a month. There are none to be had. If the federal government had acted quickly, instead of trying to get its flag on the cheques to show that it was the one providing housing for people, this woman would already have a place to live.

The government has finally reacted. Let us put the agreement aside and talk about the rapid housing initiative, or RHI, that was launched by the government last fall. I must admit that it is not a bad program, but it is grossly underfunded.

The first part of the program was for the big cities and had a budget of \$500 million, which is scandalous in and of itself. Of that \$500 million, Toronto received \$200 million, Montreal \$57 million and Quebec City \$7 million or \$8 million. Why is that? In Quebec, we have 23% of the population, but we received only 11% of the money. Is that because our needs are not as great? I never got a decent answer to that question.

The second part of the RHI was for everyone: non-profit organizations, other organizations and towns, among others. An application portal was opened and that is when we really saw the crisis come to the surface, when the program received applications for projects worth a total of as much as \$4.2 billion. However, the envelope for that second part of the program was only \$500 million.

The applications were for projects for people with real needs, desperate needs: victims of spousal abuse, addicts, people suffering with mental illness. We know what mental illness is. We have talked about it quite a bit throughout the crisis. We could have taken care of those people.

The organizations that submitted project applications were not just a bunch of guys who had nothing better to do between periods in a hockey game and so decided to submit a project to address domestic violence before the start of the third period. The application process is complicated, and these are serious individuals who know and care about the needs of their communities. The projects were valued at over \$4 billion, but there was only \$500 million in the envelope. When we talk about underfunding and say that people's needs are not being met, that is what we are talking about.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which represents municipalities across Canada, whether it be Calgary, Toronto, Victoriaville or Rimouski, applied for \$7 billion under this same program. It saw an opportunity and thought that it was a good program and that the government was reinvesting.

• (1230)

In closing, while I have probably made my point to the members of the House, I would still like to reiterate that the government is not doing enough and not moving fast enough. We are not taking care of people and ensuring they are properly housed. We need massive reinvestment in social housing and we need it now.

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[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his dynamic intervention.

When the parliamentary secretary spoke earlier today, he mentioned that the Liberal plan addresses every single component of the housing continuum and in that is saying the government is addressing supply. We have to assume if it is already addressing supply, then it had a role in leading to the affordability crisis we are facing today. What would the member from the Bloc Québécois say to that?

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that I understood the question, but there is something very interesting about which little has been said and that I have not spoken about in connection with housing.

The government is saying that rent is not that high. The average rent in Montreal is \$895. The problem is that the average rent of available housing is 30% higher. Currently, the average cost of available housing in Montreal is \$1,300 a month. We need to consider that. We must do something to help.

A little earlier, I spoke about the woman from Longueuil. There are many people like her, people made vulnerable by the pandemic and who are waiting for social housing. We must do something for these people.

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I support the member's call for more. Members will never hear me say that we have done enough. We are doing more than the previous government and we have more work to do.

I would like the member to respond to several positions advanced by Conservative MPs in this conversation about cutting red tape at the municipal level, taking away zoning regulations that the cities of Montreal and Sherbrooke have put in place, and overriding the provinces' planning criteria and jurisdiction in the supply chain as they manage, as many have said, the exclusive responsibility around planning, zoning and construction standards in provinces.

Does the member from the Bloc support the Conservative position that we should be overriding and changing the local jurisdiction's rules and regulations around the construction and siting of housing, and what sort of housing gets built in local municipalities and ignore provincial jurisdiction over planning acts at the provincial level? Should the federal government be intervening in that way?

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert to be patient as there is a point of order.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

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• (1235)

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The parliamentary secretary is misrepresenting the position of the Conservative Party.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: That is debate.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what else to say. The same thing happens with health care. Housing is a provincial jurisdiction, and the federal government needs to send money to the provinces. Historically, the federal government has established its authority over spending. It is responsible for the crisis we are in now because it does not spend enough.

I cannot get over this. Over the past 15 months, the government has spent \$400 billion on all kinds of things, which were good things, but why can it not seem to find \$3 billion or \$4 billion to house the most vulnerable?

I do not get it.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we are talking about a housing crisis, I invite my colleagues to come to Kashechewan, where 1,900 people are sharing 364 houses. That is roughly 16 people per house, and COVID has hit. We have 60 active cases and potentially 70 cases at high risk. That means out of the 30 Canadian Rangers who were sent in only five are working, because the rest are isolated with COVID. Nine health workers have been sent home. We have 10 to 15 people to a house and COVID is spreading. We are talking about a potential humanitarian disaster, with over 172 cases right now on the Mushkegowuk part of the James Bay coast.

I am asking my colleagues to get serious about the underfunding in the first nations communities. We need to look at bringing in the army to help. They do not have the housing, the infrastructure and the medical teams necessary to keep people safe when they are living so many in a home with the COVID variants that are hitting them very hard.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my hon. colleague.

I could not believe it when I saw the news about the 215 children who were found in Kamloops last week. The government's only response was to dust off Bill C-8 and say that it is taking action for indigenous peoples by adding four words to the Canadian oath of citizenship. Meanwhile, there are still indigenous reserves in northern Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba that do not yet have drinking water and where there are 25 people living in substandard and unheated one-bedroom homes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the fantastic member for Vancouver East.

Like the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, I was shocked to see that the Conservative motion is about housing. It is rare that we hear them talk about this subject. So much the better if their motion talks about housing because it is a real subject, a real issue and a real problem.

Does the motion present real solutions? That is another matter, and we can talk about it later.

Housing is a critical issue that affects thousands of people in Montreal, Quebec and across Canada. Obviously, my speech is going to focus on Montreal because that is where my riding is located. There is a real housing crisis in my riding. It is not the only place in Quebec that has been affected by the crisis, but it is one of the places that has been hardest hit by it.

The vacancy rate is approximately 1%, which is extremely low. That means that people do not have a lot of choices. Sometimes they are even forced to stay where they are because there are no other options available. Some housing units are dangerous and can jeopardize the health of their occupants. I will come back to that later.

As I was saying, the vacancy rate is really low. The delay regarding the Canada-Quebec agreement exacerbated the crisis. The federal government waited three years before releasing the funds and getting out the shovels and bricks to start real housing projects. Unfortunately, Quebec has been the last in line when it comes to housing.

The vacancy rate puts intense pressure on both the rental market and on home ownership. People are paying ridiculously high prices for housing. In Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, 74% of residents are renters. I recently saw a two-bedroom apartment going for \$1,750 a month. A two-bedroom apartment cannot house a big family. Furthermore, I wonder what kind of job someone needs to have to be able to pay \$1,750 a month. The average income is around \$40,000 or \$45,000 a year. Rent is, on average, \$1,200 or \$1,300. This puts a lot of pressure on workers, on the middle class and, obviously, the less fortunate.

Why is housing so important? It is because there are a few things we can do to help improve people's lives.

People need better working conditions. If someone earns more and inflation is not too high, they can increase their purchasing power. Higher wages are therefore a good thing.

The government can also use fiscal tools, such as taxes, to redistribute wealth and achieve greater equality within our society. One of the best ways to fight poverty and reduce inequality is to tackle the biggest expense for individuals, families and households. That biggest expense is rent.

Let us tackle that problem so we can really help people and lift them out of poverty. Maybe that just means giving them a little bit of a leg up to help improve their quality of life so they can take a vacation or go to a restaurant or the movies. When those activities are allowed, of course, but we all agree that it is coming.

Everyone knows that if a person spends more than 30% of their income on rent, they will end up poor and vulnerable. Right now, 20% of people spend more than 50% of their income on rent. In other words, one in five people spends more than half their paycheque on rent. That is outrageous. About 3,000 households or 6,000 to 7,000 people in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie are in that situation. That is a lot of people.

As I said off the top, I was happy to read the Conservatives' motion. Then I started combing through it for a couple of words that turned out not to be there: "affordable" and "social". The motion says nothing about affordable or social housing even though social housing in particular is the best way to help people get decent housing that is within their means. It is possible to create housing that costs people no more than 25% of their income, of their pay.

• (1240)

That makes a huge difference. It helps people in a tangible way. However, the Conservatives have disregarded this and have not included it among the options on the table, even if it is the best tool we have to help people and give them decent housing.

The Liberals occasionally talk about social housing, but they do not invest enough in it.

The Liberal plan, of which they are so proud, is to create 160,000 affordable or social housing units. I will get to what affordability means. The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness says that there is an urgent need to build 300,000 housing units in Canada. The plan in question, of which the Liberals are so proud, barely manages to offer half of what is needed to meet the needs of the population. Personally, I would not pat myself on the back as much as they do.

The NDP wants to go farther, faster. We want to make the kind of effort that has not been seen since the Second World War and build 500,000 new affordable social housing units in the next 10 years.

When we use the word "affordable", we must consider certain criteria and be mindful of the definition. I will get right to the issue of affordability. As a matter of fact, depending on the definition, it can refer to some completely absurd situations. If our only criteria is that these units are rented 5% cheaper than the market average, which is exploding and reaching outrageous and ridiculous prices, we end up with housing that is considered "affordable", but for which people need to have an outrageously high salary and an outrageously low standard of living.

According to the Liberal definition, in Ottawa, a unit that rents for \$2,750 a month is considered affordable. The Liberal government thinks this is affordable for the poor and the middle class. I cannot wait to go door to door on this issue.

We need to be able to build housing outside the logic of the market. That is why the NDP puts so much emphasis on building social

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housing and co-operative housing, which is another way to deal with the housing problem. This goes beyond the single perspective of real estate developers, profits and business objectives. There is obviously room for a lucrative private real estate market. There is also nothing wrong with helping people get a better deal in the market and helping young families get into home ownership.

However, we must be able to keep a part of our real estate market outside the regular market. This would reflect the principles of public service, co-operation and mutual aid, and it would include housing co-operatives, for example, which are common in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. These are great places to live, where people learn about co-operation, living together, sharing and local democracy. We have to continue to push in that direction.

We need to recognize that housing is a fundamental right and part of human dignity. For years now, the NDP has been introducing bills and fighting to have housing recognized as a right. That would make all the difference.

Speaking of making a difference, the federal government could still make a difference with investments and funding. I talked about 500,000 affordable social housing units, but there are also a lot of other things, such as working with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the CMHC, to make it easier for young families to access home ownership and to encourage the creation and maintenance of the co-op housing I was talking about.

We must also use federal land. There is federal land that is not being used and could be sold to private developers to build various projects. Why not set aside and use these federal lands to ensure that social housing is built, for example in the riding of Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, in Montreal, where there are some very interesting sites? They should be set aside for social housing.

Locally, in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, there is the issue of "renovictions", when people are forced to leave their dwelling because of renovations. This does not fall under federal jurisdiction, but we must work with the provinces to come up with solutions.

As for housing safety and environmental health, I joined a protest near my office started by people who were unable to move out of their dwelling even though it contained mould and was dangerous for the occupants.

The La Petite Patrie housing committee is working extremely hard with regard to the construction of social housing close to the Bellechasse sector. The Rosemont housing committee is also working to have other properties designated entirely as community housing when new projects are built, which is interesting.

With regard to the former Centre de services scolaire de Montréal or CSDM building on Sherbrooke Street, the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain, or FRAPRU, is asking that it be reserved for social housing.

I think that is an excellent idea and something we should consider.

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• (1245)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member keeps referring to social housing. I have a concern with social housing, at least as I understand the member to represent it. Social housing, to me, means building as many units as possible in one tight area to house as many people as possible. Although that might be beneficial in terms of having the best bang for our buck, it certainly has been proven, time and again, that it does not help with the mental health of individuals living there and it does not help with the social stigmatization that comes from ghettoized social housing. It is very well regarded that, in order to bring people through the affordable housing process, they should be well integrated. Indeed, the co-op model does that, because the co-op model requires people who pay market rent as well as people who pay non-market rent for it to be viable.

Can the member comment? When he talks about social housing, does he not mean something that is more along the lines of integrated housing? There, people who are living with rent geared to income are living with people who are paying market rent, so that there is an integration of demographics in a particular complex.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which deals with a major concern.

I would like him to come visit my riding of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie one day. He would see that the idea of a socially mixed environment and diversity is extremely important in the projects that we put forward, when we are able to get funding. The Liberal government has been dragging its feet for three years.

The idea is not to create chicken coops or ant hills where we try to shove as many people as possible into the smallest space possible and leave them there. On the contrary, we want to be able to create projects in which social housing and real affordable housing are a significant component. We want a mix of renters and prices that are in line with the true market value.

This type of project is worthwhile because everyone lives in the same living environment. That is one of the things we are trying to do with the development of the Bellechasse sector, which I talked about earlier.

Diversity and a socially mixed environment are extremely important to us.

• (1250)

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to everyone's remarks by saying that I completely agree with my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, among others.

Before becoming an MP, I worked in community action in Laurentides—Labelle. People have been talking about affordable and social housing for ages. We all knew there was a huge crisis, and I know first-hand there is still a crisis, because people come see me at my office. They recognize me and ask me for help because they have no place to live, and by July 1 it will be too late. It is never too late though.

Under previous governments, once consultations were done in the ridings, it was easy to see where things were going even though nobody saw the pandemic coming. Where were they?

Here is my question for my colleague. How is it that this is being brought up now, and by a Conservative government to boot, just before the end of the parliamentary session and at the end of the pandemic?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her extremely pertinent question.

There is a whole history behind the cuts to funding for social and affordable housing that were carried out by both a Liberal and a Conservative government.

The Liberals abolished the program in 1993. As I just mentioned, investments are barely half of what they should be, half of what is required. Additionally, Quebec is only three years behind everyone else. That makes the crisis even worse.

The Liberals promised in 2015 that they would waive the GST on all new social and truly affordable housing. They have been in power for six years and have not waived it yet. This is a small measure that could boost the initiative to build new affordable housing for families.

[English]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie a direct question.

Does he support the position of the Conservative Party that the federal government should make building affordable rental units, market units, easier for developers to help those people he is talking about as well? I ask this because a lot of people want a safe and secure place to live, but the reality is that not everyone is going to want to live in social housing, as I feel the member is suggesting in some of his remarks.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, we need a diverse supply of housing in Canada. I agree with my Conservative colleague that there is a shortage of rental housing in all sectors.

I obviously emphasized social housing because the NDP believes it is the best way to lift people out of poverty, but there is also a shortage of rental housing in the private sector. My colleague is quite right.

However, I want to stress that having more social housing also helps middle-class Canadians who are looking to buy a house, because it cools the overheated real estate market in general.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the federal Liberal government walked away from the national housing program in 1993, Canada's housing crisis has escalated to a feverish pitch. In 2017, the federal Liberal government announced a national housing strategy. It even declared that adequate housing is a basic human right.

Two years after the announcement of the national housing strategy, in 2019, the Parliamentary Budget Officer noted that \$11.6 billion of that is cost matched by the provinces. The PBO further said that the national housing strategy basically just maintains the funding at current levels, and in fact, the funding for those with core housing needs actually reduced slightly by 14%. The report said, "CMHC's assumptions regarding the impact of [National Housing Strategy] outputs on housing need do not reflect the likely impact of those programs on the prevalence of housing need."

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing) admitted on the public record that the Liberals double counted to inflate their numbers for rhetorical advantage. Even after this admission, the government shamelessly continued to use the inflated numbers in the throne speech.

We also saw that the vast majority of the funding to add new affordable housing stock was back-end loaded and in the form of loans. When eventually the trickle of money began to flow for new construction, the process was onerous, complicated and time-consuming. All the housing providers that tried to access the co-investment fund will know exactly what I am talking about. Canada is now losing more affordable housing and social housing than is being built.

Housing is a basic human right and eradicating poverty starts with ensuring that everyone has a roof over their head. Housing should not be treated like a stock market, and the current situation, where an estimated 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness every year and 1.7 million households are in core housing need, is a disgrace for a country as wealthy as ours. The Liberals' national housing strategy's goal to create between 150,000 to 160,000 units does not ensure housing is a basic human right.

The NDP shares FCM's view that the funding announced in budget 2021 does not yet meet our shared goal of ending chronic homelessness. Constantly falling short of what community housing providers are calling for is not how to treat a crisis. Resorting to double counting for rhetorical advantage might make the Liberals feel better about themselves, but it does not help the people on the ground.

Furthermore, the Parliamentary Budget Officer and housing policy expert Steve Pomeroy have repeatedly criticized the low affordability criteria of the RCFI, the largest national housing strategy program. For instance, the government announced a project in Ottawa "providing 65 units at only 21% of median income". The government is making it sound affordable, but in reality, that was \$1,907 per month, which was 48% higher than the average one- and two-bedroom apartments in the area.

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Not only is this not affordable. Steve Pomeroy argues that the project in the RCFI would have been built anyway, but of course, the housing providers will not say no to financing at lower interest rates if that is offered.

We also learned that CMHC does not even track what is the rent for this program. It does not matter if the rent is well over average market rent. The Liberals then use this RCFI to pad their claims of how many Canadians they have helped find affordable housing, but we will never know this by just listening to the Liberals' talking points. We have to dig deep to expose the Liberals' doublespeak. Without the necessary resources, the Liberals' claim that they will end chronic homelessness by 2030 will be yet another broken promise.

As pointed out by many housing advocates to end chronic homelessness, we need to build at least 370,000 units of community housing. In fact, over 40 housing organizations and advocates from across Canada jointly signed a letter to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to call for this. They are also calling for the creation of a housing acquisition fund that would provide non-profits quick access to capital for acquiring existing rental properties at risk of being swept up by these funds. This was also supported by the recovery for all campaign and the FCM.

There is a great need to limit the ability of REITs and large capital funds in fuelling the rising costs of housing and rent, but to date no action has been taken to address this urgent issue. I know the Liberals will say they announced the rapid housing initiative and its astounding success, and that they just announced phase two of the rapid housing initiative. Let me say that it still falls short of what was called for by the FCM and many other housing advocates.

● (1255)

A significant expansion of the RHI is needed, and the NDP will continue to push for a \$7-billion investment for no less than 24,000 units over the next two to three years. The NDP is also renewing its call for 500,000 units of new affordable social housing units to be built. The federal government must also step up to partner with all levels of government and non-profit housing providers to ensure operating costs and supportive wraparound services are provided. This is an essential component to a federal-provincial-territorial partnership.

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Turning to the issue of home ownership, many young professionals and couples, especially those from big cities, often find themselves in a situation where home ownership is a remote dream. The 1% tax on vacant homes owned by people who are both non-residents and non-citizens is largely symbolic, when the average cost of housing has increased 31% in 2020 alone, a rate that is simply unsustainable. In B.C., vacancy in foreign ownerships stack independently up to 2.5% combined with a 20% foreign buyers tax in metro Vancouver. The federal government should at least match B.C.'s initiative for affected housing markets to curb foreign market speculators.

The parliamentary secretary for housing also admitted that Canada is a very safe market for foreign investment, but it is not a great market for Canadians looking for choices around housing. The NDP will continue to push the government to strengthen these measures, as well as for more stringent housing ownership reporting requirements to ensure more transparency on ownership, and to make it more difficult to launder money and evade capital gains taxes on secondary residents.

Let me turn to another glaring omission in this motion and in budget 2021. Both fail to address the critical and urgent need of a “for indigenous, by indigenous” urban, rural and northern housing strategy. Despite the Liberals saying that they are committed to a “for indigenous, by indigenous” urban indigenous housing strategy, we have yet to see one materialize. In budget after budget, the Liberals fail to deliver.

To quote Robert Byers, former chair of the CHRA indigenous caucus:

For years, government officials have told us that an urban, rural and northern Indigenous housing strategy was a priority. The absence of such a strategy in today's Budget will mean that urban and rural Indigenous peoples will continue to face inequality and lack of access to safe and affordable housing, and that is a disgrace.

Indigenous peoples are 11 times more likely to use a homeless shelter. Who here has not heard the excuses, over and over again, that the government is working on it, it is doing a study, and it has targets for indigenous housing? If the study was a priority, why did the Prime Minister prorogue the House last year, shutting down Parliament, including the work of committees?

If the government wanted an indigenous-led consultation process, why did it not establish a “for indigenous, by indigenous” national housing centre? The Liberals could have done that as part of the 2019 budget, the fall economic update in 2020 or in budget 2021, yet they did not. The reality is that the core housing need for indigenous households is the highest in Canada.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer most recently reported that 124,000 indigenous households are in core need, including 37,500 being homeless in a given year. The annual affordability gap is at \$636 million. Winnipeg has the highest number of indigenous households in housing need, estimated at 9,000. Vancouver is second at 6,000.

Indigenous, Métis and Inuit people should not have to be told, time and again, that their housing needs can wait. The time has come for the government to act. I am therefore proposing the following amendment, and I hope that the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon will accept it.

I move that the motion be amended by adding the following at the end of paragraph (e): “by renewing efforts to build affordable and social housing not seen since post-World War II, including a commitment to 500,000 new units in a “for indigenous, by indigenous” urban, rural and northern housing strategy.”

It is absolutely critical that this action be taken. I hope that the member will support this amendment so we can send a clear message about what needs to be done, clearly defining the action that is required.

● (1300)

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I cannot support her amendment to the motion. I do not have enough context for the first part regarding after World War II and the figure of 500,000.

Of course, as the member knows, I have been very clear at the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, and in this chamber, that the Conservative Party and I stand behind the “for indigenous by indigenous” principle she mentions in the second part of her motion, but for—

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier, in the member for Vancouver East's remarks, she mentioned the rental construction financing initiative and how it accounts for approximately \$25 billion of the national housing strategy, which is approximately one-third.

In my speech earlier today, I talked about the MURB program, which led to the creation, according to the Library of Parliament, of 125,000 units at a revenue loss of \$1.8 billion.

To her earlier point about “for indigenous by indigenous” strategy, would the member agree that maybe some of the money allocated to the rental construction financing initiative could be used to support urban indigenous people? We could then let the private sector take care of some of that financing through tax incentives and programs similar to what we had before, such as the MURB.

• (1305)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the RCFI program, as has been indicated, is not a program that really targets affordable housing. Some of the announcements the government made clearly indicate it is not affordable, and in fact, it is above market rent. What the government is doing is providing low-interest loans primarily to developers to get these projects done.

There is a real question about what the government's goal is in making sure affordable housing is being provided to the communities in need, so I absolutely agree that we need to rethink it. The government can do this program, but the reality of course is that it needs to step up to ensure affordable housing is actually there for people in greatest need and that funding is in place, not years down the road, as the government has promised with the indigenous housing strategy and has yet to deliver on.

Finally, I just want to highlight the issue around the RCFI. It is a loan program. Ultimately, while it sounds like the government is committing a lot of money to the program, in reality it is only a fraction of those dollars. At the end of the day, a—

The Deputy Speaker: We will continue with questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to watch NDP members talk about housing. For the numbers they project, the 500,000, when one goes into their campaign document to take a look at how it would be financed, two-thirds of the money would come from municipalities and provinces. It is always easy to spend somebody else's money, rather than actually generate the federal investments required to make a difference.

On that point, when they quote the number of 500,000 and put that out as an aspiration, what is the dollar amount the NDP is proposing to assign in federal dollars on that program? How much money is the member proposing to spend to realize 500,000 units of housing?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, what is interesting is that the Liberals, and particularly the parliamentary secretary, would actually double count the numbers for rhetorical advantage. If the member wants to talk about numbers, I ask that he actually check himself what he has been putting out, and frankly, the rhetoric he has been promising to the community.

I heard him promise over and over again the delivery of a “for indigenous by indigenous” urban, rural and northern housing strategy. To this day, we still do not have it. This just has to end. We have had enough of the rhetoric and enough of the double-talk.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I attended the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' conference in Quebec City in 2019. At that conference, Selina Robinson, who at the time was the minister for housing for British Columbia, said that the government had come to the table with a national strategy but had actually not invested. I know the parliamentary secretary was there, and he seemed to take great um-

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brage at the time to that. I still have a copy of the talk because it was an interesting discussion.

Does the member believe the government truly has invested at this point? Selina Robinson is now minister of finance. I would just like to hear the member for Vancouver East's thoughts on the national housing program and whether it has worked in British Columbia.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, in 2019, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, in fact, noted that \$11.6 billion of the national housing strategy is just matching dollars from the province, and it is not meeting the needs. Minister Selina Robinson is absolutely correct and British Columbia had actually been shortchanged with respect to the funding. Through my work in getting Order Paper questions and answers, we discovered that British Columbia, on one of the biggest programs under the national housing strategy, was only getting 0.5% of the funding at that time for the co-investment fund. The numbers have increased and improved somewhat now, but are still nowhere near what we need to address the housing crisis that the Liberals caused back in 1993.

• (1310)

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Shepard.

I am the father of two young adult daughters who, in the not-so-distant future, with their effort and determination, like countless other young Canadians, will be entering the home-buying market. Similar to countless other young Canadians, my daughters are living at home, watching the never-ending stream of media reports saying housing in Canada is entirely unaffordable. Young Canadians looking to enter the market cannot do so on their own, nor should they bear the expectation that they should at this time, especially in my home city of Richmond. Even with hard work and saving up for a down payment, the reality is that many will still require parental support, something I will likely be blessed to be able to give my daughters, but something that is not available to everyone.

We see Canadians faced with a sudden expectation adjustment, one reminiscent of our Prime Minister's comment that this generation could be the first generation in many decades to be worse off than their parents. I, for one, would like to point out that the rampant, reckless spending and deficit spending prior to or after the pandemic and the types of policies being implemented by his government will pretty much guarantee that outcome.

The reality is that much-anticipated tax expansion and government programs will not address the affordable housing shortage or the underlying causes of our housing crisis. To the contrary, the tax burden imposed by reckless spending over the past six years, even excluding pandemic relief, will tie the hands of future governments and prevent them from tackling other housing priorities such as homelessness and poverty.

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Home prices have skyrocketed over this past COVID year and the dream of home ownership is becoming more distant for Canadians to attain. The national average home price was a record \$678,000 in February 2021, up 25% from the same month last year. In my home city of Richmond, single detached home prices are up 20% in the past year, averaging at \$1.5 million, far above the rest of the country. I find it ridiculous and ironic that Canada, with the world's second-largest land mass and sparse population, has to suffer such a housing crisis. The difficulties Canadians face are certainly exacerbated by the government's mismanagement of supply in our housing markets. Its incompetence is not limited to only home ownership.

The Liberal government has done nothing to address the rental market as an affordable option for Canadians either. Increasing supply within the rental market would be a boon for renters trying to make ends meet in increasingly unaffordable conditions. The government's ideas so far do nothing to address the real issues affecting affordability in our real estate market, namely through the lack of housing supply. To top it off, the two-years-too-late Liberal budget failed to rule out the introduction of capital gains taxes on the principal residences of Canadians. Punishing those who have a home as a way to pay for the government's current or future excessive and poorly managed spending does not help solve the housing crisis.

• (1315)

The Liberals' national housing strategy has been defined by funding delays and cumbersome, difficult-to-navigate programs. It has consistently failed to get funding out of the door in a timely fashion for the projects that need it most. The national housing co-investment fund is one of the worst-offending programs, as we have heard from the member for Vancouver East.

However, members do not have to listen to me on this. Housing providers across the country have called it "cumbersome" and "complicated", which is slightly higher praise than what the Liberals received on their first-time homebuyer initiative, a program that has proven to be a fatally flawed, dismal failure. It was intended to help 20,000 Canadians in the first six months, but has only reached 10,000 in over 18 months. It did not accomplish its primary objective of improving affordability in high-cost regions. These changes will not help prospective buyers in Victoria, Vancouver or Toronto.

When the Liberals' only solution to affordable home ownership is to take on a share of a Canadian's mortgage, and when their solution is actively discouraged by brokers, the government should realize that it is time to change direction, not double-down on poor policy. The Liberals should be helping Canadians by giving them the tools to save, lowering their taxes and creating jobs. For example, by incentivizing the use of RRSPs, Canadians could leverage their own savings to purchase a home.

Once again, the bureaucratic, Ottawa-knows-best approach is hurting our communities. It goes to prove that the Liberal government consistently misses the concerns of Canadians, such as concerns over legislative and enforcement gaps that have allowed the drug trade to launder illicit money through our real estate markets; concerns over supply, funding and support program criteria for long-term care homes; and the concern to fix the shortfalls of the national housing co-investment fund, a program that housing

providers across the country have voiced their criticism of, stating that the application process is too cumbersome and the eligibility criteria too complicated.

Canadians cannot afford more inaction. Only Conservatives are focused on ensuring Canadians are not left paying the price for Liberal mismanagement. Conservatives recognize the severity of the nationwide housing affordability crisis faced by Canadians.

I believe in a bold vision for my home of Richmond, one where every family who works hard and saves responsibly can achieve home ownership. I believe that the future of housing in Canada will be built on proper management of our nation's supply. Following consultation with my colleagues, I was pleased to learn that Conservatives share a belief in a nationwide plan to get homes built as part of Canada's economic recovery.

We believe in real action, not lip service, to address the consequences of money laundering and the negative impacts it has in our society. Our plan to secure the future will prioritize the needs of Canadians before foreign investors, provide meaningful housing solutions and put families in the housing market. Conservatives have advocated and will continue to advocate for improvements to mortgage policies, to the taxation system, to combat money laundering, to increase housing supply across the continuum, and to address rampant speculation and unfair profiteering.

Canada needs a plan to get our economy back on track, but over a year into the pandemic the Liberal government, like a ship that has lost its anchor, is still operating lost at sea. In response, we Conservatives have developed Canada's recovery plan that sets a course to secure Canada's future, including the modest dream of owning a home.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the issue of British Columbia has been raised a couple of times now. Just to be clear, we have partnered with the provincial government to invest \$517 million to assist over 25,000 households through the provincial-federal housing accords. We have invested, since 2015, not the paltry 2% quoted by the member for Vancouver East, but \$5.8 billion in housing in British Columbia. These investments have supported 112,000 families throughout the province to find a place to call home. We are, right now, investing \$205 million to support the creation of 700 permanent, affordable units for individuals in British Columbia through the rapid housing initiative. The dollars are real, and it is close to 30% of the total national housing strategy investment.

However, I do not think that the member who just spoke has even read the motion that his colleague passed, because the motion talks about a shared equity agreement program. Well, that is what the first-time homebuyers program is. The motion also requests action on money laundering. Well, that is in the 2021 budget, but the Conservatives voted against every single measure. They voted against the tax on vacant homes. They voted against the beneficial ownership disclosure rules and requirements. They voted against the additional investments in rapid housing and—

• (1320)

The Deputy Speaker: Let us get on to the response and then we will get on to the next question.

The hon. member for Steveston—Richmond East.

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for the intervention. It was as if he was giving a speech instead of asking a question. The only short answer I could provide is that it shows how out of touch the Liberals are. The drop in the bucket solutions and the reannouncing of the announcement that they had before will not help the housing crisis we are facing in Greater Vancouver or across the country.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I happen to be one who believes that the responsibility to provide affordable housing transcends all levels of government. We need the municipalities, the provincial governments and the federal government working together.

I trace one of the problems to the current crisis that my hon. colleague talked about: this terrible situation in which our young children, for the first generation in history, cannot purchase their own homes in a country as big as Canada. I trace that back to 1992, when the Conservatives removed the housing mandate from Canada Mortgage and Housing. The Liberals promised in 1993 to bring it in and never did. We have had the federal government effectively absent as a senior level of government from the housing file for almost 30 years. It is no wonder we are in a crisis today.

Does my hon. colleague see any results from the Liberal government's actions on housing? He is in Richmond and I am in Vancouver. Does he see any housing that is being built for people that is even making a dent in the housing crisis facing so many Canadians today?

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Mr. Speaker, I have lived in Richmond for multiple decades, and can assure the House that people here do not feel the presence of the federal government's help. Many housing projects were actually from decades ago. It is time for the federal government to use its legislative power and also its fiscal responsibility to reintroduce a change in the region. The housing crisis in Canada cannot be solved with just one single level of government, be it federal, municipal or provincial, so I agree with the hon. member in his view.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 20 years, I am getting calls from people who do not have a place to live, and they have well-paying jobs. The same people who ran Ontario into the ground with the green energy act and engineered the no places to grow law now surround the Prime Minister. In Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, we have many buildings that could be repurposed for residential

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housing. The Patrick brothers are repurposing a church and making it into apartments in Pembroke.

Would the Conservative Party of Canada consider reducing the capital gains tax so there would be more incentive for the private sector to do this repurposing of older buildings?

Mr. Kenny Chiu: Mr. Speaker, in my previous answer, I did mention multi-party co-operation to tackle the housing crisis that we are facing. That would also include the private sector helping by contributing their efforts. I believe we have to think out of the box in order to deliver solutions that will satisfy our next generation. It is our responsibility to do that. I thank the hon. member for her contribution.

• (1325)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be following my colleague from British Columbia on this debate. As many members will know, this is my second Parliament and I have been talking about housing for two Parliaments now.

I was a big critic of the first-time home buyer incentive. The member for Spadina—Fort York and I traded barbs over it on the floor of the House. We disagreed over the initial program goals that were set out. I said from the very beginning that the program was going to fail, and it failed. It failed first-time home buyers and it failed Canadians, regardless of the housing market they were in. There is no such thing as a Canadian real estate market: There are housing markets all across Canada. It failed people in Toronto, it failed people in Vancouver and it failed people in my home community of Calgary. It was going to fail from the beginning. It was an election gimmick to try to get re-elected. It was rolled out two months before an election, and it was not going to succeed.

There is a lot in this opposition day motion I could speak about, but I want to focus on housing specifically and the simple law of supply and demand. There is not enough supply and there is a heck of a lot of demand. I am one of those homeowners who recently sold his house and now I am renting. I got out of the housing market because it is so red hot right now with everybody trying to get in, not just in the city of Calgary but all across Canada.

The first-time home buyer incentive was originally supposed to help 100,000 Canadians. I have been doing Order Paper questions and I have been doing access to information requests and releasing them to the public so people could see this. I have been criticizing the government on podcasts, in interviews and in op-eds I have written for the Postmedia Network.

I think 10,000 applications have been approved. “Applications approved” does not mean that the person who applied actually went through with seeking the loan. The two are fundamentally different. It is less than 10% of what the Liberals were supposed to achieve with the first-time home buyer incentive and the shared-equity mortgages they were trying to sell. I have read the operational manual that CMHC put out for brokers to use. It is an abject failure in delivery, and it is failing two years afterward.

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The reason I bring it up is because I hear the same thing from constituents. The Liberals have had years to try to address the housing shortages across Canada. They have been wasting time, playing at the edges and coming up with these gimmicky programs to try to deal with issues that are very local in many situations. People look at postal codes in major cities when trying to buy a home because they want to be in a specific school district for their children. People look at how close homes are to transit in order to get to where they need to go.

During this pandemic, we have also seen that a big premium is now being placed on being able to work from home and having solid home Internet and Wi-Fi connections. I have caucus colleagues in major urban areas, some of whom are on the Zoom call right now, who have difficulty joining our calls while having their video on because their connections are poor in major urban areas.

That is how people shop for real estate. They look at price and they look at location. It is hyper localized. They cannot compare real estate from two extreme edges of the suburbs of Toronto. It is the same thing for Calgary. In the southeast corner of the city, where I live, and the northwest corner of the city, two very different housing markets exist. In northwest Calgary, people have to take into account that they are going to get damaging hail. In the southeast part of Calgary, that is going to happen way less often.

The reason I like so much of what is in this opposition day motion is because we are addressing some of the fundamental concerns Canadians have. We are calling for the government to really look at things like doing away with the first-time home buyer incentive. It is a failed program. It has already failed. The Liberals keep trying to change it. It is never going to work, so they should just abandon it.

The motion is calling for things like anti-money laundering efforts. Especially in markets like the Lower Mainland and parts of British Columbia, but in other parts of the country too, money laundering is having a local impact on certain types of housing.

We need a more defined debate. There are different market segments. For single-family detached homes, the prices are going up a ridiculous amount. I want to talk about asset price inflation in a broader way in a moment. With respect to condos and townhouses, condo prices have been going down all over Calgary because the City of Calgary approved a whole bunch of building permits over the past two years. A lot of supply is coming onto the market and there is way less demand.

There is an immense amount of demand now for single-family detached homes and even duplexes and townhouses. People are moving up into the market real estate space because they want to be able to work from home. They have children.

• (1330)

I am one of those parents who is doing virtual home-schooling this week, so I have my kids at home. They are being very quiet and very good right now so I can address the House and speak about my constituents who are being impacted by the gimmicky plays of the Liberal government in addressing fundamental market issues. There is not enough supply coming on and there is too much demand.

Let us talk about asset price inflation. The super low interest rates are driving not only a lot of speculative buying, but just plain buying by people who see an opportunity and are looking after their self-interest better than the government can. They see an opportunity to buy into a market they could not buy into before. I have seen chartered banks offering less than 1% interest rates for a five-year mortgage, which is a standard mortgage in Canada. Who can compete with that? Prior generations could only dream of it. My uncle, who has a home in Markham, used to talk about paying 18.5% interest in the 1980s. I have a hard time convincing young Canadians this is going to happen and I am a millennial, one of these old millennials who is turning 40 this year.

The unbelievably low interest rates today are also driving people to compete for a limited amount of supply in many markets across Canada. The government has created gimmicky programs, like rental programs. One of its programs proposes to allocate billions of dollars to support the construction and repair of 35,000 affordable housing units, but a Canada housing survey in 2018 said that 9% of Canadian households, which is 1.3 million, had purchased a home in the five previous years. The Liberals are talking about tens of thousands of units, but that is not enough. They should go big: way bigger than they are talking about here. I have heard Liberal MPs say that they will go bigger and they have, with over \$600 billion worth of spending. This is still not enough, because the fundamental issue is market supply and demand with extremely low interest rates driving people into the market.

That brings us to the next problem, which is that incomes have not kept up with asset price inflation. A young family may try to put money aside to save for a 5% down payment. The asset price on the single-family detached home or townhouse it is looking at exceeds its ability to save every single month and year. As the family tries to put a nest egg aside for a down payment, the asset price of the home goes up faster than it can save. That is the problem for young people and young families today. The member who spoke previously, my colleague from British Columbia, has two daughters who are in exactly this type of situation. They cannot save fast enough to make up the difference in the price of housing today, which is being driven up by super-low interest rates and these gimmicky plays from the Liberal government. and their ability to save due to their incomes.

The Liberals are raising income taxes. They have increased carbon taxes. They are nickel-and-diming Canadians all across the country. I live in a province that did not want a carbon tax and was stuck with it, because that is what the federal Liberals decided was the wisest course of action. It has an impact on the ability of people to save for down payments.

I have been a big critic of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which wasted millions of dollars trying to rebrand itself as “housing Canada” instead of focusing on its core business, which should be providing a mortgage insurance product. Its rates are too high. It is in the Public Accounts of Canada that it has been paying the federal government every single year while charging premiums on first-time home buyers in order to make up the difference.

I have a Yiddish proverb for the consideration of members who are paying attention to this debate: "You can make the dream bigger than the night." The Liberals have dreamt big, really big, with all of these gimmicky programs. They have tried to solve a market problem with even more government, so that every time a program does not turn out there is even more government and another government program, or it is fiddling at the edges of a government program that exists to try and fix it.

The fundamental reality is this. Young people cannot save fast enough to get into the hottest markets such as Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary and Edmonton. The asset prices are out of control and people cannot save fast enough. Much of what we propose in this opposition day motion will address that. I am so glad we have put it forward. I have been speaking about housing for years and trying to get the attention of the federal government away from its gimmicks and onto real solutions.

• (1335)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that speech was riddled with so many contradictions. I almost hope the Conservatives do not get into power ever again, because their housing policy would move in every direction except forward.

One of the big complaints from the member opposite is that the stress test creates a barrier to entry for first-time buyers, but he also complains that low interest rates are a problem. The stress test increases interest rates to take risk out of the market and make sure that home purchasers have a secure mortgage in order to move forward. His response is to get rid of that and drop interest rates, even though he thinks interest rates are too low.

Then he goes on to say that the first-time home buyer incentive has not helped people. However, it has helped 10,000 people acquire housing. We can add that to all the other programs. Yes, we can say 10,000 is small and shake our heads, but there is also 12,000 in the rental construction financing initiative, and the co-investment fund has almost 15,000 units of housing. When we total it all up, close to a million different investments have been made by this government to help Canadians secure housing, whether it is for renting or ownership.

I have a question for the member opposite. He talks about what his government would not do. One thing he just said he disagrees with was the imposition of a price on carbon. Is this yet another contradiction that he is willing to address—

The Deputy Speaker: We will have to get to the other questions that are waiting.

The hon. member for Calgary Shepard.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that the member for Spadina—Fort York caught your eye and you recognized him first. Now I can dispel some of this misinformation.

The FTHBI program promised 100,000 Canadians would be helped. It has reached 10% of that, but only those who were approved. Getting approved does not mean they actually went through with the loan. The member knows this. It is an election gimmick. It

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was an election gimmick in 2019; it remains an election gimmick today. Nothing has changed.

Second of all is the stress test. I did not say the words "stress test", but I have been a huge critic of stress tests, for both 20%-plus and under. With the stress test percentage, the contract rate is not what the person is actually charged. They are just tested against it, regardless of how their income will grow in the future, regardless of their personal situation and regardless of the fact that they are re-financing their mortgage. It has nothing to do with reality. Why is it 2%? Why is it not 3%, 4% or 5%? Why is it not a flat 3%? The government has never been able—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, housing is an exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

As we know, the provincial and municipal governments are closest to the issue, so they are the ones best equipped to handle issues related to housing. Earlier, my colleague talked about how the federal government froze funding to Quebec for three years to try to impose conditions.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the fact that the Bloc Québécois is asking the federal government to transfer the housing funds to Quebec, with no strings attached.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question and comment.

Housing is indeed a provincial jurisdiction. If the Government of Quebec can negotiate an agreement with the federal government, I do not see a problem, as long as it is similar to the one the federal government signed with the Government of Alberta.

[English]

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the member that housing affordability is a crisis in Canada and that we should put a pause on non-resident foreign buyers. However, this problem is multifaceted. One factor I have noted that impacts demand is high immigration levels. I read a poll in the Toronto Sun noting that the majority of Canadians want a pause on immigration levels until we get our economy back on track from the pandemic.

Does the member agree that high immigration levels impact housing prices and that we should consider a pause on them until we get our economy and housing market sorted out?

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, it is good to see the member in good health, and hopefully his family is doing well.

Business of Supply

I disagree with him and I disagree with his characterization. I am one of those immigrants who was fortunate enough to come to Canada. Canada took my family in after we were kicked out of communist Poland, so I disagree with him and his characterization of the issue at hand.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has worked on these issues for a long time and has done a lot for Canadians, particularly his constituents.

One thing mentioned in the motion is a freeze on non-resident purchases. That would do much more than the 1% tax the Liberals have put in place. What does the member think? Does he think this is a much more substantive policy that can actually cool the market from these activities, or does he think that foreign buyers are simply going to pay the 1% tax as the price of doing business, and this just gives the government a gimmick?

• (1340)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct: The 1% foreign buyer's tax will do nothing. Every time the Liberals have a public policy problem, they find a new tax, new fee or new levy. That is the way they do things.

The underlying issue is bid competitions in large markets, such as the greater Vancouver area. There are other regions too, because this is spreading outward. People are competing against foreign buyers, for whom this is an investment.

A pause is a much wiser choice. We have to look at it and study it some more to see the broader impacts it would have on the market, but a 1% foreign buyer's tax is the price of doing business for many of these people.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning I will highlight the devastating news coming out of London, Ontario, with respect to terrorist action, and express condolences and offer prayers to the family and their friends. I will let my brothers and sisters within the Islamic and Muslim faith know that we do love and care for them. Our prayers are with the community.

I have had the opportunity to listen throughout the day to the discussion we are having, and there are a number of things I want to highlight. One thing a member made reference to is the idea of jurisdiction. Maybe I can deal with that, at least in part.

Ottawa does have a role to play, and we have demonstrated that very clearly. However, it is also important to recognize that this is about more than just the Government of Canada or the respective provincial or territorial governments. We will find that many municipalities are involved in housing. We will find that indigenous communities are heavily involved in housing. It is going to take a team effort to try to resolve this major issue, which exists in virtually all regions of our country.

Since the Prime Minister took office, the government has made housing a priority, going back to 2015. In fact, members might recall that in 2017, we launched the national housing strategy, the first of its kind. I remember standing in the chamber talking about

this massive, multi-billion dollar program. I think it was 70 billion dollars' worth of commitments. Never before had we witnessed that kind of a commitment to housing in Canada. We want to leave a mega footprint, recognizing that Ottawa does have a critical role to play.

Many programs have been part of this strategy. The most recent ones that come to my mind are the programs for the rapid housing initiative. It is so nice to see that the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, who has been to my home province of Manitoba on several occasions, is talking about housing and announcing things related to housing. We have a minister for housing who is truly committed, not only in good part through the initiative but in all aspects of the department, to making sure that we are there in a very real and tangible way. That is one thing I love about the rapid housing initiative: It is a program that will make a real difference. It was great to participate with the Municipality of Winnipeg on it. The minister, the mayor of Winnipeg and I, along with others, participated in an announcement in regard to it.

I say all that because I believe it is important that we recognize, as the government has, that while Ottawa plays a role, there are many partners out there that need to equally step up to the table. I know that over the years some partners have been the table more than others. However, let there be no doubt that this government has been at the table from day one.

I made reference to the rapid housing initiative. We could talk about the national co-investment fund and what an opportunity that is, or the rental construction financing initiative. The parliamentary secretary referenced the first-time home buyer initiative, which is helping thousands of Canadians buy their very first home.

• (1345)

There are a number of ways we, as a government, are demonstrating leadership and working with stakeholders, in particular provinces, municipalities and indigenous leaders, to make a tangible difference. As the parliamentary secretary responsible indicates, there is always room for us to do even better, to strive to do better, and we will continue to focus more attention on the issue.

Housing is a passion for a lot of members in the chamber. When I left the Canadian Forces back in 1985, I bought a little house on Logan Avenue in the west end of Winnipeg North and it cost me \$23,000. It was a beautiful home that met my needs at the time. One of the first things I did was join the Weston Residents' Association. Weston is a beautiful little community, an older, more established community in Winnipeg. Through my experience of being involved there, I started to get a good understanding of the importance of housing revitalization, housing stock and housing affordability. Through that association, I ultimately became a board member of the Weston Residents Housing Co-op, which is still there today, providing housing to many people who likely would not have had the opportunity.

I am a big fan of co-ops, as is this government and as I know the minister and the parliamentary secretary are. There is a huge difference between a housing co-op and someone renting in an apartment block. Those who live in an apartment block or a rented facility are tenants. Whether people rent a single detached home or an apartment in a high-rise apartment block, they are tenants. In a co-op, people are residents, and there is a significant difference. People in co-ops have something at stake. Not everyone is in a position, and some do not want, to take ownership of a home, but many do. In fact, the majority do. For most Canadians, it will be the single greatest expenditure they will have in their lifetime.

I have heard about the dollar values, the prices of homes and the impact they are having. In the days after I left the military, I went into the Manitoba legislature in 1988, where my first responsibility was deputy whip and housing critic. I met with housing organizations, and there was a demand for non-profit housing units. Even back in 1988, there was a huge demand at the time for everything from revitalization to suburban growth, shelter allowances, just name it. A friend of mine, Doug Martindale, who was the president of one of the housing associations, later went on to become an NDP MLA.

The need for housing has existed for a long time, and I would challenge any member of the House to tell me when there was a prime minister in the last 50 or 60 years who was more committed than we have been in the last five years on the housing file. Members will be challenged by that, because they will not find another prime minister or government in Canada that has been as committed to housing as the current government is.

● (1350)

I always like to attribute my friend, the parliamentary secretary and member for Spadina—Fort York, as one of the most knowledgeable, able-minded individuals when it comes to non-profit housing and its importance in society. I have heard him speak many times. I know that within the industry here in Manitoba there is a great deal of respect for him because he wears his heart on his shoulder when it comes to advocating for social housing. As much as I might like to think, at times, that I can be pretty passionate about the importance of that particular issue, I may not be quite as knowledgeable as my colleague. However, I can tell members that there are many like me within the government caucus who continue to push the importance of housing. It is not just the Prime Minister or the cabinet, but the caucus, as a whole, wants to see those tangible programs, and we are seeing them.

Business of Supply

Before I comment on the most recent budget, I should provide some context. When we think of social housing and affordability, what are the types of things we are really talking about? We are talking about making sure that people have the ability to purchase homes and that people have the ability to stay in their homes. We know that the higher the rate of home ownership in a community, the greater the likelihood of that community being a better place to live. I do not have enough time to expand on that aspect, so I will ask people to take me at face value.

When we take a look at the mix, we have the first-time home buyer program to assist first-time homebuyers. We have housing co-ops, and we are recognizing and looking at ways we can expand those. We have non-profit groups that are out there and co-investments that are prepared to contribute, not only financially, but also their time, energy and other resources in order to make sure we have better housing.

In Manitoba, I believe we have over 20,000 non-profit housing units. It has been a long time since I looked at this number, so please do not quote me on the exact number. I believe it is over 20,000 non-profit housing units now that are subsidized.

We have infill housing programs and ways we can encourage infill housing, such as supporting Habitat for Humanity, which has done more in Winnipeg North than any other government agency has in terms of infill housing. No other government agency has done more for housing than Habitat for Humanity, and my hat is off to that organization for the fabulous work it does in all regions in our country, but especially in Winnipeg North. I have a lot of time for that organization. Without that organization, many people would not have the opportunity to have the new homes they are working toward.

It really matters having a progressive approach on the housing file. I have not seen that from the Conservatives. We are hearing that from many members during the debate who are not Conservative. How is it that this is a Conservative motion, as if the Conservatives really care about the issue of housing? There has really been no indication of that. The Conservative record with Stephen Harper, if we average it out, is about \$250 million per year through investments in affordable housing programs.

● (1355)

Meanwhile, we have invested well over \$27 billion since coming into office and have committed, as I said, \$70 billion.

It is interesting listening to my Bloc friends. One member made reference to it being like health care. One has to understand and appreciate where the Bloc is coming from. Bloc members do not want Ottawa to administer, to assist with or to provide programs. All they want is for Ottawa to provide the cash. They do not recognize the important and vital role Ottawa can play, whether on a national housing strategy or a potential national pharmacare program.

There is so much potential with what Ottawa can do. It can work with municipalities. It does not have to work just with provinces, as we have demonstrated.

Statements by Members

With the New Democratic Party, I thought it was interesting when the parliamentary secretary asked a very basic question of one of the speakers about the talk of having 500,000 homes and what the cost would be. NDP members have no idea. The amount of money they committed in an election platform was relatively small, and I am being generous here in my comments, compared to what we committed and spent, yet they still believe that somehow one just waves a wand and, poof, 500,000 homes are going to appear out of nowhere.

We understand the importance of this issue to Canadians. We have a very progressive and active minister and parliamentary secretary on the file, and we will continue to support Canadians in a very real and tangible way on such an important file—

The Deputy Speaker: We will end it there. That leaves exactly three full minutes for the hon. parliamentary secretary for his remarks when we get back to this motion at a later time today, and of course he will have the usual 10 minutes for questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

JUNE 1941 ANNIVERSARY

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, June of 1941 marked the commencement of a reign of terror and forced deportations in the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

In August 1939, Hitler and Stalin signed a friendship treaty that carved up Europe and facilitated the commencement of World War II. Thousands of Balts, mostly women and children, were deported at gunpoint by the KGB to the Siberian gulags. Most would never return.

The friendship between Stalin and Hitler would not last, but the terror for the Baltic peoples did. The twin evils of Nazism and Communism forced thousands to flee and many came to Canada to rebuild their shattered lives.

Ultimately, many have made outstanding contributions to the fabric of our nation. Canada's commitment to Operation Reassurance is a real and visible contribution to the memory of these victims and a recognition that vigilance against terror never ends.

* * *

● (1400)

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, I met with Marilyn Gabriel, chief of the Kwantlen First Nation community in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove, together with elders and other community members. It was a very difficult meeting, as we listened to heartbreaking stories from residential school survivors who are grieving anew with news coming out of Kamloops recently.

The pain is real. The memories are fresh and the anger is just below the surface, yet this news is not new at all because indigenous

communities right across this country have known for years about undocumented burial sites at residential schools.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission brought this to the nation's attention, yet despite many promises, progress has been frustratingly slow.

As a member of Parliament for a riding that has a first nations community in it, they are asking me to do what I can to hold the government to account. The time for talk is over. The time for action is now. It is time to get the job done.

* * *

DIPG DAY OF AWARENESS

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I want to thank the Borkowskis for their advocacy. They started a petition to name May 17 DIPG day of awareness across Canada. Last December, they lost their daughter, Isabelle, to diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, DIPG. It is an incurable form of brain cancer. It is extremely aggressive, taking away vital functions like sight, movement and breathing, while cognitive functions remain intact. It is believed that 80% of brain tumour death in children are due to it.

Currently, there is little funding in research, and prognosis and treatments have not improved in over 40 years. Isabelle loved the CN Tower and last year, the tower's staff arranged for a visit. On May 17, it was lit gold and grey in her honour and in honour of those who had passed from DIPG.

Declaring a DIPG day of awareness will help to educate, encourage funding and honour the victims of this terrible disease.

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[Translation]

BROADCASTING ACT

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the House voted on a truly extraordinary measure, one to impose time allocation on a committee.

The Conservative Party has been obstructing the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for weeks on Bill C-10. The Conservative Party is no longer alone, as the NDP has joined in on that obstruction. The NDP is working with the Conservatives to hold up a bill on the cultural sector that representatives of this sector across the country have been calling for. As unbelievable as this is, it is, sadly, true.

If the NDP refuses to allow the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to reconvene sooner, it will be nearly impossible for Bill C-10 to be passed before the summer recess. The cultural sector has been calling for this bill, as have all members of the Quebec National Assembly.

With an election looming, we cannot run the risk of letting this bill die. The future of our culture is not a game, nor is the future of our artists and creators. Quebec knows this, the Bloc Québécois knows this, and it is time for the NDP to realize it too.

* * *

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tragic discovery of the remains of 215 indigenous children buried at the site of the Kamloops residential school shocked us all.

The people of Châteauguay—Lacolle reacted immediately, placing hundreds of children's shoes in front of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic church in a spontaneous gesture and holding a vigil in memory of those children and their families.

[English]

As a Canadian Catholic, I am ashamed that the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops has not complied with the TRC call to action 58 in requesting a formal apology from our Pope.

My dear friend, Christine Zachary-Deom, former chief of Kahnawake, wrote me, and said, "Canada is now coming to grips with the reality of truth. It is difficult to bear when we know there's more bad stuff to come. Yet our forgiveness is always ready. Better not to hide behind lies."

The road to reconciliation is hard, but we must all undertake the journey together.

* * *

● (1405)

BILL C-10

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the residents of Saskatoon—University, in fact, all of Saskatchewan not to mention the rest of Canada, are deeply concerned about what we are hearing regarding this government's new censorship bill.

We live in an increasingly digital world, and one at risk of the influence of bad actors, such as this power-hungry, unaccountable government. I have heard from many people telling me that they do not trust this regime with these powers over what they can see and hear, and do not believe that Ottawa should have the power to decide which posts will be seen and which ones will be buried. Personally, I cannot blame them.

Now, we have the Liberals censoring their censorship bill. We have seen the script in other countries that this Prime Minister has expressed his love for. We do not want to see it here. The Conservatives are the only party that will keep Canada free and scrap Bill C-10.

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HEALTH CARE HEROES

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to address the House today as we mark over one million doses being administered in the Region of Peel. I am incredibly

Statements by Members

proud of how far we have come, and this would not have been possible without so many on the front lines.

I want to take a moment to appreciate the health care heroes who have cared for our loved ones in their most vulnerable moments. They courageously stepped up in our time of need and have sacrificed so much in order to care for our community.

There are countless health care heroes who have contributed to team Canada's pandemic efforts. Among them, Dr. Grewal, Dr. Anand and the entire team who have been working non-stop with testing and vaccinations at the Embassy Grand in Brampton East; the courageous team at the Brampton Civic Hospital, and some of the heroes among so many include Priya Herne, Andrea and Alex Hall, Bindu Patel, Nicole Speed, Jennifer Shiels, Mary Woodwork, Candace Barone, Darsh Takhar, and all the way from Newfoundland, Michelle Murphy.

As we look to brighter days ahead, please continue to remind family and friends to get vaccinated. Let us do our part to crush COVID-19.

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ETHIOPIA

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the United Nations reported that since the start of the conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia, over two million people have been internally displaced. Rape and sexual violence have become widespread and systematic. Civilians, human rights defenders, journalists and aid workers have been arbitrarily detained, beaten and killed.

Starvation-related deaths have begun and will accelerate exponentially without immediate intervention. Canada's \$37-million commitment to the region is critical, but if the Eritrean and non-regional military forces continue impeding aid to Tigray, this assistance helps no one. The international community must work together to demand an immediate withdrawal of the Eritrean and non-regional forces from Tigray and seek unfettered humanitarian access to the region, including support for survivors of sexual violence.

I reiterate my call for an independent, international investigation into gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law by all parties as a critical starting point to ensuring accountability, peace and security in the region.

*Statements by Members***TELUS**

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, I met with a local child care worker named Cristian who shared with me how devastating COVID has been on the children he cares for, how he struggles to provide important daily necessities for these children, and how that has negatively impacted the children's mental health, well-being and self-esteem. Cristian did not know who to turn to.

That night, Kelly and I were trying to figure out a solution to his problem. So the next day, I made a number of calls, and one included a call to Telus.

Telus has a motto, "Give where they live". Since 2006, Telus has distributed more than 165,000 kits for kids across Canada. This year, it is handing out 14,000 backpacks stuffed with school supplies for young people in need. Telus volunteers donate over one million plus hours every year. Over \$1.3 billion has been donated by Telus members and retirees since 2000. Their social purpose truly is at the heart of everything they do.

Last week, when I made the urgent call for help, Telus answered. Local Telus volunteers stepped in and collected emergency supplies for 60 at-risk youth in my riding.

I want to personally thank Telus for answering the call. It is truly building a better future for all Canadians.

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[Translation]

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations has proclaimed a Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030. World-class ocean science research is being conducted in many countries to further our understanding of the marine environment and the biodiversity within. Ocean science is laying the foundation for our blue economy strategy, and we invite Canadians to take part in the dialogue.

On World Oceans Day, I would like to recognize the incredible work of the streamkeepers, the Squamish River Watershed Society, the Pacific Science Enterprise Centre, the Nicholas Sonntag Marine Education Centre, and everyone else who contributed to the Howe Sound marine reference guide. Above all, we thank the the Salish peoples, especially the Squamish Nation, for their stewardship of the Átl'ka7tsem since time immemorial.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "It is not fair to ask of others what you are not willing to do yourself". That is a pillar of true leadership. Unfortunately our Prime Minister is running a deficit on budgets, trust and leadership. He has lost that trust because he believes that there is one set of rules for Canadians, but a special set of rules for him and his friends.

The Prime Minister has chosen to travel internationally when he has asked every other Canadian not to do so. When he returns from the G7, he will bypass the designated hotel quarantine program he has imposed on everyone else. There is a special set of accommodations for the Prime Minister and Canadian taxpayers will be footing the bill. This is the epitome of Liberal entitlement.

The special advisory council on COVID-19 has recommended that the hotel quarantine program be scrapped; subsidized hotels where women are sexually assaulted and dozens of others have lost their jobs. Canadians are sick and tired of paying for Liberal pandemic failures. Let us end the hotel quarantine program now.

* * *

STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal members on the Standing Committee on National Defence have been shamefully obstructing our committee from completing the study into sexual misconduct allegations in the Canadian Armed Forces. The defence committee has been stuck in the same meeting since May 21 with Liberals speaking ad nauseam and the chair needlessly suspending the meeting.

Yesterday, the Liberals even went so far as to filibuster their own amendment. That is the level of desperation they are taking to block our report from ever seeing the light of day. While they filibuster with their long-winded speeches to ensure Canadians never see a final report into this Liberal cover-up, they are disrespectfully and unfairly quoting survivors of military sexual misconduct.

This is the height of hypocrisy. This cheap political grandstanding is disappointing and reflects just how little regard the Liberals have for our troops. The scornful obstructionism by the Liberals has to stop. Time is running out. If they truly care about the victims of military sexual trauma, the Liberals would immediately allow a vote on my motion that would speed up the passage of our report and recommendations. Anything less is an insult to our brave women and men in uniform.

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World Oceans Day in celebration of our oceans, in solidarity with those who commit to rescuing them from the threats of climate change, plastics pollution, habitat destruction and a failure to consider the whole ecosystem in our resource management practices. Current policies and practices of the government undervalue the importance of stewardship and restoration of our marine environment, the critical importance of reversing global warming and acidification of the oceans; renewable energy and the degradation of fish stocks, habitat and biodiversity.

The government's blue economy policy does not address the role of the ocean regulating the climate by sequestering CO₂ and producing oxygen. It fails to recognize the importance of wind farms and other scientifically proven, effective forms of renewable energy. Canada clearly needs to do better for our oceans.

I call on all members of this House and all Canadians to commit to protecting the wonder of the ocean and as our life source supporting humankind and all other organisms on mother earth. I wish a happy World Oceans Day to all.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ROSE FAMILY

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, *The Rose Family*, a Quebec documentary directed by Félix Rose, son of Paul Rose, recently won the people's choice Iris award at the Québec Cinéma gala.

Although it was not nominated as expected, petitions, opinion letters signed by people in the industry, and its runaway success in theatres led Québec Cinéma to finally add it to the list of nominated films.

The Rose Family is insightful, candid, unfiltered and completely objective. It has been immensely successful, and this people's choice award demonstrates once again just how deep a mark this part of our history left on Quebecers.

By examining the tumultuous period of the October crisis through his father's eyes, Félix Rose reminds us how important documentary filmmaking is in Quebec's cultural landscape.

From Pierre Perrault's *Pour la suite du monde* and Denys Arcand's *Comfort and Indifference* to *The Rose Family*, Quebec documentaries define us, tell our story and immortalize us.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I say bravo and congratulations to Félix Rose for having the courage, the audacity and the determination to remember.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

ATTACK IN LONDON, ONTARIO

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday evening a Muslim family in London left their house to

Statements by Members

do what so many families regularly do during this pandemic, go on a family walk. However, because of a brutal terrorist attack, a nine-year-old boy, the only survivor of this senseless attack, is without his mother, father, sister and grandmother.

This is the latest chapter of a horrifying increase in Islamophobic attacks, including the Quebec City massacre and the attack at the IMO mosque in Toronto. This type of vile and extreme hatred is an affront to Canada's values and has no place in our country, but it is a reality that Canada must face and deal with immediately.

To the family and loved ones of the victims, I want to express my deepest condolences during this unbelievably difficult time.

We stand with the Muslim community and reaffirm our commitment to building a country that is free from hatred, where Canadians of all faiths can live without fear of violence or persecution.

* * *

ATTACK IN LONDON, ONTARIO

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am rising to draw attention to a deplorable act of hate that rocked my community of London West on Sunday evening. A Muslim family, a mother, father, two children and a grandmother were out for a walk. A driver mowed them down. Four people are dead and a little boy, now with no parents, is in hospital.

This was no accident. This was a premeditated attack on a family because of their race and religion. It was a hate crime. The suspected perpetrator has been caught, but nothing can fill the gaping hole left in our community.

Muslim Canadians are afraid. No Canadians should fear for their lives because of who they are. We must stand up to all forms of hate, including Islamophobia. We must speak up and fight acts of terror, and make no mistake, this was an act of terror.

I hope this chamber will join me in denouncing hate in all its forms and in committing to combat the extremism and racism that leads to such horrific events as unfolded in London on Sunday night.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are mourning with our Muslim community and with the city of London today. As a mother and a grandmother, I just cannot conceive the horror of having my family run down as we went for a walk simply because of our religion and our race. How does this happen in Canada? Our mourning must lead to action.

Can the government update us as to what is being made available to London's Muslim community and to the city to deal with this tragedy?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all join with members of this House in condemning the terrible crime that took place and expressing our heartfelt sorrow for those taken from us, for their family and for their community. Let me be very clear. This terrible crime was an act of hatred and of terror. While the nation grieves, we must also acknowledge that many of our fellow Canadians live in fear.

Hatred and intolerance exists in Canada and is an unacceptable part of the lived experience of far too many Muslim Canadians. Today we stand in solidarity and sorrow with the Muslim community, but let us all deepen our resolve to take action to end hatred, intolerance and fear, and to be the inclusive country we aspire to be.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada-China committee twice ordered for the documents to be made public relating to the firing of the two scientists from the lab in Winnipeg. The government refused. The House ordered the documents last week. The Liberals are again refusing and are blatantly defying the order of this House.

What is the Liberal government so eager to cover up that it is willing to be found in contempt of the House of Commons?

• (1420)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will point out that these documents have been turned over to the National Security Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. This multipartisan committee will now be able to review the documents in a secure fashion, and of course we support the committee in that review.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, well, that was not the order of this House. That order was to present those documents to the House of Commons and to be made public.

The two scientists in question transferred two of the deadliest diseases in the world to the Wuhan Institute of Virology in March 2019. That lab is now the subject of an American investigation into the origins of COVID-19. It also is the subject of numerous questions posed by the U.S. Department of State regarding how it handled the virus strain.

I ask again, what is our Canadian government so desperate to cover up regarding what happened at the lab in Winnipeg that it is prepared to be in contempt of the House of Commons?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again we see the opposition trying to conflate the situation with the origins of COVID-19, and indeed, the director of the lab has indicated that this is in no way connected to COVID-19, which, as the member knows, arose much later.

The National Security Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians is the appropriate committee to review these documents. It has the ability to review these documents in a secure manner, something that all Canadians expect.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what happened a few months ago and a few years ago at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg is very important and very serious for our national security. That is why, last week, the House voted for an order to be issued to the government for the essential documents, so that we can find out exactly what happened. Unfortunately, the government refused once again and instead sent these documents to its National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. It is being so secretive that we do not even know what was sent.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to comply with an order of the House of Commons?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that member opposite knows the National Security Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians is a multipartisan committee with representation from both Houses. This committee has the ability to review these documents in a secure manner, in a way that all Canadians expect.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows full well that this committee, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, is not a parliamentary committee per se. It is the Prime Minister's own committee, because at the end of the day, the Prime Minister is the one who will decide whether it suits him to release the documents. At the end of the day, he is the one who will decide whether or not the recommendations can be made public. The Prime Minister has absolute control over this committee. It is not a parliamentary committee.

I will repeat this very simple question to the Prime Minister. Why is the Prime Minister refusing to release the documents, as ordered by the House of Commons?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again, I will remind the member opposite that, in fact, the Conservative Party can nominate who should sit on the National Security Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. This committee exists to be able to review documents of a sensitive nature, of a secure nature. This multipartisan bi-House committee will now be able to review these documents in a secure manner in a way that all Canadians expect.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, right now, one in two SMEs are turning down contracts because they are short on workers. There is no way to get temporary foreign workers in to help because of delays in Ottawa. The minister cannot blame the pandemic for that, because, way back in 2019, the Bloc Québécois was already speaking out about the fact that processing times for applications from Quebec had more than doubled.

In 2019, the Bloc Québécois was already accusing Ottawa of being asleep at the wheel, as Quebec reaffirmed in the spring. Nothing is happening.

What is the minister doing to address the ongoing problems, seeing as the delays year after year in bringing in temporary foreign workers are threatening our SMEs?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am working closely with my Quebec counterpart on this file and many others.

Over 34,000 foreign workers have already arrived in Canada for the 2021 farming season, including over 14,000 in Quebec.

These results speak for themselves, and we will continue to provide the labour that Quebec needs to support the economic recovery.

• (1425)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, “[e]very year, the demand for temporary foreign workers grows.” “Every year, the government apologizes for not being ready.” Summer comes at the same time every year, and the crops do too.

Those are criticisms that the Bloc Québécois made in February 2019, well before the pandemic started. It makes me angry that I have to ask the same question again.

What will the minister do today to ensure that our farmers are able to recruit workers and that those workers get here on time so that crops are not rotting in the fields?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. Our government doubled the intake of temporary foreign workers in Quebec from 11,000 in 2015 to 23,000 in 2019.

Despite the pandemic last year, we welcomed the second-highest number of temporary foreign workers ever, and we are welcoming even more this year. We will always work with the Government of Quebec to support the economic recovery.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, genocide against indigenous people is part of our country today. That is what happens when a government is asking itself how much a childhood costs and when a government asks itself if survivors like those from St. Anne's have the right to information on their own torture.

Oral Questions

When someone does not stand up and say yes, then they are saying no. Yesterday in this House, 271 members voted unanimously in favour of an NDP motion in honour of 215 children. Who did not vote says something. How can Canadians believe that the Liberals want real reconciliation?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motion highlighted fundamental values of our government, including the need to continue to make concrete progress on implementing the calls to action, compensating survivors of historic child and family welfare system inequities, and supporting the healing of St. Anne's Indian Residential School survivors. It also included aspects on complex legal matters involving jurisdiction and privacy rights, which require extensive collaboration with indigenous peoples and cannot, nor should they be, resolved unilaterally on the floor of the Parliament of Canada in a non-binding motion.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the toxic legal battle with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations against the survivors of St. Anne's Indian Residential School has been a stain on the promise to reconciliation. It is time to do the right thing.

Yesterday Parliament ordered the minister to cease and to desist, and to sit down and negotiate a just settlement with the St. Anne's survivors who come from a horrific institution of torture and pain. Even the Liberal backbenchers are calling on her to act.

I have seen the letter that the survivors sent the minister this morning saying that they are ready to meet. Will she call the St. Anne's survivors and agree to work in good faith to finally put this matter to rest?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the mistreatment of indigenous children, including those who attended St. Anne's Indian Residential School, is indeed a tragic and shameful part of Canada's history.

To restore the confidence, rebuild trust and maintain the integrity of the process, the court has ordered an independent third party review of St. Anne's claimants to determine if additional compensation is owing to the survivors. The court has designated Justice Ian Pitfield to conduct the independent review, and steps are under way for that process. Canada will fund additional health support measures for all the survivors throughout the review.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***HOUSING**

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the housing situation in this country is catastrophic. Prices continue to climb beyond what Canadians can afford, especially in big cities. According to the Financial Post, 23,000 Montrealers are on the waiting list for social housing and many units sit in disrepair due to government budget constraints. Worse, half of Montreal's 21,000 social housing units are already substandard.

Why does the government not have a plan for housing in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. We have a long-term plan to make sure that every Canadian has stable housing, which is critical for the growth of communities and a strong middle class. That is why budget 2021, the fifth consecutive budget with more investments in affordable housing, to the tune of \$2.5 billion, is set to repair and support 35,000 more affordable housing units.

We have also introduced Canada's first national tax on vacant or underused residential properties owned by foreign non-residents. This will help families, young people, low-income Canadians and people experiencing homelessness.

• (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's current policy is not doing enough to make more housing available. The first-time home buyer incentive is a failure, and foreign buyers are investing heavily in our real estate, driving prices up senselessly.

The current approach is not working. When will the government start working on a new plan to solve these problems?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very rich for the party opposite to talk about affordable housing. When Conservatives were in government, they spent only \$250 million per year for affordable housing. Meanwhile, we have invested over \$27 billion since coming into office, and we have committed a further \$72.5 billion under the national housing strategy. Now they are opposing our budget, which includes even more investments in housing. This is a party that has absolutely no credibility when it comes to affordable housing.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a number of challenges that lead to housing problems. We have to bring in fiscal incentives to increase the number of rental units on the market. Money laundering laws have to be strengthened, and the housing policy in general needs to be rewritten to increase the number of units available.

Canadians need solutions. Why is the government not acting on any of these options?

[English]

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the numbers show in the national housing strategy report tabled recently, we have helped over 200,000 families get the housing they need through building new homes, repairing existing ones and providing affordability support. Since 2015, our government has supported the creation of nearly 100,000 new affordable housing units, and we have repaired over 300,000 more across different housing programs, representing over \$27.4 billion of investments. We have absolutely no lessons to take from a party that completely ignored affordable housing in all its years in power.

We are not stopping there. Budget 2021 plans to invest an additional \$2.5 billion and reallocate further investments to repair—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke is misleading the House. In budget 2006, the Conservatives actually invested \$800 million in affordable housing, \$450 million for housing on reserve and \$300 million for urban indigenous Canadians, so he should stop misleading the House.

To my question, today the parliamentary secretary said the national housing strategy addresses the entire housing continuum. If this is truly the case, was it the intention of the government to drive home prices out of reach for the average middle-class Canadian?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is entitled to his opinions, but he is not entitled to his own facts. The fact of the matter is that the former Harper government spent only \$250 million per year on affordable housing. Meanwhile, we have invested over \$27 billion in affordable housing solutions since coming into office, and we have committed to spend a further \$70 billion under the national housing strategy.

Conservatives ignored this problem. They did not invest in reaching home. They did not have a plan to invest in more rental stock in the market. They did not support people through the Canada housing benefit, which we introduced. We have no lessons to take from the Conservatives on this issue.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a generation of young Canadians are being cut out of the housing market. Housing has become unaffordable. There is not enough supply, money laundering goes unprosecuted, offshore speculators inflate prices and the Liberals continue to fail first-time home buyers.

Will the government take concrete action to address the supply problem challenging first-time home buyers and those seeking to own their own home in Canada?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we introduced the first-time home buyer incentive to help first-time home buyers in Canada achieve their dream of home ownership. Do members know what the Conservative Party's record is for helping first-time home buyers? It is virtually non-existent. During its time in office, the only policy that side of the House could come up with was to provide a \$750 tax credit for first-time home buyers.

Meanwhile, we are expanding the first-time home buyer incentive to enhance eligibility in the greater Toronto area, the greater Vancouver area and Victoria by raising the qualifying income threshold to \$150,000. We are making sure that more Canadians have—

• (1435)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is misleading the House. For the first-time home buyer program, the government said it was going to help 200,000 Canadians. It has helped 10,600 in two years. It is a joke.

The Aboriginal Housing Management Association's CEO, Margaret Pfoh, stated that in over 25 years in the indigenous housing sector, she has never been as shocked or as disappointed as she was upon reading the recent budget. With the tabling of HUMA's report, "Indigenous Housing: The Direction Home", will the minister fulfill his promise, or will the Liberals continue to ignore the 87% of Canada's indigenous people living in urban areas?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no relationship is more important to our government than the one with indigenous peoples. Just recently, we announced that almost 40% of all the units created under the rapid housing initiative will be targeted to support indigenous peoples, including those in urban areas, something that the hon. member fails to mention.

In addition to that, \$638 million has been allocated specifically to housing that benefits indigenous peoples living in urban, rural and northern communities. Once again, if we look closely, and if we scratch beneath the surface, the Conservatives did absolutely nothing to provide affordable housing solutions for indigenous peoples in urban, rural and northern communities.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on April 22, Ottawa announced its new target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40% to 50% by 2030. The same day, the government promised me in the House that it would include this new target in Bill C-12, but it did not. The government did not include this new target in Bill C-12. Worse still, the NDP agrees and is joining forces with the government to fight the Bloc Québécois and keep us from amending the bill.

The government chose the target. I would hope it believes it is capable of reaching it. Why then is it refusing to include it in the bill?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will remind my colleague that, in committee, our government put forward an amendment to include Canada's target in the legal text of the bill.

I will also remind her that she voted with the Conservative Party to try to defeat this important amendment. It is clear that the Bloc Québécois says one thing on this issue in the House, but something quite different in committee.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary told me yesterday that he was open to amendments and was pleased to be able to count on members of the Bloc. The minister's discourse today is not quite the same. Once again, what he is saying is false. The Bloc Québécois is trying to amend Bill C-12 to include the government's 2030 climate change targets, and the government is fighting tooth and nail, with the NDP's support, to stop us. That is not openness; it is obstruction.

I repeat, it was the government itself that set the targets. Why, then, is it so afraid to include those targets in the bill, if it has any intention at all of meeting them?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we put forward an amendment in committee to include Canada's target in the legal text of the bill.

It saddens me that the Bloc Québécois tried so hard to prevent the committee from moving forward. If we want Bill C-12 to pass to contribute to the fight against climate change, we hope the Bloc Québécois will support us on that.

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HEALTH

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at the Standing Committee on Health, we heard devastating testimony about hotel owners who are under contract for the federal hotel quarantine program and are using the pandemic to lay off their workers. It should be noted that 70% of these workers are women, people of colour and new Canadians. The Prime Minister funded this quarantine program without thinking about the details and the men and women who would be affected.

Oral Questions

What will the government do for the less fortunate people who lost their jobs?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at every step of the way we have been there for Canadians, to protect them from the risk of international travel and to work with partners across the country to ensure that the measures and layers of protection are doing their job. We will continue to do that. We know that reducing mobility is a way to protect from the importation of virus, and we will continue to use science and evidence to guide our way.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, it is clear that the minister did not listen to the question at all. I have another one for her.

After spending weeks ignoring a report she had received from a group of experts describing how to ease federal restrictions at the border, last week, the Minister of Finance scoffed at the idea of relaxing the rules for people who are vaccinated. Today, the Prime Minister, under pressure from the media on this issue, said that the restrictions could be eased for people who are fully vaccinated.

Is the Prime Minister going to jump the queue and get his second dose to try to avoid the mandatory quarantine?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at every step of the way we have been informed by science and evidence as we have added layers of protection at the border. We thank the testing and screening panel for the road map forward on how to manage international travel and also protect Canadians from the importation of the virus. We will continue to be guided by science and evidence to ensure that, as Canada opens up, and the international community opens up, we do so in a way that is safe and protects Canada from further waves of COVID-19.

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LABOUR

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the health committee heard that the Prime Minister is using his unscientific and unsafe hotel quarantine program to discriminate against women and persons of colour. An overwhelming number of Pacific Gateway's long-term workers are women and persons of colour, but they were laid off under the auspices of this program in order to hire lower-paid workers. They have now filed a human rights complaint.

Will the minister immediately stop using hotel companies that discriminate against women and persons of colour, and that union busts, to run these unsafe programs?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the ongoing dispute between the Pacific Gateway hotel and UNITE HERE Local 40. Our government believes and has faith in the collective bargaining process. We encourage both parties to work together to resolve issues to reach an agreement. However, this is a provincial matter and falls under provincial jurisdiction.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the federal government that is paying Pacific Gateway to run an unsafe, unscientific hotel program that is allowing for these abuses. At these hotels, there has been worker abuse, COVID-19 outbreaks and sexual assaults, yet the government persists in propping it up. However, the Prime Minister himself will not stay at one of these facilities, and to me, that says it all.

There is no evidence to keep these programs going, and workers are being abused. Will the minister commit to immediately scrapping the hotel quarantine program?

Hon. Filomena Tassi (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, this matter falls under provincial jurisdiction, but let me share with members what we have done as a government in order to support unions and workers from the time we were elected.

In 2015, one of the first measures we implemented was Bill C-4, which repealed Bill C-525 and Bill C-377, which were actually anti-union pieces of legislation. We have been there for workers. Members can look at the enhancements we have made under the Labour Code, such as increasing leaves and creating new leaves. We have been there, and we will continue to be there for workers every step of the way.

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[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have never been great advocates of combatting tax evasion. They have always preferred protecting the interests of their super-wealthy friends who take advantage of the system.

The latest budget proposes a corporate beneficial ownership registry for Canadian companies, but that is not enough. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been pushing the government and reminding it that it is still not doing enough. We are losing out on billions of dollars, and the government needs to do something.

When will the minister stop ignoring the schemes that the KPMGs of the world are using and take action on tax havens and tax avoidance?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency is committed to ensuring that all taxpayers pay their fair share and meet their tax obligations.

Our government's historic investments gave the CRA the tools it needed to improve its data analysis. I want to inform the member opposite that the number of audits conducted is not directly connected to the number of cases of non-compliance identified. In other words, the CRA is conducting targeted audits, which produce better results.

* * *

• (1445)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Alberta's United Conservative government has opened up the Rocky Mountains for new coal mines. Fences, roads and drill sites are going up in areas designated as critical habitat for species at risk. Benga Mining has applied to mine the Grassy Mountain site without a plan for controlling selenium pollution, and more new mines that avoid federal oversight are being pitched to investors. This will have devastating effects on our environment, and we need immediate action.

Will the minister commit to protecting the Rockies and eastern slopes from these new coal mines that will destroy our mountains and water for generations to come?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly understand and have heard the concerns of many in Alberta with respect to the eastern slopes and other areas that are opened up for prospective mining. Certainly in the context of assessing them, that is exactly why we put into place the Impact Assessment Act to ensure that we are assessing, in a thoughtful way, all environmental impacts.

I agree with my colleague that the issues around selenium discharge are extremely important. We are working on them very actively with respect to coal mining effluent regulations.

We want to ensure that any projects are environmental sustainable on a go-forward basis.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for many generations, the conservation efforts of indigenous guardians have been essential for protecting our environment for future generations. When it comes to protecting and respecting our lands and waters, all of us have a lot to learn from indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and experiences.

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change share with the House how the indigenous guardians pilot will help us reach our land and water protection targets while working toward reconciliation?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Newmarket—Aurora for his advocacy in this important area.

The indigenous guardians pilot recognizes the many lessons that can be learned from indigenous partners across the country, and relies on indigenous experience and traditional knowledge to ensure that lands and waters are protected for generations to come. Just last week, we announced funding for 10 new initiatives under the

Oral Questions

indigenous guardians pilot. These initiatives will enable first nations to monitor ecological health, maintain cultural sites and protect sensitive areas and species, while creating jobs.

We are committed to supporting indigenous leadership and conservation to protect ecosystems, species and culture for future generations.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Conservatives sent the Prime Minister a letter seeking action for the 215 children found at the Kamloops residential school and for the many more who still need to be found. Families and residential school survivors want answers, and so far all they are getting from the Prime Minister is platitudes, rhetoric and abstentions.

Will the Prime Minister commit to developing a comprehensive plan to implement Truth and Reconciliation's calls to action 71 through 76 by July 1?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, all Canadians were heartbroken when we learned of the remains of the children at the former Kamloops residential school.

We are working with the community and our partners. I had a very important conversation with Kúkpí7 Casimir last evening, who is working to provide the resources and supports needed, as determined by the community.

We are reaching out now to indigenous communities across Canada regarding how to support them in finding their lost children, as outlined in those very important TRC calls to action, including how they can access the \$27 million in funding made available on an urgent basis.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations said that 80% of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations were met or were in the process of being met. According to the Yellowhead Institute's latest report, only a dozen of the calls to action have been completed. It has been over five years since the report was finalized and only 13% have been addressed.

When will the government finally complete the remaining 87%?

Oral Questions

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the report card the member has given. The TRC road map for reconciliation is so important to our government, and in objective reviews, 80% of the 76 calls to action under the sole or shared responsibility of the federal government are completed or well under way. The recent passage of Bill C-5 is an example of concrete progress, as are Bill C-8 and Bill C-15, which are coming soon. This work will require sustained and consistent action to advance Canada's shared journey of healing and reconciliation.

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● (1450)

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned for the second time this week that the government gave taxpayer funds to an organization that were used for executive compensation. Nav Canada laid off 700 workers and increased airline fees by 30%, yet gave out \$7 million in executive bonuses.

Will the Prime Minister do the responsible thing, ask for Canadians' money back and demand that these executives give the money back to the government?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Middle Class Prosperity and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with sincere respect for the hon. member, she knows that when we developed the Canada emergency wage subsidy we did so to protect jobs. I am pleased to share that in excess of five million Canadians were kept on payrolls as a result of that program. Recently, we made an adaptation to that program to ensure that if a company increases executive compensation next year, compared with before the pandemic, it will need to pay the money back.

Before the member criticizes us too harshly, I would ask her to take a look in the mirror, because her entire caucus voted against the measure we put in place to raise taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could cut them for the middle class.

Canadians know that our government has been there for them from the very beginning, and we will do whatever it takes for as long as it takes to get them through this public health emergency.

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HEALTH

Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's hotel quarantine program has been a failure from the start. It seems that even the Prime Minister knows this, as he refuses to undergo the process that his government has mandated for every other person arriving in Canada. Canadians were outraged when they heard about alleged sexual assaults taking place at a quarantine hotel. Now it seems these facilities are laying off their workers, 70% of whom are women.

When will the government admit its program is a failure and protect Canadians by scrapping it?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have some of the strongest border measures in the world to protect Canadians from the importation of COVID and its variants. We will continue to use science and evidence to guide us on our evolving stance on the borders. It is incredibly important that we continue to make progress on the immunization of Canadians and work with the provinces and territories to ensure they have the health care capacity to test and trace. We will continue to be guided by evidence and science as we manage the border.

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[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the United States has announced that it plans to double softwood lumber tariffs. Quebec's forestry industry is again under threat.

We obviously expect the federal government to show some backbone. It is also urgent that we diversify markets, starting with this one. The federal government can take action to help the forestry industry. It can immediately implement a procurement policy that promotes the use of wood, support research and secondary and tertiary processing, and promote innovative forestry products.

The Bloc Québécois provided a turnkey plan to the government. Will it finally do something with it?

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. These tariffs are absolutely unjustified and harm workers in both countries.

The Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade raised this issue directly with President Biden and Ambassador Tai. Our government continues to push for the negotiation of a voluntary agreement. We will defend our forestry industry at any costs including, if necessary, by using the dispute mechanism in our free trade agreement, CUSMA.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government can take action by negotiating with the United States, but it can also support the forestry sector.

If the federal government did its part, the forestry sector could create 16,000 new jobs in Quebec, but as always with the feds, the oil industry is the one that gets its pump primed. This year alone, Ottawa invested \$560 million to help oil companies pollute a bit less, and that is in addition to all the other subsidies and loans it gives to fossil fuels.

Meanwhile, Quebec's forestry industry gets nothing even as the Americans up the pressure on our lumber. When will the government do something to help our forestry industry?

• (1455)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I had a conversation with the Canadian Fuels Association, whose outlook on biofuels is very positive.

We invested \$1.5 billion in a biofuels fund. Biofuels and forestry workers are key to a clean energy future and will get us to net zero.

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[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, housing prices in the greater Vancouver area are among the highest in North America because of non-resident foreign buyers, money laundering, the failed Liberal first-time home buyer program and a lack of affordable housing. Middle-class families in my riding feel it every day.

A young family in Port Moody is saving up for their first down payment by living at a parent's home, but skyrocketing prices are shutting them completely out of the competition. Their children will have to grow up far away from their grandparents in another city.

When will the government stop crushing dreams and fix the housing crisis with real solutions?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of the national housing strategy, we introduced the first-time home buyer incentive, which will help families achieve their dream of home ownership by lowering monthly mortgage payments without increasing down payments. We are actually expanding the first-time home buyer incentive to enhance eligibility in Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria by raising the qualifying income threshold to \$150,000.

When the party opposite was in office, all it could do was provide \$750 in a credit for first-time homebuyers. We are doing way more than that.

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if a young family in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove had decided a year ago to save up a little longer for a down payment on their first home purchase, today they would be \$150,000 further behind. In the words of one of my constituents, “It is so hard to be hopeful anymore.”

B.C.'s Lower Mainland is ground zero for Canada's housing affordability crisis, and people want to know what the government's plan is to tackle inflation and keep the dream of home ownership alive.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to invest in programs that put home ownership within the reach of more middle-class families and young Canadians. That is exactly what we have done. Our first-time home buyer incentive is putting more home ownership opportunities within reach of more young Canadians. We are building on our historic commitment to giving more Canadians a safe and affordable place to call home.

Oral Questions

What did Conservative Party members do when they were in office, if they care about this issue? The only policy they could come up with in nine years of government was a \$750 tax credit for first-time homebuyers. That is miserly, and we have done way more than them in a very short period of time.

Mr. Kenny Chiu (Steveston—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my home city of Richmond, house prices have gone up 20% in the past pandemic year, averaging \$1.5 million. Richmond has become the epicentre of housing challenges in the GVRD and Canada. We would benefit from well-developed policies on affordability and supply.

What will the government do to make affordable housing project approvals and make funds accessible faster and in a more transparent manner?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for a party that claims to care about supply, all it could come up with to spend on affordable housing solutions is a mere \$250 million a year across Canada. We have invested over \$27 billion in the national housing strategy since we have come into office.

We know that every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. Our plan is building on a strong foundation. That is why budget 2021 is the fifth consecutive budget that puts more money in affordable housing, to the tune of \$2.5 billion. We are also reallocating \$1.3 billion in existing funding to speed up the construction, repair or support of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle.

* * *

[Translation]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past year has been difficult for all Canadians, but the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women. In Quebec, we are seeing a devastating spike of incidents of violence, in which 11 women tragically lost their lives. Could the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development update us on how our government is preventing gender-based violence and supporting survivors in Quebec?

Oral Questions

● (1500)

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first share my solidarity and condolences with Muslims in London and across the country, particularly my hijabi sisters, who are feeling terror and who are feeling targeted.

[Translation]

As is the case with attacks on Muslims, every life lost to femicide is an avoidable tragedy. Our thoughts are with all the people affected by these deplorable actions. Since we took office, our government has been there to fight gender-based violence, and we will continue to do so.

[English]

I thank our 250 partners in Quebec for their hard work. We will continue to be there for—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a housing crisis, and the government has failed to act. In my riding and the GTA, housing prices are up by 25% in the last year, with the average household cost now over 33% higher than in the rest of Canada. Money laundering is extensively exploited in Canadian real estate, leaving many properties vacant. In Toronto alone, approximately 40% of condos are vacant, driving all prices up.

Will the government support our opposition day motion and urgently act to address Canada's national housing crisis?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the party opposite has absolutely no credibility on this subject. It spent \$250 million a year for the whole country on affordable housing. We have spent over \$27 billion in our national housing strategy, and there is more to come.

Budget 2021 is the fifth consecutive budget where we are spending more money on affordable housing solutions for Canadians. We are introducing a tax on vacant homes owned by non-resident, non-Canadian real estate owners. We have introduced the Canada housing benefit.

I could keep going, but the party opposite has absolutely no shame on this issue because it has no credibility and no lessons to give us.

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the minister's talking points today, and the plan the government has is not working. Housing prices are continuing to surge, and it is an ongoing problem. The dream of home ownership for young Canadians is being killed, and those who do find a way to buy a house are being crippled with massive debt burdens. Criticizing what a government may or may not have done six or seven years ago is not actually a plan.

What new steps is the government going to do to deal with this housing crisis?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what does not help first-time homebuyers is a mere credit of \$750. That is a joke.

What we have introduced is the first-time home buyer incentive, which reduces mortgage payments by helping first-time homebuyers with their down payment. As well, we have increased it recently to make sure it works for Canadian first-time homebuyers in Vancouver, Toronto and Victoria, as well as raising the minimum household income. Those are real solutions to ensure that Canadians have access to their dream of home ownership.

The party opposite has absolutely no credibility on this issue.

Mr. James Cumming (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's promised rapid housing initiatives have been anything but rapid. The government has spent billions of taxpayers' dollars on housing, yet families in Edmonton are struggling to secure a roof. The first-time home buyer program is a failure. The removal of regulatory barriers, incentives for municipalities to increase density, and leadership that can resolve a trade dispute are what we need.

How many families in my riding unable to buy or rent a home will it take for the Prime Minister to finally capitalize on NGOs and the private sector's ability to help housing?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only a Conservative would claim that a program that has ensured that 40% of the \$1-billion rapid housing initiative is delivering real housing solutions for indigenous communities is a failure. Only a Conservative would claim that housing being built in less than 12 months is not rapid.

We have exceeded our target of 3,000 affordable housing units under the rapid housing initiative. We are on track to actually build 4,777 permanent housing units, and in fact we have increased funding for the rapid housing initiative to the tune of \$1.5 billion, resulting in a total of 9,200 affordable housing units.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam are watching the steep decline of wild salmon in our region with great concern. This impacts my community, thousands of workers in rural and coastal communities and the hundreds of indigenous communities in British Columbia that fish salmon for food, social and ceremonial reasons. Preserving and restoring our Pacific salmon are fundamental to ensuring that the Pacific coast has salmon for generations to come, and my community expects our government to act.

What is the government doing to protect this exceptional species?

• (1505)

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam for his advocacy on this file.

I am pleased to announce that through budget 2021, our government is investing \$647 million. Today we launched the Pacific salmon strategy initiative. This strategy represents the largest-ever government investment in efforts to save Pacific salmon and is aimed at stopping the declines now, while helping to rebuild populations over the longer term.

We will be working closely with indigenous communities, harvesters, industry, environmental organizations, and provincial and territorial partners to advance actions under each pillar: to stabilize the species and to support a more modern, sustainable and economically resilient sector.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the last election, the Liberals vowed to introduce a just transition act to give workers the training and support needed to succeed in the clean economy. Organizations such as the International Institute for Sustainable Development and Unifor are calling on the Liberals to keep their promise. The minister says it is coming.

With only two weeks left before we rise for the summer, will the Liberals introduce a just transition act, or is this just another empty promise?

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am fully committed to the mandate letter given to me by the Prime Minister. We are looking at all our options to support workers as we build a low-emissions energy future, including legislation. No one gets left behind.

Energy workers built this country. They are the same people who will lower emissions and build up renewables. They are the same people who will help us meet our targets. We are investing in them through budget 2021 with \$2 billion to retrain and retool for the jobs of tomorrow with investments in CCUS, low-carbon fuels and hydrogen.

Oral Questions

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, despite a ministerial policy directive requiring the CRTC to promote competition, affordability, consumer interests and innovation in its telecommunications decision, the CRTC has fallen short in reducing prices charged by the big players to the smaller, more competitive players in the telecom industry.

Can the hon. minister explain what the government is willing to do to make these services more affordable for Canadians, especially at this time?

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry (Innovation and Industry), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kitchener South—Hespeler for his continued advocacy.

I can assure this chamber that our government has been relentless in promoting competition and improving the quality and coverage of telecom services across our country. We are fully committed to ensuring that Canadians pay fair prices for mobile and wireless services, regardless of their postal code. Let me emphasize that we cannot afford to leave anyone behind. We will continue working with service providers to make telecommunication services more affordable for all.

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for question period today.

Rising on a point of order, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I believe there have been consultations with other parties and if you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That, in light of the horrific discovery at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, the House reiterate the call it made in the motion adopted on May 1, 2018, and (a) invite Pope Francis to participate in this journey with Canadians by responding to call to action 58 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report and issue a former papal apology for the role of the Canadian Catholic Church in the establishment, operations and abuses of the residential schools; (b) call on the Canadian Catholic Church to live up to its moral obligation and the spirit of the 2006 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and resume the best efforts to raise the full amount of the agreed-upon funds; and (c) call upon the Catholic entities that were involved in the running of the residential schools to make a consistent and sustained effort to turn over the relevant documents when called upon by survivors of residential schools, their families and scholars working to understand the full scope and horrors of the residential school system, in the interests of truth and reconciliation.

Business of Supply

• (1510)

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: I am afraid we do not have unanimous consent.

Mr. Charlie Angus: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I just want to confirm that it is the Conservative Party of Canada that is giving the Catholic Church a free pass this afternoon, so it—

The Speaker: I have to cut the hon. member off. That is debate. That is not a point of order.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to table some documents outlining some of the previous Conservative government's record on housing—

Mr. Charlie Angus: No.

The Speaker: I just want to point something out. In previous governments, we have had problems where people have said no before we heard the full proposal. I will let the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon finish his proposal, and we will ask then.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table documents with respect to my questions today for the hon. minister, regarding the previous Conservative government's record on housing funding.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member moving the motion will please say nay.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, what documents? The member has to reference the documents. Does he have the documents in both official languages? Is he ready to put them on the table? It seems very ad hoc—

The Speaker: It seems that negotiations have not quite gone yet. I would invite the hon. members to meet and maybe bring back the proposal at a later date, if that is okay. I would just let them work it all out before it comes to the floor. This way, we will have everything ironed out.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent on a point of order.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to clarify something for my colleague, who was wondering if we would be tabling the documents.

[English]

Obviously, we are in the 21st century. We can table some documents with the virtual process.

Mr. Brad Vis: Mr. Speaker, just on a point of clarification, as a member of Parliament, am I required to table the document in both official languages or in one official language?

The Speaker: In both.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—HOUSING POLICY**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has three minutes remaining on his debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I could only have a bit more time, there is so much that one could talk about.

We just went through question period, where the Conservative Party asked about eight questions on housing. What was going through my mind was that this might be more questions on that issue than the Conservatives have asked in the previous five years; I have not done the math. It is part of what I referenced earlier, that the Conservatives have surprised a number of people, whether members of the government, the Bloc or the NDP, with the introduction of this particular motion—

The Speaker: I am going to have to interrupt.

[Translation]

We have a point of order. There is no interpretation.

[English]

I would ask the parliamentary secretary to check his screen to make sure his microphone belongs to the headset and not to the camera.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

• (1515)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that since 2015, the Government of Canada has made historic investments to increase supply, make housing more affordable and ensure that Canadians have places to call home. That is why there is so much irony in the Conservatives being the ones to bring forward this motion.

The Government of Canada has committed and invested over \$70 billion in the national housing strategy launched in 2017, as members will recall. The first-time home buyer incentive reduces a first-time buyer's mortgage payments to make buying a home more affordable. One of my favourites is the rapid housing initiative to address urgent housing needs for vulnerable Canadians in all regions of our country.

In January of this year, our government introduced Canada's first national tax on vacant property owned by non-residents and non-Canadians. Houses should not be passive investment vehicles for offshore money: They should be homes for Canadian families. We have invested an unprecedented \$300 million through the rental construction housing initiative. This is a government that genuinely understands and appreciates the need for a national government to be involved in housing.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my comments, we recognize that Ottawa, the provinces and territories, indigenous governments and non-profit organizations all have roles to play. As I did earlier today, I would challenge any member of the House to name a prime minister or government to have done more, in terms of investing in housing, than we have in the last five years. Members will be challenged to do so because one does not exist. Members would probably have to go back 50 or 60 years, or even farther than that. It might even be that we have never seen these kinds of dollars invested by a government. We do not need to take any lessons from the Conservatives on the housing issue.

In the most recent budget, we introduced the Canada greener homes grant. For people like me and the constituents I represent, this is a good, solid program that is going to help people stay in their homes. It will provide financial support for many necessary renovations. It is also better for the environment. This is an area of policy not only on which has the government been progressive, but in which we have seen tangible results in a relatively short time. This is a government that cares about our national housing stock and expanding, where we can—

The Speaker: I am going to have to cut off the hon. member as he has run out of time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the irony with the government is that it purports to spend more addressing affordability than any other government in the history of Canada, yet never before has the dream of home ownership been harder to attain for average middle-class Canadians and people working hard to join them, as we have heard a thousand times from the government. It has never been harder for them to enter the housing market and provide the security, stability and economic opportunities that come with home ownership.

As I asked during question period, can the parliamentary secretary tell us if it was the plan of the Liberal government for housing prices to skyrocket to the stratosphere and leave Canadians behind?

• (1520)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I wonder where that very same enthusiasm was when Stephen Harper was the prime minister, or Brian Mulroney or other prime ministers. If they are critical of this government on the housing file, I think members have to give their heads a shake.

At the end of the day, we have seen not only investments but a national government working with indigenous communities and provinces and municipalities to improve the quality of our housing stock while at the same time supporting Canadians in being able to

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buy homes for the first time. If previous governments had done what we have been doing over the last couple of years, we would not be in the situation that we are in today.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary indicated the amounts that have been given. Indeed, there was a bilateral agreement between Canada and Quebec for \$3.7 billion, half of which came from the federal government.

That is fine, except that it took three years to reach this agreement because the federal government always wants to dictate to Quebec how it should do things. Would the parliamentary secretary agree with the Bloc Québécois in asking Ottawa to transfer to Quebec its share of housing funds, unconditionally and according to its demographic weight?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I beg to differ with my friend. I think that Ottawa has a responsibility on the housing file, and part of that responsibility is to work with provinces, territories and municipalities, whether Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Halifax or Yellowknife, as well as with indigenous leaders and governments of all types to try to ensure that we have better overall housing conditions throughout the country.

This is a file that we as a government, and particularly the Prime Minister, have given a great deal of attention to. We see it with the current Minister of Housing and his commitment to the many different programs that he is pushing very hard on, such as the rapid housing initiative. He has been in my home province on many occasions to promote that particular program.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is obviously oblivious to the fact that it was the federal Liberals who cancelled the national affordable housing program in 1993.

With that being said, Winnipeg has the highest number of indigenous households in need of housing, estimated at 9,000. Indigenous, Métis and Inuit people should not have to be told time and again that their housing needs can wait, just as the government should not keep taking indigenous children to court.

How can the member sleep at night knowing that his own government has failed time and again to deliver on the promise of a “for indigenous, by indigenous” urban, rural and northern housing strategy?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is just wrong in terms of her assessments. If she were to check with the Minister of Indigenous Services, she would probably be better informed in terms of what is actually taking place on the issue of indigenous housing, which is being led and encouraged by indigenous community members today.

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In regards to changing history, back in 1992-93, whenever it was, I can remember debating Bill Blaikie in the north end of Winnipeg when the NDP were saying that the federal government did not have a role to play in housing. That was back in the early 1990s. It may be hard to believe, but it is true. I was there, on the panel, and so was Bill Blaikie.

I do not need any sort of lecture from a New Democrat on the importance of national housing. We have a Prime Minister and a government that are more committed to housing in Canada than any other government I can recall, and I have been around for quite a few years.

• (1525)

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, money laundering is extensively exploited in Canadian real estate, and we have estimates that more than 50% of real estate companies are not complying with anti-money-laundering regulations. Furthermore, we are one of the few G7 countries that does not have laws around beneficial ownership.

I am wondering this. Could the parliamentary secretary give us any insight into whether or not this government is actually going to work towards enforcing Canada's anti-money-laundering regulations and implementing beneficial ownership to reduce money laundering in Canada?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, what I can say, and what I would emphasize because we have heard this from other colleagues of mine, in particular the minister, is that houses should not be passive investment vehicles for offshore money. They should be homes for Canadian families. We recognize that we need to work with other jurisdictions. We have a multi-department approach to try to get to the root of this and how we can resolve it. At the end of the day we want to see houses being used as they were intended, and that is by real people.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I wanted to raise an issue that I raised earlier. I think there have been a lot of good comments today on things that can be done, but I raised the issue earlier that high immigration levels can also impact housing prices, and I think that is a fact. I think it increases the demand side of things.

There are some Canadians who are concerned with our economic state coming out of COVID. Does the Liberal government plan to go back to our high immigration levels immediately once borders open, or will there be a period of letting the economy and the housing market get back on track?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, Canada is a diverse nation that is recognized around the world as the place to be in many situations, and we owe that to immigrants. We are a nation that is very much dependent on immigration. I believe that Canada will continue to grow and prosper well into the future, in good part because of solid immigration policies. In many areas immigration has kept communities alive, and to a certain degree growing.

I would invite my friend, if he doubts that, to come to Manitoba. I can give him some very specific examples of some communities he can visit. I would not want anyone to undervalue the potential contributions of aggressive immigration into Canada.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Edmonton Manning.

I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak to this very important opposition motion on housing. Canada does have a housing crisis. Every day, citizens from my riding and across Canada come to me with heartbreaking stories on the challenges they face in putting a roof over their head. Many tell me they can no longer afford to stay in their homes, others share that they cannot find anywhere at all to live. I hear from young families who are forced to live far from their places of work, because it is all they can find and young people who are losing hope that they will ever be able to own a house of their own.

Nearly one in 10 Canadians experience hidden homelessness. One in seven Canadian households cannot find decent housing without spending 30%, or more, of their income. In my riding, in the greater Toronto area that number is drastically worse. The average Toronto household costs over \$850,000 where Canada's average is \$562,000, with many Toronto buyers taking nearly 75% of their household income to cover home ownership costs.

The blatant truth is that there is not enough housing available and the housing that is available is simply too expensive. The critical shortage of housing and the corresponding skyrocketing of housing prices is a serious problem that is getting worse, and not one that will fix itself.

Economists at the big banks have been increasingly sounding the alarm over Canada's housing market. Big bank economists do not typically use strong language on any topic, so when they do, we must take note and treat it with the severity that it deserves. In February, economists at the National Bank highlighted the warning signs of widespread price surges, vulnerable borrowers with high debt and uninsured mortgages.

A Royal Bank economist in late March stated that a policy response was required to address a housing market that has not had an "overheating of this scope since the late 1980s." This position was further reinforced by Bank of Montreal economists who stated that "policy-makers need to act immediately" to respond to the "housing fire" that Canada is currently living through.

Canada's national housing affordability crisis requires a comprehensive federal government approach combined with a sense of urgency that takes concrete action to implement it. Today's opposition day motion calls on the government to do just that.

This crisis in Canada is a complex issue, but today I would like to focus on the three main areas that I think should be considered in any federal government approach: tax structure changes, including addressing vacant and non-resident foreign ownership, rampant housing speculation and money laundering; employment and the quality, not just quantity, of jobs; and longer-term thinking around the total cost of ownership of housing, and how targeted initiatives could make housing more affordable while also achieving our national goals around environment and climate change.

What is taxed, how it is taxed, and the information and documentation that is provided in support of those taxes are important tools that a federal government could use to influence the foundations of our economy, including the housing market.

Many of the housing market issues are associated with shortages in supply, with renters being disproportionately affected. Renter households are four and a half times more likely to be in housing need, largely due to a severe shortage in rental properties. However, often the shortage is because properties are being left vacant rather than there not being enough properties. One such example is the explosion in the use of properties for short-term rentals such as Airbnbs. There are significant tax advantages that currently, perhaps inadvertently, incentivize owners of vacant properties to use them as for this purpose rather than as housing for longer-term renters.

While tourism is certainly a key component of our economy, the ability for families to secure long-term rentals for housing must also be prioritized. Perhaps if the tax structures were altered to, as a minimum, level the playing field between the two usage types, more property owners would choose to offer their properties for long-term rentals increasing the available supply.

• (1530)

What is also affecting the supply of shelter is the extent to which owned properties are simply being left vacant. Many of these properties are non-resident, foreign-owned. A temporary freeze on this type of ownership would be a substantive measure toward increasing the supply. Furthermore, a review of the tax conditions on properties that remain vacant for extended periods of time would also be important to look into.

The real estate market has been extensively exploited by money laundering, further compounding the problem of both the supply and the cost of housing. It is estimated that \$47 billion is laundered annually across Canada with a significant portion, with some estimates as high as 68% of that being in the real estate market.

Nearly half of all real estate companies are not complying with key aspects of the FINTRAC anti-money laundering regime and Canadian authorities are failing to prosecute these financial crimes. Compliance and enforcement of Canada's anti-money laundering must be a priority. Additionally, the introduction of beneficial ownership to increase transparency would be a significant measure that would increase the availability of housing supply and in turn reduce housing prices.

Finally, tax changes that would temper the rampant speculation in the housing market should also be explored. The purchase of properties for the sole purpose of "flipping" is contributing to the

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rapid price increases. Perhaps, the practice of "flipping" should be viewed in the context of a business operation and not as a principal residence.

Clearer residential requirements, including rules that disallow multiple principal residences within a certain period or time frame without supporting justification, such as a move for work, could all be important tax changes that should be considered, again to increase the housing supply and cool the drastic pricing increases.

While cost of housing may be a critical piece in the accessibility to a place Canadians can call home, it is not the only one. A steady and reliable income is as important on the path to home ownership. With over 30% of the Canadians precariously employed, addressing the housing crisis must include measures to increase not only the quantity, but also the quality, of jobs.

The last area that must be considered in addressing housing affordability is the standard and quality of available housing. The cost of a home is more than just the purchase price. It is also the annual recurring cost of heating, cooling, maintaining the house and much more. Significant technological advances offer much greater energy efficiency, lower carbon footprints and greater resilience against climate change events.

However, building codes lag far behind and government housing investments do not demand compliance with these higher standards. While a tax incentive to retrofit existing properties may be beneficial, the advantages of all-new builds meeting the highest possible standards and the corresponding contribution to home affordability should not be overlooked.

The national housing crisis must be urgently addressed. It requires real action to review detrimental tax treatments, address money laundering and rampant speculation, and support long-term environmental and sustainable thinking. Today's opposition motion puts forward important actions that will give more people a real chance at securing a decent and affordable roof over their head, and in turn, secure Canada's future. I urge everyone in this House to support this critical motion.

• (1535)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it will be interesting to see how the real estate sector responds to the Conservatives talking about changing the tax regime for primary residences. I look forward to the Conservative attack ads by this particular member in the next campaign. I assure members, Liberals are not changing the tax code as it relates to primary residences, but we now know the Conservatives are considering it.

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It is also nice to hear them talk about FINTRAC, an organization and police unit that the Conservatives did not fund and did not staff. We are now funding it, but the member opposite voted against that funding. She also voted against the budget to strengthen beneficial ownership measures in this year's budget, but now she seems to have changed her mind. She does like to criss-cross on issues and political parties from time to time.

What I find most interesting about the member opposite is she often advocates for the subway on Yonge Street, which the municipalities of York Region are paying for with development charges, the development charges that this particular motion threatens to strip away.

How would the cities contribute to infrastructure that builds good, strong communities if development charges were wiped out as the Conservative Party is now proposing to do for municipalities from coast to coast to coast? How does she build a subway with tax cuts?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, I am sure all hon. colleagues can agree that a principal residence is for living in and providing a family with a roof over their heads. That is the most important aspect of a principal residence. The fact the Liberals are saying they have done things to reduce money laundering is blatantly false. There are no regulations around beneficial ownership, and that is a critical gap that industry and economists alike have identified, as well as the fact that many of Canada's current FINTRAC anti-money laundering laws are failing to be enforced despite investments and much needed—

• (1540)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. She is right to say that we need to address the lack of access to housing. For example, Carleton-sur-Mer, in my riding, wants to attract more young families and more people to the area. This unfortunately is not happening because these people need to buy a house once they arrive, which is not always possible for a young person who does not have the money. This is a problem we see often.

The motion offers a number of potential solutions, which is good. However, we think the solution is rather simple. Housing is the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, so the federal government should transfer the money directly to Quebec so it can work with the municipalities to find solutions. What does my colleague think about the idea of transferring the money as a solution?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. It is so important to figure out why young people are unable to become homeowners.

[English]

Largely, it is because they do not have stable and steady incomes. We are seeing youth disproportionately affected by precarious employment, so while we need to talk about the availability and af-

fordability of housing, what we also cannot overlook is the fact that we need to have incomes that are commensurate and not have precarious employment. I think it is our responsibility as parliamentarians to look to our youth and help them in providing that more secure path.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, when we talk about supply, in my city we have building permits, cranes dotting the sky and condos being built everywhere and simultaneously there is an increasing number of residents in Hamilton Centre who are being pushed out and living in tents and informal settlements across the city. This opposition day motion, in part (e), talks about overhauling the government's housing policy to substantively increase the housing supply, yet the Conservatives decreased investments in co-ops and social housing and did not announce any plans. Will the Conservatives finally admit this opposition day motion completely overlooks social housing and real affordability for the next generation of Canadians?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, this opposition day motion calls on the government to have a national housing strategy that does better in all aspects. It is not just one aspect, because housing needs to be looked at in its entirety.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin discussing the motion at hand, I would like to give my condolences to the family that was attacked in London on Sunday evening. Four people were attacked and killed by an individual who was only motivated by hate for this innocent family, solely due to their Islamic faith. This kind of violence does not belong in the world, let alone in Canada.

Targeting men, women and children solely due to their beliefs is an act of hatred, pure and simple. It is something that cannot be tolerated in a free and just society, and my heart goes out to the family. We owe them, as a society, to work together to find a cure once and for all.

To begin with the issue of the day, I can say with confidence that one of the biggest challenges Canadians face in their lives right now is the cost of housing. Frankly, when I look at some of the real estate prices in some of Canada's largest cities, I struggle to think of how I would pay for one of those homes, and I am not talking about mansions here. Even starter homes are starting to get ridiculously expensive in this country. I took a look at some of Vancouver's real estate listings, and my mind was blown.

I think the cheapest house I found was two bedrooms and a little over 900 square feet for just under \$500,000. I took a look at some of the listings in Toronto, and it was even worse. I could not find a single house available for under \$500,000, just small condos or apartments.

One of the most ridiculous listings was a 500-square-foot bachelor pad for \$500,000. That is about the size of my office back in my constituency, and I can barely fit my desk in there. I have no idea how someone would fit their entire life into something that size.

As I mentioned, the cost of housing is one of the biggest problems that Canadians are facing in their lives right now. I know that my colleagues the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon wrote an update published in the *Toronto Sun* last week that discussed a lot of the causes of the, frankly, ridiculous cost of housing in this country. Obviously, I think it raised several good points, otherwise I would not be discussing them personally, and I think many Canadians would agree with this once they take a minute or two to think it over. The lack of supply of housing in Canada is one of their most compelling arguments.

I did the math, and from 2009 to 2019, the population of our country grew by 10.5%. That is about four million new Canadians. Obviously, there will be plenty of families in there, so I am not saying that we need four million new homes, but the lack of supply of housing is pretty well documented. This lack of housing supply has had some pretty clear consequences for Canadians.

The price of housing has boomed in nearly every major city in the country, with Edmonton and Calgary proving to be the only exceptions. Toronto, for instance, has seen the price of housing triple over the past 15 years. I think that goes a long way to explaining the 500-square-foot room for \$500,000. Ultimately, I think that represents a national tragedy. The cost of housing in many of Canada's cities is, in many ways, an exclusionary barrier to families that are looking to fulfill their dreams of owning their own homes.

I am sure that this is similar for many Canadians as well as many of our colleagues, but I grew up with this dream. It is a pretty simple one, but simplicity carries universality. It is a classic dream to grow up, find a job, fall in love, start a family and buy one's own home to live in with that family.

I am fortunate that I have been able to fulfill that dream. I am sure it is similar for some of my colleagues, or maybe most of my colleagues, but it is not a similar story for a lot of Canadians. There are thousands of families across the country that are blocked from fulfilling that dream because of the cost of housing.

• (1545)

Maybe all people can afford now is to rent an apartment, or they cannot afford a big enough house so their children can live comfortably. Maybe they are forced to live in a bad neighbourhood where it is not safe for their kids to play outside because it is all they can afford.

Just as important, this is not just a barrier for families. It is a barrier for students who are moving away from home for the first time. It is a barrier for recent graduates looking for a new home as they enter the job market. It is a barrier for seniors who are looking to downsize after their retirement. It is a barrier to every Canadian from coast to coast. It is a slap in the face to all of them, quite frankly, especially with the ongoing pandemic, meaning that Canadians have been struggling while real estate prices keep chugging up and up.

Business of Supply

The prohibitive cost of housing in many of Canada's cities is, frankly, a barrier that people are struggling to cross. It is not like a chain-link fence that we find at schoolyards. It is much closer to the walls of Jericho, tall, imposing and not crossable, but just like biblical walls, these walls can be brought down.

However, we cannot do it through the failed infrastructure and housing support programs of the government. We need to increase the supply of housing in our major cities. It is logical that our population cannot continue to grow while our housing supply barely adds new homes for Canadians. It is simple, but it is more than that.

While this is unique in every city across the country, there is a substantial amount of red tape and municipal regulations that prevent the construction of new housing. While we obviously cannot legislate municipal affairs, the federal government can work with the provincial governments and municipalities to improve the situation. We can encourage cities to cut red tape and make building new homes easier to alleviate the supply issues in many of our larger cities.

The federal government already issues gas tax rebates, carbon tax rebates and more to municipal governments. Why not other transfers such as from the thus far useless infrastructure bank or any one of the other dozens of programs? The municipal rules and regulations are a massive driver of the increase in housing prices and, to top it off, are all the government's failed programs.

Back in the 1980s, there was a tax rebate program for building new homes called the multiple unit residential building program. In today's dollars, it cost \$9,000 per home built in foregone government revenue. I would say that is pretty good. The Liberal government's equivalent, the rapid housing initiative, costs 23 times that per home. That is with the \$9,000 adjusted for inflation.

Clearly the government's current approach is not working. Clearly it is not helping Canadians afford homes. That is why we need a different approach. It is clear that the government needs to stop the endless, poorly thought-out infrastructure program. It is clear that the made-in-Ottawa programs are not working.

Despite all of the government programs designed to make affording down payments easier, and all the various tax credits related to home ownership, the walls remain up. It is time to stop marching around the city. It is time to blow our horns and tackle the issues of lack of supply and over-regulation of housing construction. It will bring down the wall of prohibitive housing costs in Canada's major cities.

Business of Supply

This is what we need to do to make housing more affordable for Canada and Canadians. This is what we need to do to make sure that Canadians can fulfill their dream of home ownership. That is what my Conservative colleagues and I support, so Canadians right now or 50 years from now can fulfill their dreams.

• (1550)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the Conservatives' climate plan was a pamphlet, this set of policies is a postcard. It is astonishing.

I really wish that the Conservatives would make these speeches at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities because, when they talk about gutting municipal regulation and gutting the rules and the planning criteria around housing, what they are talking about is eliminating the planning that is done to make sure we build the right kind of housing in the right places to the right standards to house Canadians safely and affordably in communities that are functional.

When they talk about gutting the development charges attached to new construction builds, what they are talking about is taking away the libraries, the schools, the roads, the clean water and all of the infrastructure that makes a house viable in a community.

The Conservatives do not have a policy. They have a bunch of slogans. It is like listening to people talk about the weather. They are finally talking about housing, but they do not actually have a plan to do anything about supply, cost, affordability, security or how it gets done. In fact, all they want to do is attack municipalities. If they delivered this speech at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities last week, they would have been laughed out of the room.

• (1555)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, it seems as though the hon. member is coming from a different planet altogether. He is still stuck too much in the past. Every time we suggest something, we are trying to help the government. We are trying to help find solutions for Canadians. The hon. member is always stuck in his own pity politics. He is living in the past, and he cannot move on from there.

What I am saying is simple. If their policies are working, and if their plan is working, why do we have a problem? The member knows it is not a normal problem, and Canadians know how much Canadians are suffering. If one talks to any average Canadian, whether over the screen or in real life, the first thing they will talk about is how confused, uncomfortable and unhappy they are with what is going on with the housing market.

This is my answer to the hon. member. Let us work together to find a solution. Our motion today is nothing but a step in that direction.

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. The Bloc Québécois mostly agrees with the Conservative Party on this. There is a social housing crisis, and we must do something about it.

Social housing in my riding of Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix has its own realities, but they are not the same in Charlevoix, in Côte-de-Beaupré, in Beauport or in Quebec City.

The Bloc Québécois is concerned that the federal government is looking into this issue, when I believe that Quebec is in a better position to do so and is more familiar with the situation. Quebec is in a position to implement the social housing principles.

The Bloc Québécois is suggesting that the government give Quebec its share of the money for social housing and allow Quebec to allocate it.

What does my colleague think about that?

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I agree that maybe one size would not fit all. That may not be the solution. There are different provinces, different jurisdictions and different cities. That is why I mentioned in my speech that the prices in Edmonton and Calgary are still way, way behind compared to Toronto or Vancouver. Probably the only two exceptions to this are Calgary and Edmonton right now.

We need to find solutions. At the end of the day, this is a national crisis, and we must all be stepping up to make sure we find the solutions and help the government to deal with it.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to talk about housing here today because housing is the crisis in my community. In my home town of Penticton, the average cost of a single family home is \$800,000. That is almost twice what it is in Edmonton, yet the average income for a single person is in the \$30,000 range.

People cannot even dream to afford to buy a house. There is no rental stock. There is certainly no subsidized housing stock, so if people lose their rental suite because the landlord wants to cash in on these prices, they are homeless. They are out on street.

We have had working families in that situation. I do not see anything in—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I apologize, but I have to ask the hon. member for Edmonton Manning to give a short answer.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, I visit British Columbia all the time, although not right now, but I am very familiar with it. Yes, we do have a problem. It is everybody's problem, and we have to make sure we find solutions.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the distinguished member for Kingston and the Islands.

Business of Supply

Before I begin my speech, I would like to pay my respects to the four Canadians who were taken from their family and friends. This absolutely breaks my heart. I know all Canadians have their thoughts with this family and with the nine-year-old boy for whom we all wish a full recovery. May light overcome such darkness, and, yes, we must root out all forms of discrimination, including Islamophobia. It needs to be called out. It needs to be condemned. At this time, we all stand shoulder to shoulder with Muslim Canadians across this country.

I am pleased to contribute to this very important debate that we are having, as this issue impacts all Canadians from coast to coast. I would like to thank the hon. member for raising the issue of housing. It is a frustrating period for many Canadians who are trying to purchase their first home. High housing costs, especially in urban centres, continue to put financial pressure on many middle-class and low-income Canadians. COVID-19 has exacerbated existing housing affordability and homelessness issues and the public health risks of substandard and crowded living quarters.

This government knows that a long-term plan for a faster-growing Canadian economy must include housing that is affordable for Canadians, especially young families. Stable housing is critical for communities and for a strong middle class. Affordable housing is also essential for economic fairness and growth.

● (1600)

[Translation]

Investments to make housing more affordable for the most vulnerable, coupled with measures to limit foreign speculation in the housing market, will help ensure that our economic recovery is an inclusive one that helps more people join the middle class.

[English]

That is why the government has a plan as part of budget 2021 to invest \$2.5 billion and reallocate \$1.3 billion in existing funding to speed up the construction, repair or support of 35,000 affordable housing units.

Since 2015, this government has made historic investments to increase supply and make housing more affordable. For example, under Canada's first national housing strategy, we are on track to deliver over \$70 billion in investments by 2027-28 that will support the construction of up to 160,000 affordable homes and increase Canada's housing supply.

We also introduced the rapid housing initiative to address urgent housing needs for vulnerable Canadians in all regions of Canada. The \$1-billion program will be expanded with an additional \$1.5-billion allocation from budget 2021.

[Translation]

At least 25% of that money will go towards women-focused housing projects. Overall, this new funding will add a minimum of 4,500 new affordable units to Canada's housing supply, building on the 4,700 units already funded.

[English]

The funding is available to municipalities, provinces and territories, indigenous governing bodies and organizations, and non-profit

organizations. Funding will be used for the construction of modular housing as well as for the acquisition of land and for converting existing buildings into affordable housing units. Most recently, the federal government announced it is aligning the minimum qualifying rate for insured mortgages with that for uninsured mortgages, subject to review and periodic adjustment, that being the greater of the borrower's mortgage contract rate plus 2%, or 5.25%. This will apply to insured mortgages approved as of June 1, 2021.

The government also recently expanded access to the first-time home buyer incentive to make sure more middle-class Canadians in Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria and cities of the like can benefit from this support. The program reduces a first-time home buyer's mortgage payments to make buying a home more affordable.

Another factor contributing to unaffordable housing prices for many Canadians in some of our biggest cities is speculative demand from foreign non-resident investors. That is why on January 1, 2022, the government will introduce Canada's first national tax on vacant and under-used residential property owned by non-resident non-Canadians. Houses should not be a passive investment vehicle for offshore money. They should be homes for Canadian families, many of whom reside in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

The tax will require owners other than Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada to file a declaration as to the current use of the property, with significant penalties for failure to file. Revenues generated through this tax will help support the government's significant investments in making housing more affordable for all Canadians.

I would like to turn back to some of the other housing measures contained in the budget. Budget 2021 proposes \$600 million over seven years to renew and expand the affordable housing innovation fund. To date, this program has committed funding to support the creation of over 17,600 units, including more than 16,300 affordable housing units and units for persons with accessibility challenges. This new funding would support the creation of up to 12,700 more units.

● (1605)

[Translation]

This is an investment of \$315.4 million over seven years through the Canada housing benefit to increase direct financial assistance for low-income women and children fleeing violence to help with their rent payments.

Business of Supply

The budget also proposes \$118.2 million over seven years through the federal community housing initiative, to support community housing providers that deliver long-term housing to many of our most vulnerable.

[English]

Of the \$1.3 billion of previously announced funding that has been reallocated, \$750 million under the national housing co-investment fund will accelerate the creation of 3,400 units and the repair of 13,700 units. Some \$250 million under this program will support the construction, repair and operating costs of an estimated 560 units of transitional housing and shelter spaces for women and children fleeing violence.

[Translation]

We are providing \$300 million through the rental construction financing initiative, which will be allocated to support the conversion of vacant commercial property into housing. This funding will target the conversion of excess commercial property space into 800 units of market-based rental housing.

[English]

This government also recognizes that access to safe and sustainable housing can be particularly challenging in the north. Therefore, budget 2021 proposes to provide \$25 million each to the governments of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to address housing priorities.

Our government is focused on ensuring that Canadians are able to have an affordable and safe place to call home. The measures I have outlined will help Canadians find affordable housing, spur job creation and local economic recovery, alleviate cost pressures in the housing market overall and grow the middle class.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the first events I attended as a member of Parliament was a briefing by the Canada Revenue Agency at the tax offices in Vancouver, organized by the parliamentary secretary. The tax specialists were telling us about all the new convictions that they were bringing forward related to money laundering and people who were not following Canadian laws in the real estate sector as well.

The member mentioned in his discourse about a beneficial ownership registry. What laws will need to be changed to implement a beneficial ownership registry? What laws does the member believe need to be strengthened to better combat money laundering in Canada?

• (1610)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon for bringing the opposition motion to the floor today.

As we all know, housing is a very important issue, but we also know that we need to ensure that money laundering is dealt with. I am really glad to say that the Canada Revenue Agency, through our government over the last number of years, has been provided the funds, tools and the necessary investments to combat money laundering. We actually set up at the CRA separate teams to investigate

real estate fraud and money-laundering transactions in British Columbia specifically.

I am glad to see that the member opposite recognizes the efforts of the Canada Revenue Agency and our government.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague, the parliamentary secretary.

What does he think of the motion, which calls for the first-time home buyer incentive to be replaced? What is the problem with that program, and how can it be improved? More importantly, how can a first-time home buyer measure be put in place to ensure that young Canadians can also become homeowners?

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, we have introduced the first-time home buyer measure that is supporting Canadians across the country. We are going to continue to support young families who wish to purchase a home in whichever city they wish to live in this blessed country.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we will be supporting the motion, but we know that tax incentives alone have never addressed homelessness or housing affordability anywhere in the world.

This is a crisis. This is a situation where Canadians have seen the average price of a home go up 30%. We have over 250,000 people who are homeless every year on the streets in Canada. The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness is saying that to even have a fighting chance we have to build 300,000 new, permanent, affordable and supportive purpose built housing units. We are losing housing more than we are building housing right now in this country.

The Liberals' current plan is to build 160,000 homes over the next 10 years. Will my colleague support increasing that to 500,000 units so that we can actually ensure that people have safe, secure housing in this country, and ensure that nobody is homeless on the streets of this country, a wealthy country like Canada where that should never happen?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni for his passion for our combined desire to end homelessness from coast to coast to coast.

On chronic homelessness, we are battling it, and we are making progress. If the member looks at the recent update on the national housing strategy that was produced, he will see where we are making fantastic progress in ending homelessness.

We will not rest until every single Canadian has a roof over their head and is in a safe and secure spot that they can call home.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to affordable housing, which is such an important topic, and the impacts, and what various levels of government can do to contribute to affordable housing throughout Canada.

It is most important to identify at the outset that, in my opinion, affordable housing is so much more than just social housing. I heard NDP members today talk about social housing as being a need and a requirement, and indeed to some degree it is. However, quite frankly, affordable housing spans the spectrum from helping people with home ownership right to rent geared to income, and basically everything in between. When we look at affordable housing, we need to make sure that policies we bring forward and what we do have an impact throughout that spectrum. If we try to focus on just one end of the spectrum, we are not going to have an impact. If we try to focus on just home ownership, as this motion appears to do, I do not think we are going to have a decent impact on what it means to Canadians, and in particular to those who are struggling right now, to find housing.

I really enjoy discussions on affordable housing. It is near and dear to me personally. My introduction to politics, long before I was even on city council or mayor of Kingston, was being a representative on the affordable housing development committee that the City of Kingston set up to distribute funds to various affordable housing projects throughout Kingston back in, I believe, 2004-05. That initiative was brought forward by the Liberal Government of Ontario at that time. It wanted and saw the need to build affordable housing.

One thing we discovered early on is that when it comes to affordable housing, the best type of housing one can build is mixed integrated housing. There is always the temptation when building affordable housing to build as much as possible to house as many people as possible. This was a very popular way of doing things in the sixties, seventies and even into the eighties for that matter, when the federal government and provincial governments were involved in building housing complexes. However, the unfortunate reality, as we discovered, is that quite often when we do this, we do not end up with good housing. We end up with, unfortunately, the stigmatization of ghettoized housing. We are not helping those living in this situation, and certainly are not helping the stereotypes associated with low-income renters, when everybody is put together in one area. When we start to integrate people into various settings, we expose those who are on affordable housing assistance to those who are not, and we get a certain degree of appreciation and respect for the situation people might be in.

The model we really enjoyed deploying in Kingston said that if a developer was going to build an 80-unit apartment building, why do we not move in and fund 20% of the units in it? We used the provincial government's money at the time. As a requirement for assisting in the development of a certain number of those units, the rent had to be capped to a certain percentage of the CMHC rent for Kingston at the time. The more money someone received, the lower the rent had to be. If someone received \$20,000 per unit, perhaps they were capped at 80% of market rent, or if someone received \$50,000 per unit, perhaps they were capped at 50% of

CMHC market rent. Then, of course, the developer had to commit to that for a certain period of time.

This removed the taxpayer's burden of being responsible for the physical infrastructure and put that on the developer. It also ensured that rent geared to income was available, so that by going through the various housing lists that exist in Ontario, people were allocated spots. What was the most important part about it? By ensuring that only 20 units scattered throughout an 80-unit building were affordable housing units, we did not create the ghettos, so to speak, that were very popular for previous governments back in the sixties and seventies to build, as I indicated. I have always said that the best type of affordable housing is housing that people do not know is affordable, because it blends into the community so well that people do not realize their neighbours might be the recipients of housing initiative funding, in particular for affordable housing.

• (1615)

I know we have been bringing up commitments from the previous Conservative government a lot. The minister certainly did in question period. There have been some discussions and arguments about how they do not really matter because they were from six or seven years ago. However, I think this is important because it gives a pretty good indication, at least in my opinion, of where we would go if we returned to a day when a Conservative government is in power. We would revert to a lot of those previous policies.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I see the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is applauding that idea, but I do not like those policies. I do not think they are effective; nor do they genuinely improve the affordable housing situation in Canada.

We can highlight what was going on back then. When I was on that affordable housing development committee, a fraction of the money came from the federal government. The vast majority of it came from the provincial government in Ontario. As has been referenced here several times, the previous Conservative government was only giving \$250 million per year for affordable housing throughout the entire country.

Let us say we used one of the models I previously referenced, and we encouraged a developer to build affordable units in a building that it is currently building. Let us say we gave \$40,000 per unit. That would equate to only just over 6,000 affordable housing units in the entire country. That is the entire program, never mind all the other parts of the affordable housing strategy that I previously mentioned about affordable mortgages and rent geared to income. All of these components are part of it.

That is why I am extremely proud to be part of a government that has taken seriously the challenge of affordable housing since day one. We have looked at the challenge not just as an individual problem like the NDP does, primarily with people who need their rent to be geared to their income, but also from an incentive perspective to get people into home ownership.

Business of Supply

Certainly we are having struggles now. The situation has indeed changed over the last year or so, and in particular when it comes to properties that are purchased and stay vacant, which are a place for people to park their money. Quite often it is foreign investors who are parking their money in properties and keeping the properties vacant. That is a real issue, and I can see the absolute need to address it. That is why it was great to see the Minister of Finance propose, in the budget, a tax on vacant land, which will start in 2022. It will be interesting to see if the Conservatives are going to support that, as they certainly have not supported the budget to this point.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of trying to control and address the issue. The national housing strategy, on its own, is worth \$70 billion over 10 years. It started in 2017. We have been working in collaboration with CMHC to deliver funds to specific projects throughout the entire country to make sure that resources are there. There is the rapid housing initiative, or the strategy intended for incentives for construction. I think there is \$300 million to incentivize construction to turn over vacant commercial properties, and various other properties that could be turned over in a very quick manner, to utilize the space for affordable housing.

• (1620)

I have no doubt that there will always be more we can do. This is not a very easy issue. It is not an issue that one particular action is going to completely resolve. This is something that is going to take a lot of time. However, I am very proud of the work that has been done by this government over the last six years. I lived through, as I previously indicated, the previous government's programs.

I will leave it there. I look forward to questions from my colleagues.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a good friend who lives in the member's riding, and they were telling me about how hot the market is in Kingston. My mind turns to the young graduate from Queen's University who was finishing a graduate degree and trying to start a family, but the cost of housing has increased by literally \$200,000 over the last year. The member focused his remarks almost exclusively on social housing, but CMHC has indicated that there is no way we can address the affordability crisis we are facing in Canada unless we do something with the private sector.

Why is the government so reticent to even mention the possibility of working with the private sector to address supply? All of the major economists and a lot of analysts across Canada are saying to do this.

• (1625)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it is clear that the member only listened to the parts of my speech that he wanted to. If he is suggesting that I was only focusing on social housing, he missed 80% of what I said. I specifically said that successful projects are the ones where government works with developers to help subsidize units in larger buildings. That is my preferred model.

I will repeat what I said during my speech because he clearly did not hear it. When a building has 80 units in it, the government can help to subsidize some of those units to peg rents at below market value for various levels. In my opinion, that is an ideal model. I al-

so really like the co-op model the NDP has been talking about, because it forces market rents and lower-than-market rent, and it is self-sustaining. We have many examples of it in Kingston.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, we agree that we are in the midst of a pandemic and that that is Canadians' top priority, redundant as the phrase may be. If we had to choose a second priority, however, it might be housing, because there is a serious housing crisis. Today's debate has shown that this crisis exists in every region of Canada. That is especially true of my region of Abitibi—Témiscamingue and its urban and rural communities.

When it comes to building more social housing units, something members seem to be in favour of, one of the problems is the construction itself. Right now, the price of building materials is through the roof, and I do not get the feeling that the Liberals want to do anything to lower those prices. In such a situation, it is mathematically impossible to build affordable housing. How can we lower the price of materials in order to lower building costs and make these housing units more affordable?

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I certainly do not have the exact answer to that question. If I had the answer to that question, perhaps I would be in the wrong line of work.

What we are seeing as the price of lumber goes up is creative investors and developers starting to look for other strategies and use other products. I am already seeing it myself. Maybe there is a role for the federal government to play in helping with the creation of other products that could be just as good or better than lumber in the case the member has made.

I certainly believe that there is a role for the federal government to play in making sure that we not only build affordable housing, but also, to the member's point, help keep the costs of building houses down so that people and developers can afford to build. In doing so, we can make sure that the price of houses, or rent in some cases, is feasible.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

We have a decision to make as to whether we want to be a property-owning democracy or a landed aristocracy. That might seem stark, and it is, but it is also true. It is 100% true if we look at the facts.

According to CMHC, for a house to be affordable it should not consume more than 30% of a family's income. Currently, in Canada, the average house would consume 50% of the average family's household income. In other words, the average house is two-thirds more expensive than the average family can presently afford. That is just the average. Across Canada, there are more extreme examples.

For example, in Toronto it takes 68% of the average family's income to own the average house. In Vancouver it is 79%, and that is 79% of pre-tax income, which means that it is mathematically impossible, not just difficult, for the average Vancouverite to own the average home. Why is that? It is because people do not have 79% of their pre-tax income left when the government is done with them. Even if they spent 100% of their post-tax income, it would not be enough. Even if they ate no food, bought no clothes and had zero recreation they would not have enough money, as average Vancouverites, to own the average home.

What is causing that? Why is it that Vancouver is the second-most expensive housing market in the world when we compare average income with average house price? Toronto is number five. Both of them are ahead of Manhattan, London, England, and San Francisco: places with more people, more money and much less land. Is it because we do not have enough land in Canada? We are the 10th-least population dense country in the world. There are more places where there is nobody than there are places where there is anybody in Canada. If we spread our population out equally across the land, there would be only one person standing on every three CFL-sized football fields. That is how much land we have in this country, yet somehow we have a housing shortage. Clearly, it is not because of a lack of land.

Could it be there is a booming economy that is driving up housing prices? Of course not. The GDP went down \$120 billion last year and has not recovered.

What else is it? Is it COVID? COVID should have reduced housing prices. When CMHC testified at the finance committee at the beginning of COVID, it said that the pandemic would reduce housing prices by 14%. The Bank of Canada said it would be a disinflationary event, and it should have been. People were moving farther out into the country where per-square-foot costs are actually lower. Furthermore, their jobs were threatened so they would be less inclined to get approved for mortgages, and their earned wages were down, which means they would have less money with which to pay, which should have driven down housing prices. Instead, housing prices went up. They started going down in April 2020 before rocketing up 40% since that time.

What is the real cause? The answer is that the government is restricting supply and ballooning demand.

Let us start with supply. Here in Canada we have one of the slowest processes on Earth to get from buying land to building on it. In some jurisdictions this takes seven years. In Canada in general, it takes forever to get anything approved. In fact, out of 37 OECD nations, we are ranked number 36 for the time it takes to get a building permit for a warehouse, and it is not much different for housing.

• (1630)

Toronto's per-unit-of-housing cost of government is 50% higher than the average in United States municipalities. The charges alone consume almost a quarter of a million dollars in costs for every new unit of housing built in Toronto. The global cost of government for a new unit of housing in Vancouver is \$600,000. That is just to pay the cost of government.

Business of Supply

This, of course, keeps aristocratic, leafy neighbourhoods gentrified and keeps other people out. It makes the rich richer because they get to have an exclusive domain over these neighbourhoods, where no one else can build and get in. That is very good if someone already has a house as it increases their wealth, but those who are not yet in are shut out. It is as if there was a wall built around these neighbourhoods, where only the rich are allowed inside the wall and everyone else has to try to pay the gatekeeper to get in, but of course most cannot afford to do so. Therefore, the government restricts supply.

What does the government do with demand? It has pumped \$356 billion of brand new, created currency into the financial system. The Bank of Canada began printing money in March of 2020, and from February of that year to February of this year the money supply grew by \$354 billion. What was the size of the federal deficit? It was \$354 billion, exactly the same number, so the printed money was to pay for the government's overspending.

What did that do to inflation? As we know, inflation is everywhere and always a monetary phenomenon. As the supply of money goes up, prices rise with it, and this started with housing prices. In fact, from Q1 2020 to Q1 2021, the money that went into the financial system and the mortgage system increased new mortgage borrowing by 41%. Does anyone know what the price increase was for housing between April of last year and April of this year? It was 42%. The newly created money jacked up mortgage borrowing by 41% and housing prices by 42%. Is it coincidence? Of course not. These are the simple laws of supply and demand, and they are working very well for the very rich.

For someone who owns a \$10-million mansion, the increase in that person's home value, depending on which month to month is chosen, is somewhere between \$3 million and \$4 million. That is money that individual gets for doing absolutely nothing. For a working class person with the dream of buying a home, that dream just got more remote and more unlikely. Furthermore, landlords are about to raise people's rents because the cost of property has risen. He or she will use this, perhaps in some cases unavoidably so, to raise the rents of the people who live there. The wages of working-class people measured in the amount of real estate they can buy are down in value by 30% to 40% in just one year. Meanwhile, the wealth of the super rich is way up. Printing money raises the prices of the things that the poor must buy and that the rich already own. It is a colossal wealth transfer from the working wage earner to the wealthy asset owner.

Business of Supply

What do we do? Sometimes the answers are actually simple: not easy, but simple. We should open up the country to construction so we build more homes and increase supply, and we should stop printing money in order to avoid pumping helium into prices. In other words, we should start building and stop printing. It is more about what the government should stop doing than what it should start doing. It should allow people to keep the value of their dollar, to buy things that are of worth with that dollar and build things that will make their lives better. That is how we restore our property-owning democracy. It is how we go back from today's aristocracy to what Canada should be, which is a meritocracy.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Carleton for his speech.

He gave a lot of statistics and showed that it is easier for people who have a lot of money to buy homes. Towards the end, he started proposing solutions.

According to item (b) from the motion, the first-time home buyer incentive was a failure. I would like to know whether my colleague has any solutions to propose to the young people who are having a hard time buying a home. In my day, it was relatively easy to buy a home. Today, my own children are unable to do so. The ability to buy a home is a problem for young people.

Does my colleague from Carleton have any solutions to propose to young people?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her very good question.

Young people are the primary victims of this system because they do not own property, so the increase in value does not benefit them. It is now harder than ever for them to buy a house, and their salary has less real value for buying a home.

Here is the solution. First, we must encourage the municipalities and the provinces to build more quickly at lower cost and with less red tape in order to increase the housing supply. Second, the Bank of Canada must stop printing money and start stabilizing our currency instead of devaluing it because it is issuing too much.

Protecting our money and allowing homes to be built quickly are two suggestions that would best resolve the problem.

• (1640)

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member for Carleton has spoken more about housing today than he did the entire time he was the minister responsible for CMHC, which is maybe a good thing. However, much of what he said makes absolutely no sense.

I would like the member opposite to answer a very serious question. When the Conservatives decided to go after income trusts in their first mandate, and Jim Flaherty undermined the Conservative commitment to not trust income trusts, the one thing he did not touch was the real estate income trusts, or REITs.

Why did the Conservatives pour jet fuel on the fire and allow the REITs to become the dominant player in the investment side of the real estate industry? What was the thinking behind not curtailing the power that REITs have and the impact they are now having on speculative house prices?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, first, that member has been in government for five years. If he wanted to ban REITs, he could have done it in that time. He has not. REITs are still legal: They are still a tax advantage. He has not changed a thing in that regard.

Second, there is no single person in all of Canada who is more responsible for the failings in housing than that member. Not only was he a city councillor in Toronto who prevented poor families from having homes by making it very difficult to get them built in the first place, but after that he came to the federal level to contribute to the same problem.

With him basically being the lead housing personality, both in Toronto and nationally, we now see 10,000 people homeless in Toronto and a waiting list for affordable housing of 300,000. A carpenter actually had to go out and voluntarily build huts in the middle of a public park in Toronto to save people's lives. That is the abysmal legacy of that particular member and he should be apologizing to all people in Canada.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, when investors buy up rental housing, they deepen Canada's housing crisis by taking existing rental housing off the market or by increasing rent, making it unaffordable. According to housing policy expert Steve Pomeroy, between 2011 and 2016 Canada lost more than 320,000 units of affordable rental housing. This is more than double what the national housing strategy promises to create.

Do the Conservatives support what advocates are calling for? The first step in solving Canada's housing crisis must be to keep it from getting worse by limiting the ability of large capital funds, including REITs, to purchase distressed rental housing assets.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the thing that is making the REITs more wealthy is the fact that the government is printing money and driving up the asset values they hold. If the member actually wants to help workers instead of capital owners, she should stop supporting printing money, protect the value of a dollar and protect the meaning of a wage, rather than do what the government is doing, which is ballooning asset values to the advantage of the corporations of which she speaks.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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 Bow River, Health; the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon, Canadian Heritage; the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, Veterans Affairs.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the reality in my riding of South Surrey—White Rock is that the dream of working hard, saving up, taking out a mortgage and buying a home to raise a family has become completely unrealistic. It has gone from challenging, but hopeful, to impossible.

A constituent of mine recently sent me a listing in White Rock. It had two bedrooms, two bathrooms and was 1,600 square feet. It was a modest place to raise a family, built in the 1960s. It sold in December 2020 for just over \$900,000. Now it is listed for more than \$1.25 million. If it sells at asking, and most right now are selling over asking, that is a 23% increase in a matter of months.

How about the South Surrey home that was sold in February for \$1 million and then listed again in April 2021 for \$1.35 million? No, this is not an issue that arose overnight. I recently saw a small home listed in White Rock for \$750,000. It sold in 2015 for less than half that. Housing prices should not double in a six-year period.

The average dwelling in my riding now costs about \$900,000. In the Fraser Valley, average prices have risen 20% year over year, according to the Canadian Real Estate Association. What are normal Canadians, who earn Canadian incomes and pay Canadian tax rates, to do? For first-time buyers, the dream of home ownership has become a nightmare.

The Liberals' latest answer is to increase the qualifying interest rate across Canada for insured mortgages. Now it will be even harder for Canadian families to qualify. According to James Laird, president of CanWise Financial and co-founder of Ratehub.ca, this will decrease the value of the mortgage a family could afford by roughly 5%. Then we add on the B.C. property purchase tax of 2% on the first \$100,000, and 1% on every \$100,000 after that. That money goes into the provincial general revenues and is simply lost to the buyer.

Will this increase in the qualifying rate for mortgages cool a red-hot housing market? We see no sign of that. Does it make first-time home ownership more feasible? Absolutely not. It is designed to make it harder to get a mortgage. What it does do, by diminishing buying power, is chill new developments. Developers are the first to realize they might not be able to sell as many units under the new mortgage rules. The rising cost of lumber does not help either.

What we really need to do is increase supply. It is economics 101. Price is largely determined by two things: supply and demand. Of all G7 nations, despite our vast geography and comparatively low population, Canada has the fewest housing units per capita. One way to increase supply is to slow the rampant speculative foreign buying that is distorting our housing supply and squeezing Canadian families right out of the market.

Data for 2019 from the Canadian housing statistics program showed more than 6% of properties in B.C. were owned, at least in part, by a non-resident of Canada. That number is even higher in Vancouver, rising to 11.6% of condominiums there. At first, the government was, and has been, dismissive of this issue, calling those who raised it xenophobic. B.C. workers simply are not able to live in Vancouver. It is seen by many now as a vacation destination.

Business of Supply

The parliamentary secretary for housing has said that Canada has become “a very safe market for foreign investment”, adding, “but...not a great market for Canadians looking for choices around housing”.

The latest Liberal budget, the first in over two years, promises to address foreign buying through a consultation on a tax that would apply to foreign buyers. The Surrey family of four forced into an endless cycle of renting because of a skyrocketing real estate market do not want consultation. They want affordable housing. They want to join the middle class. How many times have we heard this Prime Minister's phrase, “the middle class and those wanting to join it”? Seriously, we need a little less talk and a little more action, please.

How else can the government increase supply for prospective Canadian homeowners? It is through policies that encourage building more homes. The Liberal government needs to incentivize home construction and slash through the endless red tape. We need to make it easier to get shovels in the ground, and build. The complex web of bureaucracy that must be navigated to build in this country is extremely costly and time consuming.

● (1645)

The C.D. Howe Institute estimates that red tape and regulations add more than \$600,000 on average to the cost of a new home in Vancouver. This is staggering. Sure, much of this is municipal and provincial, but we, in this federal legislature, have a role to play.

A highlight of my parliamentary career was being awarded the Golden Scissors Award from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business in 2015, an award for slicing through red tape. The government needs to get its scissors out to start clipping away, and it needs to challenge its regional counterparts to do the same.

Enhancing transit is another key part of the equation. Better, faster transit that reaches further beyond existing boundaries would create a whole new world of possibility for residential real estate development, allowing more commuters to live in areas beyond the downtown cores.

Business of Supply

In the Lower Mainland, we need SkyTrain expansions to Langley and South Surrey. We have been waiting far too long for the replacement of the George Massey tunnel, a key artery along Highway 99 that serves commuters from White Rock, Surrey, Delta and more. There were 85,000 commuters a day in 2019. With only four total lanes of traffic, that means constant congestion.

Plans for an expansion were first announced 15 years ago. It is past time to allocate the funds and work with local governments to get these projects done. Better transit infrastructure encourages growth, development and home ownership. Let us unlock this new supply.

The Liberals' infrastructure plan simply is not working. Their Canada Infrastructure Bank, which was established to disburse \$35 billion to infrastructure projects over 11 years, has completed a grand total of zero projects in four years. The independent Parliamentary Budget Officer recently said that the Infrastructure Bank is likely to fall short of its mandate, predicting only \$15.9 billion of the \$35 billion will be spent by 2028.

Speaking of over-promising and underperforming, the Liberals' first-time home buyer incentive is also failing. The shared equity mortgage program offered first-time buyers 5% on existing homes and up to 10% on new constructions, resulting in lower monthly mortgage payments, but with the catch the government owns that 5% to 10% of the home, to be repaid to the government after 25 years or when the property is sold.

Let us say a family in White Rock decides to purchase that two-bed, two-bath I mentioned earlier at the \$1.25-million price tag. Using this 5% incentive would effectively be a loan of \$62,500. Wait a minute, I was carried away with the promise of this program for a moment. This family actually could not qualify for this program at all because the limits on the program are such that it is not available. In other words, it is completely unworkable in my riding all together. Despite the fact that such a program could result in usurious repayment rates, it is irrelevant in my riding anyway.

Canadians were told the shared equity mortgage program would help 20,000 Canadians buy a home in the first six months. Instead, it has served fewer than 6,000 over seven months. Again, the Liberals over-promised and under-delivered. Two years in, and there is less than one-tenth of the Liberals' promised uptake.

Canadians are not using the program because it is a bad deal. Home ownership is critical to ensuring lasting prosperity and financial stability of the middle class. Conservatives know this. Let us address speculative foreign ownership, cut through the bureaucracy, encourage new builds, increase supply and make the dream of home ownership a reality.

I listened to the Liberals all day during this debate brag about spending \$27 billion on housing, so why is the supply of new builds, rentals and upgrades still a crisis? I guess they have not actually been in charge for the last five and a half years. They talk more about former prime minister Harper than Conservatives do, and today, they even reached back 30 years to former prime minister Mulroney.

We are here in 2021 to address 2021 and future Canadian issues, not to gaze back into history. This is why my colleagues and I have

put forth this motion today. We are tired of the inaction, the waste, the talking points and the rapid decline of affordable housing in this country, particularly in ridings like mine.

Why not put all that profligate spending into something Canadians actually care about, such as affordable rentals, home ownership and infrastructure to support both? We need a lot less talk and a lot more action.

● (1650)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservative motion would not spend one dollar on housing. The Conservative motion is a postcard of ideas that actually would not accomplish much of anything in any of the areas they want to speak about.

The member opposite talks about the desire to build transit. The way capital budgets are constructed at the municipal level is that the development charges are the driver of the capital programs. In other words, when we add new housing, there is a cost involved in delivering the roads, the transit, the schools and the libraries. Everything in the city that a house requires to be functional is leveraged off of those development charges, yet what the Conservatives are proposing is not only to gut that system, but to also cut the funding that is the federal contribution to transit.

How do we build a subway with nothing but tax cuts and budget cuts?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, last time I looked, the Liberals were the ones forming the government. They have been in charge for five and a half years, and they are the ones who put forward a budget, not us.

We are saying that they have not spent enough time and attention in that budget on affordable housing in Canada. It is a crisis. It is a problem. It is what people really care about. They should please pay attention. We need more action and less talk.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, we agree on the fact that the housing problem is very much one of supply and demand. One of the problems with the supply has to do with the fact that many homes are either being used for Airbnb or being bought and left empty by foreign speculators. If not for these new trends, we might be able to house every Quebecker and Canadian properly. It would also be more affordable.

What tangible measures can we take to fill the existing housing units in this country?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, part of what we can do, as I said in my speech, is end the consultation and actually take action on foreign ownership and vacant housing, and on how it is used. However, more so, we need to increase supply. As I mentioned, we have the lowest housing unit per capita rate in the G7. That is shameful.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to be debating housing here today. It is a crisis in my riding and across this country. The NDP is happy to support this motion because it is a motion that says all the right things. It is like the Conservatives are taking a leaf out of the Liberal book by saying good things without having anything here that they have to live up to in an election, for instance.

The member talks about how important it is to increase the supply of subsidized and low-cost housing. What are the details? Would she agree with the NDP that we need to create 500,000 housing units that are affordable just to catch up with the 30 years of lost time when the Conservative and Liberal governments did nothing to create affordable housing in Canada?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, it is always good to talk with other members of Parliament from British Columbia. The only place where housing is less accessible than the Lower Mainland in B.C. is the Okanagan, where the member is from. It is a beautiful place to live, but a lot of people simply cannot afford to live there.

Yes, we agree that there needs to be more spending, more targeted spending and more detail put into how we help get past this crisis. We cannot just talk about there being one.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, like my friend from South Okanagan—West Kootenay, I do not find much in this motion to which to object, but I also think that, when facing the housing crisis, we need to recognize that there are some undercurrents here that are not easy fixes. There are a lot of ways we can look at the acute crisis of homelessness for people who need a roof over their head and market housing.

Would the member agree with Professor William Rees at UBC, who said that the biggest problem we faced was when we stopped having the affordability of houses in each community based on what that community earned and it became a global commodities market for speculative investment?

Business of Supply

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. This is something that has run away in Canada. It is something we need to take hold of and deal with. We should not have the places where Canadians work just be vacation destinations for people from around the world.

We need to have it tied to our incomes, because we are Canadians, earning money in Canada and paying taxes by Canadian law. That should mean something in terms of affordability of housing.

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Humber River—Black Creek.

I am very pleased to be participating in the debate and to speak about our government's efforts to fight homelessness. I am certain that all my colleagues agree that safe housing is vital for the well-being of Canadians and their families. We understand that affordable housing plays an important role in the fight against poverty and homelessness, two issues that require more than just an improvised solution. That is why we are not managing the homelessness issue on an ad hoc basis. Instead, we are developing long-term solutions to prevent and reduce these challenges.

Resolving the problem of affordable housing is of the utmost importance to Canadians. For many of us, it is easy to take our homes for granted. We sometimes forget all too readily that some Canadians are not in the same situation as we are and live in fear of losing their homes.

Poverty has significant repercussions for all aspects of our society. It tends to affect seniors, members of first nations, veterans, children of single mothers or mothers fleeing violence and people who cannot find work in their field even if they have a college or university degree. Some of these people are experiencing homelessness just because their economic, family or social situation has put them at a disadvantage since birth.

The fact is that we had to act swiftly because millions of Canadians were living in poverty and sometimes had trouble getting enough food and finding affordable housing. That is why, in 2017, the Government of Canada announced a \$2.2-billion investment over 10 years through the national housing strategy. This investment will extend and expand federal homelessness programs.

Business of Supply

In 2019, we launched Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy. This program supports the objectives of the national housing strategy, aiming to help those Canadians most at risk to maintain safe, stable and affordable housing, and to eliminate chronic homelessness across Canada. Reaching Home is a community funding program that supports urban, indigenous, rural and remote communities to help them meet local needs in the fight against homelessness.

In the first six months, the program invested in 1,200 projects across Canada. It was broadened in 2020. Our government collaborated with the communities to develop and implement community projects and plans based on science that aimed for real results. This results-based approach keeps decision-making at the local level and gives communities more flexibility to respond to local priorities, including preventing homelessness, and offer programs designed to meet the needs of specific populations, like young people, indigenous peoples, and women and children who are fleeing violence.

● (1700)

Now, let us talk about our most recent investments in the Reaching Home strategy. Budget 2021 proposes to allocate an additional \$567 million to this strategy over two years, beginning in 2022-23. This amount will complement the investment of over \$299 million in this strategy that our government announced in the 2020 fall economic statement. It also complements an investment of over \$400 million in additional federal funding, the purpose of which was to support the homeless services sector's response during COVID-19 in order to prevent homelessness.

The COVID-19 pandemic put a lot of pressure on Canada's homeless services sector, which had to transform its way of delivering services to prevent outbreaks among the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless.

Our government therefore plans to allocate additional funding to the Reaching Home strategy for two more years, as of 2022-23. The goal is to help communities to continue to safely serve the homeless and prevent homelessness among at-risk Canadians until the pandemic begins to wane. I would like to add that, given the progress that we have made in our commitment to do more, the government announced that it wants to eliminate chronic homelessness in Canada.

I would now like to briefly outline some other investments our government has made to support housing and affordable housing. First of all, budget 2021 proposes to provide an additional \$2.5 billion over seven years to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation beginning in 2021 and 2022. This includes \$1.5 billion for the rapid housing initiative, \$600 million over seven years to renew and expand the affordable housing innovation fund, \$315 million over seven years through the Canada housing benefit, to increase direct financial assistance for low-income women and children fleeing violence, and \$118 million over seven years through the federal community housing initiative, to support community housing providers.

Budget 2021 also proposes to advance and reallocate \$1.3 billion, on a cash basis, of previously announced funding. This includes \$750 million under the national housing co-investment fund to accelerate the creation of 3,400 new units and the repair of

13,700 units, \$250 million under the national housing co-investment fund to support construction, repair, and operating costs, and \$300 million from the rental construction financing initiative, which will be allocated to support the conversion of vacant commercial property into housing, which will also help a great deal.

I think it is clear that our government continues to do what is necessary to address homelessness. We are clearly demonstrating that we are developing and implementing long-term solutions to prevent and end chronic homelessness in Canada, once and for all.

● (1705)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, we have heard the hon. member recount at length all of the symptoms of the financialization of the housing market.

Perhaps my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver East, asked the most important question today, which is on the commodification and financialization of rental housing. She stated that Canada is losing more affordable housing than is being created, and this business model of REITs and other large capital funds relies on acquiring lower rental properties that allow them to maximize profits for shareholders, including through rent evictions.

Will the hon. member and the government take action to limit the ability of REITs and large capital funds to purchase rental units, and create a housing acquisition fund for the non-profit sector, as was called for by the former UN housing rapporteur Leilani Farha, the FCM and the recovery for all campaign?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, it is a concern. There is no question. With all our investments, we are moving forward with many new and renovated affordable housing units for seniors, but we must find a way not to lose those that already exist, because of investors and whatnot. It is a very important approach. We must make sure that we are working in parallel to make more affordable housing available for all Canadians.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. As I was saying earlier, the housing crisis is also being felt in the Gaspé. However, we recently got some good news. Two housing projects for people in need will be able to move forward, including in Chandler and in my riding in Saint-Alexis-de-Matapédia.

However, the organization that can help move these projects forward is the Société d'habitation du Québec. I wonder if my colleague agrees that in this crisis the role of the federal government is truly to transfer the money without condition to Quebec and the provinces, who have jurisdiction in the matter.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that very important question. Each of our regions is facing housing challenges, a serious issue that we must work on in close co-operation with the provincial and municipal governments.

I would like my colleague to know that the Union des municipalités du Québec favourably welcomes the direction we are taking to solidify our investments in housing, infrastructure and economic development.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

[English]

One thing my colleague did not touch on in his speech that I know he is incredibly passionate about, as am I, is veterans. I know he has worked closely with VETS Canada in addressing homelessness with our veteran population. Perhaps he could elaborate a bit on what our government has done to assist veterans who are finding themselves in difficulty with respect to finding affordable housing and/or finding themselves on the streets.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his hard work in supporting our veterans community and families.

It is a very important question. VETS Canada is playing a major role, as are a number of organizations, in supporting veteran homelessness, identifying those veterans and walking them through the steps that are necessary to eliminate homelessness for them. We have a project in London, Ontario that has eliminated homelessness for veterans. There are many initiatives we are discussing now regarding a national approach to eliminating homelessness for veterans right across this country.

Mr. Derek Sloan (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I made a comment earlier about immigration. I want to be clear that I think Canada has done a great job welcoming people from all over the world, but that does not change the fact that high immigration levels impact housing prices. I see here in front of me a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation study that shows that economic growth and immigration strongly influence the demand for housing. I have Statistics Canada information here that shows that, in 2019, 150,000 newcomers came to Toronto, but fewer than 30,000 housing units came online.

Business of Supply

Does the member agree that we should take a look at how immigration impacts housing prices in Toronto and our other big cities?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, it is a twofold approach. We need more immigrants to work and contribute to our great country, and we need to ensure that there is enough housing for all Canadians, including immigrants. That is why our government is investing billions of dollars to support all communities across this great country.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I commence my remarks on the file we are discussing tonight, I want to express my condolences to everyone in the Muslim community, to the family in question and to everyone in London and Canada. That terrible tragedy has saddened all of us. We certainly have to commit to move forward and find a way to eliminate these kinds of terrible tragedies. I extend condolences on behalf of everybody in Humber River—Black Creek.

I am pleased to join this debate on the motion by the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon. I want to focus on his call for our government to examine a temporary freeze on home purchases by non-resident foreign buyers. I know this is an issue that the hon. member cares very much about, as we all do. It is an issue across all ridings, as well as mine, Humber River—Black Creek.

The issue of foreign ownership of housing in Canada is a complicated one, and our understanding of the problem has been hindered to some degree by a lack of hard data. That is why, in budget 2017, our government committed almost \$40 million over five years for Statistics Canada to develop a new Canadian housing statistics program. This program was created in part to investigate the role of foreign homebuyers in the Canadian housing market, something that all of us, when we are in our ridings, have been witness to, when we see houses sitting empty just long enough for the owners to flip them.

It also aims to improve our understanding of the characteristics of residential properties and their owners that impact affordability. This program will provide a complete database of all residential properties in Canada, including whether property owners are residents of Canada. This information will be invaluable to all levels of government in developing future housing policies.

Recent reports by both Statistics Canada and CMHC indicate that the share of non-resident-owned condominium apartment units in most of Canada's major cities so far remains relatively low, but while groundbreaking research by CMHC a few years ago confirmed that foreign investment was clearly a factor driving house price acceleration in cities like Vancouver and Toronto, it is not the only factor driving the prices up. The same report identified inadequate supply as the main driver of high house prices in major centres.

Business of Supply

As we all know, our government is working with the provinces, territories and many other partners and stakeholders to address the supply challenge through the national housing strategy. I have to say how happy I am that our government reintroduced the national housing strategy. For many years, we did not have any kind of housing strategy in the House at the federal level. I am thrilled that we introduced it, and we have already made significant accomplishments. This 10-year, \$70-billion-plus plan has already added or repaired tens of thousands of affordable housing units in communities across the country. Many of those units were unlivable, but people did not have an alternative. There was nowhere else to go.

The national housing strategy has had a positive impact on my riding, where residents have been in dire need of additional units. We must ensure that these units are available to those who are on Canadian soil. The issue of foreign ownership and, perhaps more specifically, the issue of unoccupied units owned by non-residents of Canada is the real crux of this problem. The fact is that units are being purchased by speculators, whether foreign or domestic, and left empty while the owners wait for prices to rise and while many are still left without a place to call home.

Many of the streets in Humber River—Black Creek have homes where the grass does not get cut until the end of the season, completely abandoned. Owners are waiting for the chance to sell their properties and make money. This is unacceptable, especially in communities like Toronto where housing is already in short supply. The government recognizes the problem, and we are taking serious steps to address it.

The member will recall that last fall's economic statement acknowledged that speculative demand from foreign non-resident investors contributes to unaffordable housing prices for many Canadians. At the same time, we committed to help make housing markets more secure and affordable for Canadians by ensuring that these individuals pay their fair share, at a minimum.

• (1715)

I was therefore delighted, as I am sure all of my colleagues were, even on the other side, when the Minister of Finance confirmed in budget 2021 that the federal government would be implementing a national 1% tax on the value of non-resident, non-Canadian owned residential real estate that is considered to be vacant or underused. I would have liked to see it higher than 1%, personally, but it is a beginning.

This new tax, which will come into effect on January 1 of next year, will require all owners, other than Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada, to file a declaration as to the current use of the property, with significant penalties for failure to file. As we stated in the budget, the government believes that homes are meant to live in. This measure is one way to ensure that houses in Canada are first and foremost a place for Canadians to live, to raise their families and to build their futures.

Some time will be needed to ensure that the tax is designed and implemented fairly and effectively. In the coming months, we will release a consultation paper to give stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the parameters of the proposed tax, including whether special rules should be established for small tourism and resort communities.

We will, of course, work closely with the provinces, territories and municipalities in implementing this new tax, which is expected to increase federal revenues by about \$700 million over four years, starting in 2022-23. These revenues will help to support the significant investments in budget 2021 to make housing more affordable for all Canadians. These investments include \$2.5 billion in new funding and a reallocation of \$1.3 billion in existing funding to help build, repair and support 35,000 existing housing units. Budget 2021 will also support the conversion to housing of the empty office space that has appeared in many of our downtowns by reallocating \$300 million from the rental construction financing initiative.

Budget 2021 not only fulfills our commitment to implement a tax on vacant or underused residential property owned by foreign non-residents. It also builds on our legacy of investing heavily in housing affordability. The combination of massive investments to make housing more affordable for the most vulnerable, to end homelessness and to limit foreign speculation in the housing market will help ensure that Canada's economic recovery is an inclusive one that helps more people join the middle class.

I know that the member who put the motion forward shares this goal. He has frequently brought the matter of affordability to the attention of the House, and I commend him for that. However, his motion suggests that we need to begin by tearing down all the progress we have made, and that is not something I can agree with him on. Tens of thousands of Canadian families have benefited from our investments to date through the national housing strategy, including constituents in the riding represented by the member.

Our government is confident that the path we are on with the national housing strategy is the right one for Canada, and we will not stop making progress until everyone has a safe and affordable place to call home.

• (1720)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, today's Conservative motion would do absolutely nothing to address homelessness for people who have served our country, for veterans. We have heard the previous Liberal colleague talk about veterans, yet there has been no action.

Retired sergeant Bill Webb in my riding has been working with me; my good friend and colleague, the member for North Island—Powell River; the local Legions; and the local municipalities of Qualicum Beach and Courtenay. They all want to build housing for those veterans who have served our country and are homeless right now. They should not be living on the street.

Business of Supply

I put forward a question on the Order Paper and it came back that the government is, right now, explicitly looking at a whole-of-government approach to this issue. The government has committed to a timeline of 2025 to end veterans' homelessness but it has not delivered. It is highlighted in the national housing strategy as a priority, but they cannot get resources. Retired sergeant Bill Webb has been looking to the federal government to take leadership, yet that has not happened.

Can my colleague explain why the government has not delivered veterans' housing for those who have put their lives on the line, served our country and are actually living on the streets, and who should be getting support from the federal government right now?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, that is such an important question. All 338 of us, as members of Parliament, care very much about the issue of our veterans and want everything from improved services for mental health to, of course, housing.

Since the beginning of the national housing strategy, we have created over 63,000 units of housing. We have repaired over 126,000 units, and we have provided over 36,000 households with affordability support. We recognize the challenge is there. We have committed the money, and we intend to make sure that everybody has a safe home, especially our veterans.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport-Côte-de-Beaupré-Île d'Orléans-Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech.

It always feels like efforts are being made. We were given an impressive list of projects, amounts and plans. We see that there is a major problem that is ongoing and entrenched. It is going to take a big effort because every story, every city, every village, every sector has its own problems.

What does my colleague think of each province's and Quebec's ability to freely and more properly manage the amounts that will be paid by the government to help develop social housing?

[English]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, certainly working with the provinces is key, and with the other stakeholders, to create the kind of housing that we all want to see created. In the meantime, our government has invested over \$27 billion since coming to office and has committed to spending another \$70 billion under the national housing strategy.

We will continue to work with all of our partners across the country, and our stakeholders, to do everything possible to create as much housing as possible and put an end to the homelessness that continues to be a significant problem in our country. Homelessness is not something we want to see for anybody. Everybody should have a safe place to live, and I believe we are committing all of that money.

We have also committed \$1.25 billion to help many Canadians buy their first homes, so we are helping in a multitude of different ways with a variety of provinces and stakeholders.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this housing crisis affects people across the country. In my riding, it is the people at the bottom who are the most affected: the people who need subsidized housing. If someone is evicted because their landlord wants to upgrade their home and they are on subsidized housing, there is nothing available for them. They are out on the street. They are unhoused.

I just wonder if the member could comment on what the government proposed to make up the difference for the affordable housing we have lost over the last 30 years. The NDP is demanding that we build 500,000 units of affordable housing. The government is way below that, in urgency and in ambition. What is the government going to do for these people who are literally becoming homeless?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I am tremendously proud of what the government has managed to accomplish in such a short period of time. It created 63,000 new units, provided 126,000 repaired units so that now people have a decent place to live, and issued affordability support to over 36,000 people. That is already happening now, so I am very proud of the work that our government has done and I know it is going to do a lot more in the future.

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

It is my privilege to rise in the House to speak today. Housing is an issue that was important to me before becoming an MP, because in my previous job I owned a small home-building business and we built about 60 homes in the space of 10 years. Today I want to share some of the knowledge I gained over the years of building houses.

The question I want to address is how the federal government impacts the cost of housing. First of all, I want to talk about regulations. Many regulations are provincial and local, but the federal government does have significant impact when it comes to the Canadian building codes. They are set by the National Research Council every few years and then adopted by the provinces.

We always speak about the positive changes that come out of the building code changes. For example, most recently there was lots of talk about insulation, insulated basements and insulated concrete floors, etc. We must remember that everything costs more when we add new features and new things to buildings. There are more materials, more labour and sometimes more costs for testing, such as when we have to test for radon, for example.

We have to be careful when we introduce new rules, new legislation and new building codes because we have to balance the cost of these improvements with the cost that will end up in the cost of the home. If we introduce too much bureaucracy and too much cost, then that affects the consumers and the affordability of houses.

Business of Supply

We need simple programs, not complicated bureaucratic ones. A good example of that is in Saskatchewan, with the Saskatchewan home renovation tax credit. Essentially, if people have a project that fits the category, they get the work done, get the receipt, put it on their tax return and get the money back as a tax refund. It is quite simple.

We can contrast that to the Canada greener homes grant recently introduced by the Liberals, which is quite a bit more bureaucratic. For that, people have to actually get an audit done, first of all, to measure the baseline efficiency of their house. Then they get the work done, and then they have a second audit to see if there is an improvement. It is a program with excessive bureaucracy.

I want to contrast that with the CERB program. Of course, that was a program that gave \$2,000 a month to people at the beginning of the pandemic. This was a program with almost no rules, no audits and very few checks. It was just money for everyone. Now, it was a pandemic, I understand, but in hindsight I think nearly everybody would agree that it was a little too easy to get money out of that program. If we compare that to the greener homes grant, where there is all this bureaucracy, essentially the government is assuming that people are trying to cheat and trying to get money they do not deserve.

We need to find a balance here, where there are appropriate checks and care given, but it is not too bureaucratic and does not create too many onerous problems. It needs to be simple.

The second thing I want to talk about is monetary policy. This is perhaps the most important. When my wife and I bought our first house in 1989, we paid an interest rate of 13%. To put that in perspective, if a 2% interest rate today is a \$1,000 payment, if the interest rate were to change to 13%, that \$1,000 payment becomes \$2,700. Even if the interest rate only went up to 5%, that \$1,000 payment still becomes \$1,500 a month.

The government has made a trillion-dollar bet that interest rates are going to stay low forever, but history tells us otherwise. From 1965 to now, the average five-year mortgage rate was approximately 9%. There was a 20-year period in there from 1975 to 1995 when the average rate was about 12%. It is only in the last decade that the average mortgage rate has been below 5%.

Where are interest rates going in the future? Nobody knows for sure. However, the failed policies of the Liberal government are causing significant deficit spending. Deficit spending eventually causes inflation, and inflation will drive house affordability further out of reach for Canadians.

High prices also cause people to opt into high-ratio mortgages. I had an example of a customer who planned to build a house with me with a 5% down payment. I explained to them what the bank did not want to explain, which is that the CMHC charges them a fee for a 5% down payment mortgage, and that fee is 4%. Essentially, it wipes out their down payment completely. Once the customer understood that, they chose to wait and try to save for a larger down payment.

This is where the government can lead. Instead of the government's failed first-time home buyer program, people need a real program. We could increase amortization periods, improve mort-

gage terms and possibly create a tax incentive to allow people to save for their down payment.

● (1730)

The third area that I want to talk about is rental housing. There has been very little new rental housing built in Saskatoon recently, and in fact in Canada. The simple reason is that developers can make more money by building condos. The government may need to introduce some measures to gently prod the market toward more rental products.

This was done before, around 1980, through the program called the MURB program. This incentivized investors to build rental properties, and it worked great. There were 195,000 units built at a cost of about \$2 billion in today's dollars. Let us compare that to the Liberals' national housing strategy. It proposes to build 71,000 units for \$26 billion. It would be \$26 billion to get 71,000 units, as opposed to \$2 billion to get 195,000 units. It seems to me that the program from 40 years ago has a much better ROI, and perhaps the Liberal government should look at that program as it designs its program.

In February we hosted a town hall to discuss housing. What I heard was that affordable housing is key, not just for the obvious things, but for physical and mental health. In Saskatoon at any given time, there are approximately 475 homeless adults. I have received over 210 emails and letters on this issue since becoming an MP. The rapid housing initiative was supposed to address Saskatoon's housing needs, but there was no money in the big city stream for Saskatoon, and in the project stream, applications from Saskatoon were all denied by the government.

I supported three projects in Saskatoon West. I wrote letters and spoke to the parliamentary secretary. The Lighthouse application consisted of an acquisition and upgrading of a motel facility to add residential transitional housing. What was the result? There was no funding. The Saskatoon Tribal Council currently runs the White Buffalo Youth Lodge in my riding, and it has many housing options for indigenous people. It also proposed to buy a hotel and convert it to housing. What did the Liberals do? They denied it. The Salvation Army project in my city was the same story. The Liberal rapid housing initiative failed Saskatoon.

I want to remind the House of the homelessness partnering strategy of the former Conservative government. The HPS of the Harper government earmarked funds for certain regions and then let those regions decide for themselves what specific projects to fund. In Saskatoon, a board of local experts was created to make these investment decisions. They took the decision power away from the politicians and gave it to local people on the ground. They knew exactly where the money needed to be spent. With the rapid housing initiative, those decisions remained in Ottawa, with the politicians. Is it any surprise that Saskatoon, with no hope of a Liberal politician, failed to get any money?

Right now in Saskatoon, rental rates are high, availability is low and the quality is poor. This disproportionately affects single mothers, indigenous people, low-income people and new immigrants. It is especially hard for those living on social assistance, as the allowance for rent is not enough to cover the actual cost of rent.

Conservatives have solutions to Canada's housing crisis, and they are in the text of the motion today. If we put that together with our plan for mental health, we really have something good. I hope the Liberals heed the call. If not, Conservatives will secure our housing when we are elected.

As I close, I could not help but think of immigrants and newcomers as I was putting together these thoughts today. I could not stop thinking about the Muslim family killed in London, Ontario, on Sunday. It takes great bravery to leave one's home, country and family to make a new life in Canada. It takes strong courage to begin living in a country where one has few friends or family, and often one does not speak the language. It is difficult to find a good home to live in, as we have been talking about today. However, someone should not have to worry about their basic safety. That is one of the reasons they chose Canada.

To my good friends Hasan, Ilyas, Afzal, Mohammad, Sadiq, Assad, Sayad, and to all Muslims in Saskatoon and Canada, I am so sorry that one hate-filled man has caused so many to live in fear. He does not represent Canada. I am sorry that they feel afraid on the streets; they should not. To all Canadians, let us work hard to make our streets safe for all ages, all genders, all nationalities and all religions.

● (1735)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have worked very hard with my colleague to try to realize better results in Saskatoon, in particular with the Saskatoon Tribal Council and Chief Arcand. It was disappointing that other projects scored higher and therefore received funding. I assure the member that with rapid housing 2.0 on the horizon, I have already been in conversation with Mayor Charlie Clark, as well as the tribal chief, to make sure that we tend to Saskatoon's challenges.

I was a little concerned about the member's call for sort of a gutting or removal of what he would call "red tape" in the Canada building code.

Business of Supply

First of all, the Canada building code is not enforced in Saskatchewan; it has a Saskatchewan building code. It can adopt the Canadian one.

Does the member really believe that watering down housing standards is a way to make housing safer and more secure?

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's comments and I do appreciate the work that he is doing on behalf of Saskatoon. Hopefully, we will see some money flow eventually to Saskatoon.

Regarding the building codes, he is right. The Saskatchewan government does adopt the building codes, but my point was not that we need to gut them; my point was that we need to be careful when we create new items, because there is always a big long wish list of things that we want to put into building codes. We just need to be careful that those things are worth the cost benefit, that the cost of implementing those things is worth the benefit that we receive.

As a builder, I can tell members that sometimes there are things in there that do not make sense. There are new items in that building code that are not cost-effective. They add more bureaucratic red tape than they need to, and that is what I am trying to address.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, Chief Shining Turtle has indicated that there is a great need to have CMHC's section 95 program funding for home construction increased to adjust for the inflation in building costs and materials. For example, the band receives about \$148,000 in CMHC subsidies to build a house, but with housing costs running at \$400 per square foot, a 1,000-square-foot home would cost over \$400,000. The band is not able to assume that kind of financial burden, yet CMHC representatives fail to provide a workable solution. Chief Shining Turtle is calling for a bold strategy, not just tinkering around the edges.

Does the member agree that the federal contributions need to match today's cost of construction in the minimum?

● (1740)

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, the cost of construction these days is really unfortunate. That is part of why I am talking about the building codes. We have to make sure that what we are implementing for building codes is reasonable given the costs that are associated with them.

Many factors come into play when it comes to costs. We have to have a strong labour force. That is achievable. We need to have a good trade policy so that we have reasonable access to materials that come in from overseas, because the materials that we get provide a large part of the cost of the building.

Business of Supply

We also need funds to match the costs. Every new homebuyer faces that issue. They are faced with the same problem. They are faced with a very large amount of money needed to pay for the houses they want. It is a problem across the board.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I have to say that it is refreshing to see the Conservatives take an interest in the housing crisis. However, let us be frank, this is not a crisis that emerged overnight. It has existed for several years.

I do not understand why Harper's Conservative government did not increase the budget. Can my colleague explain why the Conservatives are now changing tack and want the Liberal government to increase funding?

[English]

Mr. Brad Redekopp: Madam Speaker, I can speak to my own position on this. In my former work, I was involved with different organizations working in the inner areas of Saskatoon. Housing has always been a priority to me. Housing has been important to me all through my life. I have worked hard to help people get good housing. I have worked with organizations in Saskatoon to help those who are vulnerable and who do not have access to good housing. We have tried to provide better housing for them.

It is something that is important to me, and it is very important to many of my colleagues on this side of the floor.

Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC): Madam Speaker, housing is a basic need for survival. It is not something we should tamper with lightly. People live in a complex ecosystem of currency and the interdependencies of economics and laws that govern its flow, at least in our part of the world. Outside the offerings of charity and benevolence, currency is required to buy and sell goods and services, and this includes homes.

Homes are where families are raised and provide a means for stability and safety. They are established to foster love and security and the thriving of their lives. A home provides autonomy for individuals and young families to grow their own legacy. The home is an anchor for the dignity and flourishing of those who dwell within. There are different types of homes required to meet the needs of people in different seasons of their life journey, including seniors. In the context of a complex world system, an individual's capacity to meet housing needs is intricately interdependent with the world one lives in and the opportunities facilitated by the governing entities.

In understanding these basic principles, it is incumbent on all tiers of government to work together to ensure that, in the midst of an economic continuum, the basic needs of the people are safeguarded so that necessities such as housing are accessible to all Canadians, regardless of their financial position. However, despite an upset of skyrocketing prices in the housing market, triggered by non-resident foreign buyers and money laundering, the government has done little to protect the priority of middle-class Canadians to access housing they can afford. The government has failed to act meaningfully to help first-time homebuyers and incentivize purpose-built market rental housing to fill the housing gap. It has now

been made more difficult with inflation and the rising cost of lumber.

I have been raising the issue of housing shortage since the start of the 43rd Parliament. My first question period intervention was in response to the throne speech, and I raised the issue of affordability and the ineffective mortgage stress test. I only need to listen to the stories of my constituents to know that no matter how much the Liberal government claims to have taken action to solve the housing crisis, there is little fruit to show for its work.

I would like to share the story of Jordan, a constituent who lives with his wife and two young children in Coquitlam. He reached out to my office to tell me that he will ultimately be leaving the city he has called home for over 30 years because of housing prices. The last thing he wants to do is leave, but he says that he has little choice in the matter unless he goes into obscene amounts of debt once his current lease is up. As we know, many Canadians are very close to insolvency, just \$200 shy. He is perplexed that while his salary is well above the national average, he cannot live in "what has been a working-class neighbourhood since its inception." He regrets that "the only way to get into the market at this point is to be lucky enough to have parents who have cashed out at the top and are willing to transfer the necessary wealth to their kids."

Jordan's is not the only story I have heard about long-time residents with deep roots in the community who have had to leave because they cannot keep up with the hiking housing prices. I have spoken with a constituent of Port Moody who is living with his wife and children at a parent's house, renting a floor that is below market rental value so they can save up for a down payment on their first home. However, given the skyrocketing prices, he is beginning to accept the possibility of moving further out of the city to afford a home, even though his children have begun settling into the neighbourhood and feel like it is their home. This breaks their parents' hearts. It is very sad.

Whenever I speak with young families trying to enter the housing market, I am told they cannot dream about owning a home to raise their children. However, there are common-sense steps the government can take without just talking about them or throwing money around without a meaningful strategy. The motion put forth by my colleague calls on the government to:

- (a) examine a temporary freeze on home purchases by non-resident foreign buyers who are squeezing Canadians out of the housing market;
- (b) replace the government's failed First-Time Home Buyer Incentive with meaningful action to help first-time homebuyers;
- (c) strengthen law enforcement tools to halt money laundering;
- (d) implement tax incentives focused on increasing the supply of purpose-built market rental housing units; and

(c) overhaul its housing policy to substantively increase housing supply.

In Coquitlam, the average price of a house is \$1.1 million, according to MLS stats. This is an annual increase of 23%. However, regardless of the percentages that fluctuate, at large, the price range for first-time homebuyers is so beyond reach that there is no room for them to jump into the market. It should not be controlled by foreign non-residents.

• (1745)

According to a report from CMHC, “properties that have at least one non-resident owner amount to 6.2% of those in British Columbia, and in Vancouver it is 7.6%. The proportion of non-resident participation is highest for condominium apartments. The proportion of condominiums that had at least one non-resident owner was 10.4% in British Columbia. The largest differential in median assessment values between non-resident and resident-owned homes was in single detached houses in British Columbia, at \$236,000, which is 36.7% higher than the median assessment value of resident-owned single detached houses.”

The government needs to put a freeze on home purchases by foreign buyers in order to recalibrate the housing market and make it one that reflects the needs of everyday middle-class Canadians. Middle-class Canadians need hope, as every Canadian needs hope about their future. If they get into the market, their house payments should not have to be so high that they live in debt for the rest of their lives.

As I look at the young people, it really is a prayer. I just wish I had more hope for young people as they graduate from university. They look at what is out there, and it is very daunting. They couch surf in their friends' homes. They live in their families' basements. They do not know how to move forward. It is not very much different for families who have children or for couples, because they are also staying in their homes.

In closing, I hope that I could ask the government to just step aside and with moral courage take these issues seriously, to attack crimes like money laundering, to sit down and really crunch numbers and strategies that work with mortgages, and to set their trajectory on helping middle-class Canadians find the hope to dream about their family and their future with a home where they could flourish under the safety of their own roof.

• (1750)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:50 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

[Translation]

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

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

Private Members' Business

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 9, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:05 so that we could start Private Members' Business.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

FIGHT AGAINST TAX EVASION

The House resumed from April 30 consideration of the motion.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion moved by the member for Montarville.

The fight against tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance is one of this government's priorities. As we have said from the start, the tax system must be fair, and everyone must pay their fair share of taxes.

[English]

With that in mind, I have read the motion tabled by the hon. member with great interest. Unfortunately, it has some flaws, and other initiatives that are already under way would be more effective.

I note that the motion proposes to “review the tax regime applicable to digital multinationals...to tax them based on where they conduct business rather than where they reside”. It is not quite right to say that corporations currently pay tax based only on where they reside. Current rules also pay attention to where they have their physical operations. However, I think we can all agree that companies, including digital corporations, need to pay their fair share of tax on the money they earn from their activities in Canada, even if remotely controlled. In this area, the government has made clear that it would prefer a multilateral solution.

Private Members' Business

For that reason, Canada is actively working with our international partners to achieve a global agreement. Progress was made at the recent G7 finance ministers meeting in London. Multinationals need to pay their fair share of taxes, and the G7 has outlined a path to make that possible. We are encouraged by the progress being made at the G7 and the OECD. However, it is important to recognize that a global agreement would take time to be enacted and ratified. Therefore, our government plans to move ahead in the interim.

[Translation]

I encourage all members to take a close look at budget 2021, which proposes to implement a digital services tax at a rate of 3% on revenue from digital services that rely on data and content contributions from Canadian users. The tax would apply to large businesses with gross revenue of 750 million euros or more. It would apply as of January 1, 2022, until an acceptable multilateral approach comes into effect.

In addition, the budget confirms the government's intention to proceed with changes announced in the fall economic statement 2020 pertaining to e-commerce. These measures will ensure that the GST and HST apply to all goods and services consumed in Canada regardless of how they are supplied or who supplies them.

• (1755)

[English]

Bill C-30, currently before the House, would implement these changes and ensure that the Canadian sales tax system is fair. Foreign digital corporations supplying digital products or services to consumers in Canada would be required to collect and remit GST/HST. I hope we can count on the member's support to approve Bill C-30.

Motion No. 69 also calls on the government to work toward establishing a global registry of actual beneficiaries of shell companies as a way to more effectively combat tax evasion. Again, I agree with the member opposite that it is necessary to strengthen corporate beneficial ownership transparency. The government is committed to continuing to take action in that regard. Specifically, budget 2021 announced the government's intention to create a publicly accessible beneficial ownership registry. Authorities need to know who owns which companies in Canada to be able to catch those who attempt to launder money, evade taxes or commit other complex financial crimes.

That said, in Canada, responsibility for corporate law is shared between federal, provincial and territorial governments. Only a small portion of Canadian companies are federally incorporated. Most are registered at the provincial or territorial level. Governments should prioritize these national efforts before working to establish a global registry.

[Translation]

That said, what concerns me most about the motion is that in certain cases, the proposed measures could have negative consequences. Take, for example, the proposal to change the rules concerning income that Canadian corporations repatriate from some of their international subsidiaries.

[English]

The motion, it appears, seeks to change the tax rules for what is called “exempt surplus”, the earnings of a foreign subsidiary of a Canadian company from carrying on an active business in a foreign country. These active business earnings can be repatriated to the Canadian company as dividends, free of Canadian income tax, where the foreign subsidiary is resident and carries on business in a country with which Canada has a tax treaty or a tax information exchange agreement.

The proposal would be a major change to Canada's international tax policy. It would not be well targeted and could have negative consequences.

First, the proposal would put Canada out of step with international norms. Canada's tax rules in this regard are consistent with those of most other developed countries.

Second, it could hurt Canadian companies that are foreign subsidiaries operating in a country with which Canada has a tax treaty or a tax information exchange agreement. The current rules ensure that a subsidiary carrying on an active business in one of these countries is subject to similar tax rates as other corporations operating in the same country and therefore competes on an equal footing. Canada has tax treaties and tax information exchange agreements with several countries, including some that have low tax rates. If we change the rules here, we could adversely affect the competitiveness of Canadian businesses operating abroad by increasing their overall tax burden.

Third, at the end of the day, the proposed change may not generate significant revenues, if any at all, for Canada. In some cases, it could simply encourage Canadian companies to keep their foreign profits offshore, and in other cases it could cause them to pay more taxes, but to other countries, not to Canada.

The hon. member would also like to review the concept of permanent establishment, so that income reported by shell companies created abroad by Canadian taxpayers for tax purposes is taxed in Canada. The goal is laudable, but the motion would not help to achieve it.

For one, the concept of permanent establishment generally has no application in relation to Canadian taxpayers shifting income into foreign shell companies. Rather, it applies in the context of foreign companies operating in Canada. Modifying the concept of permanent establishment would therefore not have the intended effect of taxing in Canada income shifted by Canadian taxpayers into foreign shell companies. Two, this concept cannot be modified unilaterally because the concept is defined in Canada's bilateral tax treaties.

• (1800)

[Translation]

To sum up, Motion No. 69 has the noble objective of fighting tax avoidance and tax evasion. Unfortunately, some parts of it are not properly targeted, which could have a number of negative consequences.

[English]

I invite the members of the House to reject the motion. The goals the hon. member is trying to set would be better addressed by other initiatives, including budget 2021 and Bill C-30.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a true privilege to rise in the House today to speak to Motion No. 69. I am looking forward to talking about it today. I would like to start my speech with a quote that I believe is very relevant to the topic at hand. As part of the 2007 budget—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but there is a point of order. I think I know what it is, because I believe there is an issue with the hon. member's mike.

The hon. member for Repentigny.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, that is exactly why I am rising.

The interpreter is completely unable to do her job because there is a problem with the member's microphone.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just asked him to check that.

[English]

I want to make sure the hon. member has picked the right mike.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to this important issue and to this motion.

This is part of a larger discussion that needs to happen, and I am very pleased to be talking about it today.

I would like to begin by quoting the great Jim Flaherty when he talked about the 2007 budget and had just recently announced an anti-tax-haven initiative. His words still ring very true today. He said:

When multinational corporations use this tax loophole, Canadian taxpayers are indirectly subsidizing their international operations. Our goal is to improve the fairness of our tax system and further reduce taxes for hard-working Canadians while preserving Canada's overall tax advantage for our globally successful companies.

There can be no doubt that taxation can be a challenging and difficult time when it comes to paying those taxes, but those taxes are often required. They are required for things such as making sure that we have street lights and paved roads, making sure that our firefighters are well paid and making sure that we continue to have the best education and health care systems in the world. It is critical that we have those.

Private Members' Business

As the Hon. Jim Flaherty said, when a certain portion of our tax population fails to pay its fair share, it is the rest of us who carry the burden. It is the folks on Main Street who have to subsidize Bay Street, and we do not believe that is right.

What is the size and scope of the issue that we are talking about today? Well, it is hard to put an exact figure on it, because we do not know exactly how much tax is being evaded, but there are estimates out there of anywhere between \$5 billion and \$10 billion, and even \$15 billion. That is a lot of hospitals that could be built and a lot of schools that could be constructed. We need to focus on that, and as I said, when even a small portion of Canadians do not pay their appropriate fair share, that increases the burden for the rest of the taxpayers.

Beyond taxation, often tax havens are utilized not only to avoid paying federal corporate tax or federal individual tax but also to avoid financial regulations and financial liabilities. Some tax schemes have even been used to avoid alimony and support for children, which is obviously not okay in our great country. They have also allowed corporations to shelter income and potentially criminal behaviour. All of this represents an unfair advantage for a small portion of the ultra-wealthy here in Canada.

I will now focus on the actual motion and address some of the concerns that the previous hon. member had in her speech, which was obviously well researched and well thought out, but I think it contained a number of deficiencies. Perhaps I will be able to alleviate her concerns, and maybe we will get members from the other side voting for this motion.

I will go clause by clause for those in the House or at home who have the motion and are ready to read it.

I will start with subclause (a), which is:

amend the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations to ensure that income that Canadian corporations repatriate from their subsidiaries in tax havens ceases to be exempt from tax in Canada;

While we fully acknowledge that many of these agreements are done through a tax treaty and through international tax negotiation, that does not mean that we cannot have change. In fact, there appears to be a will throughout the world to have change to make sure that people across this world are paying their fair share of taxation. The ultra-wealthy, or a certain portion of them, do not pay it.

I will describe what is going on here for everyone at home who maybe does not eat and sleep tax law.

Generally, a Canadian corporation can set up another corporation in another territory. This is not bad news but great news, because we are bringing more Canada to the world, and I think it is a fantastic thing for successful corporations. We would never want to discourage that. However, unfortunately, there can be a tax disadvantage for the treasury. What happens is that these corporations pay tax on money in these foreign jurisdictions, and then they can repatriate it back to Canada, even to wealthy shareholders, and those wealthy shareholders may not necessarily be paying their full amount of tax.

Private Members' Business

● (1805)

What is more, there is planning that can be done so that the reality of the income is not really even generated in that foreign company but is just used as a way to avoid taxes. There can be and should be work done.

Do we want to make sure, as the hon. member said, that Canadian businesses are competitive wherever they are? Absolutely, but there is a way to do that. There is a way to make sure that Canadians pay their fair share while Canadian businesses remain competitive. It should be noted that this is not a novel concept. Many countries in the world do such things, including the United States. It does not allow the type of planning that allows the ultrawealthy to avoid taxation.

If we look at (d) in the motion, it states, “review the tax regime applicable to digital multinationals, whose operations do not depend on having a physical presence, to tax them based on where they conduct business rather than where they reside”.

As we look at taxation, a lot of the concepts date back 50 or 100 years. They are very geography-centric. We know that the world is increasingly moving away from being geographically centred. Capital, digital items and all sorts of intellectual property move in seconds from country to country, so we need to revisit this.

When we look at this, the language is “review”. It is not compelling the government to a specific action. It is saying that we need to review it. I think that is absolutely right because, as is the case with a lot of this motion, we need to have multinational treaties changed, which involves collaboration around the world, and I am in favour of that. However, it does not mean that we should not review this.

The world has changed so dramatically. We need to keep up with the speed of business and the speed of innovation. Quite frankly, the Canadian government and the Canadian taxation regime are not doing that. On the same point, we need to maintain Canadian sovereignty and protect the information of legitimate Canadian businesses.

Part (b) of the motion is to “review the concept of permanent establishment so that income reported by shell companies created abroad by Canadian taxpayers for tax purposes is taxed in Canada”.

This gets back to the geocentric version of taxation that made lots of sense in the early 1900s and even in the 1950s. We need to be open to new perspectives. Just because there is a physical location or even an operation in a particular country does not mean necessarily that is where the taxation should occur.

Again, this is a review of the concept. It is not commanding the government to do anything. However, to say we do not need to look at this I think is silly, because the world is changing and the tax code needs to reflect that. We need to look away from the geographic or geocentric view and look at where that income is being generated and where, fairly and rightfully, the Canada Revenue Agency and the Canadian taxpayers have rights. If millions or billions of dollars are being generated in Canada, I think there is an argument to at least have a discussion with respect to reviewing this principle, regardless of where the company operates.

The idea of a permanent establishment has been gamed by tax professionals for years by using trusts. Trusts can have the controlling mind located in a different country, but the remainder of the business operates outside of that tax haven. I think this is an excellent idea and I look forward to a robust discussion on that going forward.

If we look at part (e), it states to “work toward establishing a global registry of actual beneficiaries of shell companies to more effectively combat tax evasion”.

Let us take a step back. I think actual beneficial ownership versus legal ownership is not a really well-known concept among Canadians. Beneficial ownership is the right to benefit from it, and legal ownership is having the title to it.

I see we are getting to the end, Madam Speaker.

● (1810)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I apologize, but the hon. member has run out of time. I tried to give him a couple of signals and I did allow for a bit more time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise to speak to Motion No. 69 in the House of Commons. This is the first chance I have had to rise since the horrific actions in London, Ontario, which is about a two-hour drive from Windsor. I want to express my community's support for the people of London, in particular, the family of Salman Afzaal and, of course, nine-year-old Fayez, who is still in hospital. We extend our condolences. This horrific event will hopefully unite many Canadians against hatred. I thank all those expressing their concern at this point in time. We have many family friends and business acquaintances in London who are close to those individuals in that community, and our hearts go out to them.

I am pleased to rise in support of this motion. It should be no surprise that New Democrats have long supported tax fairness. This motion is very appropriate now, given that a lot of winners have been created through government interactions, restrictions and changes to deal with COVID. At the same time, we are facing some historic challenges with tax havens and tax allowances for the elite, who have been allowed to escape paying for some of the things that we all pay for as citizens. Corporations, individuals and businesses have been allowed to use havens in other parts of the world to avoid paying for necessities like education, health care and the environment.

Private Members' Business

One of the things I am most proud of is my work on a motion that later became legislation. It is something I worked on ages ago with Ralph Goodale, who was the minister at the time. At one point, corporate fines and penalties were tax deductible. People could declare fines and penalties against environmental degradation, criminal activity and other things of that nature and get 50% back at tax time. We were able to negotiate having the government move away from that practice, because it undermined good corporations that were doing the right thing. Some corporations are allowing this type of behaviour to undermine their competition, good practices and those that are being responsible.

The motion has six main components that are very important in this respect. Why the government would be opposed to this is hard to understand, as the motion gives further strength in the chamber to debate, but it also addresses some of the greed and corruption out there. We have seen the challenge most recently of public money given to Air Canada being used for CEO bonuses. It is an accepted practice by the government to allow that to take place. We have also seen it with Nav Canada. My community fought to stop Nav Canada shutting down smaller airport towers. At the same time as it was laying off workers, it was giving managers bonus money. When it got a government package, it gave out more bonus money. Now there is pressure to return it to the public, but it could at least go to the workers.

The motion and the member's discussion points also bring up the unfairness in the international realm. It is important to note that the Panama papers, which are several years old now, identified a list of Canadians who were participating in a tax scheme that most of us could only dream of in many respects. It allowed people, in an organized way, to avoid paying their fair share. I do not understand as a citizen, and many in the working class do not understand, how people can get a break in the tax system the Liberal and Conservative governments have had in place for so many years if they have an accountant, a lawyer or that privileged ability to defer expenses and a whole series of things either through tax credits, manipulation of the tax system or, in this case, putting their money offshore.

We have heard stories about the Isle of Man, Jamaica, Nassau and other places that we lose all kinds of money to. Since the pandemic began, Canadian billionaire wealth increased by about \$78 billion while thousands of workers were worried about losing their jobs.

• (1815)

This is atrocious when we consider that many of those people who are actually benefiting from that are also part of the companies that have actually made money during the pandemic. As I mentioned, they are also avoiding paying taxes.

One of the classic cases is Bell Canada. It supplies our Internet, through subscriptions and online services, and we know it had access to government assistance while, at the same time, making record profits and doing a number of different things.

I do not know specifically if it is using tax evasion or havens, and at the moment I will not cast that mantle upon it. However, the reality is the company took advantage of government programs during a time when it was making significant profits.

There was a CRA decision that came out just recently concerning Loblaw's. The Canada Revenue Agency lost a decision based upon the laws in our country, which we currently have right now. It lost not based on fairness, but based upon our current laws, which are as shady as the practice themselves because they have known loopholes and are worse than a bad goaltender in hockey. The laws are essentially a sieve when it comes to allowing people and corporations to shift money out of our country. There was a loss of \$368 million in taxes from what Loblaw's moved.

Here is a retail element that has actually done significantly well, and with the pandemic on top of it. Also, to be quite frank, at times its practice with regard to employing workers during the pandemic has not always been the fairest, in my opinion. In fact, when we look at all of our grocery retailers, many of them have not been providing what I deem a fair wage.

I come from a background of employment specialists, where I assisted persons with disabilities and young people find employment in the community. Working in a grocery store is one of the most challenging positions, not only because of the types of work that they do, but also because of the types of the shifts they get, the precariousness of the job, and so forth.

Men and women have been going into these establishments and providing all these services during some of the scariest moments of COVID-19. Meanwhile, some of these employers are using tax havens to avoid paying for the support programs necessary for all of us to get by. I would argue that sometimes this becomes an uncompetitive practice, when it comes to other employers who are willing to do the right thing and not use tax havens.

I want to talk about one of the things that I think is very important, an area where Canada could be a leader. What I like about the motion is that it talks about a global registry of actual beneficiaries of shell companies to more effectively combat tax evasion. That is really important.

It is interesting. I have been here long enough to remember when Liberal Stéphane Dion said that we could not cut corporate taxes fast enough, hard enough and deep enough. At the same time, we saw meetings of the finance ministers where they actually talked about a global tax rate. What we have is companies playing countries off each other, one by one, to try to lower corporate taxes.

Finally, there is some recognition. We are a far cry from the Paul Martin days of the Liberals and others, when they would not even look at an idea like this. They would openly mock it. They would be in a competition with the United States to lower corporate taxes because the cuts were not fast enough or deep enough, according to their former leader.

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This is now being talked about because we have international web giants, and other types of online services and corporations, that no longer have a physical footprint, necessarily, in a country, but they do economic activity that generates billions of dollars while not paying any type of supports.

Essentially, this motion is an important part of the discussion in the House of Commons and one that New Democrats are really proud to support. We know there is around \$25 billion in corporate revenue that should be coming to Canada, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It is estimated that those funds could actually be used for health care, education, small business or the environment. Quite frankly, the time should come when corporations cannot use tax havens as an advantage or a leg-up versus the real innovators in our economy that actually need to be rewarded because they are doing the right thing.

● (1820)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a little ironic to be having a debate about tax havens right after talking about the housing shortage and how hard it is to get money for things like social housing. However, I will jump right in.

As Radio-Canada's Gérald Fillion said, when it comes to tax havens, Canada is part of the problem, not the solution.

Solutions do exist, however. My colleagues have been talking about solutions in the House all this time. Canada has been favouring tax havens for so long that we could even call it the founding father of tax evasion and tax avoidance, since it is so heavily involved with the worst offenders, like the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands.

I would also like to salute my colleague, the member for Montarville, for introducing this motion. We must not give up the never-ending fight against tax havens. I commend his initiative, because the Liberal government does not really intend to commit to tax fairness, as we can clearly see from its stand against this motion.

However, it is important to be able to clearly identify who in the financial world is pulling businesses' strings and encouraging tax evasion and tax avoidance. We must be able to identify the various elements that help companies mask their actual financial situation and use tax havens to achieve their ambitions: far-flung destinations, luxury hotels and upscale restaurants, or any other clandestine place in a paradise on earth, far from the eyes of the business world, stepping through the portals of a secret world of mysterious transactions and artificial and immoral pleasures, such as drugs or sexual exploitation. Members should read the works of the essayist Alain Deneault to better understand the relationship between tax havens and the sordid underbelly of humanity.

Some may say that I may be exaggerating and that the business people who use tax havens are not such seedy characters. Some are principled and honourable, but they see no alternative to using tax havens, simply to avoid getting steamrollered by their strongest adversaries.

That is a list, one that is far too long, of what makes tax havens so effective. There are certain forces that shape the world that our children will inherit, but is that what we really want?

Maybe we ought to think about that. Are the successive Canadian governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, aware of what is hiding behind the tax haven curtain and the devastating impact tax havens can have on democracies?

In their defence, it is true that, when it comes to tax evasion and tax avoidance, there is sometimes a fine line between what is legal and what is illegal. However, the fact remains that the mores that characterize tax havens are highly questionable. There are plenty of tax havens, and they all reek of immorality. Organized crime, the big cartels, the mafia and unscrupulous business people: Regardless of how we describe these users, we must not be afraid to say that there are human realities behind tax evasion and tax avoidance. More importantly, we must not give up the fight, because tax havens have a bigger impact on our daily lives than we realize.

People develop strategies. People with technological tools and an advanced understanding of the laws and regulations develop tax strategies and tricks that become increasingly sophisticated. Understanding the intricacies of tax havens has become a high-level art that gives the infamous 1% a distinct advantage over those who do the right thing and abide by a fair tax system that is good for society as a whole.

Unfortunately, we must take action and continue to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance because the number of business people using tax havens grows with every passing fiscal year.

Statistics Canada tells us that Canadian businesses invested \$381 billion in the top 12 tax havens in 2019. That adds up to almost one-third of Canada's foreign investment. I received a document in the mail about how, given the pandemic, we need those tax haven billions now more than ever. The document names these countries: Luxembourg, Bermuda, Barbados, the Cayman Islands, the Netherlands, the Bahamas, Switzerland, Hong Kong, the Virgin Islands, Ireland, Singapore and Malta.

That is why the Bloc Québécois is calling on Ottawa to crack down on businesses that hide their profits in tax havens.

● (1825)

To do that, it will need to require Canadian banks to disclose how much money they are putting in their foreign subsidiaries, establish a global registry that identifies the actual owner of a company in order to lift the veil on shell companies, contribute to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's global efforts to eradicate tax havens, and ensure that income that individuals and businesses repatriate from a tax haven is taxed in Canada. That was an interesting document that I got in the mail.

The absence of this \$381 billion from the coffers of Quebec, the other provinces, the territories and Canada has major consequences for the quality of our social services and the development of our institutions, for our businesses and infrastructure, for our education system and health care system, for seniors and so on.

Surely such a huge shortfall is the root of all our problems, given the consequences for economic prosperity. There is an obvious, not to say troubling, link between shifting tax revenues and the decline in economic prosperity.

How much of the missing \$381 billion could be invested in the economy every year by the Quebec and Canadian governments? How much of those billions of dollars could help the local and national economies? How much of those billions of dollars is not being used every year to train and attract workers? How much of those billions of dollars is not being used to modernize our economy? How much of those billions of dollars is not being pumped into colleges and universities to fund research and development?

All this missing money is not being used to reverse the trends of globalization and the offshoring of Quebec and Canadian manufacturing. How much of the missing \$381 billion could be used to revitalize the domestic Quebec and Canadian markets so products could be sourced and manufactured locally?

How many immeasurable resources are we leaving in tax havens? We could revitalize a truly national economy that is much closer to the workers and producers. This would help us be more environmentally conscious and more supportive of secondary and tertiary processing. This would ensure a much more innovative and creative economy than the current globalized model, which is inseparable from tax evasion and tax avoidance.

We need to join forces and work together to recover that inaccessible money from tax havens. The metrics of success for a company, an industry or a nation like Quebec would change, since the money recovered from tax evasion and avoidance would be invested for the benefit of local and national companies. There would be more for us, the people, than for them, the wheelers-and-dealers club.

Every transaction through a tax haven comes at a cost to small business owners in Quebec and Canada, who are struggling to carve out a place in a global economy that artificially benefits international empires.

These small businesses do not have a fair chance at success. Small business owners are fighting hard and being resourceful and creative, while international empires are relying on the financial clout that comes from not paying taxes. This disparity is weakening our democracies.

Furthermore, tax evasion and avoidance are inevitably and gradually weakening democracy in Quebec and Canada. The empires are so powerful that they are neutralizing democracies, which are scrambling to recover so they can stop finance industry crooks from hiding their activities under the cover of laws allowing tax evasion and avoidance.

Do we really want democracies that have been neutralized by powers that do not pay taxes in Quebec and Canada? No, we do

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not, at least not in Quebec. Once again, Quebec is a leader on this very important issue. Canada has a dismal record and is even seen as an accomplice in the world of tax havens, which showcases the worst traits in human nature: exploitation, lying, selfishness, cheating and more.

In closing, I want to condemn Ottawa's complacency. The federal government is being complacent in the face of fraud and excessive use of tax havens. Parliament is allocating ever-increasing amounts of money to help the Canada Revenue Agency tackle the problem, but nothing is being done and the results are not there. In 2018, the Minister of National Revenue boasted in the House that the CRA had recovered \$15 billion as a result of international tax investigations, but the CRA's report indicated that the amount was actually 600 times lower, a meagre \$25 million.

More recently, we learned that five years after the leak of the Panama papers, the CRA has laid no charges and has only recovered \$21 million in unpaid taxes.

• (1830)

Meanwhile, Revenu Québec has recovered \$21 million in addition to the \$12 million that has been assessed but not yet repaid. That means Revenu Québec has recovered provincial taxes equivalent to half of what the CRA has recovered for all the provinces.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Montarville has five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue firmly established what the problem is from the outset.

Today, we are talking about housing and the fact that the resources available to respond to needs in that area are insufficient. That is true for health, social services and all other state obligations.

In reality, we have enough money, but that money is slipping through our fingers. It is growing in tax havens to the benefit of the wealthy. Who is paying for that? It is low-income earners and the middle class who are footing the bill for the wealthiest members of our society. That is completely unacceptable. I do not understand how our Liberal colleagues can tolerate such a thing.

I would like to pay tribute to our colleagues from the Conservative Party, the NDP and, of course, the Bloc Québécois. They raised many concerns with regard to my motion. Nothing is perfect in this world, and I am well aware of the fact that there may be some problems with my motion. However, they chose not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. They chose to keep what was good about the motion and build on it. We need to take action. We cannot make excuses for not taking action. However, that is exactly what the Liberals are doing. They are saying that the few small problems, alleged problems, with the motion are reason to dismiss it, to reject the whole thing.

Adjournment Proceedings

There is a saying in Quebec that when a person wants to have a dog put down, they say it has rabies. That is exactly what is happening here. They are pointing out a few small issues in the motion to justify rejecting it altogether.

If the motion's objective is commendable, why not build on it? Why not work together to come up with real solutions to combat tax evasion and tax avoidance?

As we know, G7 finance ministers have agreed on a similar objective. Why are the members of this House not able to agree on such an objective? It boggles the mind.

The Liberals claim to be the champions of the middle class, but the reality is quite different. Since the Jean Chrétien government was in power, more than 20 tax agreements have been reached with tax havens, including at least three since the current Prime Minister took office.

The government claims it is combatting tax havens, but there are more of them. The government is normalizing the use of tax havens. That is completely unacceptable.

My colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue said that the main Canadian corporations have reportedly stashed \$381 billion in foreign countries. The Parliamentary Budget Officer concluded that this \$381 billion, which is a mind-boggling amount, was not primarily for investment purposes. My colleague pointed out that this represents one-third of Canadian investments abroad. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has told us that this money was not investments, rather, the corporations were using these tactics to avoid paying their fair share for state obligations and services. That is completely unacceptable.

I also find it unacceptable that the Liberal government is digging in and saying that it will be business as usual. Throughout this entire debate, the Liberal members have been bringing up the budget. They have been telling us to trust in the budget, that it will work and that they will continue what they have been doing so far. The problem is, things are not working. We need to take the bull by the horns and take real action to meaningfully combat tax evasion and avoidance, in the name of tax fairness.

• (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion. May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

The hon. member for Montarville.

• (1840)

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Monday, January 25, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 9, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to be in the House, as always.

I want to talk about doctors in Canada. I have a tremendous doctor in my constituency. He is my personal doctor, Dr. Van de Linde, who has been recognized for his commitment to the community. In the past, I was involved in a regional health board and met a lot of doctors in my area and community. They are fantastic people.

My doctor has given me some information that I think is really important at this time. I understand that health is part of the provincial mandate. I understand colleges of physicians and the role they play in every province as far as recognizing credentials for doctors goes. However, here is some information that my doctor shared with me: According to a survey of the Canadian Medical Association, 91% of physicians supported national licensure and believed that it would improve care for patients; 45% of physicians reported that if national licensure existed, they would work in other provinces to support their colleagues in times of need, as with COVID; 42% were willing to go to rural areas and remote regions; and 30% would do it again on an ongoing basis.

As we have seen in this particular time, this kind of move would be extremely interesting to pursue. I understand colleges of physicians and I understand the provincial mandate with health. However, we have a tremendous number of people with skills and licensing who have the mobility to move quickly from province to province. If we have an ice storm in Quebec, there are all sorts of tradespeople who can move from one province to another and to an area. We have significant professions that can move from province to province very quickly. However, for a doctor to do it, to be recertified in a different province, they are going back and looking for high school marks. At times it takes months to move from province to province. I think this is significant and we should be looking at it, especially as we come out of COVID. Doctors know it would mean better health care, and we need to follow their advice.

There is a different health topic that I would like to bring up: hotel quarantines. I think this was a boondoggle from the start. I have heard stories from constituents who had to pile furniture up in doorways of hotels because the locks had been removed. We have heard stories of people being loaded in vans with a whole lot of other people sitting side by side, and going to hotel lobbies crowded with people who are supposed to be in hotel quarantine. Some of those people in the hotel are in regular rooms.

An advisory committee suggested approximately 10 days ago that the hotel quarantine needed to be scrapped because rules are not being enforced in two of the four areas. It should be scrapped. It was not an idea that worked to begin with. It does not work. As the committee said, people are better off to quarantine at their homes if they are going to. It also said that if people are vaccinated somewhere else and are coming into Canada, quarantine should not be enforced either.

We have an advisory committee for the government that said we should change this and get rid of it. What did the government do? It increased the fines, which are only enforced in two out of the four provinces. Hotel quarantines should be gone.

• (1845)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak about these important issues. When it comes to the member's first comments around doctors in this country, that is an area that we have absolutely been working with our provincial counterparts on, whether in things such as virtual care or, as the member mentioned, the ability for practitioners to move. As he stated, this is provincial jurisdiction; however, we are constantly talking to provincial and territorial counterparts about ways that we can improve health care for Canadians across the country and that is something we are going to continue to do.

In terms of government-authorized quarantine facilities, the member said the measures do not work. That is simply not the case. The measures that have been put in place at the border have been taken because they add layers of protection for Canadians travelling. This is a measure that has been important not only to track, trace and stop the spread of COVID-19, but it is also in place to ensure that we are watching for variants of concern.

I find it incredibly difficult to take the Conservative member seriously when on social media we see the Leader of the Opposition screaming for stronger border measures, then in the House when they think Canadians are not watching, the Conservatives say, "Scrap all these measures and just open up the borders." The Conservatives need to get consistent with the message when it comes to protecting Canadians. From our side, we have put in place measures that are led by science and evidence to keep Canadians safe. These measures are important, and again are done completely with the objectives of stopping the spread of COVID-19 and saving lives.

The member also stated incorrectly that the quarantining is not even enforced in two of the four jurisdictions. That is simply not the case. In Quebec it is being enforced through the judicial process, and Alberta has the ability to enforce these measures. The local jurisdiction has not yet enacted the Quarantine Act or the regu-

lations to do this enforcement. However, we are still able to enforce these measures.

It is important that all local public health measures are enforced because they are done with the goal of protecting Canadians and stopping the spread of the virus. We are all very much looking forward to a life after COVID, and the fastest way we are going to get there is if Canadians continue to step up. Over 30 million vaccine doses have been delivered, and by Canadians stepping up and getting vaccinated we are going to see our way out of this pandemic.

In the meantime, these measures are incredibly important. Again, we are constantly watching so that we are able to track and trace and stop the spread of COVID and the variants of concern. Our objective to keep Canadians safe will not stop.

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, I think I talked about hotel quarantines. I did not mention the border once, which the parliamentary secretary focused on. I thank her for recognizing Alberta: For months and months, now approaching five, they have not enforced it. I thank her for recognizing that. I appreciate that.

Let us move to one other health topic. I have talked to optometrists. They are extremely concerned about what is going to happen as we have had children like my granddaughter averaging 19 hours a day in front of blue light from screens. We are going to see such repercussions for eyes. One might say that is health, that is Alberta again, but indigenous and Armed Forces are under federal jurisdiction. We need to look after eye care, and that is something we should be doing coming out of COVID because we are facing a tragedy. It is going to be brutal. We need to look at this federally.

• (1850)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, off the top, I do not know why the member opposite would find it to be a point of pride to not enforce quarantine measures. Local quarantine measures are in place for the purpose of actually protecting communities, so I find it odd that he finds it to be a point of pride to not enforce local public health measures. That is between him and his constituents.

When it comes to optometrists, absolutely we have heard from stakeholders. We are listening and taking those comments very seriously. Again, as I mentioned, we are going to continue to work with our provincial and territorial counterparts and ensure that Canadians have access to the health care they need.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I asked a question several days ago on the Liberals' broken promise to eliminate the marriage after 60 clause. Veterans and RCMP retirees are reaching out to me because this issue is still not fixed.

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Just so Canadians understand, this clause was created in the early 1900s and it prevents the spouses of veterans and RCMP retirees, as well as any federal public servant, from receiving a pension after the death of their partner if they marry after 60. This clause is a relic that should belong in a sexist history. It is still known under the name of “the gold-digger clause”, as it was created to prevent young women from marrying older veterans to get their pension when they died.

It is still in place today. How is that for a feminist government? It was wrong then, and it is wrong now.

What we know is that veterans' spouses in this category are often in poverty. In fact, some veterans stop taking part of their pension while they are living so their spouses will have something when they die, which can mean veterans and their spouses live in poverty for years so that if the spouses live longer they are not completely without an income.

Fundamentally, the federal government is punishing veterans for marrying after 60. This is sexist, as well as ageist. I know of one couple, for example, who were going to get married. COVID prevented the wedding from happening, and then the veteran turned 60. Now what do they do?

The government's plan is to study this, study this very small population of largely impoverished women so the government can find them. I appreciate the importance of studies. However, this small population is in desperate need. Veterans are worried about the future of their partners.

In the 2015 and 2017 mandate letters to the ministers of Veterans Affairs, the PM was very clear and instructed the ministers to eliminate the marriage after 60 pension clawback. Sadly, this mandate was not found in the most recent 2019 or 2020 mandate letters.

The Liberals promised to eliminate the clause in the 2019 campaign, but instead created the veterans survivors fund in the 2019 budget, with \$150 million over five years. This funding was panned to many organizations, including the National Council of Veteran Associations, the Armed Forces Pensioners' Association, and the RCMP Veterans' Association. To date, not one penny of the fund has been spent.

It is very clear that this issue for a relatively small population is just not a priority for the government. The government could eliminate this clause, have an application process for the spouses, and this issue would be resolved. Instead, the spouses of retired RCMP officers and veterans who married after 60 continue to remain poor.

When will the government fix this? How long will it take? VAC has funded two studies on this issue. The first is through the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research and was completed recently by UBC professor Dr. Eric Li. In his executive summary, he states that he was able to include only seven survivors and three veterans in his study. Even with that small sample size, the primary recommendation is that VAC reconsider the criteria for inheriting a veteran's pension.

The second study is through Statistics Canada, which sent its preliminary results to VAC one month ago. The results were sup-

posed to be made public by summer 2020, but now we are being told to wait until 2022.

Was the government expecting these studies to produce a result other than the need to eliminate the marriage after 60 clause? Everyone, and I mean everyone, who is affected by this clause has called for the government simply to eliminate it. Even the Prime Minister wanted it to happen, so why the delay?

● (1855)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the MP for North Island—Powell River, for her excellent work on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, on which I serve as well.

[Translation]

I am pleased to present the government's response today. Let me note that the well-being of Canadian veterans and their families is a top priority for our government. This includes ensuring that veterans' partners continue to receive support after the death of their spouse.

[English]

It has been a long-standing concern that those who marry veterans after the veteran has turned 60 are not entitled to automatic survivor pensions under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act. This is why, in 2019, our government announced \$150 million over five years to establish a veterans survivors fund designated to “better support veterans who married over the age of 60 and their spouses”. At the time of the announcement, no information was available on the population who married a veteran after the veteran's 60th birthday. The first phase of that funding commitment requires some research into the size, characteristics and needs of this population.

As a result, Veterans Affairs undertook two research projects. One was a quantitative study with Statistics Canada to identify the population's size and the characteristics of survivors who married a veteran who was over 60. The second was a qualitative study with the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research to examine the financial well-being of these survivors to better understand the nature of their financial situation and what unmet needs they may have.

[Translation]

The department uses the results of this research to determine the best way to support the survivors. In the meantime, we encourage spouses of deceased veterans to contact Veterans Affairs Canada if they are having difficulty—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): One moment, please.

The hon. member is rising on a point of order.

[*English*]

There are only points of order if there is a technical issue. Is there a technical issue?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I am so sorry to interrupt. The interpreters have identified that the wrong microphone is selected and they are having a hard time interpreting. That is the only reason I interrupted.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We had checked that, but we will check again. The hon. member should unplug and plug back in his microphone, or go to the microphone selection on the computer and make sure that the right one is selected.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I was saying that in the meantime, we encourage spouses of deceased veterans to contact Veterans Affairs Canada if they are having difficulty in the wake of their loss. Support is available to them as we speak.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his work on the veterans affairs committee as well. I deeply respect the work. I know, in our hearts, all of us want to see the very best for the veterans who have served our country.

My response is to ask when the money is going to be spent. There was \$150 million over five years, and we still have not had any reports of a single cent spent. We have had spouses contact our office and ask about the veterans survivors fund. In fact, when it was first announced, we had a huge number of people contact our office asking what the application process would look like and wanting to identify who they were: the spouses who do not have

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enough resources, who married after 60 and are desperate for that fund.

We also had veterans calling us who had married after 60 who wanted to know the process because they care about their partners. They wanted to know that after they are gone, that person would be taken care of. There is still no clear pathway for an application process.

Our office is still waiting for answers, but more importantly, the spouses are waiting for answers. When will they get them?

● (1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, the government has undertaken to ensure that surviving spouses of veterans who got married after age 60 receive the support they need when they lose their partner.

[*English*]

Once the research into this population is properly analyzed, the government will use the results to inform how best to support these individuals.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon is not present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given. Accordingly, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

[*Translation*]

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:01 p.m.)

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